

Student Exchange Program

Letter of Recommendation Guidelines

TO THE APPLICANT

Thank you for applying for SSCA's student exchange program! To complete your application, SSCA must receive one Letter of Recommendation from a teacher at the junior high school or high school you attend. 9th grade students may wish to ask a teacher from middle school. If more than one Letter is received, later letters will be discarded. Please choose a teacher who knows you best. You may want to ask previous homeroom teachers or elective teachers.

Please send this document to your teacher when you request the Letter of Recommendation.

As the applicant, it is YOUR responsibility to ensure the teacher is given adequate time to properly complete the Letter and it is YOUR responsibility to verify that SSCA has received the Letter. SSCA will send you an email confirmation once your application is complete. Thank you again and we look forward to seeing your application!

TO THE TEACHER

Thank you for writing a Letter of Recommendation for this student to participate in the Sunnyvale Sister City Association (SSCA) Student Exchange Program. Because our participants are treated as official guests while in Iizuka, SSCA aims to send the best representatives possible to Japan. Your Letter of Recommendation plays a crucial role in our selection process.

We value your unbiased opinion. If an applicant is not accepted, they are encouraged to reapply in following years. If you do not believe the applicant is ready this year, but may be ready in future years, we appreciate your insight and honesty.

Finally, the information contained in the Letter of Recommendation will not be transmitted to anyone outside of the Student Exchange Program Selection Team.

About the SSCA Student Exchange Program

Since 2014, the SSCA Student Exchange Program has sent over 150 Sunnyvale students from 7th to 12th grade to Tokyo and Sunnyvale's sister city, Iizuka. This trip provides participants with a unique, non-tourist view of Japan by including a homestay with an Iizuka host family and opportunity to attend school in Iizuka. Please check out our Program webpage for more information (https://sunnyvalesistercity.org/programs_student.html) or contact us at s2i@sunnyvalesistercity.org.

What types of students are we looking for?

Passion for Japan – SSCA’s program links Sunnyvale with Iizuka, Japan. Successful participants will use this program as a springboard to deepen their existing interests and passion for Japan including language, food, culture and traditions.

Ambassador first, tourist second – SSCA’s student exchange programs are meant to be more than a trip to Japan. We are looking for participants who understand the difference between being a tourist and being an ambassador. Successful participants will be excited to represent the best of our City, State and Nation in speech and behavior. Successful participants will also be eager to listen and learn about what it means to be Japanese and share about what it means to be American.

Curious and Adventurous – Compared to the US, Japan is a very different and potentially confusing place. Successful participants do not see this as a drawback. Successful participants will be excited to immerse themselves in this new environment and to learn from the experience.

Friendly – S2I participants will travel to Iizuka with students who they may not know initially. They will go to an unfamiliar Japanese school and stay with a Japanese host family. Successful participants will be excited to go the extra mile to reach out and make lasting friendships with people they meet on the trip.

Letter of Recommendation Instructions

SSCA must receive the completed Letter of Recommendation by September 30.

The Letter consists of two parts:

1. Numerical Rating section (Evaluate a student on a scale of 1 to 5)
2. Short Answer section (Write short 100 word answers to a few questions about the student)

How to submit the completed Letter of Recommendation:

- Please email this Letter of Recommendation directly to s2i@sunnyvalesistercity.org and do not carbon copy the Applicant.
- Please put the Applicant’s name and “Letter of Recommendation” into the subject line

Letter of Recommendation Contents and Format

Numerical Rating Section

Please rate this applicant on the following items from 1 to 5 (1 strongly agree, 5 strongly disagree).

Statement	Rating (1 to 5) 1 strongly agree, 5 strongly disagree
The student is introverted	
The student is adaptable	
The student is good at following directions	
The student is punctual	
The student is interested in Japan	

We have sent all types of students to Japan with great success. These ratings help us give context to a student's performance at the applicant interview.

Short Answer Section

Please write a short paragraph of **maximum 100 words per question**.

Question 1 - Based upon the types of students we are looking for, please evaluate the applicant and provide a specific example/ story.

Question 2 - Please tell us how you think this opportunity to visit Japan as a non-tourist will benefit the applicant.

Question 3 - As a teacher who knows the applicant, please let us know how the applicant reacts to stressful situations (ie. an interview) and how this can differ from the applicant's normal behavior.

Question 4 - If you marked your student as particularly high or low in the Rating Section, we would like to hear your reasons for this rating.

Thank you again for taking your time to help us learn about the applicant!

Sincerely,

Student Exchange Program Selection Team