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# Cultural Activities

A Guide to get you started + IDEAS!

First, let's review the purpose of these activities as part of your program. The reason this is part of your visa requirement is based on the U.S. government's goals for these programs which is to foster the exchange of ideas and perspectives between Americans and those from other nations.

You have a tremendous opportunity to impact what American students are learning about the wider world, their place in it, and the ability to appreciate other perspectives and experiences. Through having you as a teacher they can learn how to treat others who are different from them; engage in conversation exploring various perspectives; and become curious about people and cultures around the world. Thus, we encourage you all to design activities that will have meaningful impact and include purposeful reflection and assessment of your lesson or activity.

GOOD LUCK!

## Contents

**Visa  
Requirements**

**Deadlines**

**Report Format**

**Ideas + Resources**

**Real Examples**

**REPORT link**



## VISA REQUIREMENTS

Let's re-examine the rules of your visa. You are required to do one activity in BOTH categories EVERY year.

### ONE WAY

(1) An activity for the teacher's classroom, school, or the community at large designed to give an overview of the history, traditions, heritage, culture, economy, educational system and/or other attributes of his or her home country.

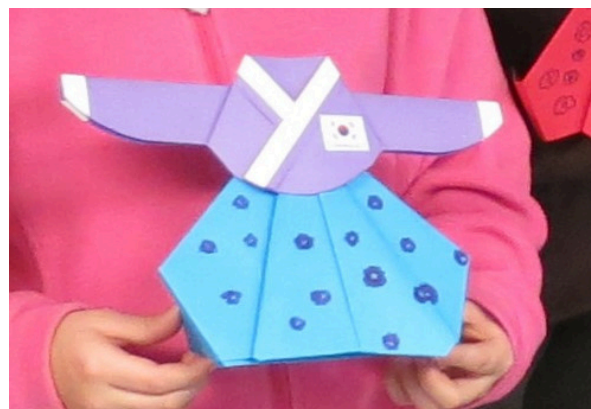
YOU to the STUDENTS/COMMUNITY

### TWO WAY

(2) An activity that involves U.S. student dialogue with students in another country, preferably in the exchange teacher's home school, through virtual exchange or other means, in order to supplement the goals of the in-person exchange.

US STUDENTS + FOREIGN STUDENTS COMMUNICATE

**Teachers in an international school** (one that follows non-US or predominantly global curriculum) must conduct at least one cross-cultural activity per academic year outside the host school in nearby schools or communities where international opportunities may be more limited than those found in their host school



## DEADLINES

| Year                                   | Due Date          |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|
| First, Second, and Fifth Year Teachers | March 6th, 2026   |
| Third & Fourth Year Teachers           | January 5th, 2026 |

## THE REPORT

The report itself is a brief questionnaire and not a long written narrative. These questions are dictated by the U.S. government. We will send these reports to the government for your extension beyond 3 years application. You may submit whenever you have done both activities. Be clear, specific and reflective!!

**[CLICK HERE](#)** to view report

# Structure + Format

Treat this like a lesson and consider the preparation, desired learning outcomes, materials needed, and assessment and reflection. As you plan, think about what aspects of culture you are trying to impart. If you are making food or sharing music, what do the items you picked demonstrate about your culture? What is their significance or history? Make sure to include discussion about that during the event.

General:

- Activities can be in-person or virtual
- You cannot use an activity from the previous school year. A January event does not count for the school year starting in fall. The two events fall in the academic year July- June.
- You don't have to include the entire class. For either activity, if only a few students are involved that is fine but do ensure it is at least a handful.
- Activities you do in your community to learn about the U.S. do not count towards either category.

Two-way Exchange with U.S. students and overseas students:

- Provide the opportunity for the students to share information, ideas and feedback about the topic.
- Presentations or exchanges between teachers or other staff are great ideas but do not count for the purposes of the annual requirements.
- Activities can be virtual live, pre-recorded videos you exchange, based on art or pictures, using old fashioned mail, using essays after watching or reading something- unlimited options!
- It doesn't have to be a group activity. You could connect a few students to individual students abroad for one-on-one communication.
- If you can't be there to facilitate or observe, you must design an activity where you can provide the prompt for conversation or a list of questions/instructions to guide them. Then, have the students report back to you on how it went, what they learned or enjoyed about it getting them to reflect.
- If you began a pen pal type exchange previously that is on-going, that is ok too, but you do need to bring new topics, themes or activities to the exchange and provide the guidance necessary to encourage new learning this year plus the follow up to discern the impact on the students.
- You cannot use international students in your U.S. community for the second activity. You must connect U.S. students to those physically outside the U.S.
- You cannot watch YouTube videos of students overseas as you must be able to directly communicate with them.

# Examples + Resources

## Example Categories

- Work it into your regular lessons such as through science or social studies classes and pull in elements of your home country.
- Take your students on a virtual tour of your home
- Create a pen pal program either through snail mail, email, or video sharing
- Cooking demonstration
- Explore the variations on holidays or holiday traditions
- Compare classic children's stories or well-known literary works/authors
- Traditional games from home and the U.S.
- Language lessons
- Themes across countries: climate change and environmental issues, wildlife, architectural traditions, artificial intelligence, healthcare, free speech and the media, forms of government

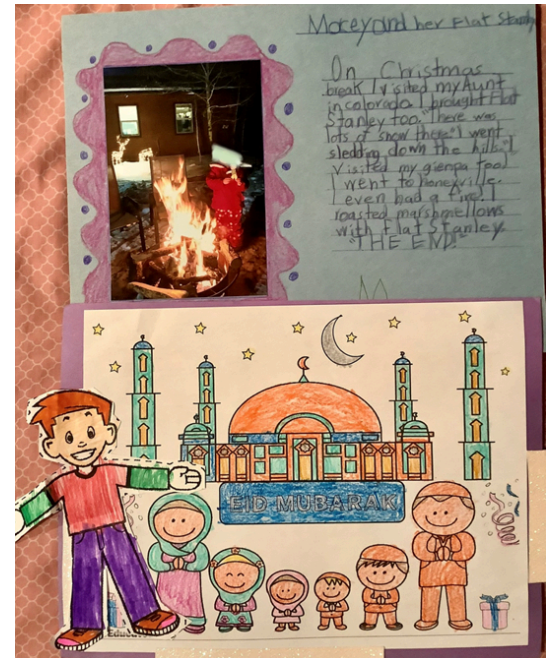
Keep reading to see some real teacher reports!



# Examples + Resources

Here are some articles, courses, and web platforms that encourage and help teachers implement virtual exchanges and find classrooms to connect. There are many organizations which specialize in this and have pre-designed activities and resources to help teachers. Some are even theme/subject focused such as science or the arts. Don't forget the basic visa requirements!

Empatico- empowers teachers and students to explore the world through experiences that spark curiosity, kindness, and empathy. We combine live video with activities designed to foster meaningful connections among students ages 5-14.



Generation Global- Through facilitated video conferences and online community, students interact directly with their peers around the world, engaging in dialogue on issues of culture, identity, beliefs, values, and attitudes. All our resources and video conferences are free for educators and young people ages 13-17.

The Teachers' Guide to Global, Collaborative Teaching and Learning is a searchable database of global projects and resources to help educators foster global competence and build connections with their students.

Epals- Connect with classrooms around the world, match students 1-1, utilize pre-developed activities

iEARN- Join a vibrant community of K-12 schools and youth organizations in more than 140 countries.

Virtual Exchange blog article from Global Education Benchmark Group

Flat Connections - multiple formats and subject-based projects for global collaboration  
And many more <http://www.globaledguide.org/organizations/>



## LESSON BASED EXAMPLES

### American election and political systems in Europe

“This project lasted for 6 weeks and we held virtual meetings every Wednesday where students and teachers from Pacific Buddhist Academy were encouraged to participate in several different discussions leading up to the presidential Election in November. Students were asked to prepare presentations on different aspects (the candidates, the political parties,...) and students from each country shared their opinions and own experiences with politics.

The students as well as the teachers here at Pacific Buddhist Academy were very surprised at how much knowledge teenagers from Europe have about American politics and how interested they are in the matter. Students here also gained an insight into the different political systems that are in place in Germany, Poland and Sweden and were able to compare benefits and challenges of each system. Some of the students from Pacific Buddhist Academy are still in contact with the European students through social media. The activity itself gave the students an insight into the role America plays in the world and how the politics here affect other countries as well.”

### Rhino Poaching: causes and solutions to saving the critically endangered species

“The students have been introduced to snippets of South African culture throughout the year; however, our main focus has been South African wildlife (easy to assimilate into a Science classroom). The students were completing the section in the curriculum on Natural resources and they were distinguishing between renewable and non-renewable resources. Their textbooks categorized water and wildlife as a renewable resource; however, the students were encouraged to challenge this idea by looking at critically endangered wildlife and the severe water crisis in South Africa. The Year 7 students were given a lesson on Rhinos and Rhino poaching. They looked at why these Mega-herbivores are important for biodiversity and why they are being poached. Students also conducted their own research into what could be done to prevent poaching. They were provided with a number of solutions; however, they were also enthusiastically formulating their own solutions to the problem. The learners created posters to put up around the school, creating awareness about Rhino poaching and informing their peers and teachers on how they can assist in alleviating the problem.

I believe the activity had a huge impact on the learners as the majority of them knew very little, or nothing at all, of the Rhino species. They were also very enthusiastic about the topic as most students around that age generally feel empathy towards animals. The students were all shocked and horrified about the cruelty of these poachers.”

# VIRTUAL TOURS OF HOME

## Virtual tour of Spain!

“The Cultural activity consisted into creating an online Spanish cultural trip. Online Connection with a Native Spanish Teacher in Spain. Virtual tour of a Typical Neighborhood in Barcelona. Students investigated beforehand and prepared questions for the virtual guest. Topics included (Cultural traditions, Gastronomy, Politics, History, Geography and Politics).

This activity had an enormous impact in my students. They had to investigate about Barcelona preparing questions, doubts and interesting fact about the country and had the opportunity to ask the questions to a local and had the opportunity to do a virtual tour of a neighborhood in Barcelona and ask questions to real people in the streets of the city. This activity generated curiosity to continue learning about another country, empathy with people in another continent and the opportunity to realize firsthand they can communicate in a foreign language and be able to understand people abroad.”

## Virtual tour of Jamaica!

“The 6th grade students were given a virtual tour of Jamaica, with the aid of a power point presentation. The tour started with a brief history of the island including the reason it is known as Jamaica West Indies. A comparison was also made between the size of Florida and Jamaica, where Jamaica is about thirteen times smaller. They were informed on how to get to Jamaica, as well as the medium used to get around when one is on the island, especially on the beautiful highways. In addition to that, they were shown pictures of various mouth-watering Jamaican food, its currency, and how to say certain expressions in the Jamaican language (patois).

Additionally, they were shown attractive sites and were introduced to some influential people like Usain Bolt and Bob Marley.

The participants enjoyed the presentation. They were attentive and exercised interest in wanting to visit the island. They were excited to hear about the food that Jamaicans eat, and were eager to speak some expressions in patois. When they were told about some influential people like Bob Marley, a student delightfully said, “I know that guy!” Also, they exercised concern for the people now living in Port Royal, after being told it was once called the wickedest city in the world. However, they were assured that the cruel behavior is of the past, as it is now a peaceful little community and an attractive site. Overall, the presentation was fun, engaging, and informative.”

# Pen Pals

## International Pen Pals from Houston, TX to Singapore

“During Covid-19 and the Virtual School Experience that my school was offering to students, I gave the children in my 2nd Grade homeroom class the option of setting up a pen pal system. One child volunteered as did a child from the school that I taught at previously in Singapore.

During the Pen Pal exchange, I encouraged both children involved to share information about where they live, their favorite foods and hobbies.

Surya, a child in my current class, is an American citizen and has lived in Houston, TX her whole life. William, a child who I taught 2 years ago, was in my class Dover Court International School, Singapore, where I taught for the 3 years before moving to Houston.

The children wrote letters which they sent to me via email. I then sent the letters and pictures on to the recipient.

During a time when children around the world were isolated and forced to be away from friends and classmates, this exchange really generated excitement between the children involved. They were both enthusiastic about the exchange, asking questions about where the other person lived and what it was like there, foods that they like to eat and images of various craft projects that they were working on whilst at home.

They discussed how there was a lock down in both of the countries that they lived in and thought it was very exciting that I had been both of their teachers!

## Pen Pals explore American and British/Irish culture

Children from London wrote letters outlining British food, sports and weather. Each child in my class received a letter and we discussed the similarities and differences. The most notable difference was the weather. My class couldn't understand that it almost never snowed in Ireland as where we are it snows for 4 months straight! The children in my class then had to write a letter back to their Pen Pal telling them all about American food, American sports and American Weather (based on the state we are in).

Impact:

Interest; Children when exposed to different cultures are curious and interested. They want to learn more about them and each child goes on their own investigation path I have noted. So, it allows them to develop their own interests and use research skills to find out more. My students would tell me something new they had learned about a different aspect of British culture when we zoomed!



(continued)

Awareness; Creating an awareness of places outside their home (my kids are 6) and awareness that not everybody is like them. My American school is in an upper middle-class area with little to no diversity whatsoever. Exposing the children to a different culture and different lifestyles I feel created an awareness and the beginning of tolerance and understanding. As they grow older and are exposed to differences in thought, culture, race I believe these small activities will leave them better equipped to respectfully respond to those differences.

Connecting with others; Having a Pen Pal and connecting with people from different cultures in that way creates interpersonal relationships and will allow the children an even greater opportunity to develop strong social skills and emotional awareness. Children develop empathy as they are exposed to others who are different to themselves and as they develop relationships with them. Children in my class were kind in their reactions to their pen pal and curious about their lives. Having a pen pal I think also gave my class a sense of independence. It was 'their' pen pal and they held a pride of ownership about it.”

**GOOD LUCK!!**



CulturalVistas

**THANK YOU**

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