

subject focus

High schools in Canada

High schools in Canada have an established tradition of accepting international students into their classrooms and students can expect high standards of course and accommodation provision.

The international secondary school sector is relatively well developed in Canada, thanks in part to the country's worldwide reputation for safety and wholesome outdoor activity. Increased demand from students has also led to an increase in the types of programmes on offer over the last decade.

Sandy Prentice, International Program Coordinator at School District #8 in Nelson, BC, says that their international programme has grown organically from small beginnings nine years ago. "We started because students heard about our school and our community and they contacted us to ask if they could come to a school in our district," she says. "After many requests we finally said yes and it has been fantastic ever since."

School District #8 consists of six high schools and 11 elementary schools and Prentice relates that course provision for international students has developed according to the needs of their growing international community. "First we started with full immersion," she explains. "Then we added ESL [classes] to support students with their homework." A number of formal English language classes and programmes followed, including "English courses designed to be a bridge between ESL and academic English", says Prentice. Finally, the school district now offers tutorial support in the classroom and during the lunch hour at some of its schools.

A steady progression towards meeting the needs of international students is a common trend at many state secondary schools in Canada and a number of school districts now offer programmes that consist of formal language training and academic preparation programmes. At School District #42 in Maple Ridge, BC, specific courses for international

PHOTO: LAURENTIAN ACADEMY IN VALMORIN, QB



students have been part of the curriculum for 10 years and now the range includes university preparation, high school diploma, Toefl preparation and high school preparation programmes among others. Kathren Clarke, Supervisor for International Education, says that student demand has led to the development of more unusual courses. "We have developed a Hotel Operations Co-op Program [for study and work]," she relates, "as well as aviation programmes [for students]."

At River East Transcona Schools in Winnipeg, MAN, Birgit Hartel says that they have "fine-tuned" their courses for international students over the eight years that the international sector has been served. This means looking at course delivery methods for both the language-specific and mainstream classes. "Our teachers do their very best to differentiate instruction and structure in their classes to accommodate our international students so they gain the most educationally and also culturally," she says.

International students in Canada also have the option of studying in one of a number of private schools throughout the country. Laurentian Academy in Val-Morin, QB, started life as an outdoor education camp for young people and has operated as an international language centre for over 20 years, according to Michael Averill, Headmaster at the school. "The current incarnation, as a full-fledged international school offering secondary and pre-university training, came to be in 2000," says Averill. "We have the good fortune of being organisationally and physically contained within a French private boarding school. This permits our kids to engage in sports and other activities in French."

The ability of international students to mingle with their Canadian counterparts in the classroom and at home is part of the appeal of studying overseas and schools report that accommodation is an important part of any international programme package. Residential and homestay options are the most common for secondary students and at Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute in London, ONT, demand for each is evenly split, according to John Pammer at the school. Both have an appeal for different reasons, he says. "[Residential accommodation] helps to give the students independent living skills, preparing them for university," he explains. "Homestay is a great way to... get to know a Canadian family."

At Sedbergh School in Montebello, QB, all international students live in boarding accommodation with Canadian students. Joanna Hoad at the school says that this helps students feel part of the school body. "We are able to ensure that students are assigned roommates of different languages and cultures," she says. "In addition our meals are eaten in a family-style where students are assigned tables. [This helps students integrate] with those from other countries and grades." During half-term when all students leave the school, international students have the options of staying with another local student or finding a homestay through a private organisation.

At River East Transcona Schools, Hartel emphasises that host families are rigorously screened and monitored by staff "who are employed by our school district solely for this purpose". She adds, "We do take this aspect of the international experience most seriously. We know it is a huge decision on the part of the natural parents to send their son or daughter so far away from home, especially for an extended period of time. We know that they want to be assured there will be individuals there who will authentically care for and support their children."

Location	Name of school	Range of international programmes	Min age of int. students	Min. language proficiency	Lang. support?	Accom. options
Bethany, ONT	Bethany Hills School	ap,e,sh	12	n	✓	r
Coquitlam, BC	Coquitlam School District no. 43	ap,e,s,sap,sh	-	n	✓	h
Delta, BC	Delta School District	ap,e,s,sap	12	b	✓	h
Edmonton, AB	Edmonton Public Schools	e	-	n	✓	h
Fort Erie, ONT	Niagara Christian Community of Schs.	ap,e,s,sap,sh	12	v	✓	h,r
Halifax, NS	Halifax Grammar School	e	15	a	-	h
Kamloops, BC	Kamloops School District no. 73	ap,e,sh	-	b	✓	h
London, ONT	Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute	ap,e,s,sap,sh	9 (sh)	n	✓	h,r
Maple Ridge, BC	School District no. 42	ap,e,s,sap,sh	8 (sh)	b	✓	h
Mill Bay, BC	Brentwood College School	ap,e,s,sh	12	i	✓	r
Montebello, QB	Sedbergh School	ap,e	12	n	✓	r
Nelson, BC	School District no. 8	ap,e,s,sh	10	e	✓	h
Ottawa, ONT	Ottawa-Carleton District Sch. Board	ap,e,s,sap,sh	13	b	✓	h
Rigaud, QB	Collège Bourget	ap,e,s,sh	12	n	✓	h,f,r
Rosseau, ONT	Rosseau Lake College	ap,e	12	e	✓	r
Saltspring Island, BC	Gulf Islands Secondary School	ap,e,s,sh	13	b	✓	h
Sidney, BC	School District no. 63	ap,sh	13	e	✓	h
St Catharines, ONT	Ridley College	ap,e,s,sap	10	l	✓	r
Stanstead, QB	Stanstead College	ap,e,s	12	b	✓	r
Ste Adele, QB	College Northside	ap,e,s	16	n	✓	r
Toronto, ONT	Braemar College	ap,e,s,sap,sh	12	n	✓	h,f,r
Vancouver, BC	Richmond School District	ap,e,s,sap,sh	13	n	✓	h
Vancouver Island, BC	Cowichan Valley School District	ap,e,sh	11	b	✓	h
Val-Morin, QB	Laurentian Academy	ap,e,s,sh	12	n	✓	r
Victoria, BC	Victoria Int. High School Progs	e,s,sh	13	b	✓	h
Windsor, ONT	Academie Ste Cecile Int. School	e,s,sap	10	n	✓	r
Winnipeg, MAN	River East Transcona Sch. Division	ap,e,sh	11	n	✓	h
Winnipeg, MAN	St John's - Ravenscourt School	e	13	i	✓	r

a advanced ap year-long ac. prep. b beginner e exam f flatshare h homestay i intermediate n none r residential s summer activity sap summer ac. prep. sh short-term v varies - info not supplied

Cultural preparation

Many agencies worldwide now offer pre-departure orientation sessions for their students as a method of ensuring high satisfaction rates. It's also a way of preparing students for a life abroad. **BETHAN NORRIS** finds out more about this aspect of an agency's business.

Ensuring that a student knows what to expect when they arrive in a foreign country to start a period of study is an important aspect of any agency's counselling service. It is in no-one's interest for students to return home early after an unhappy experience overseas and for this reason many agencies now provide specific pre-departure orientation sessions for their clients, and clients' parents, in order to ensure that students know how to deal with any problems or cultural differences they may encounter.

The scale and type of orientation sessions offered by agents differs greatly between countries as does the age of students going overseas and the types of courses studied. "Preparation workshops for international students in Brazil is almost an unwritten law," says Ricardo Peixoto from Bridge Cultural agency in Brazil. "Our agency focuses on language programmes as well as high school programmes. Both demand a specific type of workshop as the ages of the participants are different as well as their duties as international students."

In agency markets where clients tend to be older, pre-orientation sessions are not as vital. Wolfgang Mandl from Flamenco Sprachreisen in Austria does not provide orientation sessions for his clients as most of them are over 17 years of age and are studying on short-term courses in Europe. "For younger people," he says, "we assist them at the airport, provide them with written information which indicates various aspects of travelling – address, family, local sights, local food, differences in families etc – and always advise them to accept local cultures but feel free to contact their guide, school or us if something is not OK."

At agencies where clients are likely to be embarking on long-term studies in destinations that differ widely in their cultural and academic

"Sessions include travel tips, cultural behaviour, advice in critical situations, general cultural differences and challenges. Sessions are also combined with some simulations of situations students might encounter"

High school clients at Bridge Cultural agency in Brazil receive a very detailed pre-departure package to ensure they are psychologically equipped to deal with the new experiences awaiting them. They attend a workshop where they undertake activities prepared by psychologists and also get to meet former exchange students. Once students have completed a number of activities, some of them in English, they are profiled according to their personalities. "The profiles are divided into three main groups: outgoing, bashful and special care," says Peixoto. "For each profile there exists a specific orientation [package]. Overall, our preparation of high school students consists of four steps: explanation of the programme; rules and basic characteristics of the country; group

workshop at a farm, smaller group meetings divided by student profile; and individual meetings with parents and student," he says.

Hearing about personal experiences of studying abroad is often an important part of

an orientation programme. Cris Pessuti from Melbourne Languages International in Brazil says, "We put students in contact with [the] previous students we have and others who are still abroad so that the newcomer feels more confident about the whole situation." The agency also offers some language help, he says. "We teach essential pre-departure English to students, when that is needed – [covering] immigration, customs [and] airports."

Bulent Peker from UKLA Abroad in Turkey says that their orientation session for students occurs after all other procedures have taken place. "Sessions include travel tips, cultural behaviour, advice in critical situations, general cultural differences and challenges," he says. "Sessions are also combined with some simulations [of situations] students might encounter [whilst abroad]."

Common problems experienced by students while settling into a new country differ according to nationality. Roberto Passarelli from ICL - StudyNet agency in Brazil says, "The weather and the food work hard towards making our [students] homesick, especially if they leave Brazil during our summer time and arrive in their country of destination in winter time."

Expectations regarding accommodation and general living arrangements are also areas that many students find difficult to adjust to when living overseas. Elif Oltulu from Foreda Study Abroad and Tourism Agency in Turkey says, "I think the accommodation is the most important thing for students. In general they hope to find their house abroad. They are very young and without experiences so they know only their family and friends and not the real world."

Annette Duerdoth, High School Program Director at Interstudioviaggi in Italy, agrees that settling into accommodation can be the most difficult thing for students. "Not all students are prepared to do what is asked of them ie. to leave their 'Italianness' in Italy and dive into a new culture. In our orientation, we try to explain that the differences are what makes the programme, not the similarities!"

Travelling overseas for study purposes can be one of the most challenging and exciting experiences of a student's life and a good pre-departure orientation session should help students see that academic and cultural differences are all part of the fun not to mention an integral part of the overall experience. A lot of agencies are beginning to see the benefits of offering such sessions prior to departure. Passarelli believes them to be vital for the success of some students' trips overseas. He relates, "Since we started the orientation sessions, the number of students who returned to Brazil [early] has decreased a lot and last year we had only one female student who came back one week prior to the end of her programme." ■



expectations, orientation sessions may include personal interviews with students and their parents, and some agencies provide group courses for all clients about to travel overseas. "We have common sessions for all students and separate sessions for individual students," notes Kunnuparambil Punnoose from Education Abroad in India. "Since we [have] studied, lived and worked in the UK, we try and cover all areas of importance. We give emphasis to academic obligations, social behaviour, legal responsibilities [and] personal safety."



Preparing you for a world of opportunity

- English Language Courses
- **University Placement Service**
- TOEFL* and Academic English
- Test Preparation Courses (IELTS, Cambridge, GMAT, GRE, and more)
- Career Development Programs

At some of the world's best locations



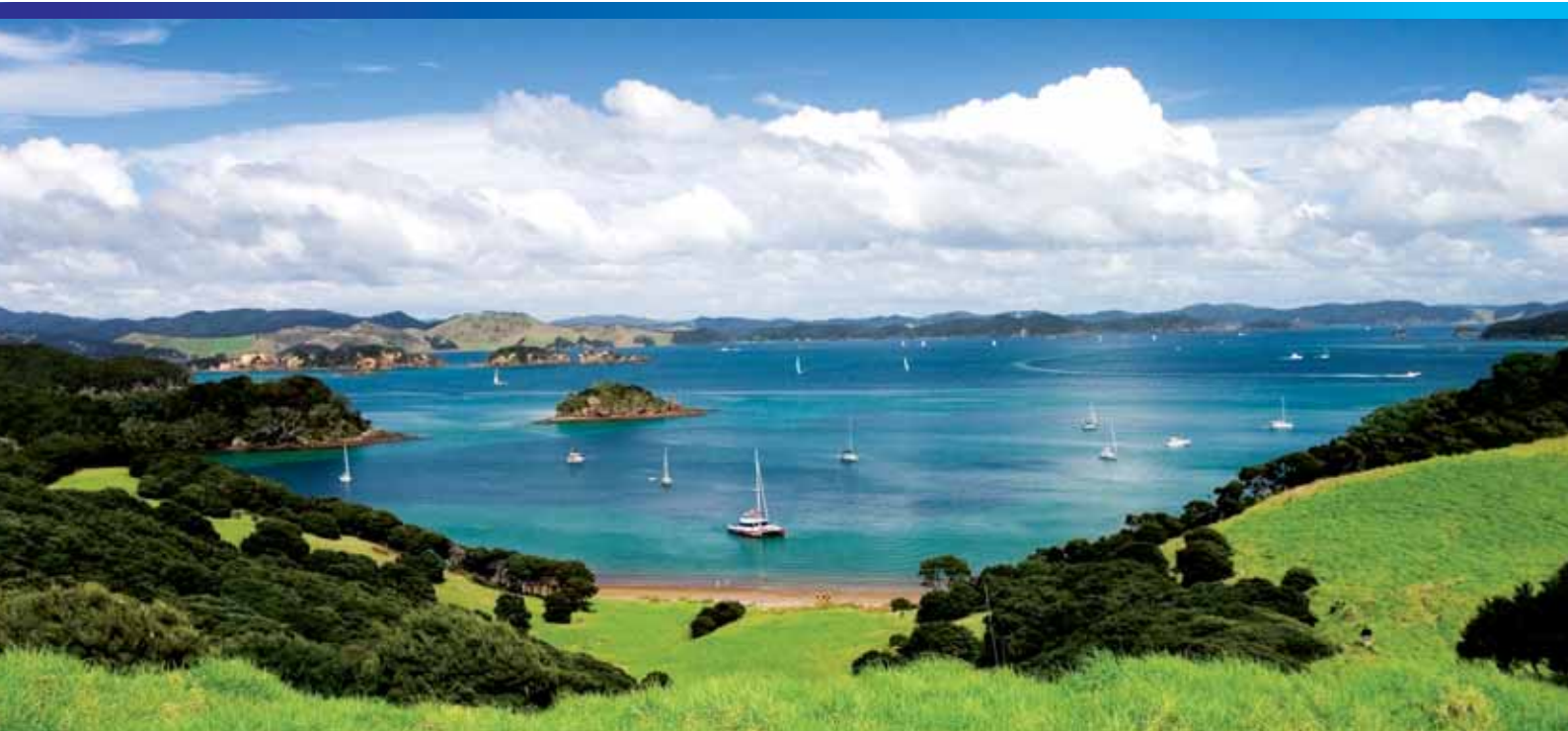
BERKELEY • BOSTON • CHICAGO • HIGHLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE • IRVINE VALLEY COLLEGE
LONDON • LOS ANGELES • MERRIMACK COLLEGE • MIAMI • NEW YORK • SACRAMENTO
SAN FRANCISCO • SEATTLE • VANCOUVER • WASHINGTON DC

Please contact your local Kaplan Manager
of International Sales for more information.

agents@kaplan.com | kaplanenglish.com

*Test names are registered trademarks of their respective owners.

Broaden your horizons in New Zealand!



Aspect's colleges in Auckland and Christchurch offer students a unique New Zealand experience. Our wide range of specially designed programmes give students the opportunity to discover this amazing country whilst improving their English and learning new skills.

- › General English
- › Study Tours
- › Silver Age (English for 50+)
- › English + Design and Arts
- › Academic Year and Semester
- › English for Business and Internships
- › Teacher Training
- › Paid Work and Study



- UK
- Ireland
- USA
- Canada
- Australia
- New Zealand
- Malta
- South Africa

Contact **Aspect New Zealand** today

E-mail:
newzealand@aspectworld.com



Aspect colleges in New Zealand are fully accredited by NZQA. Aspect New Zealand is a member of English NZ.

www.aspectworld.com