KANSAS

VISITING INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS

HANDBOOK

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Background

The Visiting International Teachers program based on bilateral cultural agreements, sanctioned under the Fulbright-Hayes law, allows certified teachers from Spain and China to teach in Kansas schools for a period of up to three years. Kansas is one of many states participating in such programs; but specifics are unique to our state. In 2001 the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture to start the Visiting Teacher from Spain Program. In November 2006 an MOU was signed with China's Office of Chinese Language Council International, referred to as Hanban. With this addition, the program name was changed to Visiting International Teachers (VIT). (MOUs are available on the VIT web page; see Resources below.)

Since the program's inception, teachers have been hired primarily to teach languages (Spanish, Chinese, and English as a Second Language). They have taught other subjects as well including art, math, science, and elementary grades.

The Role of KSDE

Three KSDE program consultants coordinate Visiting International Teacher services to participating school districts and teachers. Responsibilities include the following:

- Pre-screen and interview teacher candidates for prospective job openings.
- Serve as "Responsible Officers" for U.S. Immigration and Customs Services (SEVIS) to issue a DS2019 form required for a J-1 (Exchange Visitor) visa.
- Expedite the issuance of a "Visiting Teacher" certificate for teaching in the State of Kansas, including fingerprinting.
- Provide an orientation week for all new teachers in the program, one or two weeks prior to the beginning of the school year. Provide dates and location well in advance, to facilitate travel planning.
- Provide an orientation day for the school district, the professional mentor, and the community host designated by the district on the last day of orientation before taking the visiting teacher home.
- Provide a weekend fall retreat, about one month after the beginning of school, for teachers in their first, second, and third years of the program.
- Monitor and mentor teachers to help make the cultural adjustment to the U.S. and to Kansas classrooms.
- Assist with curriculum development, state standards, and state testing.
- Assist district administrators when difficulties arise.

The Role of the School District

Where to begin. Districts initiate participation in the Visiting International Teacher program by sending KSDE a "Letter of Intent" found on the VIT web page (see Resources below) providing the general information. Deadline is March 1.

1) A job description of the position to be filled.
2) A description of the support team which includes a district facilitator, classroom mentor, and community-cultural host/ess.
3) The person responsible for hiring who can be available by phone and e-mail during the interviewing process (most of April.)

Fees. The VIT Program is self-supporting. Districts pay a fee of $2,000 per teacher to participate, payable to Kansas State Department of Education. Once the district selects a specific teacher for a specific position and the teacher accepts the position, a check for this amount is submitted with our 'Commit to Hire' form found on the VIT web page (see Resources below.) This fee covers all expenses related to selection, placement, orientation, teaching license and fingerprinting, and retreats. It does not cover expenses involving transporting the teacher from the orientation to the district, or making personal or professional arrangements.

Payroll. All visiting teachers are employed on a standard district contract with salary based on the level of education (provided on the credential evaluation described below) and years of experience. The VIT program *does not include* cultural resource teachers on stipends from their respective governments.

- Taxes – The school district withholds federal and state income taxes from the teacher's paycheck and issues him/her a W-2 form.
- Social Security and Medicare Taxes – According to IRS Publication 519, U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens, J-1 visa holders will have no Social Security and Medicare withheld from the pay they receive until January 1 of their third year in the U.S. For further information, please see http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=131635,00.html.
- Retirement – (KPERS, etc.) Retirement funds are not withheld from the Visiting Teacher's paycheck while the J-1 visa is active.
- Health Care and Insurance. – The J-1 visa regulations from the U.S. Department of State require each visitor to have insurance in effect which covers the exchange visitor for sickness or accident during the period of participation in the program. (http://www.ice.gov/sevis/factsheet/100104ent_exchng_fs.htm
  Each school district shall provide the following coverage:
  - Medical benefits of at least $50,000 per accident or illness.
  - Repatriation of remains in the amount of $7500. (VIT participants take out this insurance individually and are reimbursed by participating districts.)
  - Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the visiting teacher to his or her home country in the amount of $10,000.

Mentoring. The professional, cultural, and personal adjustments made by visiting teachers are facilitated by three types of mentors – fellow classroom teachers, district employment facilitators, and community/cultural hosts. Districts are responsible for ensuring and arranging all three types. Mentors are encouraged to attend the final day of the July orientation and escort their new teacher home.

- A **professional/classroom** mentor is another teacher in the same building who is teaching the same or a similar subject and grade level. This mentor provides information about the classroom, teaching materials and supplies, and teacher tasks and routines. This person should be prepared to spend a day or two with the visiting teacher to help them organize before the school year begins. In Spain and China, teachers do not have their own rooms. Classes have a room and teachers travel, so the type of preparation in the classroom is quite different.
- An **employment facilitator** is the main contact between KSDE and the school district employing the visiting teacher. They are to see that the teacher applies for a social security number once 10 days have lapsed after his/her arrival in the U.S. The visiting teacher will need help arranging for housing, transportation, credit to finance major purchases, utilities deposits, testing for a Kansas driver's license, auto insurance, and many other details. In addition, if difficulties in the classroom can not be successfully addressed by the professional mentor and employment facilitator, then a district administrator should contact KSDE staff for assistance.
- A **community/cultural host** (person or family) orients the visiting teacher to community events, community culture, American culture, holidays, Kansas places and events of interest. The visiting teacher could live in the home of the host while making living arrangements prior to the beginning of the school year if suitable accommodations have not already been arranged. This would serve as an introduction to typical American life and routines. The relationship should continue through the school year, especially at holiday times and special community events.

The Role of the Teacher

Individuals wishing to teach in Kansas apply in Spain to the *Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport* or in China to the *College of International Cultural Exchange of Huazhong Normal University*. Applications are reviewed to see if the individual meets participation requirements including: at least a Bachelor's degree, preferably three years of teaching experience, and advanced English language proficiency. Interviews are carried out in Madrid, Spain, and in Wuhan, China by KSDE staff. School districts will offer a job contract for one year and may extend that contract annually for up to a total of three years.

U.S. Visa. Teachers apply for a J-1 visa, valid no longer than three years. Once a teacher receives a job offer from a school district, he/she responds with a "yes" or "no" answer, then completes the "Agreement to Teach in Kansas" on the KSDE webpage (see Resources below.) Using that information, a KSDE Responsible Officer generates a DS2019 form to send to the teacher, along with an employment letter. The teacher makes an appointment at the nearest U.S. embassy. The DS2019 form and employment letter must be taken to the embassy to apply for the J-1 visa and must also be in hand when arriving at a U.S. port of entry (airport.) A SEVIS fee is also paid before visa application. Teachers must keep their copy of the DS2019 in a safe place, see that is signed annually, and request a replacement when necessary.

English Language Proficiency. All teachers must be fluent in English. Language proficiency is determined in a variety of ways: written applications in English for the program, job interviews carried out in English, and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), if KSDE staff or the school district requires it.

Kansas Teaching License. Teachers are required to become licensed to teach in Kansas, on a special one-year "Foreign Exchange" license, renewable annually. Application forms will be

provided during orientation. The initial application must be accompanied by a "foreign credential evaluation" issued by an independent U.S. agency. The teacher pays for the evaluation and requests that it be sent to KSDE's Teacher Education and Licensure office and to the school district. This evaluation identifies coursework required for Kansas certification and placement on a district pay scale. Accepted agencies who translate credentials are listed on this web page: http://www.naces.org/members.htm . Application for renewal is required for each year that the teacher returns, up to a limit of three years total.

Travel to U.S. Each teacher is responsible for paying travel costs to Kansas. An orientation session will be scheduled at the end of July/ beginning of August at a location near one of the two major airports (Wichita or Kansas City, MO). We will help teachers with transportation from the airport to the orientation site. Transportation from the orientation site to the new home town is provided by the school district.

Personal Finances. Teachers are required to bring with them a minimum of $3,000 to assist them in establishing their living situation in the U.S. Visiting teachers will pay for their own housing and related costs out of their district salary, but the first paycheck is sometimes not received until four to six weeks after the beginning of employment.

Maintaining Contact with Responsible Officers. For the duration of participation in the program, the teacher is responsible for informing one of the two KSDE Responsible Officers when changing address, phone number, or job location. A Responsible Officer's signature is required on the DS2019 form when leaving and returning to the U.S. This should be requested well in advance of departure, since both Responsible Officers often travel, and may not be available on short notice.

Kansas Driver's License. International residents in Kansas are allowed to drive up to one year with a valid license from outside the state, or outside the U.S.

Resources

KSDE Visiting International Teachers web page http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1751

U.S. Immigration and Customs information for visiting teachers (Exchange Visitors.)
http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/index.htm

Acceptable credentials evaluation services
http://www.naces.org/members.htm

Publication 519 (2008), U.S.Tax Guide for Aliens
http://www.irs.gov/publications/p519/index.html

An Equal Employment/Educational Opportunity Agency
The Kansas State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:
KSDE General Counsel, 120 SE 10th Ave., Topeka, KS 66612; 785-296-3201