Foreign Student Placement and Student Visa Guidelines

Argentina  Aruba
Bahamas  Brazil
Canada  Cuba
Denmark  Dominica
Ecuador  England
Finland  France
Guatemala  Guyana
Haiti  Honduras
Italy  Israel
Jamaica  Japan
Kenya  Korea
Lebanon  Libya
Mexico  Morocco
Netherlands  Nicaragua
Peru  Pakistan
Romania  Spain
Surinam  Thailand
Trinidad & Tobago  Uruguay
Venezuela  Yugoslavia

Federal and State Compliance Office
Miami-Dade County Public Schools

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

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Mr. Alberto Carvalho
PREFACE

Federal and State Compliance Office, through the Foreign Records/Student Visa Department is committed to providing our diverse student population, parents, schools, and community with the most current information on international educational systems and their equivalence to Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Our goal is to facilitate the transition and empower students to pursue educational excellence.

The functions of the department include:

STUDENT GRADE PLACEMENT

The Foreign Records Department assists Miami-Dade County Public Schools with interpretation of foreign records such as transcripts, birth certificates, passports, and guardianship letters for proper placement into our school system.

FOREIGN GRADES CONVERSION

The Foreign Records Department also provides at the secondary and adult level (6-20) a detailed interpretation, translation, and conversion of all coursework taken at each grade level in the foreign country, along with the equivalent grade earned in each subject area.

STUDENT VISA DEPARTMENT

The Student Visa Department assists clients in determining student visa eligibility, as well as in providing assistance with securing, completing, and submitting appropriate immigration forms. This office is the only Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department with personnel authorized to complete the I-20 Form, required to request an F-1 or M-1 Visa from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Other functions include providing maintenance and guardianship of client files and collection of the reimbursement cost as required by the current immigration law.

The goal of this document is to provide you with information that may assist in responding to the most common inquiries regarding grade placement and grade conversions of foreign students. Also included are guidelines regarding student visas and related information which provide parents/guardians with the USCIS guidelines.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Placement and Interpretation of Records ................................................................. 1
Temporary Grade Placement Form ............................................................................ 2
Placement of Foreign Exchange Students ............................................................... 4
Foreign Vocational Students .................................................................................... 5
Implications of Federal Immigration Law ............................................................... 6
Recommended Actions for School Site Administrators .......................................... 7

APPENDICES

Contacts .................................................................................................................. 10
School Board Rule ................................................................................................ 11
Student Progression Plan ....................................................................................... 13
Poster/Handout in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole ...................................... 16
PLACEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF RECORDS

STEPS FOR IMMEDIATE PLACEMENT OF FOREIGN STUDENTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FOREIGN STUDENT RECORDS K-12:

1. Fax records to our office at (305) 887-8423 preferably when students and parents are at your school counter. Please use our department’s Fax Cover Sheet found in our website under the Presentations link. School records may also be sent through the school mail, Mail Code 9028.

2. Please specify on our Fax Cover Sheet before sending the following information: date, student’s name, date of birth, from what country are the school records from, student identification number, if available.

3. Note that the validity of the documents depends on the information you provide. Indicate if you see any type of alteration, for example, use of correction fluid or strike through that would not be evident on a faxed document.

4. Indicate if you are looking at an ORIGINAL document or a FAXED copy.

5. Call this office IMMEDIATELY after you have faxed the documents. You will speak to one of the International Student Placement Advisors, who will provide you with a recommendation for appropriate placement. You will be provided with the school year calendar and the number of years required for graduation in that country, and any other relevant information.

6. The student will then be placed following the Student Progression Plan guidelines and all the documents presented.

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<tr>
<th>AGE(S)</th>
<th>LEVEL ASSIGNED</th>
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<td>5-10</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
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<td>Elementary school or middle school, depending on grade configuration of the school.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Middle school or senior high school depending on grade configuration of the school.</td>
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<td>15 &amp; older</td>
<td>Senior high school</td>
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7. Once the student is placed properly, the student's grades will be converted into the Miami-Dade County Public Schools scale. The conversion will either be sent or input directly into Transfer and Credit Evaluation, TRACE at the secondary level.

8. If after requesting tangible documents none are provided, please refer to Student Progression Plan for placement guidelines or you may call our office. See page 9.

9. Staff will assist you over the phone or in our office, should there be any questions or concerns from staff or parents. This office has access to international education manuals and is constantly in contact with different consulates and/or ministries of education from around the world; thus keeping up to date with the latest educational changes. Should you need more information, please call (305) 884-2044.
TEMPORARY GRADE PLACEMENT FOR USE WITH ALL NEW STUDENTS WITH OR WITHOUT SCHOOL RECORDS

I, ____________________________, understand that my son/daughter has been placed in the ________ grade temporarily pending the arrival and/or evaluation of school records from his/her previous school(s).

Upon receipt of the school records, I agree that my son/daughter will be placed in the proper grade, and change schools if necessary, should the records prove to be other than what I have indicated.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of Student (Last, First, Middle)</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Student I.D. Number</th>
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PREVIOUS SCHOOL HISTORY

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PREVIOUS SCHOOL HISTORY (If Applicable)

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REQUIREMENTS

PLACEMENT OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS J-1 VISA
(GRADES 9-12)

US Citizenship Immigration Services (USCIS) and Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) guidelines require Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) to monitor and report exchange visitors on a J-1 visa. Therefore, all exchange visitor sponsoring organizations requesting admission of their applicants to attend MDCPS are required to contact:

Federal and State Compliance Office
Foreign Records/Student Visa Department
489 East Drive
Miami Springs, Florida 33166
(305) 884-2044

The Foreign Records/Student Visa Department is the only designated office in Miami-Dade County Public Schools with authorized school officials to sign and approve the sponsoring organization’s Exchange Visitor School Acceptance Form. Principals and other school site administrators are not to sign the form.

Foreign Exchange Coordinators requesting placement of exchange students in your school are to be directed also to the Foreign Records/Student Visa Department. Our office will approve the acceptance form and determine the proper grade placement of the exchange student. Once the J-1 Visa is issued, the Foreign Records/Student Visa Department will transmit a clearance document to the schools verifying appropriate grade placement.
FOREIGN VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

A student may be issued an M-1 visa for the purpose of attending a full time vocational program subject to the rules and regulations currently in effect under Section 625 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-208.)

The Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 Form) and the M-1 visa will be valid for a period of one year and renewable in accordance with the established guidelines that include satisfactory progress in the vocational program of study. An M-1 visa may not be issued for the study of English as a Second Language (ESL.)

Vocational programs that are longer than 12 months will require an extension of stay. This extension will be processed through the Department of Homeland Security. The M-1 visa holder will send a completed I-539 Form at least 45 days prior of the expiration program date that appears in his/her I-20 Form. While the student is in the process of waiting for the approval or denial of the extension of stay, he or she will not be able to travel.

Students who are holders of M-1 visas are allowed to study one program in the vocational curriculum. Should a second vocational program be desired, the student must obtain a new I-20 indicating the new program of studies and a new visa at the U.S. Consulate in the student’s home country will be issued or denied.

Tuition fees established by the State of Florida are in effect for all non-immigrant students attending Miami-Dade County Public Schools adult education centers.
In 1996 Congress enacted a law, Section 625 of Public Law 104-208, establishing section 214(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, placing limitations on foreign students (F-1) attending publicly funded institutions.

There are limitations and requirements related to foreign (F-1) students attending public secondary/high schools (grades nine through twelve), under U.S. law. Student F-1 visas cannot be issued to persons seeking to enter the United States in order to attend a public elementary, middle school or a publicly funded adult education program.

Students who attend private schools or privately funded adult education or language programs are not affected by the law. However, if a private school student wants to transfer to a public school or a publicly funded adult education or language program, he or she must follow the requirements of Section 625 of Public Law 104-208.

Foreign students may come to the U.S. to live with U.S. citizen relatives while attending public school. The student is limited to twelve months of study in a secondary school (high school) grades 9th-12th only. The student may not study in an elementary or middle school. It should be noted however, that the student's status as a resident of the school district and the fact that the U.S. citizen has paid local property/school taxes is irrelevant and does not fulfill the cost of the reimbursement fee requirement of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) 214 (m). Therefore, F-1 secondary school students are required to pay the school district the full cost of education by repaying the school district for the full, unsubsidized, per capita cost of providing the education to him or her. The student’s secondary school cost reimbursement fee requirement is mandatory and school districts cannot waive the reimbursement fee requirement.

The law prohibits the issuance of F-1 visas to attend publicly funded adult education programs. Publicly funded adult education is defined as: “Education, training or English as second language programs operated by, through, or for a local public school district, system, agency or authority, regardless of whether such a program charges fees or tuition.” Programs under this definition cannot accept students in F-1 status, even if tuition is charged.

The visitor visa is a type of nonimmigrant visa for persons desiring to enter the United States temporarily for business (B-1) or for pleasure, tourism or medical treatment (B-2). **B1 or B2 visa holders are not allowed to enroll in school.** If you wish to study in the U.S. while in B status, you must change it to F or M status first. If you have enrolled in classes while in B1, B2 or B1/B2 status, you are considered out of status. This violation of visa terms makes you ineligible to extend your stay under B status and cannot change your status to another non-immigrant class such as F or M.

**Student Visa Information:**

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html
Students and/or parents requesting information to obtain and/or renew F-1 Visas are to be referred to the Foreign Records/Student Visa Department located at:

Federal and State Compliance Office
489 East Drive
Miami Springs, Florida 33166
(305) 884-2044

This office is the only Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department with personnel authorized to complete the I-20 Form required to request an F-1 Visa from the U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services (USCIS) and collect the reimbursement fee as required by immigration law.

Note: Please be reminded that public school officials may not ask for a student passport, visa or other proof of immigration status in order to enroll or transfer to a public school.
APPENDICES
CONTACTS

Federal and State Compliance Office
Ms. Terry Ceballos (PDSO)
Foreign Student Coordinator K-12
489 East Drive
Miami Springs, Florida 33166
Phone: 305-883-5323
Fax: 305-883-7544
tceballos@dadeschools.net

The following services are provided by our department:

I. FOREIGN RECORDS

- Interpretation of foreign school records (K-12 and adult) for immediate grade placement
- Grade conversions of high school records for credit:
  
  Mr. Michael Perez, International Student Placement Advisor
  305-884-2044 Ext.2

  Ms. Maria Elena Paradela, International Student Placement Advisor
  305-884-2044 Ext.3

  Ms. Margarita Casero, International Student Placement Advisor
  305-884-2044 Ext.4

II. STUDENT VISAS

- Issuance of Form I-20 and Non-immigrant (F-1 and M-1 Student Visas)
- Inquiries about F-1, J-1, and M-1 Student Visas, including transferring of students into post secondary institutions
- Monitoring foreign exchange students on J-1Visa:
  
  Ms. Maria Elena Paradela, International Student Placement Advisor (F-1, J-1Visas)
  305-884-2044 Ext.3

  Ms. Margarita Casero, International Student Placement Advisor (M-1 Visas/Adult Ed)
  305-883-1445
The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida is dedicated to the total and continuous development of each student. The professional staff of the school system has the responsibility to develop administrative procedures to ensure the placement of each student in the subjects, in the grade level, or in the special program(s) best suited to meet the student’s academic needs, with consideration given to the student's social, emotional, and physical development.

Decisions regarding student promotion, retention, and special placement are primarily the responsibilities of the individual school's professional staff; however, the final decision in regard to grade placement is the responsibility of the principal. The district wide standards, in accordance with which placement decisions must be made, are entitled *Student Progression Plan 2010-2011*, which is incorporated by reference herein and made a part of this Board rule. Also, the purpose of this plan is to establish requirements and procedures for pupil progression within Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Copies of this plan are on file in the Office of Board Recording Secretary and the Citizen Information Center. The standards and the procedures for their implementation that are contained in the plan reflect clearly that promotion in Miami-Dade County Public Schools is based primarily on student achievement and is not an automatic process.

The measures which are employed to implement the standards must clearly reflect the multicultural composition of this community. Students must be provided placements which are appropriate for their English language competency and cultural background. English Language Learners (ELLs) must be provided instruction which is understandable, as well as equal and comparable in amount, scope, sequence, and quality to that provided to English proficient students. The acquisition of English language skills is the highest instructional priority for speakers of other languages. Grade placement and promotion, however, are to be based on the student's performance in the dominant language while the student is in the process of becoming independent in English.

The purpose of the instructional program in the district's schools is to provide appropriate instruction and selected services to enable students to perform academically at their grade level or higher. However, in recognition of the wide range of students’ abilities, motivation, interests, and development, the *Student Progression Plan* establishes objectives and competencies for language arts/reading, writing, mathematics, science, computer literacy, social sciences, and for electives, which may include foreign languages, art, music, physical education, and applied technology (vocational) courses, which all students must meet as one condition for graduation within the school district. These objectives and competencies assure that all students who earn a diploma from a senior high school or adult education center have sufficient basic skills to function effectively in post-secondary education, the world of work, and the community.
The Student Progression Plan provides assurance that all students within Miami-Dade County Public Schools who receive a diploma have met and/or exceeded all of the requirements mandated by the State of Florida and by the School Board.

The accompanying manuals for the Student Progression Plan 2010-2011 shall be the Florida Course Code Directory, published annually by the Florida Department of Education, Course Descriptions, Sunshine State Standards, Curriculum Bulletin-I, and the Competency-Based Curriculum, K-12, which shall be a part of the Student Progression Plan. Copies of the manuals are on file in the Office of Board Recording Secretary and the Citizen Information Center, Room 158. Principals shall distribute copies of the Competency-Based Curriculum for the grade levels or courses to classroom teachers, as appropriate, in accordance with specific courses being taught.

As part of the Student Progression Plan, procedures are established to achieve parental understanding, cooperation, and acceptance of the student's promotion or placement with the knowledge that, within District and State regulations, the final decision regarding grade placement remains the prerogative of the principal. The student, the parent, and other interested patrons must have ample opportunity to understand fully the promotion and placement requirements of the District.

When students are from homes where a language other than English is spoken, communications (written or oral) with parents are undertaken in the parents' primary language or other mode of communication commonly used by the parents unless clearly not possible. When it becomes evident that the standards or requirements for promotion may not be met, parents of students in K-12 and adult students must be informed of the possibility of retention or special placement. Student grades, unsatisfactory work notices, parent reports on State assessment and/or standardized testing, parent conferences, and adult student conferences should serve as the primary means of communicating student progress and achievement of the standards.

Specific Authority: 1001.41(1) (2); 1001.42(25); 1001.43(10) F.S.

Law Implemented, Interpreted, or Made Specific: 1001.41(3); 1001.42(6); 1003.41; 1003.413; 1003.4156; 1003.428; 1003.429; 1003.4295; 1003.43; 1008.22; 1008.25 F.S.

History: THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Repromulgated: 12-11-74

Amended: 4-14-77; 4-22-81; 6-8-83; 7-6-83; 9-21-83; 2-8-84; 8-22-84; 8-21-85; 9-17-86; 10-15-86; 9-30-87; 9-28-88; 6-28-89; 9-26-90; 9-4-91; 9-23-92; 9-22-93; 6-7-95; 5-8-96; 10-8-97; 8-26-98; 8-25-99; 10-11-00; 10-24-01; 8-21-02; 8-20-03; 10-20-04; 3-15-06; 3-14-07; 8-1-07; 9-10-08; 9-9-09' 10-13-10
c. Out-of-Country Transfer Students. Applicants with school records from out-of-country will be considered for admission under the same provisions as out-of-state transfer students.

All out-of-country transfer students shall register at an elementary, middle, or senior high school serving the attendance area approved by the School Board for the actual residence of the parent. Programmatic assessment of out-of-country students’ takes place at the school, with staff seeking to document what prior school experiences each new student possesses, by using the student’s school records, transcripts, and other evidence of educational experiences to determine a recommended grade level placement. Students who have educational records from their home country must be placed in grade level/courses based on these records. However, if a student’s records reflect an age discrepancy of two years or more, placement will be according to chronological age as indicated on the chart on the following page 11. Any adjustment resulting in lowering of grade level placement must be thoroughly documented with home language assessment data, e.g., tests, class work. Any such lower grade level placement for ELLs must be reviewed and approved by an ELL committee and submitted for district review to the Associate Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction, or designee. The parent must be informed prior to the grade level adjustment.

In those instances where school site personnel are unable to interpret a transcript from a foreign country, the Foreign Records Department at the Federal and State Compliance Office provides a detailed interpretation, translation, and conversion of all coursework taken at each grade level in the foreign country, along with the equivalent grade earned in each subject area. However, the student’s enrollment in school shall not be delayed while the records are being evaluated by the Federal and State Compliance Office.

Secondary school students who enter M-DCPS during the second semester after having finished a grade level in December in their country of origin must be placed in the next grade level. It is recommended that these students, if ELLs, be double blocked for the Language Arts/English Through ESOL course (2 periods) and the ESOL elective course (2 periods). Half credit courses that require one semester for completion should be scheduled for the remaining two periods.

Out-of-country transfer students without educational records shall be placed according to age based on the following criteria:

- The age of the student as of September 1st of the school year shall be the official age used to determine the appropriate grade level for placement.
Students are to register at schools according to chronological age as follows:

**STUDENT CHRONOLOGICAL AGE ASSIGNMENT**

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<th>LEVEL ASSIGNED</th>
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Out-of-country transfer students registering at the middle or senior high school level cannot be automatically placed in the lowest grade at that level. Principals shall take appropriate steps, in cooperation with the faculty, to assess the student’s level of learning in the core content areas and recommend the most appropriate placement for the student. Principals will use testing, faculty interviews, and/or the advice of proper placement given by the Foreign Records Department at the Federal and State Compliance Office. For additional information, refer to the document entitled, *Placement of International Students and Student Visa Guidelines*, Foreign Records Department.

A notarized statement indicating completion of a particular grade level from the student's parent, a school official from the student's native country, or from the student, if an adult, may be submitted to the principal of the receiving school. Upon receipt of the notarized statement, the principal of the school shall take appropriate steps, in cooperation with the faculty, to verify the student's level of learning in each of the courses identified on the statement. Principals will use testing, faculty interviews, or other professional procedures for the verification process.

Special care should be exercised to ensure that a student's limitation in his/her ability to communicate in English is not a factor to be considered in determining grade placement. Ultimately, grade placement is the responsibility of the principal in cooperation with the professional staff of the school. Once the most appropriate grade placement has been determined, credit and subject requirements associated with grades below the student's grade assignment are to be waived. In such cases, credit requirements shall not be retroactive.

Students who have not completed high school in their home country must be scheduled to attend courses at the high school level. Adult center placement should not be the primary alternative offered to these students.
d. Transferring Exceptional Students

For information about transferring exceptional students, see Policies and Procedures for the Provision of Specially Designed Instruction and Related Services for Exceptional Students which is incorporated into Board Rule 6Gx13-6A-1.331.

Section 504 Students: A transferring 504 student is a student who was previously enrolled in any other school or agency with an active Section 504 Accommodation Plan and who is enrolling in a Florida school district. Upon notification that a transferring student is one with an active 504 Plan, the receiving school must review the existing 504 Plan and must revise it as needed.

e. Students Transferring from Another State or a Foreign Country who Enter Grade 11 or 12

A student who transfers from another state or from a foreign country and enters grade 11 or 12 shall not be required to spend additional time in school to meet the high school course requirements for graduation if the student has met all the requirements of the school district, state, or country from which he/she is transferring. However, to receive a standard high school diploma, a student must earn a 2.0 grade point average and pass the FCAT graduation test or an alternate assessment, as appropriate.

A new student who enters M-DCPS at 12th grade from out-of-state or from a foreign country and provides satisfactory proof of attaining a score on an approved alternative assessment that is concordant to a passing score on the FCAT graduation test, shall satisfy this requirement for a standard high school diploma.
ATTENTION
PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Do you need information on how to obtain an I-20? (F-1 Student Visa or M-1 Vocational Student Visa)

Do you need guidance concerning your child’s or your legal status?

Do you need information on educational options after high school graduation?

For answers to the above questions and other related issues, contact the following Foreign Student Advisors:

Ms. Terry Ceballos
Coordinator F-1 and M-1 Visas
305-883-5323
tceballos@dadeschools.net

Ms. Maria Elena Paradela
F-1 Student Visa
305 884-2044, Ext. 3
mparadela@dadeschools.net

Ms. Margarita Casero
M-1 Student Vocational Visa
305- 884-2044, Ext. 4 or 305-883-1445
mcasero@dadeschools.net

Federal and State Compliance Office
Foreign Records/Student Visa Department
¿Quisiera saber cómo obtener una I-20 con nuestro sistema escolar? (Las visas F-1 o M-1 para estudiantes internacionales)

¿Necesita información sobre su estado legal o el de sus hijos?

¿Necesita información sobre cuáles son sus opciones educativas en los Estados Unidos si ya usted se graduó de la escuela secundaria?

Si necesita las respuestas a estas preguntas u otros asuntos relacionados al tema, por favor, contacte a:

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Federal and State Compliance Office
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ATANSYON
PARAN AK GADYEN

Ou bezwen enfòmasyon sou I-20?
(Vìza F-1 pou Etidyan oubyen Vìza M-1 pou Etidyan nan Lekòl Vokasyonèl)

Èske w bezwen konsèy sou kondisyon legal pitit ou oubyen pa w?
Èske w bezwen enfòmasyon sou opsyon edikasyonèl apre ou fin diplome nan lekòl segondè?

Pou repons kesyon anwo yo ak lòt sijè ki gen rapò ak yo, kontakte:

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