Educator Exchange Programs

Handbook for In-Person Short-Term Exchanges

Your Guide for Navigating an Exchange

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Alberta

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Introduction

Congratulations on your successful exchange application! We're delighted to have you as a participant in the Educator Exchange Programs (EEP).

You have already spent weeks applying and waiting to be accepted for this exchange, but the work isn't over—you now face several months of making personal and professional arrangements. The information in this handbook is intended to help you with these preparations whether your exchange is within Canada or abroad.

The success of an exchange depends on the attitudes of the exchange partners. Keep an open mind—remember that you applied for the exchange because you wanted to experience a different education system and lifestyle. A positive attitude will get you far, as will your sense of humour. Careful planning can help you avoid unpleasant surprises. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you need to, and to contact EEP for help.

Both exchange partners need to take their obligations and responsibilities seriously. Above all, be honest with each other. Open communication is crucial. You may hesitate to share or ask about delicate issues, but not sharing this information can lead to problems. When someone doesn't feel comfortable enough to ask questions, a simple matter can grow into a larger problem.

We're confident that you will thrive in your exchange environment, and that you'll bring home memories and experiences that will stay with you for a lifetime. We hope you have an exciting and rewarding exchange experience!

The EEP offers a suite of short-term exchanges for teachers and school leaders, within Alberta and abroad. Please consult with teachers.ab.ca to stay up-to-date on program opportunities.

Educator Exchange Programs Staff

Welcome and congratulations!

When I was asked to write a welcome letter, I had no idea what to say and way too much to say all at the same time. Since you've got an entire package to wade through, I've compressed my advice (or tried!) to a small list to start.

1. Don't discount all the paperwork and experience you've already gone through and learned from. Your exchange began the moment you entered your first name on the top of the original application form and won't end for months—or even years—after you get back to "real" life. You already deserve a pat on the back.

2. Always remember this is *your* exchange. Spend it, plan it, hate it or love it in the way that works for you. Can't wait to travel every possible spare moment? Awesome—do it. Eager to live like a local and really get to know your own neighbourhood better than anywhere else? Perfect—do that.

3. If you make a million connections with places and people, fantastic. If you make a connection with only one person, one place, one thing, that's OK too. One "wonderful" may be all you need.

4. Be patient with those around you—friends, family, colleagues, complete strangers—in their assumptions of your exchange experience. Smile, nod and wait until you get around the corner before you scream, laugh or roll your eyes.

5. You will experience the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. Embrace both extremes and every level in between—the sheer variety of good and bad is what makes an exchange so valuable, unique and not even close to replicable.

Lastly, here is a wise story excerpt to keep in mind for your adventure abroad—

> In the midst of a marathon—the real one, and the marathon of complaints about aches, pains and frustrations—one runner interrupted me to ask "How's your left arm?"
>
> My left arm? I looked at him like he was crazy. Had he not been listening at all? "My left arm is fine," I said. "It's my legs, and my back, and my feet, and ..."
>
> "Well, then," he said, "focus on your left arm."
>
> As I continued along, watching him disappear into the crowd, I was distracted from my complaints by his bizarre suggestion. Just the simple shift in thinking about things made the next few miles easier.
>
> Focus on what's working. Focus on what's working. Focus on what's working!

Be grateful for this magnificent journey that will be with you for the rest of your life!

Sincerely,

Kimberly Cave
kimberly@kimberlycave.ca

Making Personal Arrangements

Research, planning and preparation are key for a successful exchange experience. Some of these topics may not pertain to short-term arrangements but are worth considering.

Financial

The Government of Alberta is pleased to offer a $1000 subsidy for Educator Exchange Programs for up to 50 participants who travel during the 2024/25, 2025/26 or 2026/27 school year. The subsidy is subject to eligibility and conditions. Please refer to the expense claim form for details, located in the resource section of the EEP website.

It is essential that you take enough money to cover all your expenses. The amount you'll need will vary depending on the local cost of living. Maintaining a financial cushion is advisable throughout the exchange period.

If travelling abroad, it's a good idea to have local currency with you, and a couple of different ways to access funds. Apple pay, for instance, may not work everywhere, and you may wish to notify your credit card company of your travel plans so that it does not get shut down.

Legal

If embarking on an international exchange, you should finalize your power of attorney, will and personal directive.

Travel Considerations

As the world continues its transition toward managing Covid-19 as an endemic disease, there are many things to consider and plan for before departure, while on exchange and for your safe return home.

Passport

Ensure your passport is valid for the exchange period, including six months past the return date. Avoid delays and apply early if your passport is expiring.

Vaccinations

We expect rules to change and evolve, so it is important to remain up to date for the rules both in Canada and abroad.

Applicants may need to update their vaccination documentation to stay up to date with new possible vaccination requirements for travel out of Canada to the destination country and re-entry to Canada. Health Canada may change its definition of being fully vaccinated, or your host country may put new requirements in place.

EEP Travel Form

EEP will ask for your travel plans, and it is your responsibility to keep EEP aware of any changes.

Booking your flight

Always check government websites and airline materials before booking and traveling. You may wish to book through a travel agent, as they have expertise in the travel industry. We advise against using third- party booking sites. Consider purchasing refundable fares and travel interruption insurance. EEP is not responsible for any loss incurred during the educator exchange.

Registration of Canadians

Registration of Canadians Abroad is a free service that allows the Government of Canada to notify you in case of an emergency abroad or a personal emergency at home. The service also enables you to receive important information before or during a natural disaster or civil unrest.

We encourage you to register:

https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration

Health Insurance

Talk to your extended benefits provider to be informed about coverage in your particular health context while abroad. Coverage while on exchange is excellent, but in some cases may vary from in-province coverage. You may wish to consider additional coverage. It is the responsibility of the applicant to understand their extended health benefits while on exchange and determine what will best suit them. This is especially important for Covid-19 and to plan for unforeseen events.

Entry/Health Requirements for the Host Country

Research and stay up to date with any changes to travel advisories and requirements to enter the host country. Before you travel, you must check the rules of your destination country and the countries you transit through.

Sherpa is a useful application and notification service to check for entry and health requirements, but you are also responsible for checking government websites to ensure accuracy of information and changing requirements.

New European Entry Requirement- ETIAS

ETIAS will be a largely automated IT system created to identify security, irregular migration or high epidemic risks posed by visa-exempt visitors travelling to the Schengen States, while at the same time facilitate crossing borders for the vast majority of travellers who do not pose such risks. Non-EU nationals who do not need a visa to travel to the Schengen area will have to apply for a travel authorisation through the ETIAS system prior to their trip. The information gathered via ETIAS will allow, in full respect of fundamental rights and data protection principles, for advance verification of potential security, irregular migration or high epidemic risks.

Before Departure

Research and stay up to date with any changes to travel advisories and requirements to return to Canada. Resources from the Government of Canada website, https://travel.gc.ca/, include information on travel advice and advisories.

Activities While on Exchange

You and your exchange partner and household members may have differing comfort levels regarding what activities to partake in. Communicate well in advance to tailor a visit and hosting plan that is responsive and thoughtful in conjunction with your partner. Creating a Google document can be quite useful.

Plans in Case of Disruptions

What is your plan should your flight be delayed/cancelled? Discuss with your exchange partner and your school what plans you will put into place should there be disruptions. Preparing extra lesson plans is useful, should your return be delayed. In case of flight disruptions that affect your return, keep the EEP liaison and your school informed.

Making Arrangements with Your Exchange Partner

Communication

Contact between you and your exchange partner should be initiated as soon as your exchange is confirmed and should continue regularly until the exchange begins. Video applications are wonderful tools to get to know your partner. When communicating with your partner, be clear and diplomatic. Remember that you are trying to build a professional contract of trust and goodwill with someone you have never met, not addressing a friend. Once the business terms have been thrashed out and an understanding has been reached, you might consider developing a friendship from there.

> "Dealing with different ideas and ways of doing things has taught me to Stop. Breathe. Think."
>
> —exchange participant

Climate

Describe for your exchange partner the temperature variations in our province. Indicate the type of clothing required and be sure to explain that in the winter our buildings are warm but good outerwear is required.

Education System

Describe our school system, holidays, term dates and so on. Indicate the dress code expected of teachers at your school, outline the teaching assignment and other duties (such as noon-hour supervision and sports), and list the equipment and facilities at your school.

Work Authorization for Short-Term Exchanges

Under the terms of this program, salary and benefits continue to be paid by the host country while you host each other for an approximate one to two-week period. At no time does the guest educator take charge of a classroom. No formal work authorization is required; however, the EEP program will provide you with a formal letter that each party can present at immigration to show that this job shadow program involves only observation in a classroom. Exchange teachers should carry this documentation on their person on their flights to avoid delays or detainments from immigration upon entry into the host country.

During your exchange, you will become a member of the staff of a school in another system. As such, you will be subject to rules and regulations as determined by the administration of the institution and the local school authority.

When communicating with your partner, be clear and diplomatic. Remember that you are trying to build a professional contract of trust and goodwill with someone you have never met.

Former exchange educators have made the following suggestions for approaching a teaching/administrative assignment:

- Be careful not to overstate when describing your abilities and qualifications.
- Obtain as much specific information as possible about the school.
- Request a detailed description of your partner's assignment, including the timetable and (if available) an outline of courses taught, course content and daily routines.
- Find out the academic level of the students, the organization of the school and the goals of the administration.
- Determine the method of teaching used.
- Try to determine, as much as possible, what your host expects.
- Don't expect to be given special treatment or to be the centre of attention.
- Initiate activities.

The common thread running through these suggestions is research. Find out as much as possible about your school situation before you get into it. Don't hesitate to ask questions or ask to see examples before you get there. The Internet can be a wonderful source of information—look up your host school or educational authority and see what you can find.

Find out if your school has specialized programming or a focus you would like to explore. If you know this beforehand, it will make your in-class time with your partner that much more productive!

Shadowing in Your Host School

Prior to arriving or hosting your exchange partner for the short-term exchange, consider jointly working on an agreed-upon calendar. Setting up a schedule will permit discussion about expectations both in and outside of the classroom. Consider what cultural events your partner might enjoy experiencing. You will probably be very excited to show off your school but discuss itineraries ahead of time in order to avoid disappointments if the hospitality is not reciprocated. Don't expect your partner to mirror your hosting habits—it will be up to the two of you to come to a mutually agreed-upon plan of school and cultural events.

You may choose to have your partner visit other classrooms and schools—this can be a great way to observe other situations or to investigate particular teaching interests. You will gain a more complete picture of their education system by incorporating multiple perspectives.

Sample Calendar

Arnbjorg's Canadian Adventure!

Sept 23 Sunday	**Sept 24** Monday	**Sept 25** Tuesday	**Sept 26** Wednesday	**Sept 27** Thursday	**Sept 28** Friday	**Sept 29** Saturday
Arrive on Red Arrow from Edmonton (AM) Come back to the house and get settled Relaxing aft/eve *The Big Cheese* for dinner	First day of school! Class visits and student tour	Class visits and neighbourhood walk 8:00 – 1:00 Math Coach Ps Meeting (PM) 2:00 – 4:00pm "Locked Room" 7pm	Area Level Meeting (AM) Class visits (PM)	Class visits Pinnovate class	Breakfast meeting with admin team at Bob Ed (our middle school) Niitsitapi (Aboriginal Learning Centre) 10:00 – 2:15 Edmonton Orientation mtg (6:30 – 8:00 pm)	Lake Louise, Banff and Canmore Hiking Johnson Canyon Zane field lacrosse practice 6:00–8:00pm
Sept 30 Sunday	**Oct 1** Monday	**Oct 2** Tuesday	**Oct 3** Wednesday	**Oct 4** Thursday	**Oct 5** Friday	**Oct 6** Saturday
Zane's Field Lacrosse practice 11:00 – 1:00 Dinner with the Nortons (our extended family)	Class visits School Council Meeting 6pm	City Hall School with Sheila Bean **dress comfy, bring water bottle* Glenbow Museum/ Charcut for dinner	System P Meeting (AM) Class visits (PM) Calgary Flames vs Vancouver Canucks (watch game at home)	Mayland Heights visits (French Immersion) Girl's Night Out Cooking Class 6:30 – 9:00pm	First *Family Friday*, you are an honourary Moose! Staff meeting 12:15 Alison, Michelle and Kelly (after dinner)	Drive to Edmonton – fly home :O(

Relationships with Colleagues

- Don't be disappointed if the other educators don't invite you to share your ideas or experiences. You are there to learn about their education system.
- Avoid criticizing your new colleagues. Any criticism may be counterproductive. Remember that you continue to be guided by the Code of Professional Conduct.
- Keep in mind that you may be the only exchange teacher with whom your colleagues will have had the opportunity to interact, day to day, on a professional basis. You are, in this sense, representing the educators of your school district.

Relationships with Students

- Learn the type of language to which the students best respond by listening to other teachers, school leaders and students.
- Do not think that because you are a novelty at the school, you will be revered by the students.
- You may wish to initiate projects or partnerships between your host and home schools.

Materials

- Bring books, maps, and photos or slides to show students about your home, school and community.
- Bring resource materials for any special units you especially enjoy teaching (your idea file).
- Bring business cards or mailing labels with your home and host addresses.

Alberta Kit

If you are exchanging outside of Alberta, consider taking items along that will be novel to people in the host country. This Alberta Kit could prove useful.

Examples of items to include in the kit are: maple syrup, a football, a hockey puck, a book to present to your host school, Canadian souvenirs, a Canadian flag, Halloween masks and costumes, Canadian (or Albertan) recipes, crafts, photographs or a PowerPoint presentation (showing snow, for example), travel guides, and video of a hockey or football game. Sharing your culture is one way to build a relationship with students and with your exchange partner.

Before your exchange, collect photos and posters and send them to your exchange site for creating Four Seasons in Alberta displays. Or how about a class correspondence project between your students at home and your host students?

Travel Alberta has some spectacular videos about our province that you can incorporate into your presentations. Your Member of Parliament may be able to supply you with Canada pins and flags, free of charge. You may wish to purchase a book to leave with the school as a thank you.

Contacting Past Exchange Teachers

The exchange experience requires serious consideration by all parties—the teacher, the school leader and the school district. The success of the exchange depends on all participants working together for the good of students. Sometimes it is helpful to compare notes with or ask for help from those who have had similar personal experiences.

Contacting teachers/school leaders who have recently been on an exchange, or teachers/school leaders who are currently on an exchange in Alberta, may help you in your preparations by allowing you to discuss matters with someone with personal experience. EEP can provide contacts for you.

However, we caution you that generalizing from the experience of one exchange teacher/school leader can be misleading. Every exchange is unique. Speak with as many teachers/school leaders as you can before making your own plans.

The Exchange Teachers' League is a group of teachers/school leaders who have been on exchange. They have enjoyed the hospitality of similar groups in other countries, and want to give back and do what they can to encourage the maintenance and expansion of exchange programs.

Dealing with Problems

Adjustment Hurdles

You may not have had time to consider the implications of job shadowing for the first time in a new setting. As an experienced teacher/school leader, you may find it difficult to deal with your lack of confidence when faced with a new and unusual teaching situation. You may feel lost and overwhelmed. These feelings are natural for a teacher/school leader on an exchange. After all, you have not even experienced this education system as a student, let alone as a teacher/school leader.

> "I'm excited to merge my new and old teaching practices."
>
> —exchange participant

Culture shock is a cumulative response to many unfamiliar situations—jet lag; change of climate, food, accommodations and school; and the lack of a support group.

Take it easy on yourself. Jetlag can leave you tired, and the journey there could be hectic. Your personality could be quite different from theirs, and if you're dealing with another language, all the new sights, sounds and activity will mean good down time.

If you have a problem while on exchange, ask yourself, *Is the problem really as serious as I think it is? Is culture shock causing any of it? Is this really the problem or am I lonely? Do I have a positive attitude about the problem? Are there other things I could be doing to solve it? How can I live with the situation?*

When Problems Arise

Should a serious problem arise during the exchange year, seek advice from your school leader and then from the Education Exchange Programs. Please take our contact details with you:

Phone: 780-447-9400 E-mail: exchanges@ata.ab.ca
E-mail is the most effective method of communicating with us, particularly from overseas.

If the problem is major (professional or personal), contact the appropriate authorities before taking any other course of action. Avoid unpleasant correspondence with your exchange partner or local people. Do not involve your exchange partner's colleagues or friends unnecessarily in your personal or professional problems.

Please show the utmost tact in e-mail correspondence, remembering that an e-mail message is not accompanied by body language and can sound more harsh than intended. Also, remember that e-mail is not confidential and may be shared inappropriately, which can lead to serious consequences.

Try to be positive, adaptable and calm and to maintain your sense of humour. You are on the exchange to experience a different culture and learning environment. Stressors and difficulties are bound to arise—that's the nature of a learning experience, especially one in which you are immersed in a different culture. Remember that you're only there for a short time. Try to appreciate the differences and challenges, and don't expect life in your host country/province to conform to your Albertan/Canadian expectations. Above all, remember that you are an ambassador for your school board, province and country and for your profession.

> [My exchange] has changed me in ways I don't yet know, and will change the way I teach and handle new situations both in and out of the classroom."
>
> —exchange participant

What If . . .? Worst Possible Scenarios

No one wants to contemplate an accident, an illness or a death in the family, but any of these could happen during your exchange. You and your family must consider all possibilities and decide on your plan of action in the event of any such occurrence.

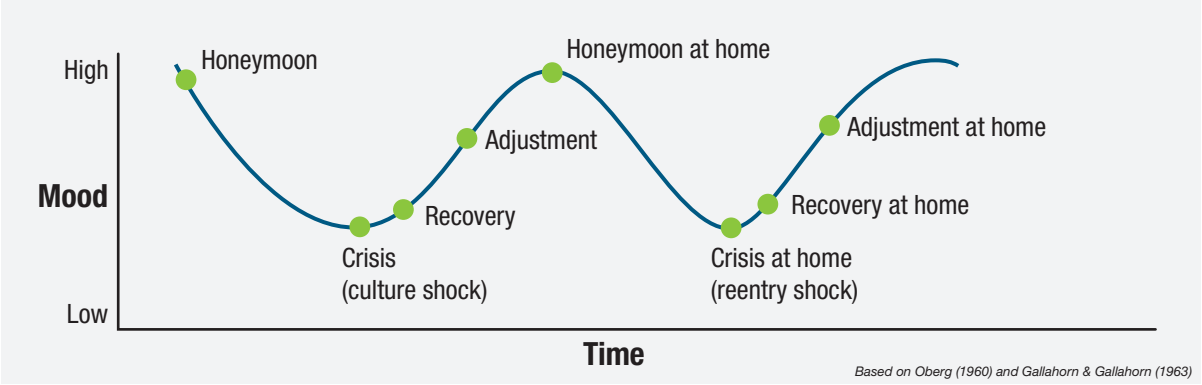
Your will, personal directive, power of attorney and other personal affairs should be in order. If a member of your close family became ill or died, what would you do? Remember, you are committed to fulfilling your job shadow in your host country. What would you do in the event of disability? Have you checked your employee benefits package?

It is imperative that financial and human resources are in place to meet these personal crises, should they occur.

Cultural Adaptation

What Is Cultural Adaptation?

Cultural adaptation is a process many travellers experience, particularly if they spend an insignificant amount of time in a foreign culture. When properly prepared and supported, travellers can adapt relatively well and experience minimal culture shock.[1]



The cultural adaptation process is often illustrated as a W curve (see diagram). Initially, the traveller experiences elation or excitement about being in the new environment. This initial excitement can deteriorate into a state of sadness or confusion, generally as the traveller becomes aware of less desirable cultural characteristics or feels unable to function effectively in the host culture. Over time, most travellers recover to a place of cultural understanding and functionality.

A similar process occurs during re-entry or when a traveller who has been away from his or her own cultural context for a substantial period of time returns home. While away, many travellers romanticize home and are excited to return. However, home can feel foreign or overly mundane. Travellers may be frustrated with the rules or lifestyle of their home country or feel unable to relate with their friends and family. Again, with time, most travellers adjust to life in their home context.

The W curve provides a basic framework from which to understand cultural adjustment; however, not all travellers experience this predictable pattern. Recent research suggests that the cultural adaptation process can be more or less challenging based on "intensity factors"[2] such as the following:

1. The degree of cultural difference between the home and host culture
2. The extent to which the traveller is immersed within a culture and the length of time in which he or she is immersed
3. The extent to which the host culture welcomes outsiders into the community

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1 Culture shock is a feeling of disorientation and discomfort due to the lack of familiar cultural cues (Martin, J. and Nakayama, T. (2000) International Communication in Contexts, 2nd ed. Mayfield Publishing: Mountain View, CA: 206)

2 Bennett, J. and Paige, M. (2008). EPFA 510: Training Design for Intercultural Learning. Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication, Portland State University: Portland.

4. The traveller's prior intercultural experience
5. The traveller's ability to function in the language of the host culture
6. The accuracy of the traveller's cultural expectations

Significant preparation and support are necessary if a traveller is expecting a transition of great intensity. If someone with little intercultural experience is travelling to a place of considerable cultural difference for a lengthy duration, his or her ability to adapt would be enhanced by learning some of the local language and researching the host country and culture before departure.

One cannot expect to escape the anxieties of cultural adaptation; it is, by nature, a challenging and uncomfortable learning process that most travellers go through. Travellers who do not experience any of the indicators of cultural adaptation have generally been isolated or shielded from the host culture. For example, tourists often remain in the honeymoon phase.

Learning to adapt to another culture can reveal a great deal about one's personal values and identity. This kind of personal exploration can be challenging and scary but it has tremendous benefits. Travellers emerge from this transformational process more comfortable with their personal and global identities and more confident in their ability to manage change.

(Adapted from *Maximizing Study Abroad*, pg 70, and Todd Odgers, Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education, presentation, Feb 10, 2009.)

Indicators of cultural adjustment

(From Martin and Nakayama, pg 211, and http://studentservices.engr.wisc.edu/international/cultureshock.html)

Honeymoon Phase

- Confusion/disorientation
- Frustration and irritability
- Suspicion and stereotyping of host culture
- Crisis of identity
- Romanticizing home culture
- Struggle with simple, everyday activities
- Feeling like an outsider
- Withdrawal from host culture
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Digestive problems
- Uncharacteristic weight fluctuation
- Deterioration in appearance (dress and grooming)
- Out-of-character behaviour with others (family, friends, colleagues)
- Complete adoption of host culture (i.e. surrendering own identity)

Recovery and Adjustment

- Sense of mental well-being
- Comfortable and competent when engaging with the host culture
- Able to complete everyday tasks with ease
- Able to articulate likes and dislikes with regard to their home and host cultures
- Capable of problem solving

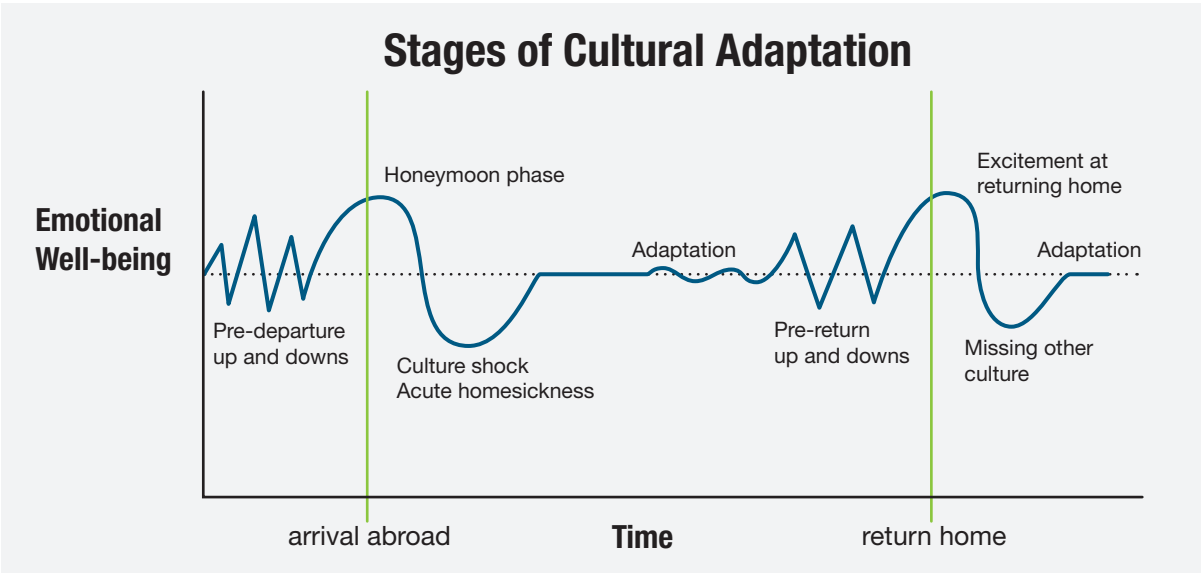
Cultural Adjustment Stages

Stage 1: Cultural Euphoria/Honeymoon

- Initial excitement of being in a new culture
- Everyone new and wonderful and eager to explore
- Interpretations are not necessarily realistic
- Focus more on visible aspects of the culture (food, scenery, and clothing) and ignoring the more complex and less obvious cultural aspects
- Focusing on similarities rather than differences
- Tourists can remain in this stage for entire stay

Stage 2: Cultural Confrontation

- This stage is typically 1/3 to 1/2 the way through an experience
- The initial excitement diminishes and cultural adjustment begins
- Stage characterized by confusion and frustration and is the most difficult stage
- Feelings can shift from very positive to extremely negative
- You may view the home and host culture in unrealistic terms—one is superior while one is lacking
- This is because everything you used to do in home culture with ease appears more difficult due to the culture or language
- Homesickness may also contribute to your feelings of discomfort
- Feeling discouraged and begin to doubt whether you can learn the language or adjust to the culture
- Be encouraged! Despite these feelings you are making critical progress in expanding your cross-cultural awareness and developing your own strategies for coping with cultural differences



Stage 3: Cultural Adjustment

- This stage represents the transition of our culture shock into significant cultural adjustment
- You feel increasingly comfortable and competent in the culture, and these feelings prevail over the times you have felt frustrated or out of place
- Homesickness may still be an issue, but you are interacting more effectively with people from the country
- You start to look forward to the rest of your experience and what you can learn in the remainder of the exchange

Stage 4: Cultural Adaptation

- In this stage, you have reached a point at which you have a great deal of confidence in your ability to communicate and interact effectively
- You have a deeper understanding of the influence culture has in people's lives
- While you have acquired considerable cultural knowledge, you recognize there is still much you don't know or understand
- You have integrated many of the values, customs and behaviours from the new culture into your daily life

Tips

Some Helpful Coping Strategies

- Find ways to relieve stress
  – Understand your language and culture limits—if things get too overwhelming, take a break
- Do what you do at home or something close to it
  – What works for you at home when you are feeling down? Reading? Listening to music? Watching a funny movie? Give it a try in the exchange country as well.
- Express yourself
  – Find someone who understands to talk things over—it may be another Canadian or international teacher. Singing, playing an instrument or dancing can also be wonderful means of expression you can do by yourself or with others.
- Connect with family and friends back home
  – Send e-mails as writing can be a valuable means of reconnecting when things aren't going so well. But set a limit. Too much time sending e-mails can make you feel you never emotionally left home. And that's not what you want either!
- Keep a journal
  – Writing down your experiences can be a great way to vent and also to process and create a space to gain insights into your experience and the cultures surrounding you.
- Stay active
  – Take walks, bike or engage in other kinds of physical activity. A good workout can be calming and therapeutic.
- Always be prepared to have your expectations altered. This will require some adjustment.
- Be candid in all correspondence with your exchange partner. Complete frankness is a necessity; however, share information in a considerate manner. Withholding information would be an injustice to your exchange partner.
- Approach the experience as an exchange, not an even trade on all accounts. Some things will be better and some will be worse than what you are accustomed to at home. Realize that there will be subtle as well as obvious cultural differences, and try not to prejudge the experience.
- Watch out for the following questionable assumptions:
  – Culture shock doesn't affect you as long as you are aware of it.
  – Culture shock isn't as great in a culture where everyone speaks the same language as you.
- Be flexible. The exchange becomes a marvellous experience only if one is flexible. Customs, food, climate—all are different in ways that are often so subtle as to be frustrating rather than quaint.
- Be humble and not a know-it-all. Remember that you are in someone else's country, and show an eagerness to learn. This attitude will encourage those around you to help.
- Stay excited. Be enthusiastic. Remain rested and in good health.
- Be prepared to
  – answer the same friendly questions over and over again, and
  – let life go on without you at home.
- Treat the whole experience as an interesting adventure; this will help you put problems into perspective.
- It may be up to you to initiate activities and friendships.
- Accept invitations on the first offer; people may be reluctant to offer an invitation a second time.

Jump in! No matter how much you do to prepare, you simply have to get into it! And you really won't know what you don't know until you get here.

- Exchange letters or e-mails between your new class/school and your home school or exchange partner.
- Print business cards to hand out.
- Present a memento to your host school at the end of your stay (for example, a Canadian book, video, poster or flag).
- Begin a scrapbook or blog about your exchange. Include the mementos you collect, photos and so on.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Come with an open mind. Show your love of teaching and try to do what you can, not everything.
- Take it all in. We are guests. Take time to get to know each other. They are going through the same emotions, fears, anxieties etc... as you are. The insight you share with each other helps you both get through the challenging moments.
- Flexibility is key. Nothing is ever going to go exactly how you planned it, so learn how to roll with it. Be open and honest about what you really want and keep an open mind. Say yes to everything!!
- Be prepared for jetlag and take it easy, get your rest.
- If you need alone time, be open with your partner. It can be hard to be "on" 24 hrs 7 days a week schedule times to explore on your own.
- Try not to imply that the differences are negative. Find them interesting.
- Meal times and portions can vary widely, so speak up if you've feeling snacky and reciprocate this when your partner is in Alberta. They may not realize that your eating schedule is off!
- Be excited and try to do as much as you can while you are here, both professionally and personally.
- My attitude was to say yes to everything! Be prepared to be busy, your afternoon and weekends are full with every new experience you can jam into exchange. There is very little down time.
- Above all, keep your sense of humour!

Departure Checklist and Suggestions

Congratulations! Your match is confirmed. To ensure that both you and your exchange partner will have an excellent exchange experience, it is important to

- communicate with your partner, your current school and your new school;
- prepare your Alberta classroom, students and staff for the incoming exchange;
- arrange accommodations; and
- make travel plans.

Checklist

Some of the following items may not be applicable to your particular exchange.

- ❑ Consulted travel agent to arrange the best travel package and required insurance. Pre-purchase your seat.
- ❑ Checked airline rules regarding luggage and carry-on. Consider travelling only with carry-on.
- ❑ Checked government websites for entry and return requirements.
- ❑ Obtained the necessary documentation for a national/international exchange including vaccination documentation, electronic travel authority (ETA or ETAS) as well as the immigration letter that EEP provided you.
- ❑ Left a photocopy of passport, visa and itinerary with family or friends. Renewed passport, if necessary.
- ❑ Checked to make sure that the name on air ticket, passport and photo ID are the same.
- ❑ Consulted www.travel.gc.ca to obtain information about your travel and register as a Canadian abroad.
- ❑ Included copies of prescriptions for medication you are carrying and filled prescriptions.
- ❑ Looked into information to maintain coverage for your extended health benefits, and what that coverage includes. Consider additional insurance.
- ❑ Checked with cellphone provider about useage abroad.
- ❑ Informed credit card companies of your whereabouts.
- ❑ Inquired about the climate of your destination for wardrobe planning. Asked about the formality or informality of dress for work and social occasions.
- ❑ Located the contact information of the nearest Canadian consulate/embassy.
- ❑ Visited the website of the relevant district/department of education to preview curriculum.
- ❑ Uploaded important documents to the Cloud/Google drive and shared it with a family member or contact.

Suggestions

1. In your correspondence with your partner, ask questions about the school, your teaching assignments, specific classes and curriculum. Your partner will probably have similar questions. Now is a good time to send your school handbook, staff and school photos, school newsletters and so on, or begin a class-to-class or school-to-school correspondence project.
2. Depending on the arrival date of your partner, developing a calendar of social activities to share with them online with Google Docs may be a thoughtful way of welcoming your partner to Alberta. Perhaps your friends and neighbours would be willing to help.

Although this checklist and suggestions are by no means exhaustive, they may be of some use to you in planning for your exchange. Have a great time!

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