

## Educator Exchange Q and A

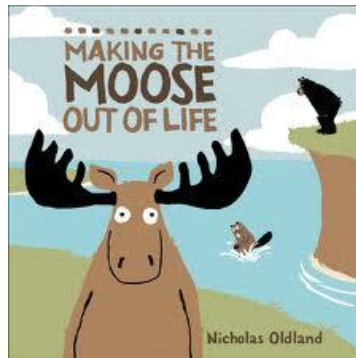
Carolyn Freed, International Educational Exchange Liaison, Alberta Teachers' Association



Here are some of the top questions asked about educator exchanges:

**Q. I have a young family and am considering a teacher exchange. What is the best age to take children on exchange?**

**A.** Any age! We've had so many parents say that they worried about taking their teen or preschooler, but said in retrospect it was the best gift a parent could give to their children. A chance to see things with new eyes, make new friendships, and become more globally minded. Keep an open dialogue going with family members to make sure everyone is included in the unfolding of this amazing adventure. The destination is just one part of the journey. If you have a younger child, I recommend reading [Making the Moose out of Life, by Nicholas Oldland](#). It's a fabulous reading about making a big leap. There's a lot of take away for the adults too!



**Q. My children are in school- how do I go about getting them into a school overseas?**

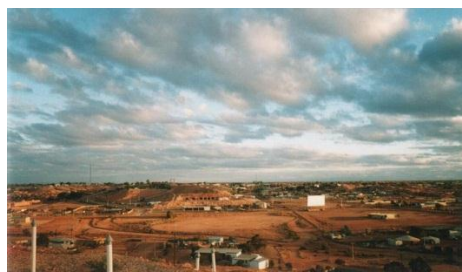
A. Your first point of contact will be your exchange partner. Depending what level you teach at, it may be possible for your child to attend your host school. Your exchange partner will be an excellent resource to help locate a local school that meets your criteria.

**Q. My partner is also a teacher- can they teach while on exchange?**

A. If they do not hold an exchange agreement, they will have to seek employment from the school jurisdiction in the host community. The individual will have to meet the teacher qualification requirements set in that area, so we recommend that the application process be started early. Getting onto a substitute list while on exchange can be a worthwhile endeavor, and has frequently lead to more permanent work. Plan ahead, and notify the principal that you have a partner seeking work.

**Q. My partner will be joining me on exchange- what advice can you give?**

A. If your partner is planning to find work, plan ahead, but remain flexible. There have been spouses that have worked outside of their career areas to take on interesting positions in wineries, hotels, working on boats, you name it! This could be an opportunity to explore areas of interest, study, volunteer, and get involved with your new community. The earlier you start on making your networks, the better! Start a house-spouse club for other Canadians on exchange in your area- we've had spouses arrange an opal mining trip in [Coober Pedy](#) (opal capital of the world) in underground dug outs, plan open ocean swimming races, and weekly cinema meet-ups.



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**Q. I've got a pretty specific teaching assignment that may be hard to match- what can I do?**

A. It all depends on who pops up on the other side of the globe. If you have a teaching load that spans many grades and subject areas and you have flexibility in your assignment you may wish to consider starting a conversation with your administration. If your school leaders are willing to accommodate an overseas teacher teaching in another subject area at your school, this might be a feasible situation for all. For instance, within a science department, there may be flexibility to have the incoming overseas teacher take on a chemistry position while you take on a biology assignment overseas, both remaining within their respective areas of subject expertise and finding internal replacements for the original assignment.

**Q. What are the most popular subjects from overseas applicants?**

A. One might think that elementary generalists are in the most demand, but there is a whole range of teaching assignments. They can range from grade 12 Physics to Food Studies to Junior High Physical Education to Industrial Arts. It really is dependent on the applicant pool overseas. We encourage everyone to apply early which alerts the international coordinators to the applicant trends and which areas to be targeting from year to year.

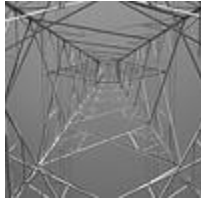
**Q. I'm an administrator. Can I participate?**

A. This depends on the individual exchange program in your area. Administrators have exchanged positions, but it is rare. An assistant principal may wish to arrange for an administrative leave for the duration of the exchange and take on a regular teaching load. In Alberta, administrators can participate in short term job shadow exchanges to Germany, Denmark, and Australia. This is an approximate 2 week hosted experience with your exchange partner, and provides valuable insight into other educational landscapes.

**Q. I'm excited to think about sharing this experience with my exchange partner- any tips?**

A. Keep an open dialogue with your exchange partner. Lay the building blocks for a strong foundation built first on collegial commonalities. Technologies like Skype permit a more personal face-to-face experience to

start these conversations. Life-long friendships may result, and a great working relationship will benefit not only you as practitioners, but also your students, your respective schools, and communities. The ripple effects extend well beyond the classroom. Expand your reach by changing up where you teach!



**Q. I am super keen to go on exchange- how long does the process take?**

- A. It is a lengthy process that can take upwards of a year from the time you submit your application to departure. Applications deadlines can vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The success rate of matching is dependent on the alignment of overseas teaching assignments, so don't set your hopes on a match the first year. To give you an example, of the over 30,000 active teachers in Alberta, only 29 Albertans went on exchange in 2012, less than 1% of the teaching population.
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Educator exchanges are a way to develop professionally, get out of your comfort zone, and experience different ways of doing. With the promise of the same vocation in a different location comes the challenge of adapting to new ways in a different cultural context. We are a community of educators that embrace challenge-start the conversation today to start the educational journey of a lifetime!

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[www.ieep.ca](http://www.ieep.ca)

Alberta Teacher Exchange League's website --- follow the blogs of educators on exchange to get a bird's eye view  
<http://www.members.shaw.ca/saetc/SAETC/styled-3/index.html>

*We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give*

*Winston Churchill*