



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)**  
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**International Education Initiatives and Programs in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board**

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**PURPOSE:**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's (OCDSB) international education initiatives, which are provided in collaboration with the Ottawa-Carleton Education Network (OCENET). This report will highlight the key accomplishments and programs in international education, and provide recommendations for future growth and development. By leveraging the strengths of both organizations, the OCDSB and the OCENET aim to enhance global citizenship, intercultural understanding, and academic excellence and well-being for students, staff and school communities.

**STRATEGIC LINKS:**

2. This report outlines initiatives, accomplishments, and potential growth areas for international education in the District, aligning with the Ministry of Education's K-12 International Education Strategy and the OCDSB's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. All aspects of these initiatives connect directly to the three pillars of the Strategic Plan 2023-2027 - learning, well-being and social responsibility. International education initiatives and programs enhance student achievement by providing rigorous academic programs, cultural and language immersion experiences, intercultural understanding, and opportunities for personal growth.

**CONTEXT:**

3. The OCDSB, in collaboration with OCENET, has been a pioneer in international education since 1999. This partnership has enabled the District to offer exceptional national and international learning opportunities to its students, staff, and international educators, preparing them for the global challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Through the strong global connections and international partnerships forged, students and staff have been provided with opportunities to

connect with diverse cultures and languages, explore different parts of the world, and engage in virtual and in-person exchanges.

The OCDSB's international education initiatives and programs align with the strategic goals outlined in the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. By immersing students in diverse cultures and perspectives, these programs contribute to the development of well-rounded learners who are equipped to succeed in a globalized world. Rigorous academic programs, coupled with cultural and language immersion, enhance student achievement and well-being, a key priority of the Strategic Plan.

By embracing global perspectives and fostering Intercultural understanding and experiences, students are empowered to become informed, compassionate, and responsible global citizens. These experiences foster character development such as empathy, respect, and appreciation, and support students to acquire all of the OCDSB Exit Outcomes, including the characteristic of becoming 'globally aware'.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

### 4. Alignment with Provincial Strategy

The OCDSB's international education initiatives and programs are closely aligned with the [Ministry of Education's Ontario Strategy for K-12 International Education](#) and the OCDSB's Strategic Plan 2023-2027. This strategic alignment ensures that students are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a globalized world.

As the Ministry of Education continues to refine its international education strategy, the OCDSB remains committed to collaborating with provincial partners to ensure that District initiatives continue to meet the evolving needs of students, staff and the broader community.

### 5. OCENET Structure and Governance

The OCENET is an independent corporation governed by a Board of Directors. Its mission is to foster global connections and enhance educational opportunities through collaboration with schools, educators, and students worldwide. The OCENET aims to:

- Create a global network for educators and students to share knowledge, expertise, and cultural perspectives;
- Enhance OCDSB programs through international partnerships;
- Provide financial assistance to support OCDSB's international initiatives;
- Strengthen local networks of teachers and schools within Ottawa for knowledge sharing; and
- Facilitate international exchanges, creating opportunities for Ottawa students and teachers to engage with international peers.

### 6. OCENET International Student Recruitment/Engagement

The OCENET's recruitment efforts focus on attracting exceptional students to enhance cultural diversity and financial sustainability within the OCDSB. To achieve this, the OCENET partners with trusted agents, attends international fairs, and builds relationships in key global markets. By promoting the District's mission and

goals, such as academic excellence, inclusive learning environments, and multiple pathway opportunities to higher education, the OCENET attracts students from high-demand regions such as Asia, Latin America, and Europe. By leveraging digital marketing and social media, the OCENET connects with prospective students and families worldwide.

This school year, the OCDSB has welcomed 572 international students from 48 countries, currently distributed amongst 21 high schools and 32 elementary schools. The top ten countries represented include China, Vietnam, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Italy, and Thailand. The tuition fees for international students are \$15,300, with \$1,300 of the total directed to the provincial government, as required. The District is fortunate to welcome this diverse student body, who enrich the learning experience for all students and staff while further fostering its commitment to equitable and inclusive school environments.

## **7. OCENET Student Programs/Student Exchanges/International Certificate Program**

### **OCENET Student Programs**

The OCENET student programs offer short-term immersion experiences, enabling international students to integrate into OCDSB schools, where they receive high quality instruction to improve their language skills, build cultural awareness, and explore the National Capital Region.

### **Student Exchange Programs**

The OCDSB's students are eligible to explore both short-term and long-term student exchange programs with current partnership districts and schools. These transformative experiences enable students to connect and learn from and with peers globally, as well as providing reciprocal learning and cultural experiences.

### **International Certificate Program (ICP)**

Secondary students in the District have the unique opportunity to enroll in the ICP. This exciting, distinct OCDSB program celebrates learners that are committed to global citizenship, fostering global connections, and learning through cultural exchange opportunities to achieve these goals throughout their secondary school career. Presently, there are over 750 secondary students enrolled in this program, with a projected graduating cohort of 238 students in June, 2025.

## **8. OCDSB/OCENET Partnerships**

### **L'académie d'Aix-Marseille, Région académique Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (Marseille, Nice, Aix-en-Provence, France)**

A partnership has been in place with the education district in the region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur since 2016, which facilitates student exchanges for a five-week reciprocal exchange. Presently, further exploration is underway to determine the possibility for extending the reciprocal exchange to a semester for secondary students. Also, educator exchange and partner schools have been developed and continue to expand.

Chengdu Chenghua Municipal Education Bureau (Chengdu, China)

A collaboration and partnership has been in place since 2016. Components to this partnership include partner schools in the Chenghua District and the OCDSB; both elementary and secondary schools, teacher training, leadership delegation meetings and visits, virtual and in person student exchanges. Annually in November, the OCDSB and the Chengdu Municipal Education Bureau celebrate their People to People Exchange Month.

Jeju School District (Jeju City, South Korea)

A partnership has been in place with Jeju City School District since 2016. Over the years, students and educators have had exchange opportunities within the OCDSB. OCDSB secondary students have bi-annually attended the Jeju Youth International Forum, which is also made available to OCDSB students through support from the Korean Cultural Center.

Osaka Gakugei High School (Osaka, Japan)

A collaboration has been in place between the Osaka Gakugei High School and the OCDSB, which has welcomed secondary students to study in a variety of District secondary schools. International students are eligible to attend secondary schools for a variety of durations, both short-term and long-term.

Yamate Gakuin High School (Yokohama, Japan)

A bi-annual reciprocal cultural exchange program for secondary students has been in place between the OCDSB and the Yamate Gakuin High School, which was established in 2016.

**9. OCDSB School-based Initiatives**

Several schools within the District have established formal partnerships with schools or districts in other regions. These connections provide unique opportunities for students and staff to collaborate and learn from each other. Currently, approximately 32 elementary and secondary schools participate in these partnerships. Many of these partnerships involve virtual classroom connections, fostering deep student engagement through collaborative global projects and initiatives.

**10. OCENET Educator Programs/Exchanges**

The OCENET's educator development programs help educators worldwide improve classroom practices and leadership skills. Current programs include areas such as Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL), English for young learners, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and Ontario-focused leadership training.

Current countries involved in teacher development are as follows: Spain, Costa Rica, South Korea, China, Colombia, Sweden and Nigeria.

These educator programs and exchanges promote global collaboration and professional growth. The OCENET continues to explore ways to provide training opportunities for international educators both in person and virtually.

## 11. **Awards and Bursaries for OCDSB Students and Staff**

The OCENET provides a variety of awards or bursaries to support students and staff in their pursuit of exploring international and intercultural opportunities. The following awards and bursaries are currently available:

- *International Education Bursary for OCDSB Employees*: Provides financial support to staff for professional development in cultural proficiency, global competency, and global citizenship, with awards available in amounts of \$500 and \$1,000;
- *International Study Abroad Bursary for Students*: Encourages OCDSB students to engage in cultural exchanges, international learning, and the development of global competencies. This bursary supports study abroad programs, cultural exchanges (including remote communities in northern Canada), international school trips, and summer credit courses abroad; and
- *Lynch-Getty Global Student Award*: Established in 2010 to honor Alex Getty and Ron Lynch, former board members of the OCENET, this award is presented annually to four OCDSB students (both Canadian residents and international students). It recognizes students who demonstrate leadership and involvement in activities that foster cross-cultural understanding, such as international exchanges, intercultural clubs, and volunteer programs.

These awards highlight the OCENET's commitment to supporting global engagement, removing barriers for students and staff to access opportunities, as well as, student and staff recognition for contributions to international education initiatives and programs.

## 12. **Future International Education Initiatives and Programs**

The OCDSB in partnership with the OCENET is expanding its global connections and forging new partnerships in Bologna, Italy, and in Taiwan. In both cases, the work is currently underway with each district and their respective embassies, who are involved peripherally. The goal is for a short-term reciprocal secondary student exchange to be in place between Bologna, Italy and Brookfield High School beginning in October, 2025. At this time, work is still ongoing to confirm the possible timelines for future reciprocal student exchanges to Taiwan.

To continue to support the expansion of student exchanges, the OCENET and the Program Services department are working with secondary administrators and central staff to explore and develop credit courses and experiential learning options for secondary students that are a part of short-term and long-term exchanges with all partners. The intention is to further complement students' credit accumulation toward their pathway option, while ensuring that their learning, international experience, cultural exchange experience(s), and potential language acquisition are appropriately accredited.

Furthermore, the District and the OCENET are in conversations with different post-secondary institutions about the possibility of offering programs for international students that graduate from the OCDSB as well as for students that graduate with the ICP designation.

**13. Future Considerations**

Recognizing that the OCDSB is the largest school district in the National Capital Region, the District and the OCENET are committed to continuing to enhance and expand opportunities to align with other international capital cities, globally. Discussions pertaining to expanding and scaling opportunities for all secondary schools to access domestic and international initiatives and programs is being explored. Also, increasing opportunities for elementary schools both in person and virtually is being reviewed.

In order to continue to be leaders in public education, it is essential that District leaders, experts, and educators connect and collaborate with colleagues nationally and internationally. This connection and collaboration will continue to foster a community of learners and experts to share best practices and expertise related to student achievement and well-being. This will in turn continue to enrich and broaden the organization’s position globally and situate the OCDSB as an international leader in culturally responsive teaching, cultural competencies, modern learning, student achievement, and well-being.

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

14. No additional financial or resource implications are anticipated for the District. The OCENET generates more revenue than it costs to staff and operate its initiatives and programs. This surplus revenue is annually transferred from OCENET to the District. Consequently, all costs associated with international education initiatives and programs are covered by the proceeds from international education related activities organized through OCENET.

**SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION.**

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