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US high schools

Many high schools in the USA accept overseas students for full-time academic programmes and associated ESL provision is becoming more commonplace. **BETHAN NORRIS** reports.

For some US high schools, welcoming international students is part of a long tradition that goes back many years. Christy Earl, Director of Communications at The Hockaday School in Dallas, TX, says that their residence programme for boarders began in 1914 and the school has been recruiting abroad since the 1940s. "Recruiting trips included South America, Europe and even Saudi Arabia," she says. "By the 1950s, students from across the world walked the hallways of Hockaday."

Today the school welcomes students from 12 different countries and Mary Reynolds, Director of Hockaday's Admissions Office says that the original international borders "brought a diversity of experience and culture that added a valuable dimension to the educational experience" at the school. For other schools in the USA, welcoming international students has been a more recent trend and in some cases this has come as a result of introducing new facilities to the school. "We have offered domestic/international boarding since the 2003/2004 school year," says Ginger Bell, Director of Admissions and Marketing at The Brook Hill School in Bullard, TX, who adds that they are currently "working to refine our ESL programme to meet the specific needs of such a diverse group of students".

Michelle Bos-Lun, Director of Admissions at The Meeting School in Rindge, NH, says that their international enrolment activities were interrupted after 2001 due to a change in US government policies. "In the pre-9/11 years, we often had a couple of international students on our small campus," she explains. "After 9/11, visa requirements changed in the USA and we have just got certified to accept international students again this past summer. We look forward to welcoming some new international students to our student body once again."

Most schools that actively welcome international students onto their campuses acknowledge the advantages a diverse student body can bring to the school and the wider community in general, and have been updating their facilities and course provision to appeal to this market. Terri Brooks from Brandon Hall School in Atlanta, GA, says that the school began a formal ESL programme in 1990. "We have formalised the programme with not only introductory courses, but also transitional courses into the regular curriculum," she says.

Targeted ESL provision, orientation programmes and transitional pathways to gently introduce students to mainstream education are becoming the norm for schools that are serious about increasing their international student enrolments. Scott Breed from Subiaco Academy in Subiaco, AR, says that the school has welcomed qualified students into mainstream education for many years, although it has since introduced an ESL programme in order to formalise their provision for international students. The school also has an orientation programme to help international students settle in and encourages students of all nationalities to mix with each other. "We require international students to room with US students and require all students to participate in extra-curricular activities such as clubs and sports," he says.

At St Timothy's School in Stevenson, MD, international students can undertake an ESL programme before moving on to a full academic programme that sees them graduate with a St Timothy's diploma. Patrick Finn at the school says, "The International Baccalaureate was introduced two years ago and attracts international students. Our international students have an orientation to start the year and are quickly integrated into school life. They live with both American students and other international students

in our dorms. We are in a rich cultural area and international students are able to visit many historical and cultural places."

Boarding provision for international and US students offers many opportunities for inter-cultural mixing. However, The Brook Hill School goes one step further to ensure that international students integrate with members of the wider community. "This year we have added an 'Adopt a Boarding Student' programme," says Bell, "where families of Brook Hill students will mentor boarding students – taking them home for short breaks and including them in family outings."

Schools in the USA report high demand for boarding school programmes among international students, although most point to a number of key student markets that tend to dominate the nationality mix. Breed says of their international intake, "Asian is the predominant trend with Korean the greatest by far. Koreans esteem education and see that English is the world's predominant language and the USA is the predominant economy."

Bell agrees that Korea is the most important international student nationality for all boarding schools in the USA. "The tradition of studying in the USA and the westernisation of Korea seem to be the major causes of this trend," she says, although she adds that they have been widening their recruitment outreach in recent years. "We are just now beginning to grow in our Hispanic numbers with enquiries from Mexico and Central and South America," she explains.

Ela Robertson, Director of Admissions at Olney Friends School in Barnesville, OH, says that their international student enrolment trends have developed and changed over time. "Our first international students were European and Japanese," she explains. "Today as developing countries establish higher educational goals for their children, enrolling in US boarding schools is seen as the best preparation for college and university studies. We are seeing many more African and Asian continent students now than 10 years ago."

When it comes to marketing to overseas students, some schools cite agents as playing a role in the marketing mix. Brooks says that while word-of-mouth is their best marketing tool, "there are consultants or agencies in other countries that know our programme", although she adds that parents, rather than the school, pay the agents.

Bell says that overseas agents played a part in their international student enrolments policies right from the beginning. "Before we even had completed our first boarding houses, I travelled to Asia and visited with consultants recommended by an admissions officer at another boarding school," she says. "The consultants caught the vision and began placing students with us right away."

Finn adds that they use a variety of recruiting methods to reach overseas students and increase the school's profile overseas. "We travel abroad to visit agents and attend workshops in various countries," he says. "We attend Alphe, Icef and other workshops and each have their advantages. We also visit schools abroad and our alumnae have receptions for interested families. We also advertise on websites and in magazines such as *Language Travel Magazine*."



PHOTOGRAPH: OLNEY FRIENDS SCHOOL

"We have formalised the programme with not only introductory courses, but also transitional courses into the regular curriculum"

subject focus

All of the schools below offer specific high school programmes for international students. The majority also provide language support for students, either in conjunction with their academic programmes or as preparation programmes prior to full-time study.

Location	Name of school	Programmes offered	Min. age of international students	Min. English proficiency	Language support?
Atlanta, GA	Brandon Hall School	ap, f, sa, sap	10	n	✓
Austin, TX	St Stephen's Episcopal School	f, sa	12	i	✓
Barnesville, OH	Olney Friends School	f	13	i	✓
Bullard, TX	The Brook Hill School	ap, f, s	-	e	✓
Butte, CO	Crested Butte Academy	ap, f, sa, sap, sh	-	n	✓
Chattanooga, TN	McCallie School	ap, f	14	a	
Dallas, TX	The Hockaday School	ap, f, sa, sap, sh	14	i	
Glen Arbor, MI	The Leelanau School	ap, f, sap	14	n	✓
Idyllwild, CA	Idyllwild Arts Academy	f, sa	14	b	✓
Jacksonville, FL	The Bolles School	ap	12	e	✓
Lexington, MO	Wentworth Military Academy	ap, f, sa, sap	13	i	✓
Marlborough, MA	The Hillside School	f, sa, sap	9	i	✓
Melbourne, FL	Florida Air Academy	ap, sa, sap	11	b	✓
Mercersberg, PA	Mercersberg Academy	ap, f, sa	-	a	
New Milford, CT	Canterbury School	ap	14	i	✓
Paoli, PA	CFS - The School at Church Farm	f	11	i	
Phoenix, AZ	St Paul's Preparatory Academy	ap, sa, sap, sh	12	a	
Pottersville, NJ	Purnell School	f	13	e	✓

Location	Name of school	Programmes offered	Min. age of international students	Min. English proficiency	Language support?
Rindge, NH	The Meeting School	ap	14	i	✓
Rome, GA	Dartington School	f, sa	14	i	✓
Santa Barbara County, CA	Midland School	ap, f	-	i	✓
Sewanee, TN	St Andrews Sewanee School	ap	13	e	✓
Springfield, MA	The MacDuffie School	f	15	i	✓
St George, VA	Blue Ridge School	f	13	e	✓
St Petersburg, FL	Admiral Farragut Academy	f	-	e	✓
Stevenson, MD	St Timothy's School	ap, f, sa, sap	13	i	✓
Subiaco, AR	Subiaco Academy	f, sa	13	i	✓
Washington, CT	Glenholme School	ap, sa, sap	11	e	✓
Washington, CT	The Gunnery	ap, f	13	i	✓
Wayne, PA	Valley Forge Military Academy	ap, sa, sap, sh	12	b	✓
Wesley Chapel, FL	Saddlebrook	ap, f, sa, sap, sh	8	n	✓
Weston, MA	Cambridge School of Weston	f	-	i	✓
Wilbraham, MA	Wilbraham & Monson Academy	ap, f, sa, sap	13	b	✓
Willoughby, OH	Andrews Osborne Academy	ap, f, sh	13	b	✓
Wolfeboro, NH	The Summer Boarding School	sap, sh	11	b	✓
Woodstock, VA	Massanutten Military Academy	ap	11	b	✓

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