



DEFINING EXCELLENCE

**Board Meeting:** January 6, 2025

**Title:** France 2/14/2026 - International Travel Request - Cliff Schwartz and Kim Caster - Edina High School - World Language

**Type:** Action

**Presenters:** Jody De St. Hubert, Director of Teaching and Learning, Jenn Carter, Edina High School Assistant Principal; Kim Caster EHS World Language Teacher, and Cliff Schwartz EHS World Language Teacher

**Background of Current French Exchange:** In accordance with Policy 538, the following international student travel experience for up to 20 Edina High School Students students for one week in February, 2026 has received support from the school's administration. Participating students will miss 5 school days for this travel experience.

In early 2023, Georges Duby High School contacted Cliff Schwartz and Kim Caster to create a school exchange among 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. This high school, in Aix en Provence France is a specialty high school focused on the study of English and English-speaking opportunities (ACT, SAT, American colleges, etc) so that their students can have in-country experience before graduation. These students fill out applications and go through interviews to be accepted to this highly competitive school. The 2023-2024 school exchange was developed and was approved by the school board on May 15, 2023.

After multiple meetings with the organizers for Georges Duby High School and Jenn Carter for Edina High School, we followed the protocol of the South Korean exchange to create an application process for both the Edina side and the French side of this exchange. Once the school board approved the travel on May 15, 2023, the students on both sides applied to exchange and host each other during this experience.

As part of the application process, students and families confirmed that the "traveling student" would have a private bedroom, access to privacy in the bathroom, and access to their dietary and medical needs (allergies) during the homestay. Students were then paired based on the needs and interests of the students participating in the exchange. Families are vetted through background checks. After this pairing and vetting was complete, student and parent emails/information was shared and in August students started communicating with the family from the opposite country.

The French arrived on October 19, 2023 and departed on November 6, 2023 (after a 5 day delay due to weather issues all over Europe. During this time, an itinerary ([attached here](#)) was developed so that the French chaperones had daily connection either by phone or in person with their French travelers. American students brought their French students to school when asked and on other days, the French students went on excursions around the Twin Cities. During their stay all French students had access in two languages to their chaperones and could text or call at any time of day if anything went wrong.

For the board approved 2023-24 exchange the Edina group will be arriving in France on Saturday, February 17, 2024 and departing February 27 2024. The same protocols to ensure a dynamic, safe, and rich experience for the French students while in Edina will be in place for Edina students while in France.

Given that this year is the first year organizing this exchange, the organizers are paying close attention to what works and what doesn't to ensure that future experiences are even more successful. After the American families hosted the French students, we polled both parents and students. They loved their experiences and the American students can't wait to reconnect with their French counterparts.

**Summary of French Exchange for Proposed 2026 Exchange:** While other travel opportunities allow our Edina students to see other cultures, this is a rare opportunity for our immersion and traditional students to learn day-to-day vocabulary, live a French life, and to do it in an affordable way that allows for more access. The proposal to continue the exchange and approve travel to France for Edina students in February of 2026 is coming forward with an established school partnership, strong protocols for safety, and rich learning experiences directly connected to MN World Language Standards and competencies of the Portrait of a Well-Rounded Edina Graduate.

The itinerary below is based on past exchanges the last 2 years and is open to slight adjustments based on experiences and feedback from families and students.

**Saturday, February 14th:** Your arrival - kids go home with families.

**Sunday, February 15th:** Host family day

**Monday, February 16th:** Students at school all day

**Tuesday, February 17th:** Travel day

Leave school at 8 am: Kim, Cliff, Polly and Chantal plus 3 or 4 parent chauffeurs

IDEA ONE: Drive one hour to Arles: The Arena, walking around, Cloitre, lunch

IDEA TWO: Drive 40 minutes to la Camargue and do a 1h30 minute horse (poney) ride in the Camargue : flamingos, etc

<https://www.arnellescamargue.com/>

**Wednesday, February 18th:** Travel Day

Leave school at 8 am: Parent chaperones plus Kim, Cliff, Polly, Chantal

IDEA ONE: [Cassis](#) - market day is Wednesday, walk around, beach, visit les calanques en bateau (if weather ok)

IDEA TWO: [Carrieres de Lumiere et les Baux de Provence](#) - OR [Saint Remy de Provence](#)

**Thursday, February 19th:** Travel Day

Meet at school at 8 Take bus to **Marseille**

Le petit train (or Big Bus) tour

Vieux port

Notre Dame de la Garde

Lunch in les Halles

Mucem view, le Panier walking around

Bus back to Luynes

**Friday, February 20th:** Students in class in the morning and travel in the afternoon

Kim; Cliff, Polly, Chantal (?) take bus with them to eat lunch in Aix and visit Atelier Cezanne, Musee de Granet ? , petit train tour?

Bus back to school

**Saturday, February 21st:** Family Day

**Sunday, February 22nd:** Family Day

**Monday February 26th:** With French students, on vacation

**Tuesday, February 27th:** Départure

**Additional Information:** This travel exchange will be available to all ninth and tenth grade students during this current year of 2024-2025. (Sophomores and Juniors in 2025-2026)

Students applying to participate will be enrolled in French classes, either French III, Diverse Francophone World, French IV or AP French Language and Culture. Students participating on this exchange will:

- a) use their French-speaking skills both in the fall (when hosting a French student) and in February (when traveling to France). Students will get extended time speaking to native speakers, reinforcing what they've learned over the past 5-10 years of French education
- b) make cultural connections about their experiences with their host families and while they're in France in general. They will get to see real life examples of what they've studied or new examples that they can bring back to the classroom about French and Francophone cultures.

This experience is coordinated by the organizing teachers, Kim Caster and Cliff Schwartz in conjunction with their counterparts in France. These teachers will use Delta Group Travel for the purchase of the flights to and from France. Students will be paired with a French student/family and will stay with these families during their time in France.

**Cost:** The estimated cost will be \$1500. A secondary cost for all families is hosting the French student in the fall, paying for meals and experiences while the French student is here.

**Transportation:** Airlines, family vehicles, trains and buses in France

**Accommodations:** Homestays

**Supervision:** Staff members traveling with the group are Kim Caster and Cliff Schwartz, EHS World Language Teachers, and a licensed school administrator.

**Recommendation:** Review and approve the international travel experience.

**Desired Outcomes for the Board:** Review the International Travel Request to France for approval.

**Attachments:**

1. Appendix III Board Policy 538, [Extended Field Trip and Travel Application Preliminary Approval](#)
2. [May 15, 2023 Approved French Exchange](#)
3. [Fundraising](#)
4. [Insurance - Delta Travel](#)