

ASSE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

ASSE is an Exchange Program that was originally established as American Scandinavian Student Exchange to provide opportunities for student exchange between Sweden and the USA. It cooperates closely with the provincial Ministries of Education in Canada. In the USA, ASSE is designated by the United States Department of State as an “Exchange Visitor Program” and adheres strictly to its regulations. Since its inception 31 years ago, ASSE has also been granted full listing by the U.S.A. Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET).

Today ASSE programs include exchanges amongst:

Sweden	Switzerland	Morocco	Pakistan	Lithuania	South Africa	Taiwan
Norway	Italy	Israel	Gaza	Georgia	Canada	Thailand
Denmark	Czech Republic	Tunisia	Egypt	Armenia	USA	Australia
Finland	Poland	Bahrain	Gana	Ukraine	Mexico	New Zealand
Great Britain	Slovakia	Bangladesh	India	Moldova	Brazil	
Holland	Turkey	Mali	Kenya	Romania	Japan	
Spain	West Bank	Indonesia	Mozambique	Turkmenistan	China	
Portugal	Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Nigeria	Tajikistan	Korea	
France	Kuwait	Suriname	Philippines	Kyrgyzstan	Mongolia	
Germany	Lebanon	Senegal	Estonia	Kazakhstan	Hong Kong	

Incoming ASSE exchange students are girls and boys, 15, 16, 17 or 18 years of age who are carefully screened and selected by the ASSE Representatives abroad. School administrators, teachers, and ASSE Representatives evaluate the students. Only those who can demonstrate excellent character, deportment, and proficiency in the English language are chosen. All ASSE exchange students have at least three or more years of English study (or the equivalent) in their home countries.

The students have excellent medical and liability insurance. They receive pocket money from their natural parents, and the host family is expected to include the exchange student as a member of the family.

Beginning in the Autumn, the official student application packets for each exchange student who is accepted into the program are sent to the appropriate ASSE office. These application packages include a two-page typewritten autobiographical essay prepared by the student, the official application form, academic records, a collage of photographs of the student, and a Health Certificate. Electronic and paper copies of the student applications are available to ASSE Area Representatives and potential host families who have completed the application and approval process.

ASSE believes it is important that the host families be qualified as soon as possible during the year so that correspondence between the host family and student can begin early and continue until the student’s arrival.

Each host family applicant is personally interviewed by the ASSE Area Representative. Potential host families are required to complete a detailed application, covering many facets of their background and lifestyle. The application includes an official agreement form confirming that they have read and agree to support the ASSE Student Rules. ASSE and the United States Department of State also require that the host family applicant undergoes a criminal background check in addition to furnishing three letters of reference, one from a community organization (church, temple, service club or other such organization) and the other two from friends or neighbors who know the family - attesting to the stability and good reputation of the family.

The ASSE Area Representative takes photos of the host family home and completes the ASSE Home Visit Screening Form with an indication of his/her impressions of the household and the neighbourhood.

Host families are required by the ASSE program to participate in the selection of the student who will be with them for the academic year or semester. Once the family has qualified and made the important student selection, the ASSE Area Representative will contact the School Administrator or School Board to ensure acceptance of the student at the local high school. The placement is not confirmed until the school has approved the student and signed the school acceptance letter. Then the procedure is set in motion to obtain the student's visa.

ASSE Area Representatives hold a mandatory Host Family Orientation Meeting prior to the students' arrival. Host families meet the students at the nearest major airport on arrival.

Within 2 weeks after the student's arrival, the ASSE Area Representative will conduct a comprehensive Student Orientation Meeting using as a guide our established Agenda and other orientation material. At this critical meeting, students and families are prepared for the rules of behavior and official guidelines within which the program functions. Each student speaks privately to the ASSE Area Representative in order to establish a close relationship, which is so important to the success of the placement.

Every student and host family is furnished with the name, address and telephone number of the ASSE Area Representative, as well as the information about their appropriate ASSE Coordinating Office and Regional and/or National Office, and in the USA with the United States Department of State "Regulations Governing Exchange Visitor Programs." All ASSE offices have a 24-hour answering service in case an emergency arises outside normal business hours.

Each month, the ASSE Area Representative contacts each student and host family to establish that everything is satisfactory. Communication is maintained throughout the year. Three times during the school year students and families get together with the ASSE Area Representative for cross-cultural activities and/or holiday gatherings.

In addition to the incoming academic year and semester programs described above, ASSE also sponsors an outbound year, semester and three month program as well as summer programs designed for high school age students who may wish to spend four or six weeks abroad during the months of July and August, either living with a host family in a Language and Cultural Immersion Program or participating in a Summer Homestay Language Program. All students who apply for participation as an ASSE Exchange Student abroad for any of these programs are interviewed individually and with their parents by the ASSE Area Representative. ASSE requires letters of reference, from teachers, from a member of the school's administrative staff and from a church or civic organization, supporting the student's qualification to participate. The ASSE Exchange Student Applicant must also furnish a two-page, typewritten, autobiographical essay, signed transcripts of the last two years in school, a certificate of health, one passport-sized photograph, and a photo collage.

ASSE believes that through cultural exchange programs and homestay programs, a greater international understanding is achieved among people and countries.