



## SISTER SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

### Sister Schools Mission & Goals

#### The Sister Schools Mission:

**Promote peace through mutual respect, cooperation,  
and understanding – one student, one school at a time.**

#### Sister Schools Goals:

- Integrate the Sister Cities model of citizen diplomacy into youth and education initiatives
- Offer international “people-to-people” connections to students, teachers, and school administrators
- Promote cultural exchange and global awareness among students through virtual and in-person project-based learning

#### Introduction

The Sister Schools initiative is an opportunity for schools to introduce an international element to a curriculum through cultural exchange programs for students.

The following is a guide for starting and running a Sister Schools program based on pilot partnerships, existing Sister Schools organizations and the research and experience of Sister Cities International.

The documents in the Sister Schools Toolkits are meant to guide you through the process of finding partner schools, starting, and operating a Sister Schools program in your community.

If you have any questions or need any further assistance, contact Sister Cities International or your Sister Cities International State Representative.

#### What are Sister Schools?

The Sister Schools Initiative brings together schools within current and potential Sister Cities. Sister Schools partnerships can be between individual classes, entire schools, or even school districts. Teachers and Principals in partnered Sister Schools have their classes participate in collaborative projects.

#### Why Start a Sister Schools Program?

Sister Schools participate in collaborative projects so that students can work with and learn from fellow youth around the globe. These collaborative projects provide students with an understanding of international and cultural similarities and differences.

Through these cultural exchanges, students not only gain a more global perspective on subjects, but learn about their own community by sharing it with their Sister School.

Interacting with their international peers allows students to become active citizen diplomats and ambassadors for their country. These interactions create a mutually beneficial relationship for all participants and rewarding experiences for your schools and students.

## The Three Components of Sister Schools

To organize a Sister Schools program, three components will be needed to ensure its success:

- The Local Sister City Organization
- The Schools
- Sister Cities International

The Individual roles of each of these components are detailed below. Please make sure to note your role and responsibilities in a Sister Schools Program.

### The Local Sister City Organization:

Locates a Sister School in a Sister City through current contacts, supports the program, and keeps updated information for the Sister Schools program.

A local Sister City organization looking to establish a Sister Schools program should consider:

- Identifying active partnerships and contacts in the Sister City, where the Sister School will be located
- Identifying staff or volunteers supportive of incorporating a Sister Schools partnership in their community, who may:
  - Facilitate the pairing of Sister Schools between Sister Cities
  - Keep updated contact information for both Sister Schools
  - Provide basic support and resources (including Sister Schools Toolkits) for the Sister Schools program
  - Act as a contact between Sister Cities International youth programs and the Sister Schools

### The Schools

Conduct the program by designing and implementing projects between Sister Schools, and sustaining the partnership through consistent communication.

Schools need ***motivated teachers and principals*** to:

- Work with the Sister Schools Coordinator to find a Sister School
- Communicate with their Sister School to initiate the partnership
- Conduct the program by organizing projects between Sister Schools
- Maintain consistent contact and communication with their Sister School
- Update their Sister Schools Coordinator about the program

For more detailed information, please refer to the Sister Schools Toolkit for Schools.

## The Principals and Teachers

The schools need the following to fulfill their roles:

- A supportive principal
- At least one teacher who is willing and excited to implement the program in their class
- Consistent Communication between Sister Schools

The school's role in a Sister Schools partnership is of course the most important and pivotal to its success. The schools need to have motivated teachers and principals, who recognize the value and importance of bringing an international curriculum into their schools and classes in order for the program to be successful and effective.

### The Principal's Role

The principal's role is one of coordination and support. The primary functions of the principal are to:

- Facilitate a dialogue between their school and their prospective Sister School
- Sign a Sister School Agreement
- Acknowledge the Sister School partnership at their school
- Support the teachers who are conducting Sister Schools projects in their classes
- Keep consistent communication with their fellow Sister Schools principal

**Principals should make their school aware and excited about their new Sister School. There are many ways to have the partnership be visible and accessible to students.**

For example:

- Have special assemblies to announce the partnership, and present the new Sister School to the school as a whole
- Hold annual school wide events to commemorate the partnership (such as international holiday festivities or other types of cultural events)

### The Teacher's Role

The teachers' role is to communicate consistently with their Sister School, and to design and implement projects between the schools.

**Teachers will need to:**

- Have a Sister Schools Dialogue between schools to structure the partnership
- Collaborate to create curriculum and/or projects between their Sister Schools
- Communicate as often as needed, to update one another on their class's progress on current projects, and to discuss future plans.

Teachers can also design their own project or decide to collaborate on one through the International Educational & Resource Network (i-Earn).

### **Sister Cities International will:**

- Provide schools with information on how to connect with their local Sister Cities organization
- Provide the resources and guidance needed to start a Sister Schools program
- Will provide project packets and resources for teachers to use as a direction for the partnership
- Will provide tools and ideas for sustaining the partnership

### **Sister Schools Models**

There are three basic models to base your Sister Schools program on:

#### **Class to Class:**

A Sister Schools program can be as simple as partnering a single class at each school to partake in projects together. Ideally, classes should be matched by age, and number of students.

The Class to Class model allows for a cultural exchange experience to occur between students and teachers at Sister Schools. Teachers can pair their students up as pen-pals, and can easily monitor projects between their classes. Sister Schools teachers in class to class partnerships will form close bonds, designing and completing projects year after year that will strengthen the program.

#### **School to School:**

A Sister Schools model can be between schools as a whole by conducting school-wide Sister Schools projects or events. The principals may take more of a leading role in this model.

The School to School model can have schools participating in joint fundraising events, art projects, letter-writing campaigns, festivals commemorating your Sister Schools' holidays, or exchange visit programs between schools. The possibilities for projects are endless!

An annual Sister Schools Day could be considered for any model as well, to renew appreciation for the program every school year!

#### **School District to School District:**

There are circumstances when a School District to School District model is the best. This model may work especially well when working with a hierarchical international school district. A District to District model offers a larger program which may be more inviting to financial sponsors, and support from the district may allow for more diverse opportunities for activities and in-person exchanges. A great challenge in a District to District model is making sure the teachers are invested in the program.

If such a model interests you, please inform Sister Cities International and we will provide you with more contacts and information for taking on such a program.

#### **Links to Sister Schools Resources:**

[Sample Sister Schools Agreement](#)

[Sample Lesson Plan](#)

[Sister Schools Project Packet](#)

[Recording Permission Form](#)

[Sister Schools Sustainability Tips](#)