

RIVERSIDE SECONDARY'S
SUCCESSFUL AND WELL ESTABLISHED
EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WITH AUSTRIA AND ITALY

Over the past 20 years a successful and rewarding program has been in place at our school, enabling students from Riverside Secondary to experience traveling and living in a foreign culture or welcoming a student from one of our partner schools in Austria or Italy, into their homes.

Everyone can be a "tourist" but being a "traveler", exposed to the authentic life anywhere, is different and will give you a much broader horizon and enable you to understand other cultures better which will also be a great asset for any future career.

Why should I consider taking part in a homestay program or hosting someone in my family?

A "homestay" is a cultural exchange in which a person visiting or temporarily staying in another country lives with a family. Homestays involve relationships between people and should not be confused with a boarding-house or hotel experience in which a person only rents a room.

A homestay exposes students to a rich variety of cultural learning opportunities, such as family activities, holiday celebrations, religious practices, sporting events, etc.

A homestay often results in students developing deep, lasting friendships with their families. Such a personal connection broadens one's horizon and enables barriers to be broken and better understood.

A homestay with a host family is a great way to experience life in another country, in the home of a family whose child is similar in age with the visiting student.

Homestays are wonderful opportunities to learn about family life and values in another country; interact with people of different ages; and share their own culture and interests. Homestay students must be willing to make an effort to communicate and cooperate with others and have an OPEN MIND towards new experiences from food to cultural activities.

Not every Riverside student will have the opportunity to travel to Austria or Italy to experience the culture and life in these great countries. Inviting someone to stay for 10 days in your home here in Port Coquitlam is a wonderful opportunity to start a friendship. Getting to know someone who lives in a different culture might open some wonderful opportunities in the future.

Our homestay programs to Europe also involve a traveling component, whereby we tour for a few days to see some of the other highlights of the countries we are visiting. For instance, while in Florence our group has always had a day trip to the majestic canal city of Venice. And while staying with the host families, we go and visit great sights, museums, and experience cultural activities. Things we don't normally do on a day to day basis when at home.

The relationship between Riverside Secondary and its two partner schools in Vienna, Austria and Florence, Italy has been one full of warmth and great cooperation. As students ventured out to learn about different cultures and opened their eyes and hearts, not only did they enhance their education but also enriched their lives from adolescence onward. Lifelong lessons and memories have been embedded in the minds of past participants and numerous testimonials exist from former students corroborating this.

In this day and age of computers and social media, it has become even more important to stretch out our hands and extend ourselves socially. Taking part in our exchange programs is proving to be even more valuable than ever before.

We encourage you to look at our programs and give serious consideration to involving yourself somehow and/or actually travel to Austria or Italy with the Riverside Exchange program.

We've just hosted 20 Austrian students and 2 teachers and will likely require hosts for Sept., 2016. Details and profiles of kids will arrive in early 2016. If you are interested in hosting, please pick-up a hosting application form from our exchange board, located on the first floor hallway outside room 123 or visit my share point site located on the school web-site. Further, feel free to contact me with any inquiries or comments to help enhance this program. I can be reached at mluongo@sd43.bc.ca.

Please note that we will be hosting an information sharing evening for those families interested in having their children travel to Europe during spring break, 2016. The meeting will take place at Riverside on Wednesday, Oct. 7th at 7:00 pm in Rm. 121.

You can follow Mr. Luongo on Twitter at #marioluongo and/or visit our school Facebook page for further details and messages.