



Advocates for Language Learning - El Marino
2022-2023 Spanish Immersion México Exchange Program
Program Introduction & FAQ's

The students of El Marino have had an opportunity to participate in an academic and cultural student exchange with schools in Guadalajara, Jalisco, México since 1984. The México Exchange Program (MEX) is sponsored by ALLEM and it is organized and operated by the families who participate.

The lead coordinator for the 2022-23 México Exchange is Hilda Ordaz . The México exchange committee members are Candice Chang, Alex Cobian, Edy Mendoza and Noemi Barajas.

We are here to lead and guide the process but **your full participation and assistance is expected** as soon as you are accepted into the program. **This is a GROUP EFFORT.**

We feel that the opportunity to live as part of a Mexican family gives participating students an enriching and eye-opening view of a different culture and a new land. It almost always provides the participants with an enhanced sense of self-confidence and independence and a new-found appreciation for their own home and culture. It definitely provides them with plenty of practice in communicating in Spanish. For many, the México Exchange is the capstone experience of the Spanish immersion program at El Marino.

This document attempts to provide answers to the questions parents ask most often. It won't have answers to all of your questions, so feel free to ask any other questions that you like.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to apply?

Any fourth grade student from SIP is eligible to apply and is returning to El Marino for fifth grade. Application process is during summer. We shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, national origin (ancestry), socio-economic status, in any of its activities or operations. **But you must attend all meetings. It is a requirement.**

Is my child ready?

Please consider your child's (and your own) emotional preparedness for this type of journey before deciding to participate. Our goal is that every child and every family have a good experience with the program. While the Exchange Program offers a wonderful opportunity for the child who participates by enriching their cultural awareness. It can be painfully difficult for the child who is not ready for such a trip. It can also be hard on a parent who is not ready to have their child away for 10 days. It is important that both the parent and the child be enthusiastic about participating. The México Exchange is not suitable for all ten or eleven year old children. This program is for adventurous, mature kids who are willing and able to act as an ambassador

for our school and our country. It's not something that should be taken lightly and it's not something that a child or parent should be pushed into. If you feel that you or your child is not yet up to this cultural experience, you should not apply.

What factors do you consider in reviewing the applications?

We consider both social and academic preparedness. This type of exchange requires that the child be adaptable, recognize and meet social expectations, and respect authority. Children with behavioral issues are not good candidates for the exchange. Children who have issues with honesty are not good candidates for the exchange. Academically, your child will be **required to do the homework assigned by the school in Guadalajara, as well as keep up with certain work assigned by El Marino teachers**. They will return to school approximately two weeks into the **Spring**. Children with poor work habits are therefore not good candidates for the exchange. Your child's 4th and 5th grade teachers, adult supporters at school, and the Principal will be asked to evaluate these characteristics in your child.

How many applicants are accepted to participate in the exchange?

Only 9 students will be allotted to partake in the exchange based on the evaluation and completion of application requirements. Only 3 fluent Spanish speaking parents chaperones will be selected. Fluency is key to being culturally sensitive to our exchange hostess.

How does my child apply and how many children are accepted?

You and your child should complete an application form and submit it ALLEM no later than **Friday, Sept 30, 2022**. It is important that **all** sections of the application are completed. Late applications will be considered only after on-time applicants have been placed in a participant group or wait listed. We can accept no more than 9 children into the program.

If there are more than 9 eligible applicants, how are the participants selected?

Some years we have had more than 9 eligible applicants for the program. Children who are eligible and are not selected for the participant groups are placed on a waiting list. Below is a description of the method used to select the participants and generate the waiting list.

Level 1 Selection: Children identified by their teachers and the Principal as being exceptionally good candidates are automatically selected as participants for the lottery. Children identified by their teachers and the Principal as being exceptionally poor candidates are declined.

Level 2 Selection: Eligible applicants who are in Level 1 lottery and qualified chaperone selected may be automatically included as a participant if their parent is an active member and an active volunteer for ALLEM. Only 3 applicants will be selected in this format.

Level 3 Selection: All remaining eligible applicants are included in a lottery and are randomly selected to participate. The lottery is also used where there are more than 9 eligible applicants to determine position on the waiting list.

How long and when is the Exchange?

Your child will be in México for approximately 10 days and your family will host for approximately 10 days. These two things do not occur simultaneously. The dates are tentative and subject to change, but we anticipate that your child will be in México for two weeks in **late March through early April 2023**. In México, the students will experience a day to day routine with their host family while attending school and participate in the group activities assigned. Any additional

activities will be at the family host discretion. We will host the groups from México **late May through early June 2023**. We will provide them a day to day routine experience with school and any additional activities aside from the group activities scheduled.

Where will my child go to school in México?

ALLEM has had an enduring relationship with Colegio La Calma: <https://lacalma.edu.mx/> a private school in the city of Zapopan (a suburb of the greater Guadalajara metropolitan area) for 35 years. Colegio La Calma is smaller than El Marino and has classes from pre-K through 6th grade. Colegio La Calma offers an intensive English language program (similar in some ways to El Marino's Spanish program) and many activities and enrichment programs. For the last 6 years, we have also been sending students to The Neill School <https://www.neillschool.com/>, a newer partner school located several miles from La Calma. They have proven to be an enthusiastic host school with all the same qualities and characteristics as of La Calma.

Where will my child live in México?

Your child will be matched with a child who attends Colegio La Calma or The Neill School who is probably in 5th grade, but may be in 4th or 6th. We will send information about our participants to the directors of both schools in Guadalajara, who will select a host for your child based primarily on gender. However, it doesn't always turn out that way. We also try to match children based on their interests and personalities, but this is not an exact science. We will also address any special health needs. For example, if your child is allergic to dogs, we will make sure that the host family does not have a dog. It is important that you inform us of anything we should know to aid this process *at the time you apply*. Ideally, the child that your child lives with is the child you will host when he or she comes to Culver City. Again, it doesn't always work out this way, but that is the goal.

Is it safe?

We are all parents and we all have the same concern for the safety of our children. There is crime in every major metropolitan area, including both Guadalajara and Los Angeles. The crime rate there is reported to be less than Los Angeles. Moreover, La Calma and The Neill School are in middle class neighborhoods and the families that host our children are caring and thoughtful parents who take great caution with our children. In other words, our children stay with careful and concerned parents (just like ourselves) in a middle class neighborhood of one of the safest states in México. Perhaps the best way to keep the news reports in perspective is to understand that every time there is a report of a mass shooting in the United States, the families at La Calma and The Neill School get nervous about whether it is safe to send their children to Culver City. In the end, though, whether to send a child on the exchange is a very personal decision and we respect every parent's right to choose what is best for their family. This program is voluntary and parent run. If for any reason, you decide it's not safe to send your child, your child should not apply. This decision should be carefully thought out before you submit your application.

Can I call my child in México?

Yes, but we require that you limit your calls to once each week. Experience shows that this helps your child adjust to the new environment and alleviates homesickness. More often than not, your call will leave your child sad and homesick. The calls are scheduled for Thursday evenings because they are usually followed by something fun for the weekend that alleviates the feelings of homesickness.

What if my child is unhappy with the host family?

It depends on the cause of the unhappiness. A range of actions can follow, including assistance by the chaperones to aid in your child's adjustment or, in extremely rare cases, finding a new host family for your child. It's important to manage your child's expectations and your own when it comes to the connection that is made between your child and their host family, host brother or sister. Some kids find a new best friend, some get along just fine but don't find a deep connection, some don't get along at all. We can't guarantee a "love connection" but we can assure you that we will handle each situation according to the attention it requires. Safety is our biggest concern. Sometimes the biggest lessons our kids learn are from learning to live with a family that is different from their own.

When you host a child or Chaperone?

When deciding whether to participate, you must also consider this a commitment. This is a two way exchange: every family must help with the hosting of the group that comes to Culver City from México. You will be expected to host a child or chaperone in your home for two weeks when they visit Culver City. If, for any reason, you are unable to host a guest, you will be expected to help with a disproportionately large amount of the other hosting duties and help shoulder the expense of hosting. Some of the other duties include inviting chaperones to your home for dinner, acting as day guide and planning parties and excursions. Keep in mind that you may have to host chaperones in the morning in addition to an evening.

The cost of the parent's weekend:

Airfare, Hotel, Excursions – varies by family

What is the parent's weekend?

The parent's weekend is optional but most families choose to participate. You will fly down and stay in Guadalajara. The parent weekend allows you to reconnect with your child, meet their host family. It's an important trip especially if your child's family is hesitant to send their child to live with you in Culver City. When the families meet us, it makes a big difference in their decision to send their child.

Costs associated with hosting.

This wonderful experience gains your family a new member that becomes a part of your nuclear circle for the next two weeks. You will be responsible for this new member financially during their stay. You will continue with routine and normal outings. This includes for example amusement parks, family vacation/weekend events, a movie, museum, or ice skating, etc. The children from México bring their own money to cover their Disney & Universal Tickets, your whole family or part of your family may want to participate too, which will add expense. Other expenses include small gifts for each member of your child's host family and minor incidentals you may need to purchase for your exchange child you host.

What are the excursions?

While in Guadalajara, your child will experience school outings. The outings could typically include the Zoo, a trip to Tlaquepaque where the children are taught and exposed to cultural artesian or a trip to a new Children's Museum called "Kidzania" <https://guadalajara.kidzania.com/es-mx>. While the group from México is here, we all go to Disneyland and Universal together. We usually go to the California Science Center. You can also take your exchange child/chaperone on additional excursions as a family.

What do I do if my child has health issues?

Anything that may affect your child's behavior or health while away from home **MUST** be disclosed to the chaperones and the host parents. This includes medical conditions, medications, emotional problems, stress behaviors, and adaptive mechanisms. **We cannot overstate the importance of sharing this information with the people who will care for your child in your absence.** If your child has an on-going and/or serious medical condition, you should consult with your child's physician to make sure the trip will not compromise your child's health. If your child sees a therapist, we request that you speak with the therapist to determine if this trip is suitable for your child. If it is determined that your child's health issues are too dangerous for the chaperones to handle, we would be unable to accept them into the program.

What if my child gets sick while they are in México?

It's entirely possible that your child could come down with a cold or have stomach issues while in México. We would handle the situation in México the same way we would here in Culver City. If your child needs to rest and stay home from school either the host parent or a chaperone will stay with them. In addition to your own health insurance policy, you will be required to purchase an international policy which will cover any doctor visits or emergency visits when your child is in México. Guadalajara has very good doctors and hospitals. You will be notified immediately if your child is ill or has an accident and be a part of the conversation on how best to treat any ailments or injuries.

Are children ever sent home mid-trip?

We reserve the right to take the unusual step of sending a child home mid-trip should the circumstances warrant it. If, for any reason, the directors and chaperones determine that it is in the best interests of your child or the program for your child to return home before the end of the trip, the cost of the early return will be your responsibility. Also, your child will return home unchaperoned, unless you elect to travel to Mexico to accompany your child.

How are the chaperones selected?

Adults interested in being a chaperone must complete and submit a chaperone application no later than **Friday, Sept 30, 2023**. Typically (not always), chaperones are parents of children participating in the exchange. They are selected based on their school clearance, experience and skill with children, their ability to communicate in Spanish, their availability to commit for 10 days, their history with ALLEM, and the results of the interview process. The selection will be made by the México Exchange Committee. The chaperones are on duty at all times while in México and they cannot expect to work while they are there. They are responsible for all of the children and will be expected to undergo a training process that includes First Aid/CPR and Sexual Misconduct prevention. It's important to ask yourself if you would not send your child if you were not chosen. If you would only consider sending our child if you are the chaperone, that's not a good reason to be a chaperone. You should feel comfortable sending your child regardless. If you are chosen to be a chaperone, your child will be expected to turn to the other chaperones for assistance. This program is all about fostering independence; helicopter parenting is strongly discouraged.

Are chaperone expenses covered by the program?

Some of the chaperone expenses are covered, including regular airfare and excursion costs. The funds for this are provided by the parents who send their children to México. Chaperones must cover all of their additional expenses, including a portion of the excursions and outings and the cost of host gifts for their host family, and incidental meals.

How much does it cost?

The approximate cost of sending your child to México is around \$1,350:

- \$100 Application Fee
- \$400 Roundtrip Airfare LAX/GDL
- \$150 Chaperone Airfare
- \$100 Excursion Costs
- \$50 Money for emergencies.
- \$50 Souvenir Money
- \$150 SOS Personal Travel Insurance for your child (mandatory)
- \$350 ALLEM Foreign Liability Insurance (mandatory, cost will vary depending on how many families participate)

Whom do I contact if I have more questions?

Feel free to contact the committee with any questions that arise. The committee members are
Hilda Ordaz
Candice Chang
Noemi Barajas
Alex Cobian
Edy Mendoza

This e-mail address goes to the entire committee: mex@allelmarino.org

Please look forward to updates on parent information meetings through Dolphin Splash, school newsletter or ALLEM page <http://allelmarino.org/> .