

Saskatchewan-Québec Student Exchange Participant Handbook



Student and Family Edition

Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
1.1	Objectives of the Program	3
1.2	Eligibility	4
1.3	Step by Step Application Process	4
1.4	Requirements Once the Student is Accepted	6
1.5	Costs	7
1.6	Travel During the Saskatchewan-Québec Student Exchange Program	8
1.7	Safety Protocol	8
1.8	Student Exchange Program Timeline	9
2.0	Before the Exchange	10
2.1	The Student.....	10
2.2	The Family.....	11
2.3	The Ministry of Education and Schools	11
3.0	Timetable Planning and Programming Considerations	12
4.0	During the Exchange	13
4.1	October to November (Hosting Period)	13
4.2	December to January (Preparation Period)	16
4.3	February to March	17
5.0	After the Exchange.....	24
5.1	Culture Shock	24
5.2	Maintaining Language Skills	24

1.0 Introduction

The Saskatchewan-Québec Student Exchange Program is a reciprocal exchange program. A francophone student from Québec lives with a Saskatchewan family for two months and attends a Saskatchewan high school. Later in the school year, the student from Saskatchewan lives with the Québécois family for two months and attends a Québécois high school. The program is available to Grade 10 and 11 Saskatchewan students who are studying the French language. The application to participate is completed in Grade 9 or 10 and participation occurs the following year, in Grade 10 or 11.

In any given year, there are limited placements for Saskatchewan students in this program. An application from an individual student will not be considered without school involvement and support. It is important to note that application does not ensure the participation of any one student.

This handbook will inform participating families about the exchange. Information for the student, host family and the host school is outlined in a timeline format. BEFORE, DURING and AFTER the exchange period are seen as major section headings.

Please note: The Québec exchange student will be hereinafter called “twin.”

1.1 Objectives of the Program

The program will give the participating student an opportunity to:

- improve knowledge of French as a second language;
- learn about French Canadian culture;
- experience a new school system; and,
- experience personal growth (e.g., social skills, independence, confidence, maturity, sense of responsibility, tolerance and self-reliance).

The participating student will find it useful to identify a few personal goals regarding the exchange, both in Saskatchewan and in Québec and to record these goals in writing. The goals should be discussed with the liaison teacher and family. They may also be discussed with the twin, possibly before departure in late January.

Examples of personal goals may include:

- flexibility, willingness to try new activities;
- building more independence;
- being more patient, tolerant and friendly when hosting and when being hosted; and,
- improving social acceptance.

These goals may be revised or changed as the exchange progresses.

1.2 Eligibility

The Saskatchewan student and the Saskatchewan school must inform the Provincial Coordinator at the Ministry of Education in writing of its commitment to the program by submitting a Principal and Director application form.

Please Note: There can be no student participation in this exchange program without school involvement and support.

To be eligible to apply for this exchange program, a student must:

- be recommended by the liaison teacher;
- be currently enrolled in a French Immersion, Core French or Intensive French Program;
- have parental and school support;
- have good academic achievement and participate actively in the Saskatchewan school;
- be motivated to participate; and,
- be flexible and open to new experiences and a new culture.

The school must be assured the Saskatchewan student meets the above criteria and that the home is one that will enthusiastically receive a twin for two months. Only one member per family may participate in this program at any given time.

Important: While an application does not guarantee participation, the student should start planning their timetable as soon as possible. For Grade 9 students applying to go on exchange in Grade 10, French 10 or its equivalent should be completed before departure for Québec and, if possible, in the first semester of Grade 10.

For Grade 10 students applying to go on exchange in Grade 11, French 20 or its equivalent should be completed before departure for Québec and, if possible, in the first semester of Grade 11.

1.3 Step by Step Application Process

Before a student is selected to participate in the exchange, there are multiple steps to complete:

1. Register Online

Any qualifying student can apply to participate as a Saskatchewan student. To register visit the Government of Saskatchewan's website page at [Saskatchewan Quebec student exchange-programs](#).

As part of the online registration process the following forms are available online and must be completed and uploaded. The forms must be completed online in a single session. Please ensure the below documents have been uploaded before closing the registration form:

- [Principal and School Division Approval Form](#)
- [Parent/Guardian Approval Form](#)

The application must also include:

- **Letter of Introduction:**

Students must include a five to six paragraph letter (maximum 5000 characters) in French for their future exchange partner and family to read. The letter should include:

- why the student wants to participate and what they want to accomplish in the program;
- their ideal future student exchange partner;
- their own personality, strengths and areas of improvement;
- their family;
- their preferred activities and hobbies; and,
- their typical school year (activities, school structure, classes, etc.).

- **Images:**

- a recent head and shoulders colour photo of the student;
- a colour photo of their family;
- a colour photo of the student with friends/pets; and,
- two colour photos of the student doing activities they enjoy (skiing, dancing, music, etc.).

Important: A completed Interview Questionnaire is also required. It must be submitted by the liaison teacher directly to the Provincial Coordinator at prog.fedprov@gov.sk.ca.

Deadline to apply: March 20, 2026

The Provincial Coordinator will send the student an email confirmation within three business days.

2. Review Proposed Twin

Once the student is selected and matched with a twin in Québec, the school and liaison teacher will receive a message indicating if a match has been found. The match proposal will be sent to the school by secure email from the Provincial Coordinator no later than six weeks after the submission deadline.

Once the proposal has been accepted by the school and liaison teacher, the Provincial Coordinator will send it to the student and his or her family for final acceptance.

In the case of refusal: if the proposal is refused by the school, the student or their family, a new proposal could be formulated, depending on the number of applications available.

Important: a similar process is followed by the partners in Québec for the processing of the application of the student. The match will be confirmed once accepted by all parties.

3. Consent and Confirmation Form

The student and their family must be aware of the conditions of participation set out in the normative framework of the program. Please consider the expectations in section 1.4 Requirements Once the Student is Accepted before applying.

To confirm this, a confirmation of participation form must be signed by the student and his/her family for consent to the conditions of participation. The school must also sign the form and send it to the Provincial Coordinator to accept the twin match.

4. Criminal Record Checks

To finalize placement in the program, anyone 18 years of age or older residing at the host family residence are to provide the coordinator with a satisfactory criminal record check (CRC) and a vulnerable sector search (PIC-VS). With the individual's consent, CRC results will be subject to disclosure to the Québec counterpart agency.

In the event of a positive CRC, the application will be considered on a case-by-case basis. As the administrator of the program, the Ministries of Education (Québec and Saskatchewan) make the final decision on a positive CRC. Should changes occur to CRC status during the exchange program, the individual will be required to advise the provincial coordinator within two days of the change.

Criminal Record Checks will be sent to by adult family member to the Provincial Coordinator at the Ministry of Education at prog.fedprov@gov.sk.ca.

5. Notification of Status

All applicants will be notified of their status by mid-May. Candidates who were not matched should discuss alternative programs with their liaison teacher.

1.4 Requirements Once the Student is Accepted

1.4.1 Student

Time and Priority

Participation in this program requires a continuing commitment from the student. A student uncertain of their interest or of their commitment should not participate in this program.

- The student will be away from their regular school for two months and requires special program planning for the year in collaboration with their school.
- A student must give priority to their responsibilities as the host. If the student works part-time or has a significant other, the student must ensure that these do not interfere unduly with their hosting responsibilities.
- It is important for the student to realize their commitment upon application so that the student and the family can plan accordingly. Consider how this new family member would affect the student's and family's daily activities (e.g., reduce working hours to prioritize time with the twin).

Respect

As a representative of Saskatchewan in Québec there are expectations that must be met.

- The student participating in the program must be prepared to respect house rules in their host home in Québec (e.g., curfew, house chores and smoking limitations).

- Respect all laws. Trouble with the law, can mean immediate termination of the exchange and return home at the expense of the participating student's family.

Pre-departure training

Training is mandatory for all participating students and parents/legal guardians. Organized by the Ministry of Education, this training aims to prepare families for the exchange experience. Those in charge of exchanges within the schools are also invited to participate.

Documentation and Identification

- **Required documentation:** The ministry will inform the student of the documents to be obtained. Schools are responsible for ensuring that documentation is complete and compliant.
- **Identification:** A copy of a valid travel ID must be submitted to the Provincial Coordinator through a secure email. The student must submit one of the following:
 - a passport valid for at least six months after the date of return;
 - a government-issued photo ID (federal or provincial) showing the student's full name and date of birth; or,
 - two pieces of official identification issued by a federal or provincial government.

1.4.2 The Family

Time and Priority

A student's participation in this program requires a commitment from the beginning to the end of the exchange for the family. It involves the hosting of a twin for two months. Once notified of a proposed match, parents must carefully consider the responsibilities outlined in this and previous student sections and the way that an exchange would affect the family before accepting a proposed match. A signed application form comes with the understanding that the commitment has been made to this exchange program.

Respect

It is essential that every member of the family be receptive to the twin and be willing to contribute to the success of the exchange. Every family member must agree to participate in the exchange by supporting the presence of a new family member for a two-month period.

Hosting

There must be space in the home for another adolescent. A separate bedroom is desirable. A separate bed is essential, as is the creation of a private space where the twin may be alone when desired. As well, this private space must be respected at all times.

1.5 Costs

The host family is responsible to pay a \$250 deposit, which is reimbursed after completion of the exchange. This deposit is to be paid once the proposed match has been accepted and finalized.

One checked bag is included in the airfare provided for the student. Any subsequent baggage is the responsibility of the Saskatchewan family for their own child.

While hosting the Québec student, the Saskatchewan family is responsible to pay for any family excursions or activities that they would offer to their own child. The Québec family will do the same for the Saskatchewan student while they are in Québec.

There should be no additional school expenses in Québec. However, it is important to note that Saskatchewan families are responsible to pay for any *optional* school trips that their child may choose to participate in while in Québec (e.g., band trips) that may be costly.

1.6 Travel During the Saskatchewan-Québec Student Exchange Program

The Travel Consent Form must be filled out by the Québec and Saskatchewan families and submitted to the Provincial Coordinator at the Ministry of Education before the Saskatchewan students leave for Québec. Saskatchewan families may **not** sign permission forms for the Québec students to travel on school trips. The liaison teacher will ask the Provincial Coordinator to contact the Québec family directly for this permission. In general, travelling alone or with other teenagers involving an overnight stay is **never** permitted.

1.7 Safety Protocol

The Ministry of Education places a high priority on the students' safety. Should the student find themselves in a situation which puts their safety or wellbeing at risk, the following steps outline the procedure to follow.

1.7.1 Persons to Contact

1. The Liaison Teacher

After parents and family, the liaison teacher should be one of the first people the students meet upon arriving in Québec. The liaison teacher is the first contact for anyone wishing to report an incident. The role of the resource person is to:

- listen to the student's complaint and inform them of their rights listed below;
- inform the student of any available services, such as school counsellors;
- recommend the appropriate immediate measures in the student's best interest for their security, such as medical attention or change in housing;
- identify with the student the type of action desired: a simple intervention, a report filed with police or another option;
- help the student write up a police report, if requested; and,
- complete an incident form to be supplied by the host school, if necessary.

The liaison teacher will notify the school principal and the Official Languages Programs Coordinator at the Ministry of Education to follow up on the situation as soon as possible.

2. The Police

In the event of an emergency in Saskatchewan or Québec, contact 9-1-1. If it is not an emergency, but the student would like to file a complaint, they must contact the non-emergency line.

1.7.2 Rights of the Complainant

A complainant has the right to:

- be treated fairly and promptly;
- seek other recourses of action;
- receive all information pertinent to the report or complaint process;
- obtain the appropriate support following the report or complaint; and,
- the complainant may, at any time, stop the complaint process. However, this does not take away the obligation of the school to ensure the security and integrity of the staff and students.

Confidentiality

All reports are stored in a confidential manner and are solely used for tracking and reporting incidents, as well as improving prevention and protection measures for students.

1.7.3 On-Going Support

During the exchange, monitoring is carried out by the schools, with the support of the ministry as needed. Directives concerning the reception of counterpart students will be shared by the ministry.

1.8 Student Exchange Program Timeline

Year One (Application)	
February:	Student application forms available online
March:	Processing of applications by candidates and schools Home interviews Student applications to Ministry of Education (due March 20, 2026)
April to May:	Matching process Student is notified if matched with a twin Student and liaison teacher receive Québec files
June:	Orientation webinar
June to August:	Correspondence between families and schools

Year Two (Participation)	
October:	Twin arrives in Saskatchewan
November:	Mid-term evaluation meetings in Saskatchewan
End of November:	Twin returns home

January:	Saskatchewan student prepares for departure
February:	Saskatchewan student departs for Québec
March:	Mid-term evaluation with video meeting with Saskatchewan student
End of March:	Saskatchewan student returns to Saskatchewan

2.0 Before the Exchange

After being paired with a twin, the student and their family should start to prepare for the exchange.

2.1 The Student

2.1.1 Provide Relevant Updates

Please advise the liaison teacher immediately should changes occur in family status (e.g., relocation, family breakup or household members), diet or any other significant factor.

Important: If circumstances require the withdrawal of a student from the program, please notify the liaison teacher promptly in person. Please also notify the twin and their family, by phone and in writing, with reasons explaining the need for withdrawal. A copy of this correspondence should be sent to the Provincial Coordinator at the Ministry of Education through the liaison teacher.

2.1.2 Correspondence with the Twin and Their Family

Successful candidates should prepare to correspond promptly with their twin and Québec family. This allows adequate time to get to know the new family. The Saskatchewan student can inform their twin about:

- themselves (e.g., photos, typical daily activities, domestic chores and weekend activities);
- their family (e.g., photos, typical evening and weekend activities);
- their school (e.g., school handbook, available courses, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs available, such as sports, clubs and music); and,
- their community (e.g., clubs, recreation facilities, geographic location, population, local economy, cultural and sports activities).

The first email message should include basic information. Correspondence throughout the summer can provide further detail.

When the student receives an email from their twin, they are encouraged to reply promptly. Regular correspondence is crucial to the success of the exchange.

The student is asked to be careful when using social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, etc. It is easy to make a snap judgement based on pictures or postings. Take the time to get to know the twin personally and don't place too much emphasis on what is posted on these sites.

2.2 The Family

2.2.1 Responsibilities

The parents and the student will be requested to meet the incoming twin at the Regina or Saskatoon airport and to return them to these points for their departure to Québec.

The Saskatchewan family will provide suitable cultural and recreational experiences for the twin. This might include some travel within the province. There are no minimum expectations and individual families should plan to do only what they might wish to do.

2.2.2 Prepare for the Exchange

Families must prepare a room or private space (e.g., bed and furniture) for the twin. Please ensure that any changes in information given during the interview or on the application form are communicated promptly to the liaison teacher and to the Provincial Coordinator.

2.2.3 Correspondence

Parents are encouraged to communicate with each other to provide more information about the home situation (e.g., household rules and chores, shower rules, curfews, rules concerning alcohol, church attendance, medical problems, diet, smokers in the family and clothing to take).

Families may inform the twin of their summer contact information such as addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers so that communication is clear and may be continued throughout the months of July and August. The summer months are an ideal opportunity to establish relationships.

2.2.4 Withdrawal

Should circumstances require the withdrawal of the student from the program, please follow the procedure outlined in the student section, 2.1.1.

2.3 The Ministry of Education and Schools

2.3.1 Logistics

The Provincial Coordinator, the school and the ministry will jointly determine the logistics of travel related to the outbound and return flights. The files required to ensure the safety of the students will be sent to the chaperones. The student's plane ticket, purchased by Ministry of Education, will be sent directly to the student by the ministry in a secure email. In this email, the school is also informed of the route.

Important: the meeting point for groups travelling together, as well as the instructions to be followed during the trip, is communicated by the ministry.

3.0 Timetable Planning and Programming Considerations

Since the next school year will be different, it is very important that the student plan their school program for 2026-27 with special care. As soon as possible, the student should consult with their teachers, counsellors and with the school administrators, if necessary, to ensure that the school program is structured so that they receive a year of full credits and satisfactory marks. If the student is in need of courses or credits, some options are:

- summer school during the summer before/after the exchange;
- online courses; and,
- applying to receive a special project credit before the exchange.

Note: The special project credit is a student-designed initiative. The Special Project Proposal Template, found within the [Special Project Credit Policy](#), must be completed and approved by the principal and school division superintendent (or designate) **prior** to the student beginning the project and prior to their departure for Québec.

The following is suggested for a student applying in Grade 9 for an exchange in Grade 10.

- Take the French courses in the first semester.
 - Note: French 10 (for a Core French student) must be completed before their departure in February.
- For the second semester, most of which the student will spend in Québec, the student may consider:
 - French 20 (Core French);
 - Social Studies 10 or any other course in which the subject matter is not sequential; and,
 - electives such as Physical Education, Art, Music, etc.
- Select these based on personal competence in these areas so the student can make up for the lost time upon their return.
- Do not plan to take any 20 level courses, other than French 20, in the second semester.

The following is suggested for a student applying in Grade 10 for an exchange in Grade 11.

- Take the French courses in the first semester.
 - Note: French 20 (for a Core French student) must be completed before their departure in February.
- For the second semester, most of which the student will spend in Québec, the student may consider:
 - French 30 (Core French);
 - Social Studies 20 or any other course in which the subject matter is not sequential; and,
 - electives such as Physical Education, Art, Music, etc.
- Select these based on personal competence in these areas so the student can make up for the lost time upon their return.
- Do not plan to take any 30 level courses, other than French 30, in the second semester.

Working on Saskatchewan schoolwork through distance learning courses during the two-month stay in Québec is discouraged as the student will be occupied with their Québec school program and activities.

In early February, the Provincial Coordinator will accompany the Saskatchewan student to Québec and will help arrange and verify the student's timetable. While the school in Québec will attempt to meet the student's requests regarding course selection, this is not always possible. The goal of the program is language-learning in the cultural environment, and this will require the student's full attention. Therefore, schoolwork from Saskatchewan would hinder the achievement of this goal. Should the student have timetabling concerns, please discuss them with the liaison teacher and administration.

4.0 During the Exchange

4.1 October to November (Hosting Period)

During this two-month period, the responsibility of the Saskatchewan student and their family is to welcome the twin and make them feel comfortable in the home.

It can be a stressful experience for a teenager to leave a familiar environment where they feel safe to live with a new family for two months. This difficulty is usually compounded by language or communication difficulties. A great deal of patience and understanding is required during this period. This section will provide suggestions which may help the student during the October to November portion of the exchange.

4.1.1 Arrival

The student and family must be at the pickup point, either the Regina or Saskatoon airport, to welcome the twin. Make the arrival a special event (e.g., flowers, party, barbecue or dinner), but please remember the twin could be exhausted.

The student should help their twin settle into their home. A tour of the home and a review of the relevant household rules are recommended. This may be repeated several days later to ensure understanding.

Be considerate of the twin; they may be tired and may not understand everything in their new surroundings. The twin may experience fatigue due to time change, stress and language learning and it may continue for a few weeks. Symptoms include wanting to go to sleep after supper, some confusion, slower reactions or understanding. The twin can be hungry at odd times – or all the time!

4.1.2 At School

When the student takes their twin to school, the first person that they should meet is the liaison teacher, the guidance contact person and the administration. Inform the twin of the school rules (e.g., opening exercises, timetable, cafeteria, gymnasium, bus pass, locker and tour of school). The twin may follow the student to their classes until a timetable is established.

Take the twin to all classes and introduce them to the teachers. If there is a major problem, tell the liaison teacher, but remember that little things are good excuses to get upset when there are major cultural language adjustments to make. It's important to be patient.

During the fall term, parents should make every attempt to attend a parent meeting or conference day at school to:

- determine the progress of their own child and the twin (e. g., is the twin attending class, participating and progressing); and,
- verify that teachers are aware that the Saskatchewan student will be attending school in Québec for two months (February to March).

When an individual is learning a second language, they tire very quickly. Allow for a lot of sleep, sports, non-conversational activities and private space for the twin.

4.1.3 Family Situation

The presence of a new family member may cause jealousy among siblings. Suddenly, someone is receiving more attention. It is important to involve all family members and to help younger children accept the new addition to the family.

The twin should be encouraged to come out of their room. Family members can encourage the twin to get involved in family events (e.g., play games, watch television or help with family chores). It is recommended that the twin moderate their use of technology, especially when it isolates them and when the language of communication is in French (e.g., emailing, using social media, listening to music, texting or phoning to Québec). Respect the twin and communicate honestly with them as often as possible. It is not, however, necessary for the students to be with each other every minute.

In the early stages of the exchange, continue to verify that the twin understands and that they are not just polite and agreeing to whatever is being said.

Parents should check in with the twin if they exhibit any of the following:

- snacking more than usual;
- crying a lot;
- engaging in a lot of screen time; and,
- spending all of their time in their room.

If necessary, involve the school liaison teacher. The twin must be encouraged to communicate with each other if there is a concern at any time. The twin must realize that the host family cares.

Family Rules

Many Saskatchewan families have very few written rules, but a short-written list should be given so that the twin knows:

- meal times and if the family eats together or not;
- morning/evening schedules;
- curfew (weeknights and weekends);
- family chores (setting table and dishes);
- television (how much and how late); and,
- family activities.

Phone or Online Calls

Frequent calls from the twin to Québec or to other French speaking students can occur but should be limited. The twin is encouraged to interact and learn English. If long-distance calls have a cost, the twin will be responsible for costs. Likewise, the student will pay for any long-distance call costs while they are in Québec.

Language

The twin may use English to swear, unaware of the meaning in English. If this happens, explain why it is inappropriate.

Health Care

- The twin is encouraged to have additional medical insurance; however, it is not mandatory.
- The twin must present their Québec Health Insurance card upon request of medical services. If the medical office accepts the card, there should not be a fee. If the medical office does not honour the card, it is recommended that the host family:
 - communicate with the twin's parents to determine who will pay the fees;
 - retain the original invoices and receipts;
 - in the event of major surgery, obtain the operation record from the doctor; and,
- the payee may request reimbursement from the [Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec](#) (Québec health insurance plan) by completing an Application for Reimbursement form.

General Observations

Many Québec students tend to be very frank and honest. In contrast, the Saskatchewan students tend to be more reserved.

Québec homes may be less structured and regulated than Saskatchewan homes. The twin may note the greater structure and regulation of Saskatchewan homes. Use direct communication with the twin. For example, Saskatchewan parents should communicate directly with the twin to do something, such as cleaning up their room. Tell the twin what is being asked or requested.

4.1.4 Friends

The Saskatchewan student should introduce their twin to their friends. During the exchange the twin will make their own friends. This will allow both young people to spend some time apart which may be a healthy situation.

The host student in each province is not expected to provide instant friends. Friendships require time to develop in a normal fashion and should not be forced. With the new setting and the added dimension of a new language, it can be a challenge to find new friends.

4.1.5 Language Learning

When a twin becomes capable of expressing themselves in a second language it is a satisfying accomplishment. However, there is usually a frustration period that might last for up to six weeks. Single words will be replaced by groups of words. An entire sentence is a major victory. The strength of the

motivation to learn the second language and the family environment will determine the rate of progress. Here are a few ideas to help the twin:

- dictate grocery lists to the twin and take them to the store and ask them to state the items in English;
- ask the twin questions which require more than a simple yes/no response;
- have the twin write a daily or weekly email about anything and after dinner, have them correct it; and,
- invite the twin to play a variety of social games.

Always encourage the twin to communicate in English. Help them in English, if necessary.

4.2 December to January (Preparation Period)

The Saskatchewan student will have said a temporary goodbye to a new friend. Besides the readjustment to the family dynamics, the student will complete the final stage of their pre-departure schedule. The Saskatchewan student will begin to realize that soon it will be their turn!

The more work that is completed before going to Québec, the easier it is for the Saskatchewan student to readjust to the Saskatchewan school system and way of living upon returning in early spring. It is suggested to complete tasks that can be completed prior to the departure. A weekly schedule of tasks to complete might be helpful. Time will pass very quickly.

A clothing list is a good place to start. The student may ask their twin what kind of clothes to take to Québec. If there is a lot of baggage, the student may send some ahead by bus or by mail and let their twin's family know it is coming so they can pick it up.

4.2.1 Medical Coverage

Saskatchewan and Québec have a reciprocal agreement for hospital care. If a Saskatchewan student is hospitalized, a valid Saskatchewan Health Card will be accepted.

There is no reciprocal agreement for visits to a clinic. Publicly funded clinics will accept the Saskatchewan Health Card. In cases where a Saskatchewan Health Card is not accepted, payment will be required at the point of service, after which a receipt may be obtained and submitted to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health for reimbursement at Saskatchewan rates.

It would be entirely up to the parents to determine whether or not to purchase extra health insurance. Extra health insurance would be for the same benefits as in Saskatchewan (e.g., ambulance, private hospital room or private nursing).

The following are some suggestions for the student to begin preparing for their exchange.

- Have a medical and dental check-up prior to departure.
- Obtain a valid Saskatchewan Health Card to carry in Québec.
- Look into obtaining extra health insurance for the duration of the trip (optional).

4.2.2 Considerations Before Departure

- Start listening to the radio, news and other programs in French to become acclimatized and to help reduce shock once arriving in Québec.
- Prepare a list of items to take (e.g., French dictionary or mobile application dictionary, clothing, luggage, skis and money).
 - Many students like to keep a journal to record their experiences.
- Make a family decision with respect to finances and a budget. Will the student use a debit/credit card or other.
- The student may be asked to prepare for a Saskatchewan special project credit. Consider the research that may need to be completed before departing.
- The twin may have shared the course list from the *Polyvalent* (high school). The student might consider giving their Québec school a tentative list of courses they would like to take, keeping in mind that changes may be made. This list may be given to the twin to take back to Québec.
- Complete as much schoolwork or as many assignments as possible before departure.

Important: The student is reminded to take their signed “*Permission to Authorize Medical Procedures*” form to Québec and give it to their Québec family.

4.3 February to March

4.3.1 Departure for Québec in February and Return to Saskatchewan End of March

A representative of the Ministry of Education will chaperone the student when travelling to Québec in February and during their return in March.

4.3.2 Visits to Schools

A representative of the Ministry of Education will visit the student in their Québec school during their first week in Québec. The representative will verify that the Saskatchewan student is doing well and will check the student's timetable to meet the student's needs. Upon the representative's return to Saskatchewan, parents will be contacted by the Provincial Coordinator regarding their child's progress.

4.3.3 Mid-term Evaluation in Québec

The Provincial Coordinator will conduct an online interview with the Saskatchewan student as part of a mid-term evaluation. Parents will be contacted by the Ministry of Education regarding their child's progress.

4.3.4 Student Arrival in Québec Community

The first two weeks in Québec will be a challenge; the student will be surrounded by new people and may encounter new situations. The student is reminded to be gentle, kind and patient with themselves as they are immersed in a new family, school, language and culture.

4.3.5 The Québec Family

Upon arrival, the student may be tired and inundated with new information all in French. The student may be asked if they wish to rest and unpack in their new room. The student should never say they have understood a communication in French if this is not true.

The student should not hesitate to ask others to repeat information and names. The student should not hesitate to tell their twin and their host family if they are tired (e.g., due to travel or constant usage of French).

In the Saskatchewan home, where the rules are understood, the student does not need to ask or confirm information. In a new family, the student must learn the rules and may have to ask to have this information repeated. The student should ask their twin about the following family rules.

Meals

- Verify time and details of meals. Does the family eat together?
- Diet restrictions, such as allergies or a vegetarian diet, should be made known to the host family.
- What are the expectations of the student to help with meal preparation or clean-up?

Housework

- Housework expectations should be clarified (e.g., which chores is the student expected to do and how often).
- Find out the location of the cleaning materials.
- The student's bedroom must be kept tidy. If the student shares a room, cleaning responsibilities should be determined and discussed.

Morning/Evening Schedules

One more family member will affect the schedule. The student should ask about the schedule and follow it.

4.3.6 Hints for Healthy Family Relationships

The student must first ask themselves, "What can I do to help around the home?" It is important that the student realize that it is their responsibility to adjust to their host family's way of doing things and not the other way around.

Open Up to the Exchange Family

The family is concerned with how the student feels and how they are doing. The family wants to learn all about the student, their family, their part of the country, their culture and customs.

The student may spend time talking to the family or offer to help prepare a special meal. The student may share unique celebrations with the family (e.g., birthday or breakfast).

Above all, try to accept all invitations. If the family invites the student to go somewhere, it is recommended to accept, even if the student doesn't particularly like that activity. After all, this is a student exchange – this is a chance to see and experience new things. The student is encouraged to be adventurous!

Be Polite

Do not forget to say "please" (s'il vous plaît) and "thank you" (merci). Volunteer to help. Most families assign some chores to each family member, and they will expect the student to do their part but may be reluctant to ask for help.

The student is expected to understand that there are responsibilities for everyone involved in running a household and that they must do their share. Most students have found that more was expected of them from their Saskatchewan family than from their Québec family. Do not wait; volunteer and ask what can be done so the family has no reason to be disappointed and complain.

4.3.7 Religion

The host family may have different views on religion than the student's family. The host family may or may not attend religious services. If it is important for the student to attend religious services, this should be discussed with the family before arrival to make the necessary arrangements.

4.3.8 Personal Space and Communication Strategies

The twin is a new person and there will be a tendency to cling to them. Remember this can become tiresome for the twin and may become an imposition after a couple of weeks.

Others may wish to practice their English and speak with the student. Students should make sure to say, **"No English, please."** If the student is having difficulty understanding others, they may:

- ask others to repeat "please repeat" (répétez, s'il vous plait) "more slowly" if necessary (plus lentement);
- use gestures, facial expressions or mime;
- take time to write down a new expression or two; or,
- ask others to teach them new words and idioms in French, if applicable.

Just as the twins come to Saskatchewan to practice their English, Saskatchewan students are going to Québec to improve their French.

4.3.9 Friends

The twin will introduce the student to friends at school and people in the community. The student should try to accept all new invitations to try a new activity or meet new people. The student should not expect the twin's friends to become their friends automatically. New friendships usually require time and commitment. This is more difficult when the student is not as fluent as they would like. The student is reminded to be gentle with themselves.

It will be up to the student to make the effort to integrate into the school and community. This can be very taxing and frustrating, especially in the first weeks when the student's French is limited.

The student should not hesitate to make their own friends. There is no need to "live in each other's pocket." Spending too much time together for too long could cause problems. Discuss with the twin should this issue arise.

Some schools may have several Canadian or international exchange students. Friendships with other exchange students are natural – but the student should restrict their English and make a commitment to speak French.

4.3.10 Significant Others

If the twin has a significant other, there may be occasions when the student is invited to join them for an outing. If the student feels like a “third wheel”, discuss this with the twin.

Should the student develop a relationship with a significant other, it is important to abide by the family rules. If the Québec parents appear to be over-protective, the student may ask themselves how they would act as a parent, hosting another teenager.

4.3.11 Screen Time and Communication

It is natural for the student to call home occasionally, especially upon arrival. However, communicating too frequently may be an indication of problems and may cause the host family some concern. Should the student become homesick, discuss this with the host family and ask for support.

If the student finds themselves spending hours in their room alone or engaging in lots of screen time, they may have some serious difficulty adapting. This type of activity is not helping the student to learn French and may be a sign of homesickness, culture shock, frustration or difficulty with language learning.

The student must remember that their absence does not diminish their friends’ and family’s caring and they will be there when the student returns. The student is encouraged to concentrate on their experience in Québec.

4.3.12 School in Québec

When the student arrives at school the first morning, they should first meet the liaison teacher. Then be sure to meet the administrative staff.

The student may not receive a timetable immediately. The student may go to classes with their twin until their new timetable is arranged. The school situation in Québec is very different than in Saskatchewan. Do not insist on a certain schedule or course. A selection of all classes may not be possible in the new school due to timetable and class-size restrictions.

Not all teachers will be excited about having “un anglophone” or “une anglophone” in their class. The student is an ambassador for Saskatchewan. The student must be diplomatic and considerate at all times. Imposing one’s views on others may create unnecessary conflict.

The student will be a new face in the school – and obviously an English speaker! The student may feel “stared at” – a very accurate observation! A friendly smile and a “hello” (salut) should see the student through the situation.

The student should not be afraid to use their limited vocabulary and get to know people in their school and community. Often, the negative feelings are about the unknown. Giving people in Québec a chance to know them will usually dispel most of the fears.

Be prepared to talk about Saskatchewan. The student may be asked to speak in their classes and possibly in others, as well as for groups in and out of school. Do not be surprised at some of the questions.

The student is in Québec **as an exchange student**, not on a continuous vacation or travel program. The student is expected to attend school regularly, work hard, earn acceptable marks and demonstrate a positive attitude even if they receive no academic credit for their school experience in Québec.

At some point, the student might feel it is a lost semester as far as progress with their academic education is concerned, but the student has chosen to enrich their life with this exchange experience and the non-academic learning gains are certain to balance out any perceived academic loss.

The clubs and teams that the student may join can offer new friendships. As soon as possible, the student should visit the clubs and teams at school (e.g., drama group, computer club or sports teams). Sports teams in Québec schools may not be as numerous or as competitive as in Saskatchewan, but if the team is not already full of players, the student might be just the person they've been waiting for! Involvement is the key.

4.3.13 Attitude

The student's attitude will determine the success of their exchange. First of all, the student must have a positive mindset. The student should remain curious and open. Be optimistic; look for the good things and for what can be learned from the experience.

Above all, remember the two "C's" – consideration and cooperation. During the exchange, greater maturity is demanded of the student; therefore, they are obliged to cooperate with and to have consideration for others – to think about them and what they might want. The small, everyday gestures are very important (e.g., say thank you, smile and say hello when walking in the door, offer to set the table, take out the garbage, shovel the driveway, keep the bedroom clean, join the family in their activities or write thank-you notes to individuals who have shown a special kindness).

It may seem like a burden to the student, but they are not responsible only for themselves; they are a representative of Saskatchewan in Québec. The attitude of people in Québec towards people from Saskatchewan may be shaped by the student and their behaviour. The image that the student leaves in the minds of people in their community may pave the way or block it for future exchange students from Saskatchewan. It can mean that there will be more homes for twins or that there will be less. Even if the student must make an extra effort at times, please act selflessly, be mature and be a good ambassador!

4.3.14 Homesickness

At some point, the student may ask themselves, "What am I doing here? I could be with my friends and family or at least with people who think the same as I do." The student may feel homesick. It is important for the student to know they are not alone and this is a perfectly natural way to feel when they find themselves in a culture different from their own.

Culture shock is experienced when daily routine is disrupted and all the familiar supports that have been present are suddenly absent. Remember culture shock is a common and normal reaction when an individual is in a strange place.

Another common feeling is anger. The student may become irritated about almost everything. The student may feel that everything in Québec is strange and that everything back home is wonderful. The student may feel that no one understands them! They may be tired, not feel like going out or be afraid to take risks. If a student is feeling homesick, some things that may help include:

- When the student is bored or lonely, the student should engage in activities (e.g., watch a hockey game, call someone from school and arrange to meet, go to a movie, a concert or just out for coffee or a soda).
- Take steps that generally improve mental health, including eating sensibly and avoiding junk food, getting sufficient sleep, staying active, etc.
- Concentrate on the here and now. Look at life in the new setting as being interesting and different – not better or worse. If the student is critical and negative, they will quickly alienate people and they may become isolated.
- Talk to the host family. The twin may have felt this way when they visited Saskatchewan so the twin may be able to suggest something that worked for them. Sometimes talking about how one feels makes the feeling itself less intense. The host family will be happy that the student has opened up to them.
- Talk to new people. Many of the students at the school may already have a circle of friends or a group, but they are interested in the student. Many Québec residents are friendly and will include the student if the student makes the first move. Do not wait for others to initiate and do not get discouraged if attempts are unsuccessful.
- Join clubs and sports teams. Participate in school and community activities. The student may join a youth group or volunteer to teach young people a skill that they know or that others are trying to learn.
- Contact the liaison teacher. If the student feels that their problem is different and this advice does not help and their host family does not understand, then the student must contact their liaison teacher. The liaison teacher will provide the student with a rewarding exchange experience and will do all they can to see that the student achieves their goal.

The student should understand they are not alone. Others may experience similar feelings if they were living in a new place, staying with a new family, attending a new school and learning a new language. The student should reach out to someone rather than considering ending the exchange early or using self-harm, drugs or alcohol to cope.

4.3.15 Language Learning

If the student speaks another language, their knowledge of that language is probably more than adequate. Sometimes, however, it will be necessary to investigate the real meaning of a word. The student should have a mobile language app or pocket dictionary and make use of it. The student may already have access to a bilingual dictionary, but while in Québec the student should also have a French language app or dictionary.

The student should be sure that they are aware of the effect certain words have on the listener. **The student should ask if they do not understand something and be sensitive to the nuances of words.**

In talking about complex subjects, the student will still find themselves searching for the right way to express themselves, but should not be deterred from getting into interesting discussions. Know that:

- others may perceive the student as being quiet or shy. The student should remember while this may not be their “true self,” it is a phase they are going through as they learn French;
- when the student relaxes, they learn more quickly; and,
- if the student is not afraid to ask others to repeat, they will do their best to help the student.

Patience and Permission

The student should be patient with themselves and ask for the information they need so others can help. The student cannot become bilingual overnight. The student should give themselves permission to make mistakes. This is how individuals learn and as the student listens and practices more, they will be able to acquire more vocabulary and learn more grammatical structures.

It is natural when the student does not know an item in French, that they try English or a literal translation to communicate. As others speak French and provide correct phrases and structures, the student will be able to speak more fluently.

Practice Makes Perfect

Research in linguistics (the study of languages and language learning) is determining that bilingual people have separate language centres. Translation to English merely strengthens one’s English centre. To learn French and develop competence, the student must use French in their daily life, thinking and even dreaming! This can happen for the student while in Québec. To take advantage of this opportunity, the student must be ready to:

- eliminate translating into English;
- learn the French names for objects (ex. make lists and label items);
- learn the structures that express ideas in French and use them; and,
- be ready to experience headaches and frustration from the concentration.

The reward is incredible. After eight weeks in Québec, the results are evident and the student can be proud of their accomplishment!

4.3.16 Saskatchewan Family While Child is in Québec

During this time, the Saskatchewan family will need to support their child who is in an unfamiliar situation by determining how often communication with family and friends should occur and encouraging that the student become involved in the family and social life in Québec.

Limiting communication with the Saskatchewan family is suggested. The need to escape from the homesickness and frustration of a new language and culture is only temporary. The advantage of a pre-determined communication schedule is that the student learns independence and faces difficulties that they may encounter.

Visits from Saskatchewan friends or family can disrupt the exchange year. It is recommended that friends or family not visit at all, but if they do, they should arrange to stay in a hotel. It is confusing to have two sets of parents with potentially different value systems and difficulties can develop. Encouragement from the family will see their child through. The reward is personal growth, independence and increased fluency in French.

4.3.17 Certificate

Upon completion of the exchange, the student will be presented with a certificate commemorating their participation in the Saskatchewan-Québec Student Exchange Program.

5.0 After the Exchange

5.1 Culture Shock

When the student returns to Saskatchewan, they may discover they are in the midst of another adjustment process. Just when they thought that they had finished adjusting to another culture they find, in reality, change is the norm rather than an exception.

5.2 Maintaining Language Skills

As the student is working to earn credits, finishing the semester or preparing for the summer, they may wish to consider options for maintaining and improving their French. It is essential once having achieved their current level of fluency that the student take the initiative to maintain and improve their skills. While considering the student's options, some of the following suggestions may be helpful:

- Seek summer employment with a local tourist office or attraction where French would be an asset.
 - French summer job listings may be found at www.fransaskois.sk.ca
- Assist in a day care, nursery school, kindergarten or playground where French is the language of communication.
- Volunteer to help at a summer language camp.

Summer work and study programs exist, as do year-long programs of study abroad. Inquiries may be directed to appropriate agencies or the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. The student may discuss these possibilities with their liaison teacher. The following websites provide information for language bursary programs and other exchange programs:

- [Explore - Official Languages Programs OLP-PLO](#)
- canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/exchanges-canada

Investigation of various options offered by post-secondary institutions will also provide more opportunities to improve the student's French. This may be a worthwhile inquiry as the student considers their choice of universities and programs.