



TEACH BEYOND BORDERS • PART 1

**Applying to Become an
Ambassador Teacher**
in the United States



Table of Contents

Use this guide to decide whether the Ambassador Teacher program is the right next step for you.

03

Welcome!

04

SECTION 1

The Meaning of the Ambassador Teacher Experience

06

SECTION 2

Is This Experience Right for You?

10

SECTION 3

A Program with Purpose, and a Partner You Can Trust

13

SECTION 4

The Application Process

18

Join Us!

20

Appendix



Scan the QR code to learn more about
teaching in the USA.



WELCOME!

If you're reading this, there's a part of you that's already curious.

Curious about what it might be like to teach in a U.S. classroom. Curious what it would feel like to plant roots in a new country, grow as an educator, and share your culture with your students and your community. Curious about what this step could mean for your career, your family, and your future.

That curiosity is the spark that leads many Ambassador Teachers to begin their journey.

How can you determine, with clarity and confidence, whether teaching in the U.S. through Participate Learning is right for you? We're here to help you decide.

Together we'll look at:

- what this experience truly means
- who it's designed for
- what you need in order to apply and be accepted

Along the way, we'll answer the questions we hear most often and help you feel more comfortable with any questions or worries you may have but haven't yet shared.

You don't need to be certain about anything yet. Just curious about exploring what's possible.





SECTION 1

The Meaning of the Ambassador Teacher Experience

Every life-changing journey begins with a decision that feels both exciting and uncertain.

For thousands of educators around the world, that decision was saying “yes” to teaching in the U.S. through Participate Learning’s Ambassador Teacher program.

Some Ambassador Teachers are motivated by the desire to live abroad and explore the communities and cultures of a new place. Others seek professional growth, a change from what’s familiar, or a meaningful way to share their own life experiences with others whose lives have been shaped primarily within their local communities.

No matter what brings them to our organization, teachers soon discover that where you teach is less important than *how* and *why* you show up. That’s why we use the term “Ambassador Teacher” intentionally.

Yes, you will do everything great teachers everywhere do: teach curriculum, support student learning, and contribute as engaged, dedicated members of the school community. But this role extends beyond campus. As an Ambassador Teacher, you also serve as a bridge between cultures.

You bring your lived experiences, traditions, culture, language, and perspective into your new home. At the same time, you experience the U.S. not from newspaper headlines or movie portrayals, but through real relationships. As you teach and learn alongside your students, collaborate with your colleagues, and expand your new international network, you bring cultural exchange to life. You are an ambassador for global connection.

“ The experience has been transformative, allowing me to develop a deeper understanding of different cultures and perspectives.

—Ambassador Teacher,
End of Year Survey 2025

Your Impact—In and Beyond the Classroom

Teaching as an Ambassador Teacher in the U.S. is a lived exchange that unfolds through routine school days, special school events, shared meals, surprising questions, and moments you could never have planned but will always remember.

Though your title may be “Ambassador Teacher,” you’ll do what all great educators do: you’ll grow.

Professionally:

- refine your instructional practice
- adapt to a new education system
- build skills that stay with you forever

Personally:

- navigate ambiguity and nuance
- practice perspective-taking
- lead with confidence

And when your time in the U.S. comes to an end, your experience is by no means over. By embracing U.S. culture and inviting others into your own, you live out the heart of cultural exchange. Returning home, you bring with you stories, relationships, and an authentic understanding of intercultural collaboration. You carry what you’ve learned into every new classroom you enter and every new community you join.

In this way, Ambassador Teachers carry the spirit of cultural exchange throughout their lives. ●●●



SECTION 2

Is This Experience Right for You?

The thought of teaching abroad is exciting. It's also unsettling. Feeling both emotions—and a whole host of others—is completely normal.

Almost every Ambassador Teacher once asked themselves:

- Am I ready for this?
- Will I be a successful teacher in a U.S. classroom?
- What if I struggle?
- What if my English isn't perfect?
- What if I get homesick?
- What will this mean for my family and my future?

If these questions sound familiar, you're not alone—and you don't have to figure them out by yourself.

Common Questions

Will the transition be difficult?

Change always comes with challenges, but our team at Participate Learning will be with you throughout the entire journey—offering resources, support, and guidance as you find housing, set up health insurance and banking, and navigate the U.S. school system and classroom culture.

This support and preparation begins well before you arrive. Through our Online Orientation, you'll participate in professional development focused on best practices in U.S. education, build connections with fellow incoming Ambassador Teachers and our team, and explore important life logistics such as housing and transportation. You'll also gain access to practical resources designed to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

“ Participate Learning supports teachers, gives us resources, and promotes connections with other Ambassador Teachers. **I have never felt alone** in my journey and have always received the support I needed. —Ambassador Teacher, End of Year Survey 2025

Before your arrival, you'll be paired with a local or community adviser in your school district. Your adviser will support you by:

- Contacting you via email at least four weeks before your arrival
- Assisting you with your Social Security appointment details and directions
- Offering guidance as you find permanent housing and transportation
- Greeting you at the district office and assisting with transportation* to your temporary or permanent housing
- Hosting a local social event to help you make community connections
- Checking in monthly through February and reporting on your adjustment

You will be assigned a mentor teacher at your school to help you adjust to the teaching environment, navigate curriculum, and build confidence in your classroom. These trusted individuals provide personalized support as you get settled.

*Note: If you arrive in your district after your local adviser has already begun teaching, they may not be available to pick you up from the district office. In this case, you may need to arrange transportation from the district office to your housing by Uber or taxi. Please plan accordingly, as transportation cannot be guaranteed if your arrival time conflicts with your local adviser's school schedule.

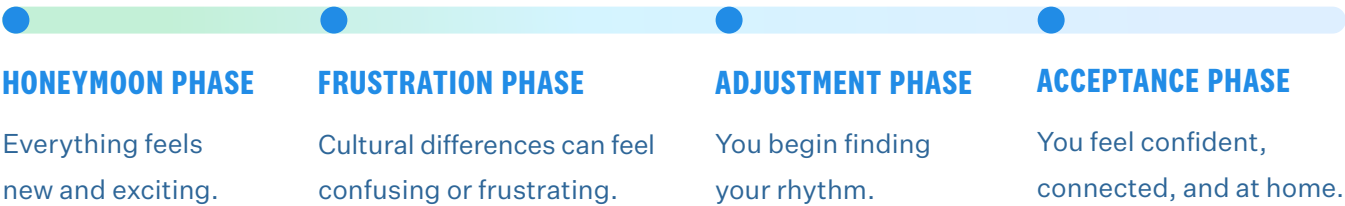
What if I struggle with classroom management?

You'll receive personalized training and coaching designed to help you adapt your teaching strategies and feel confident leading your classroom from day one.

What if I feel isolated or homesick?

Feeling homesick at times is completely normal, especially during big transitions, and it doesn't mean you're not strong or prepared for this experience. Participate Learning connects you with a built-in network of support, including peer groups, mentors, and regional groups of teachers who truly understand what you're experiencing. While you're still in your home country, you will have access to virtual events that will help you connect and make friends with your fellow new Ambassador Teachers. During Arrival Orientation, you'll continue to build community as your network grows. And as a member of the Participate Learning Network, you have a whole team that will soon begin to feel like family.

Moving abroad comes with a range of emotional experiences—and all are valid. Many teachers go through the following phases:



There's no perfect timeline. You may move back and forth between phases. What matters most is staying patient with yourself and remembering you're never alone.

What happens if I need help during the school year?

The Participate Learning Network we mention above doesn't disappear once school starts—it just changes shape. You'll always have access to Participate Learning staff, coaching resources, and a professional learning community ready to help whenever you need it.

In your first year, you will engage in three stages of orientation, including Online, Arrival, and Fall Orientations. You'll also receive an initial visit from an Instructional Specialist, ongoing support from our Teacher Resources and Instructional Specialist teams as needed, and additional guidance from your school and district.

HAVE A QUESTION THAT WE
HAVEN'T ANSWERED HERE?

Check out our [FAQ page](#)
for more information.



What We Look For in Ambassador Teachers

There's no such thing as the "perfect candidate" at Participate Learning. In our decades of experience bringing international educators to U.S. classrooms, we've found that our strongest Ambassador Teachers are curious and always willing to learn more.

YOU MAY BE A GREAT FIT IF YOU:

- ✓ Have at least two years of full-time teaching experience
- ✓ Are currently teaching 5–18 year-olds
- ✓ Hold a degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's in education or in the subject you teach
- ✓ Feel confident communicating in intermediate English both professionally and in daily life
- ✓ Are curious about other cultures and open to learning new ways of teaching and living
- ✓ Feel comfortable building relationships across differences
- ✓ Are excited to share your culture and learn a new culture in return
- ✓ Are adaptable, reflective, and open to feedback

A Moment to Pause

Take a moment to reflect. If you find yourself nodding along to the criteria listed above, feeling both excited and nervous, that's often a sign you're a strong candidate to be an Ambassador Teacher.

This experience isn't for everyone. But if you believe in the power of education to connect people, and if you're eager to grow into your next professional and personal self, this may be the opportunity you've been looking for.

Do these describe you? If so, you're ready to take the next step. You don't need to know everything on day one. What matters most is your mindset. This experience is designed for educators who are ready to challenge themselves, learn alongside others, and lead with purpose.



SECTION 3

A Program with Purpose, and a Partner You Can Trust

As an Ambassador Teacher teaching in the U.S. through Participate Learning, you'll be part of [BridgeUSA](#), the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program. Participate Learning is a designated BridgeUSA program sponsor in the Teacher category. BridgeUSA advances its mission by increasing mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries not through tourism, but through studying, teaching, building professional networks, and strengthening English and intercultural skills across U.S. schools, universities, and research institutions.

As a teacher with BridgeUSA and Participate Learning, you'll help students expand their worldviews, develop empathy, and build communication skills they'll carry into their futures. Through your presence, classrooms become places where curiosity replaces assumptions and connection replaces distance.

Why Participate Learning

Choosing a sponsor for your exchange experience is one of the most important decisions you'll make. Your sponsor shapes not only your application process, but your entire experience.

Since 1987, Participate Learning has supported international teachers through cultural exchange. We pride ourselves on being so much more to our teachers than simply a sponsor. From greeting you at the airport when you first land in the U.S. to celebrating your graduation as an Ambassador Teacher when you complete the program, we walk alongside you for the whole journey.

More than 18,000 educators have taught in U.S. classrooms through our Ambassador Teacher program, building meaningful connections with students, schools, and communities across the country. Our mission is to provide education programs that equip students and teachers with real-world skills to positively impact local and global communities. Everything we do is rooted in a vision of globally connected classrooms, preparing students not only for college and career, but for life in a connected and fast-changing world.

18K+

**EDUCATORS PLACED
SINCE 1987**

97%

**WOULD REFER TO
ANOTHER TEACHER**

\$0

APPLICATION FEES



AMBASSADOR TEACHERS CHOOSE PARTICIPATE LEARNING BECAUSE:

- We are truly mission-driven. We focus on building meaningful, lasting relationships that extend far beyond placement.
- We provide honest, clear information from the very beginning.
- We understand the realities of teaching abroad because we've supported thousands of teachers through it.
- We prioritize both professional success and personal well-being.

From the start, you'll work with a dedicated admissions specialist who guides you through the application and visa process. Before you arrive, you'll complete Online Orientation, followed by in-person Arrival Orientation to prepare you for teaching and living in the U.S.

Once you begin teaching, you'll be supported by a mentor teacher at your school and an Instructional Specialist who provides coaching and classroom support. You'll also have access to high-quality resources and a network of fellow Ambassador Teachers who understand your experience.

YOU'RE SUPPORTED AT EVERY STEP

- ✓ Step-by-step guidance through application and visa
- ✓ Orientation before you arrive and when you land
- ✓ In-school support from experienced educators
- ✓ Ongoing coaching and teaching resources
- ✓ A global network of Ambassador Teachers
- ✓ Professional growth opportunities

When you apply through Participate Learning, you ensure that you'll never be alone.



You're joining a community that
understands this experience and supports
you through every step of it. ●●●

What Sets Participate Learning Apart

Choosing a sponsor means choosing who stands beside you during one of the biggest transitions of your life. Here is how Participate Learning compares to what most J-1 sponsors offer. For a full side-by-side comparison of Participate Learning and other J-1 visa sponsors, please see the [Sponsor Comparison](#) on pages 20–21 in the appendix.

WHAT TEACHERS ASK	PARTICIPATE LEARNING * * *	WHAT MOST SPONSORS OFFER
Will I have to pay a sponsor fee?	✓ \$0	\$0–\$1,505 sponsor fee, plus monthly fees up to \$275/month at some programs
Who pays for my flight to the U.S.?	✓ We buy your one-way ticket from your home country	You book and pay for your own travel
Who will be there when I land?	✓ A Participate Learning staff member meets you at the airport	You arrange your own transportation from the airport
What will my first days in the U.S. actually look like?	✓ A one-week, in-person orientation—travel, hotel, and food included—on teaching in U.S. classrooms, finances, housing, health coverage, and daily life, so your first day of school is about teaching, not figuring things out	A 1–2 day virtual or in-person session, or an online packet
Will someone help me settle in?	✓ From pre-arrival housing and transportation guidance provided by Participate Learning, to a current international teacher on the ground in your area—you are supported before you arrive and after	A contact list or online forum
Can I bring my family with me?	✓ Family members can join you on a J-2 visa if they meet program eligibility requirements. Participate Learning supports teachers who come with family— helping you and your family prepare for the transition and adjust to life in the U.S.	J-2 dependent support varies widely; many sponsors offer limited or no guidance on family transition. Some sponsors may charge a processing fee for each J-2 dependent



SECTION 4

The Application Process

Our application process has been thoughtfully designed to ensure you and the schools you join are ideally positioned for success. Your journey to becoming an Ambassador Teacher includes five key steps: application, interview, school matching, offer, and visa preparation.

“ The organization provides clear guidance throughout the visa and relocation process, offers valuable training sessions, and fosters a community that makes it easier to adapt both professionally and personally.

—Ambassador Teacher,
End of Year Survey 2025

Basic Eligibility Requirements

TO APPLY, YOU MUST:

- ✓ Be a non-U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- ✓ Hold a university degree in teacher education (equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's in education or in the subject you teach). Review degree equivalencies on our [FAQ page](#)
- ✓ Be currently teaching students aged 5–18 and have at least two years of full-time, postgraduate teaching experience with this age group
- ✓ Demonstrate high English proficiency (intermediate level, at minimum)
- ✓ Hold a valid driver's license
- ✓ Be available to teach with Participate Learning for at least two years
- ✓ Meet the teaching standards of the U.S. state where you may be placed
*This is assessed during the application process



The Application Journey at a Glance

Here's a simple overview of what applying involves:

1

ONLINE APPLICATION:

share your experience, background, and goals

2

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW:

connect with an admissions representative to expand on your application, discuss your teaching experience, and gauge your readiness to be in a U.S. classroom

3

DOCUMENTATION:

gather and submit required documents

4

SCHOOL MATCHING:

interviews with potential partner schools

5

OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE:

confirmation that this opportunity is the right fit

Participate Learning operates on a rolling admissions cycle. Our recruitment cycle begins each September for teachers traveling the following summer. Interested applicants are welcome to apply to the Ambassador Teacher program at any time of year.

Throughout this entire process, our team is available to answer questions, provide clarity, and help you feel confident at every step.

The J-1 Visa

A J-1 visa is a U.S. nonimmigrant visa for participants in educational and cultural exchange programs. Spouses and unmarried children under twenty-one are eligible to accompany you to the U.S. in J-2 status. While they're here, your dependents can study, and your spouse may apply for work authorization.

The J-1 Teacher program allows eligible teachers to teach in the U.S. for up to three years initially. Teachers in good standing who meet extension requirements may be approved for up to two additional years, providing the opportunity to participate in the program for a maximum of five years. After the program, most teachers must fulfill a two-year home residency requirement before applying for another J visa.

What You'll Need:

- passport
- transcripts
- degree credentials
- teaching credentials
- reference forms

As an organization, Participate Learning does not charge any application or program fees. As part of the J-1 visa process, applicants will pay any [related fees](#) directly to the appropriate U.S. government agencies.

\$185 DS-160 Nonimmigrant Visa Application Fee

- This fee is paid per visa applicant, including J-2 dependent family members, to the U.S. Department of State and covers the processing of your visa application at the U.S. embassy or consulate.

\$220 I-901 SEVIS Fee

- This fee is paid to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and supports the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which tracks your participation in the Exchange Visitor Program. J-2 dependents do not pay the SEVIS fee.

Participate Learning provides information, resources, and individualized guidance from an admissions specialist to help teachers independently complete the visa process and prepare for embassy interviews.

J-1 VISA TERM
5 years

PARTICIPATE LEARNING
APPLICATION FEE

\$0

DS-160 NONIMMIGRANT VISA
APPLICATION FEE*

\$185

I-901 SEVIS
APPLICATION FEE

\$220

* Visa fees are subject to change; always confirm current fees with official U.S. government sources.

The Application Journey in Depth

● Step 1: Tell us your story

After you've ensured that you meet the basic eligibility requirements, you may begin your application [on our website](#). This is your chance to share who you are—not just on paper, but as an educator, a leader, and a person.

In this part of the application, you'll answer questions about:

- Personal and contact information
- Educational background and certifications
- Teaching experience

● Step 2: The interview (a conversation, not a test!)

If your application is a match for our Ambassador Teacher program, you'll be invited to begin the virtual interview process. This is your opportunity to connect, reflect, and share more about who you are as an educator.

What to Expect

- A discussion about your application and an evaluation of your compatibility with our program.
- The opportunity to showcase your classroom skills and teaching practices.
- A chance to ask your own questions and learn more about Participate Learning.

Best Practices

Interviews can be nerve-wracking even for the most experienced, level-headed professional. To set yourself up for success, make sure you are:

- Sitting in a quiet, well-lit space that has a stable internet connection.
- Ready to discuss your teaching methodologies and day-to-day classroom experiences.
- Able to share your goals for introducing your culture to your school community.

We're not looking for perfection—we're looking for purpose and passion.

● Step 3: Selection, school placement, and visa documentation

After a successful virtual interview, you'll begin gathering required documents for the Participate Learning admissions process and be added to our candidate pool for school interviews. These are typically conducted by a school or district administrator, sometimes joined by teachers or staff.

You may interview with one or several schools. Each conversation is a chance for the school to assess your teaching experience, instructional approach, and fit—and for you to evaluate the school's culture and community.

If a school extends an offer and you accept, you'll move to the next admissions stage and the J-1 visa process will begin. Timelines vary, but you'll receive clear guidance and regular updates throughout.

JOIN US!



If you're still reading, it's likely because something about this opportunity resonates with you.

You don't need to have everything figured out. You don't need to know all the answers—or even which questions to ask.

What matters is that you're curious, capable, and open to growth. Teaching in the U.S. as an Ambassador Teacher is a bold step, but with Participate Learning as your partner, it's a step you'll take with guidance, care, and community.

If you decide to apply, we'll be eager to speak with you! And if you're not quite ready yet, that's okay, too. Take your time allowing yourself to imagine what's possible.

We've been walking this path since 1987. When you're ready, we'd be honored to walk with you, too.

**Take the first step toward teaching beyond borders.
Apply today.**

▶▶▶ **Start Your Application**



Is your passport ready? Although you don't need it in order to apply, you will need a passport for what's ahead. If you already have one, take a moment to ensure that it's up to date.

Appendix

Sponsor Comparison

WHAT TEACHERS ASK	PARTICIPATE LEARNING * * *	WHAT MOST SPONSORS OFFER
Will I have to pay a sponsor fee?	✓ \$0	\$0–\$1,505 sponsor fee, plus monthly fees up to \$275/month at some programs
Who pays for my flight to the U.S.?	✓ We buy your one-way ticket from your home country	You book and pay for your own travel
Who will be there when I land?	✓ A Participate Learning staff member meets you at the airport	You arrange your own transportation from the airport
How do I get a phone?	✓ We provide a U.S. cell phone with an active line on arrival day and pay for your cell phone plan for six months	You buy your own SIM card or phone after you arrive
Who pays for my International Credential Evaluation?	✓ We do—covered by Participate Learning at no cost to you	Teachers pay for their own, typically \$100–\$280. Most sponsors do not cover this cost
Who handles my U.S. teaching license paperwork?	✓ We manage the process on your behalf—from compiling requirements to submission. Teachers are responsible only for a portion of the state fee, currently about \$60	Most sponsors provide guidance at best. Teachers are typically responsible for the paperwork and associated costs themselves
What will my first days in the U.S. actually look like?	✓ A one-week, in-person orientation—travel, hotel, and food included—on teaching in U.S. classrooms, finances, housing, health coverage, and daily life, so your first day of school is about teaching, not figuring things out	A 1–2 day virtual or in-person session, or an online packet
Will someone help me settle in?	✓ From pre-arrival housing and transportation guidance provided by Participate Learning, to a current international teacher on the ground in your area—you are supported before you arrive and after	A contact list or online forum

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Sponsor Comparison (continued)

WHAT TEACHERS ASK	PARTICIPATE LEARNING * * *	WHAT MOST SPONSORS OFFER
How do I open a bank account?	✓ Opened before you arrive; you leave with a debit card in hand	You figure it out after arrival, often waiting weeks for access to your money
Does the program do anything special to support teachers in their first year?	✓ We bring all first-year teachers together in person mid-year—travel, hotel, and meals covered—to reconnect as a community, grow professionally, and leave feeling supported	No equivalent structured mid-year gathering
Will I be supported in my classroom?	✓ A Participate Learning Instructional Specialist visits your classroom, gives you personalized feedback, and is available to support you throughout the year	Online resources and occasional email support
What is support actually like when I need help?	✓ Participate Learning staff are available 24/7 by phone and email—and the people who answer know you, know your school, and understand the realities of teaching in a new country. Support covers everything: classroom challenges, visa questions, personal adjustment, and anything else that comes up.	24/7 availability is required of all J-1 sponsors. The quality, consistency, and depth of that support varies significantly.
Does the program support my life beyond the classroom?	✓ Participate Learning structures your experience around four areas: Connections—building friendships with fellow teachers and your local community; Cultural Experiences—exploring U.S. culture and sharing your own; Leadership—taking on roles inside and outside school; and Learning—growing professionally through courses, credentials, and learning you carry home.	Little to no structured support beyond the classroom
Can I bring my family with me?	✓ Family members can join you on a J-2 visa if they meet program eligibility requirements. Participate Learning supports teachers who come with family— helping you and your family prepare for the transition and adjust to life in the U.S.	J-2 dependent support varies widely; many sponsors offer limited or no guidance on family transition. Some sponsors may charge a processing fee for each J-2 dependent

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Sponsor Comparison (continued)

WHAT TEACHERS ASK	PARTICIPATE LEARNING * * *	WHAT MOST SPONSORS OFFER
What about health coverage?	✓ Medical, life insurance, and mental health support—comparable to what U.S. teachers receive	Basic or minimum-compliant coverage; varies significantly by sponsor
How long can I stay?	✓ Up to 5 years	Up to 5 years



participatelearning.com