

INTRODUCTION & GENERAL GUIDELINES FRIENDSHIP-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

DEFINITION:

A friendship school relationship is the development of a positive association between two countries through the establishment of links between schools and school communities.

The opportunity to participate in a friendship school relationship is open to any school with a desire to learn more about the language and culture of countries other than their own.

Friendship school relationships can be established under a Memorandum of Understanding as part of Victoria/Melbourne sister state/city agreements or independently.

AIM OF FRIENDSHIP SCHOOLS:

- To strengthen the relationship between Victoria and overseas countries;
- To broaden the knowledge and understanding of students by enabling them to gain an understanding, appreciation and respect for other cultures;
- To support the teaching of that language in the Victorian school and English in the overseas school;
- To develop ties of friendship through regular communication;
- To develop opportunities for teachers to exchange course material, information on methods and practices and on educational matters in general;
- To provide opportunities for contact and interaction with the wider school community;
- To promote Victorian education overseas, and
- To facilitate visits of students and teachers to the sister school.

BENEFITS TO TEACHERS:

- Knowledge and experience of a different education system first hand;
- Professional development by exchanging ideas and knowledge;
- Broader educational horizons by adding a global perspective; and
- Improved proficiency in LOTE through added involvement in the language and culture.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS:

- Knowledge and experience of a different culture first hand;
- Access to new ideas and experiences by working closely with teachers and students from a different culture and educational system;
- Access to native speakers of LOTE; and
- Broadened understanding, acceptance and tolerance of other cultures.

SCHOOLS WISHING TO ARRANGE INDEPENDENT FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

- **Expression of Interest** forms are available from Sarita Yen, *International Division*, Level 6, 35 Spring Street, Melbourne. Tel: **9651 3948**.
- Form signed by the Principal and the School Council President are to be returned to Sarita Yen, *International Division*, Level 6, 35 Spring Street, Melbourne
- Once a link has been established the principal of the school will need to write a letter of introduction. The school should include a package of information, such as the school's brochure, magazine, photographs etc.
- After initial contact has been made, the two schools should negotiate a mutually agreeable contract. A sample Agreement is attached. A list of schools with friendship school relationships in the same country/location will also be provided to assist with this.
- Schools should provide the *International Division* with a copy of the agreement so that the school can be recorded on the Friendship School Register. This register will be used to assist other schools wishing to establish a friendship school relationship in that country and to provide information on activities, visits or promotions which may be of interest to schools.

FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL AGREEMENTS ARISING FROM MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING and SISTER CITY / STATE AGREEMENTS

Friendship school programs under Memoranda of Understanding and sister city/sister state agreements will be advertised in the **Education Times**. Application forms will be sent to those schools expressing interest. Schools will be required to complete the Schools Undertaking on the application form.

STUDENT EXCHANGES ARISING FROM FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL AGREEMENTS

Student exchanges should operate under conditions that have been mutually agreed by both schools. Schools should ensure that student exchanges are organized for a maximum period of 29 days. Overseas students at government schools will be charged fees after this period of time. Schools wanting to organize exchanges for periods in excess of 29 days have to become Registered Exchange Organizations. (Please contact the International Division on 9651 3948 for Guidelines and Application Form for Registered Exchange Organizations). Participating schools should ensure that reciprocity of student exchanges is maintained and that programs operate on a non profit basis.

(i) Prior to the Exchange

Exchanges require careful planning and could take up to twelve months to arrange.

The legal obligation of a school's Duty of Care applies to both incoming and outgoing students. There is a high standard of care required to fulfill that duty. The obligation is to positively take reasonable measures to protect against reasonably foreseeable risks.

Schools must ensure that there is an appropriate screening process for the selection of host families for both incoming and outgoing students. It is extremely important that every possible care is taken to ensure the safety of students.

It is important that a rapport is established between students in both schools through regular communication before the exchange takes place. This could occur across the curriculum, for example in geography students may exchange maps and local geographical information, in music, tapes and posters could be exchanged. (Note: Often video systems are not compatible between different countries and conversion costs can be high).

The schools may consider the regular exchange, perhaps once a term, of information on a particular topic, for example native animals or national cuisine. This could be a permanent display in the school and also include copies of the sister school agreements written in both English and the language of the sister school.

Schools may consider communicating through the Internet system which provides a more immediate form of communication for students.

(ii) Victorian students travelling overseas under a friendship school agreement.

Students traveling overseas should preferably travel on Australian passports.

Health requirements vary from country to country. The travel agent can advise you of the requirements for each country. It is highly recommended that you also check with the Health Department and that students receive all the recommended immunisations.

In principle approval may have already been given by School Council for the exchange of students under a sister school agreement. Specific details of the proposed exchange program must be presented to School Council for its approval.

It is highly recommended that travel insurance be compulsory for all students participating in cultural exchanges under sister school agreements.

If students are to be unaccompanied when traveling overseas, schools should clearly inform parents in writing at the time of obtaining parental approval for the activity being undertaken.

Schools must also refer to the relevant section of the **Schools Reference Guide** for guidelines concerning Student Safety.

(iii) Overseas students visiting Victoria under a friendship school agreement.

Students may attend a Victorian Government school on a visitor's visa if they are participating in a cultural exchange and the period of the exchange does not exceed 29 days.

It is likely that the host school will be responsible for arranging a program and homestay accommodation. Organisers may consider providing host families with a briefing session or selecting families which have had experience with overseas students or who speak the visiting student's language.

Schools undertaking student exchanges as part of their sister school relationship should ensure that participating home-stay families undertake a mandatory criminal record check prior to hosting visiting international students.

Further suggestions:

- Students may find it helpful to spend some time communicating with their hosts prior to departure. This helps to develop a bond between the students;
- Official gifts are usually presented to the visiting/hosting school;
- Consideration could be given to approaching the local Mayor to host an official welcoming ceremony for the visiting sister school;
- Consider publicity of the friendship school arrangements in both the school newsletter and the local paper;
- Students will need to prepare for a climate which is often different from that which they are familiar with;
- Be aware of the sister school's holiday and when you can and cannot communicate;
- Consider approaching local businesses for support. For example the photographic store may provide discount photographic materials or the school uniform provider may provide a discount on school windcheaters which could be presented to students from the sister school;
- It is important that parents, students and teachers involved are carefully briefed;
- It is important to evaluate the exchange. If hosting, the school could survey students and families involved. If the school has undertaken a visit to the friendship school, students could be required to write a report on their experiences.

TEACHER EXCHANGES ARISING FROM FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL AGREEMENTS

The terms of a teacher exchange should be negotiated between the two schools and operate under conditions which have been mutually agreed to.

Schools wishing to participate in teacher exchanges should contact Sarita Yen the *International Division* on **9651 3948** or **Email: yen.sarita.m@edumail.vic.gov.au**

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION DIVISION FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL PROGRAM

A friendship school relationship can be established under a Memorandum of Understanding, as part of Victoria's sister-state and sister-city arrangements or arranged independently by participating schools.

Regardless of which category schools have or wish to establish sister school relationships under, it would be useful to have this information on the central register which has been established at *International Division*. This information could be used in a number of ways e.g. arranging itineraries for visiting delegations and official visitors or in assisting other schools wishing to establish relationships in similar locations.

As the central point, the *International Division* would be the conduit for information, activities, visits, etc. which may be of interest to those schools concerned.

Process

1. Establish Terms and Conditions and a set of Guidelines for schools wishing to be involved.
2. Call for Expressions of Interest through the Education Times
3. Liaise between and match schools interested in friendship schools relationships
4. Maintain a Register of Sister Schools.

Schools with Established Friendship School Relationships

School with established relationships should advise the International Division to be included in the Department's friendship school register. It would be important that the Department of Education & Training is not seen to be taking over programs which are already established and working well. The register would enable networking of schools with interests in the same countries for sharing of ideas and resources. These schools would also be able to assist and advise new schools wishing to establish a sister school relationship.

Schools with established links should continue to liaise and operate as agreed under their individual agreements.

Schools Wishing to Establish New Friendship School Relationships

A list of schools wishing to establish friendship school relationships is maintained by the International Division. The *International Division* will liaise with the relevant Consulate or appropriate body, depending on the country, to establish programs for schools and assist in the process. Initial contact between the two schools which have been linked should be made through school Principals.

The *International Division* will not be responsible for the day to day administration of the program. The Unit will provide advice e.g. other schools which have relationships in the

same area/region/country, provide guidelines and liaise with the Consulates on behalf of schools.

The *International Division* will compile a list of schools with existing relationships in the same location to assist new schools in establishing their programs.

Schools will draft their own agreements with the sister school. A sample agreement is attached to assist schools. This sample would only be a guide and should not restrict schools from negotiating other programs and activities.

Friendship School Relationships Arising from Memoranda of Understanding

- Expressions of interest for sister school relationships from Memoranda of Understanding will be sought through the Education Times.

The *International Division* will be responsible for liaison between Victorian schools and the Consulate concerned. Once a link has been established, initial contact between the schools will be made through the Principal. The *International Division* will coordinate reporting and review procedures.

Friendship School Relationships Arising from Sister City / Sister State Relationships

Melbourne and Victoria have a number of official sister-city / state links which aim to foster goodwill, cooperation and exchange not only on a commercial and cultural level but also in education. Sister school relationships will be another excellent way of enhancing these relationships and there is a great deal of potential for students and teachers to become involved in a wide range of activities and programs outside of school programs as part of the sister city / state arrangements.

Expressions of interest for friendship school relationships arising from sister city / state relationships will be called through the Education Times. Schools will be required to complete an application form and selection of Victorian schools will be undertaken by a committee with representation from the appropriate Sister City / State Committee replacing the Consular representatives.

Melbourne's sister cities are:

Boston, USA Osaka, Japan Tianjin, China Thessalonika, Greece
St Petersburg, Russia

Victoria's sister states are:

Aichi Prefecture, Japan Jiangsu Province, China

A Sister Relationship on Economic Cooperation exists between Pusan, South Korea and Victoria.

Overseas Schools Wishing To Establish Friendship School Relationships with Victorian Schools

If a request is made by an overseas school through the *International Division* and an appropriate Victorian school is not on file, an advertisement would be placed in the **Education Times** inviting schools to express interest

SCHOOL'S UNDERTAKING

(School Name & address)

- Is prepared to give a commitment to the ongoing development of the friendship school relationship over a period of _____ years.
- Is prepared to provide sufficient resources to establish and maintain the sister school program.
- Will appoint a coordinator to accept responsibility for the administration of the link, liaise with the *International Education Division* and management of the program.
- Will draft a mutual agreement with the sister school, outlining the goals of the program and activities to be undertaken and will forward a copy of this agreement to the *International Division* in the Department of Education & Training, Victoria.
- Understands that reciprocal student exchanges are a part of the friendship-school agreement and that exchanges can only be organized for a maximum period of 28 days if the school is not a Registered Exchange Organization.
- Will review the sister school agreement in _____ (year) to ensure that the aims of the program are met.
- Is prepared to share the acquired knowledge, information and skills and assist other schools with the establishment of a sister school relationship as required.

Principal's signature
Principal's name

School Council President's
signature
Name:

Date

Date

Please return this to the Co-ordinator, Friendship School Programs, *International Division*, Department of Education, Employment & Training, GPO Box 4367, Melbourne 3001.

Telephone enquiries: **9651 3948**

Facsimile: **9651 3982**

SAMPLE AGREEMENT

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING Between SCHOOL X & SCHOOL Y

School X in Victoria, Australia (full address of school) and School Y in (country & full address of school)), hereby agree to become friendship schools in order to build up friendship and cooperation between our two schools and promote mutual understanding between Australia and (country).

FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL PROGRAM GOALS

- To strengthen relationships, understanding and appreciation between people in (country) and the School X District
- To deepen the understanding of and respect for each others cultures
- To develop opportunities for students and teachers to develop skills which enhance Australia-(country) relationships
- To support the teaching of (language) in Victoria and English in (country) and to continue to teach the languages
- To develop ties of friendship through regular communication

FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

- The exchanges of information about curriculum, school policy and school events
- The exchange of teaching resources, course materials and teaching strategies
- The exchange of student work, letters, photos, student newspapers, etc to promote mutual understanding
- Both schools will endeavour to maintain student, teacher and administrator exchange program to provide the opportunity to study, work and live in the sister school community

In 200...., School X and School Y will review this agreement to determine future directions of this agreement.

Principal, School X
Address:
Tel:
Fax:
Email

Principal, School Y
Address
Tel:
Fax:
Email

President, School X School Council

President, School Y School Council

This is only a guide. The agreement should include goals and activities which meet the needs of both schools.