



SAANICH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM (SISP)

2024-2025 Student Arrival Guide

“Transforming lives and communities through intercultural experiences”



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Introduction

Hello and a warm welcome from the Team at the Saanich International Student Program (SISP)!

SISP oversees and supports all international students in the Saanich School District, on beautiful Vancouver Island. SISP is committed to ensuring each international student has the most enriching experience possible. We strive to provide a caring, safe, and culturally rich environment in schools, homestays and the community.

Territorial Acknowledgement

SISP acknowledges with great respect the WSÁNEĆ People on whose traditional territory we live, learn, teach and work. The WSÁNEĆ People have lived and worked on this land since time immemorial and their historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Our Schools

We are very excited to welcome you to Saanich soon! You will be joining one of the great schools in our School District:



Claremont Secondary



Parkland Secondary



Stelly's Secondary

In this Student Arrival Guide, you will find important and detailed information about preparing for your journey, travelling here, your arrival in Canada and your stay here with us in Saanich. Please read this information carefully.

It is important to understand the information in this Student Arrival Guide is subject to change.

We look forward to meeting you soon!

International Program Information & Staff

The SISP office is located in the Parkland Secondary building.

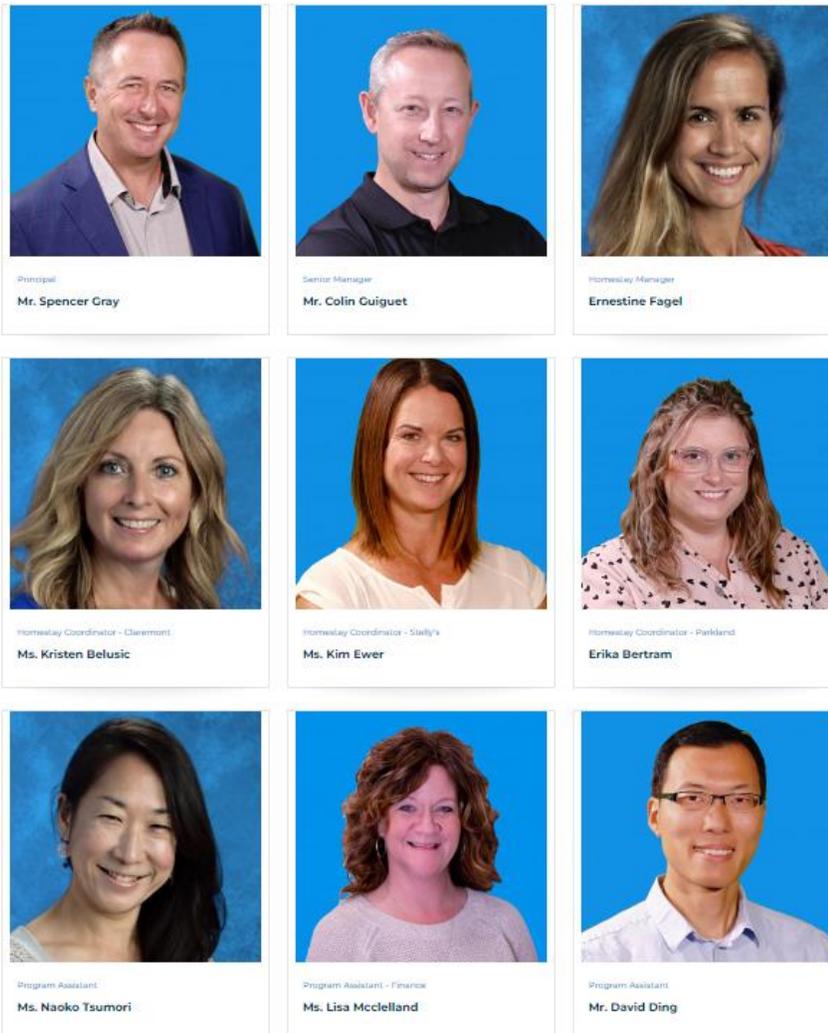
Address

Saanich International Student Program
10640 McDonald Park Road
North Saanich, B.C. Canada V8L 5S7

Phone: [+1 \(250\) 655-2720](tel:+12506552720)

The team at SISP works diligently to support you during your time here in Saanich. You will find all contact information for SISP staff in Appendix 1.

The SISP Team



Pre-Departure Information for All Students

Communication and Relationship Building with your Host Family:

- Prior to coming to Saanich, connect with your host family by having several Zoom, WeChat, FaceTime or WhatsApp calls to get to know one another
- Speak with your host family about your arrival information:
 - When will they pick you up?
 - Where will they meet you?
 - How will you recognize them?
- SISP also sends arrival flight itineraries to your host family
- Exchange phone numbers and email addresses and save this information in your phone

Checklist of what you need to have ready at the border

You will need to have the following items with you for assessment by our government officials at the border:

- Study permit, permit confirmation document OR Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) if studying for 5 months or less.
- Custodianship documents
- Letter of Acceptance
- Homestay Profile and contact information
- Contact information sheet for SISP emergency line and staff (see the last page of this Guide)

The following is **no longer required by the Canadian Government**:

- Proof of COVID-19 vaccination
- Pre-board testing
- COVID-19 pre-entry and arrival tests
- Quarantine after you enter Canada
- Using ArriveCAN to enter Canada
- Health checks to board planes
- Wearing masks on planes
- ArriveCAN is **not required, but**

ArriveCAN is a useful app to save time at the border. You can use [the ArriveCAN customs and immigration feature](#) to complete your declaration in advance if you're flying into a participating international airport.

Make sure to save the SISP Emergency Number in your phone in case you need assistance during your travels: +1-250-812-0731

Packing, Airport and Flight

In this section you will find information on what to bring with you, and what to be mindful of during your flight and at airports. All students will have to bring a cell phone and a laptop or tablet when coming or returning to Canada for the 2023-2024 school year.

In your CARRY ON:

You will need to bring the following things with you on the plane. DO NOT put these in your suitcase, but have them with you at all times!

- Cell phone + charger
- Laptop
- Passport
- Wallet
- Change of clothes
- Important documents (printed):**
 - Study permit, permit confirmation document or ETA, if applicable
 - Custodianship documents
 - Letter of Acceptance
 - Homestay Profile and contact information
 - Contact information sheet for SISP emergency line and staff

In your SUITCASE:

- Regular items such as:
 - Clothing
 - Toiletries
 - Personal belongings
 - Books
 - Maybe a small gift for your host

Medication:

If you take medication for any health condition, you will need to:

- Bring a supply that lasts you throughout your stay in Canada, OR
- Have your family send you your medications throughout your stay in Canada OR
- Make plans on how you will obtain your medication in Canada BEFORE you arrive here

SISP is not responsible for making sure you obtain medication in Canada for any pre-existing conditions, and that you and your family will need to plan ahead to ensure you have what you need.

Other Travel Tips

- Wash hands frequently
- Keep your cell phone charged
- Bring a refillable water bottle and food with you
- If you need help at the airport, go to the Information Desk or look for volunteers who can help you!

Arrival in Canada

When you arrive in Canada, you will need to undergo a screening by a Canadian Border Services Officer. Please have your documents as outlined under “packing” ready to provide to the Canadian Border Services. Most of our students’ first port of entry is Vancouver Airport (YVR), however, if you are flying via Calgary, Toronto or Montreal, the information below applies the same.

Upon arrival at Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, or Montreal Airports, make sure you:

- Log in to the Free Airport Wi-Fi
- Text or WhatsApp your host family and let them know you have arrived in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, or Montreal
- Have your documents ready to share with Canadian Border Services Agency
- Listen carefully to Canadian Border Services Agency agents, and if you don’t understand something, ask questions
 - Go through immigration and baggage pick up
 - Receive your study permit at immigration and review it, to make sure the information is correct.
 - For assistance at the:
 - Vancouver International Airport, if you need help, look for Customer Care Ambassadors (blue jackets, white shirts). They will can assist you, and help with watching/caring for you and minors in transit. They can also help with language barrier issues and if by chance you miss a flight and need to be in the airport overnight, they will make sure to check in with you. Students can also use customer care phones if they don’t have cell service, etc.
 - Calgary International Airport, the Customer Care Ambassadors will be found wearing red uniforms, if you require any assistance, please reach out to them.
 - Montreal-Trudeau International Airport, the Customer Care Ambassadors can be found wearing red jackets with black pants or skirts and are there to help you.
 - Toronto International Airport, if you require any assistance, please reach out to any staff member at the airport.

Upon arrival at Victoria International Airport (YYJ), make sure you:

- Connect to the airport Wi-Fi and message your host family that you have arrived
- Proceed to baggage pick up
- **If you have an emergency call the SISP emergency phone at: 250-812-0731**

General Program Information, Rules and Expectations for All Student

Current Rules in British Columbia

British Columbia, the province where Saanich is located, no longer has Covid-19 restrictions in place. This means wearing masks in public indoor settings is not required by public health and it is a personal choice if one wears a mask. Masks are encouraged on public transit, BC Ferries and planes, but not required.

Important Rules for SISP Students:

- **Travel:** travel outside of our local area without your host family is not allowed during the month of September. After that, if you wish to travel outside of the Victoria area, you will need to submit an online [Travel Application](#) for each trip via our website.
- **Alcohol and drugs:** all SISP students are strictly prohibited from drinking alcohol or consuming drugs during their stay here, regardless of your age or what the rules are in your home country. SISP maintains a Zero-Tolerance Policy when it comes to consuming alcohol or drugs.
- **Driving:** SISP students are not allowed to drive a motorized vehicle during their stay here, nor can they obtain a driver's license. This is not covered under our insurance.
- **School:** SISP students need to follow school rules, attend school regularly, complete homework assignments and maintain a satisfactory level of academic achievement.
- **Working:** Not possible while in Canada. You are a student here to study.
- **Volunteering:** All requests to volunteer must be approved by SISP or your assigned school.

School Bus and Public Transportation

- **School Bus:** Saanich School District has a school bus system. However, many of our students prefer to use Public Transportation. When you have arrived, please check with your host family whether you need a School Bus Pass. Your host family is responsible for registering you for a school bus pass on the [Saanich Schools Transportation](#) website.
- **Public Transportation:** BC Transit is the public transportation service in our area. To find bus schedules, fares and where to buy bus cards, please visit, [BC Transit Website](#). Your host family can also help you with this, so don't hesitate to ask them for more information!

Curfew

It is up to your Host Family to set the curfew, although SISP has created the following guideline for a weekend (Friday-Saturday) curfew:

- Grade 9 ⇔ 9:00pm
- Grade 10 ⇔ 10:00pm
- Grade 11 ⇔ 11:00pm
- Grade 12 ⇔ 12:00am

Students should be home by 8:00pm on weeknights (Sunday-Thursday) and the expectation is that you are home most nights for family dinner.

Medical Insurance

Medical Insurance is required to be an international student in Saanich. You are welcome to purchase your own medical insurance in addition to the required Guard.Me or MSP coverage.

Graduation Program Students: MSP

The British Columbia Medical Service Plan (MSP) coverage is required for all graduation program students (10 months or more), provided the student has a valid Study Permit.

4/5/10-Month Students: Guard.Me

Guard.Me coverage is required for the duration of your study period in Saanich. Guard.Me is private insurance for students without the BC Medical Service Plan (MSP).

If you have guard.me insurance coverage and go to a clinic or hospital, keep your receipts, follow the instructions and submit the online claim form. Visit [guard.me](https://www.guard.me) for insurance plan details and frequently asked questions (FAQs).

The SISP office enrolls you with guard.me before you arrive and provides you with a guard.me card during new student JumpStart/Orientation.

Pre-Existing Conditions

A pre-existing condition is any illness, injury or medical condition, for which you've had advice, treatment or experienced symptoms, prior to the start date of your insurance here in Canada. If you have a pre-existing condition, it's important to know that:

- Any treatment sought in Canada for this condition is likely not covered by Guard.Me
- Any treatment sought in Canada for this condition will need to be arranged (where possible) and paid for by you or your natural parent(s) at the appointment

If you are interested in learning more, visit <https://www.guard.me/saanich> for more information.

JumpStart Orientation

JumpStart will take place **August 29-30, 2024**. You should book your arrival flight to Victoria International Airport (YYJ) **for arrival on August 27 or 28**. Students from all Secondary Schools arrive at Claremont Secondary School on Thursday, August 29 at 9:30am. Here is a draft schedule, subject to change, to prepare for:

August 29, 2024

Pack a snack and wear appropriate clothing/shoes for several hours of site seeing and exploring downtown Victoria. **Returning on the school bus to Claremont is required at the end of the day.**

- Lunch provided by SISP, students to bring a snack
- Host parents are responsible for transportation to and from Claremont
- **Students must bring their study permit to JumpStart....if you have one**

Time:	Activity:
9:30am-10:00am	Arrival at Claremont Secondary School (Ridge Theatre)
10:00am-11:00am	Welcome/Introductions/Presentation by SISP Staff
11:00am-11:30am	Lunch (provided by SISP)
11:30am-11:45am	Buses Loaded and travel to Downtown Victoria (Parliament Buildings)
11:45am-3:00pm	Free Time Downtown & Photo Contest
3:00pm-3:30pm	Bus to Claremont
3:30pm-4:00pm	Homestay family pick up student @ Claremont

August 30, 2024 - School Based Day

Arrive at your assigned school (Claremont, Parkland or Stelly's) at 10:00am. Meet your school-based support staff, receive a school tour, class schedule and join in a school planned activity in the afternoon. Pick up by your homestay at 3:00pm.

Time:	Activity:
10:00am	Arrive at your assigned school (Claremont, Parkland or Stelly's)
10:00am-12:00pm	Welcome/Introduction School Tour/Class Schedules/Google Classroom Access
12:00-3:00pm	Lunch Provided by School School planned activity
3:00pm	Homestay family pick up student @ student assigned school (Claremont, Parkland or Stelly's)

Homestay Information and Expectations

Your host family is a very important part of your stay here in Canada. Our host families are wonderful families who are eager to give you a fantastic experience. Of course, as you will be joining a family that is different from your own, there will be new things, rituals and family traditions to get used to. The information in this section is to help you establish a strong relationship with your host family and avoid any unnecessary issues.

The two most important things - Integration and Communication

Integration:

Trying to be part of the family is an important responsibility you have while you are here. Your host family will appreciate it when you:

- Engage in conversations
- Talk about your home and country
- Are home for meals - dinner is a great time to connect with your host family
- If your host family invites you to activities you should go!

Communication:

Communication is the key to building trust and respect with your host family as they are responsible for you and are your parents while you are here. This is especially important during Covid-19 times, where host families can be nervous about their students going out to socialize.

Make sure your family knows where you are at all times, text or phone them to let them know, clearly communicate the following details:

- Where you are and where you are going
- Who you are with
- When you will be home
- Let them know if your plans have changed
- Let them know ahead of time if you are going to miss dinner
- *Example: I'm on the {bus number} bus, heading to Uptown Mall with {friend's names} and going to go for dinner at {name of restaurant}. I'm now at the restaurant. I'm now on the {bus number} bus and will be home at {time}. Please respond to your host family in a timely manner, especially when they ask you to clarify or ask you to provide more information.*

Everyday Important Things

Food:

- Talk to your host family about the foods you like and dislike.
- Go grocery shopping with them and show them what you would like.
- Talk to your host family about breakfast and lunch preparation.
- Share recipes from your home and country.
- Be home for dinner often.
- Be open to trying new foods.

- It's ok to politely let them know if you don't like something after you have tried it.

Manners:

Canadians are considered very polite and say "please" and "thank you" a lot. You are expected to adopt these habits while you are here. If you are unsure about how to be polite in a situation just ask, they'll be happy to tell you. For example, even though host parents are expected to make dinner for you, it is customary to thank the cook for the meal and let them know that you enjoyed it.

Showers, Laundry, Chores

Showers:

- Limit the length of time you shower to approximately 10 minutes.
- Make sure you put the shower curtain inside the shower before starting the water.
- Clean up any water that gets on the floor.
- Do not shower late at night when your host family is trying to sleep.

Laundry:

- Your host family will let you know how they would like to handle the laundry.
- Some will want to do your laundry for you and others will teach you how to do your own laundry.
- Do not do laundry late at night.

Chores:

Each homestay is different so make sure you discuss what chores you are expected to do. You can find examples on the next page. Most homestays will ask students to:

- Help with the dishes
- Make the bed and tidy the bedroom
- Clean up after yourself in the kitchen and public areas
- Some homestays will expect students to:
 - Clean the student bathroom
 - Do their own laundry

Heating and Lights:

- Families in British Columbia keep their homes quite cool, 20 degrees is normal for us.
- Some host families will allow the students to heat their rooms to 25 degrees, but they must turn the heat down when they are not in the room.
- If the heat is on, please do not open windows, as the heat will escape.
- Please turn off the lights and heat when you are not in your room.

Computer and Internet Use:

- Minimize the amount of downloading that you do. Host families may have to pay extra if you download too much, there is a limit per household.
- Stop gaming and skypeing at an early hour, around 10:00 PM so you do not disturb the family members while they are trying to sleep.
- Avoid being on the phone after 10pm to not disturb nightly quiet time in the home.

Contribution to Household Chores and Rules

This is a list of various contributions/chores and rules that are your host family may expect you to do and follow, which are reasonable. Many host families will have a list printed and hanging it in their home as a reminder of the expectations in the home.

There's a good chance your host family's rules are different from your own family's rules! If anything is unclear you can discuss this with your host f

<input type="checkbox"/>	Curfew
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask if it is okay to go out. Provide details, where you are going and/or where you are, who you are with, what bus you are on and when you are to be home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask your host parents ahead of time, if it is okay for you invite a friend over for a visit or a sleep over
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask your host family ahead of time (at least 1 day) if it is okay for you to stay overnight at a friend's home and share with your host family the person/family you will be staying with and your friend's parent's/guardian's name and contact number.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you aren't going to be home for dinner, please let your host parent know by pm
<input type="checkbox"/>	You are to do your own laundry. Your laundry day is
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make your bed every morning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep your bedroom tidy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clean your bedroom weekly, garbage into the main garbage can, recycling to recycling boxes, dust, vacuum, etc
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wash and change your bed sheets once a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	No food or eating in your bedroom.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bedroom room temperature should be degrees when you are in your room and degrees when you are not home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep your bathroom tidy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clean your bathroom. Ask your host family for cleaning supplies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Showers are minutes long and to be taken between the times of and .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help prepare dinner and/or set the table.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clean up the kitchen after you have prepared food, wash down the counters and table.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wash, dry and put dishes away.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put dishes in the dishwasher.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Empty the dishwasher.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take out the garbage and recycling.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cell phones are to remain in your bedroom during mealtimes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Offer to help out, such as carrying groceries into the house, going grocery shopping, asking your host if they need help, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quiet time is between and on weekdays and between and on weekends.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Respect all family members and be open to communicate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Participate in family activities.

Problems with your host family?

Adjusting to life in a “new” family may take a while and you can expect that both you and your host family will need some time to get used to each other and to establish a relationship. Open communication with your host family is very important! Please remember that your host family is likely very different from your own family back home and will view things differently than you do. As long as both you and your host family are respectful about differing views, this does not have to be an issue.

If you feel your placement with your host family is not working out, there are a few steps you should take:

1. **Talk to your host family:** when an issue arises with your host family, the first step should always be to talk to them about this. Many times, a host family might not even be aware there is an issue. If they don't know, they can't make changes to make you feel better!
2. **Contact your Homestay Coordinator:** book an appointment with your Homestay Coordinator to talk about the issue and what you have already done to address this with your host family. Your Homestay Coordinator will give you strategies to talk to your host family to resolve the situation.
3. **Meeting with Host Family and Homestay Coordinator:** if, after using the strategies your Homestay Coordinator gave you, the situation is still not improving, your Homestay Coordinator may organize and mediate a meeting with you and your host family to discuss the issue and see if there are any possible solutions. This opportunity usually assists with resolving the situation.
4. **Potential Change of Host Families:** if, after all the previous efforts, and there isn't positive progress and the issue persists, you may request a move to a different host family with your Homestay Coordinator. Your Homestay Coordinator will assess the situation and make a final decision, based on you and your host family's efforts to resolve the issue as well as the availability of another suitable host family. This will take time to arrange.

Important note: A casual request to change host families without any efforts to improve the situation will not be entertained. Students will not be moved immediately and without discussion with the host family first, unless there is an emergency situation or the student is not safe.

Student Safety Handout

The main priority of the SISP team is ensuring your safety and wellbeing while you are in Saanich, both in school and in your homestay.

Please carefully review the SISP Student Safety Handout (Appendix 2), which outlines what kind of behavior by any member of your host family or anyone at school is NOT appropriate. This handout also tells you who you can reach out to if you feel that you need support.

Damage to Homestay Property

It could happen that you accidentally damage something in your host family's home during your stay. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Stains on carpets, furniture or sheets
- Broken objects such as mirrors or shower heads
- Burns on pans or other items from cooking or microwaving
- A broken septic system after flushing anything but toilet paper down a septic toilet
- Water damage from showering without closing the curtains properly

If you accidentally damage something in your host family's home, the following actions are very important:

- Be honest with your host family about causing the damage! Accidents happen and host families will usually be understanding if you are honest and upfront about this
- Explain what happened and what you should do to repair/clean/fix (if possible)
- If the damage is such that it requires professional cleaning, replacing, or repairing, your host family will follow the process outlined below

Process for Damages:

- Your host family will discuss the damage with you, then contact your Homestay Coordinator
- Your host family will have to complete the SISP Damage/Loss Report form received from Homestay Coordinator, including photos of the damage and 2-3 quotes to repair the damage or replace the item
- You will be asked to write a short statement as to how the damage occurred
- If it is determined the damage was indeed caused by you, damages up to \$300 are to be covered by your natural parent(s)
- Damages exceeding \$300 will have to be submitted to the insurance provider Guard Me by the host family, with the assistance of the SISP Homestay Team

Appendix 1: Saanich International Student Program – Contact Information

If you have questions or concerns regarding your Homestay, please contact your Homestay Coordinator.

For any questions or concerns regarding school and courses, your first point of contact is the International Student Advisor/Support at your school. They are also able to assist you with all kinds of other problems by directing you to the person who can help. They are at your school to help you – don't hesitate going to talk to them!

Saanich International Student Program Staff

Staff	Title	Phone	Email
Mr. Spencer Gray	Principal	250-514-8354	sgray@saanichschools.ca
Mr. Colin Guiguet	Senior Manager	778-676-0447	cguiguet@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Ernestine Fagel	Homestay Manager	250-880-4950 250-655-2718	efagel@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Kristen Belusic	Homestay Coordinator Claremont	250-655-2723 250-217-6727	kbelusic@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Kimberly Ewer	Homestay Coordinator Stelly's	250-217-9368 250-655-2721	kewer@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Erika Bertram	Homestay Coordinator Parkland	250-655-2726 250-880-1589	ebertram@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Naoko Tsumori	Program Assistant	250-655-2720	ntsumori@saanichschools.ca
Ms. Lisa McClelland	Program Assistant - Accounts	250-655-3022	lmclelland@saanichschools.ca
Mr. David Ding	Program Assistant	250-655-2725	dding@saanichschools.ca
SISP EMERGENCY #	After Office Hours & Evenings in Case of Emergencies	250-812-0731	

School's International Student Advisors:

School	International Student Advisor	Email
Parkland Secondary School	Mr. Jeff Hilton	jhilton@saanichschools.ca
Stelly's Secondary School	Ms. Asha Sidhu	asidhu@saanichschools.ca
Stelly's Secondary School	Mr. Dan Berger	dberger@saanichschools.ca
Claremont Secondary School	Mr. Graeme Mitchell	gmitchell@saanichschools.ca
Claremont Secondary School	Mr. Shon Ryan	sryan@saanichschools.ca

School's International Assistants:

School	International Assistant	Email
Parkland Secondary School	Ms. Sara Benson	sbenson@saanichschools.ca
Stelly's Secondary School	Ms. Tricia Millman	tmillman@saanichschools.ca
Claremont Secondary School	Ms. Lori Rampon	lrampon@saanichschools.ca