



EAST SAN GABRIEL VALLEY
JAPANESE COMMUNITY CENTER **ESGVJCC**

2027 STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM SISTER CITIES OF WEST COVINA AND OHTAWARA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I have to be able to speak Japanese to participate?

No. It is helpful to know a little Japanese, but it is not a requirement. However, this program is a great opportunity to learn Japanese and practice with the host family.

How do I sign up?

Complete a Student Exchange Program application (available through the ESGVJCC Website). Application must be accompanied by a \$500 non-refundable deposit. If the number of applicants exceeds the available program slots, applications will be reviewed and scored as part of the selection process. Participants will be selected based on their application scores, with the highest scoring applicants receiving priority for available program slots.

Does the student or family need to be members of the ESGVJCC?

No, the student or family does not need to be an ESGVJCC Member. However, non-members will not receive the member rate for the program and will be required to submit an additional letter of recommendation as a part of their application. In addition, special consideration will be given to ESGVJCC Members during the scoring process.

Do we have to host students?

In order to gain the full experience of the program, each family is required to host the same number of Japanese students in August 2028 as the number of students they sent in 2027. Hosting a Japanese student is a remarkable experience that the entire family can benefit from.

What activities will we do while in Japan?

The activities are different each year. Typically, the group will visit local historic sites, visit a Japanese junior high school, visit Edo Mura (theme park), and eat lots of great food! There are also two free days planned by each student's host family.

Are the students accompanied by any adults?

Yes. Throughout the entire trip to Japan, at least two adult chaperones will accompany the students. These chaperones will be responsible for the students during travel and while in Ohtawara. While the students are with their host families, the chaperones will remain locally in Ohtawara and will be reachable by telephone.

Do we have to attend any meetings before the trip?

There will be 6 meetings held before the trip to cover important information, including passport requirements, Japanese customs, what to expect in Japan, omiyage (souvenirs), and other trip-related preparations. Students are encouraged to attend all six meetings, but are required to attend a minimum of four.

Meeting Dates:

February 6, 2027 from 1-2pm

February 27, 2027 from 1-2pm

March 20, 2027 from 1-2pm

April 17, 2027 from 1-3pm

May 16, 2027 from 10am-12pm

June 6, 2027 from 10am-12pm

How much does the program cost?

The program costs \$2,250 for ESGVJCC Members and \$2,500 for non-members, which includes airfare, housing, transportation, food, and activities while in Japan. We encourage the students to fundraise throughout the year to help offset the cost of the trip.

What if my student needs to cancel?

If a student has to cancel and cannot attend the trip for any reason, written cancellation must be submitted on or before March 26th in order to receive a full refund. Cancellations after March 26th will incur a more significant forfeiture. The \$500 deposit made at the time the application was submitted is non-refundable.

What happens if the trip is cancelled by the ESGVJCC?

Eight students is the minimum number of students needed to send to Japan. If the minimum number is not met, the program will be cancelled for the year and a full refund will be provided.

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