



Special Activities for FLEX Students

OVERVIEW

As part of their scholarship from the U.S. Department of State (USDOS), FLEX students have extra opportunities as well as additional responsibilities. These activities allow students to learn more about the U.S. and become more involved in their local communities.

AMERICAN EXCELLENCE ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Enhancement activities are group events for FLEX students that are planned and paid for by the Community Coordinator. The goal of these fun and educational activities is to deepen participants' understanding of American culture, principles, and history. Examples of enhancement activities include exposing participants to American excellence through briefings on government and the judicial system, freedom of speech, community programs, business and tech incubators, and sports activities. Coordinators have access to grant funds to pay for these activities, which should be of no cost to FLEX students or their host families.

Coordinators usually aim to provide one enhancement activity per quarter. Occasionally, enhancement activities will entail an overnight trip—in which case, the coordinator will be in touch with students and host families about any such arrangements.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership is an important part of the enhancement program, giving students the opportunity to develop skills they can use to better serve their communities—both in the U.S. and at home. Leadership activities provide specialized training in public speaking, team-building, critical thinking, and goal-setting.

Examples of leadership activities include leading a cultural presentation, participating in debate club or speech competitions, coordinating peer-led clubs or student council, joining mentorship programs with adult leaders, attending workshops on conflict resolution, and developing project management skills. Students who complete 5+ leadership activities during the exchange program receive the “PAX Distinguished Leader Award.”

CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS & NOVEMBER CELEBRATIONS

As part of their scholarship responsibilities, FLEX students are expected to hold cultural presentations throughout the program. As part of a coordinated effort, students are encouraged to present about their home country or culture during the third week of November (or as close to that week as possible). Students should watch their email in October for further PAX-provided details.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

As a part of their scholarship responsibilities, FLEX students are expected to complete at least 30 hours of volunteer activities. Many FLEX students will choose to volunteer more than 30 hours, and any student who volunteers over 100 will receive a special certificate. To qualify as volunteer activity, an activity should be unpaid and should provide a benefit to the community beyond the student and host family.

Examples of qualifying activities include participating in activities and social interactions with residents at a senior home, mentoring younger students in tutoring programs, or joining a club such as Key Club (which promotes leadership, character building, and community involvement). Students are usually enthusiastic contributors, eager to give back to their communities. If host families are already engaged in community activities, they can consider ways to involve their student in these activities.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - APRIL CELEBRATIONS

Throughout the program, students are encouraged to get involved in community activities. During the last full weekend of April, students will have the chance to participate in special volunteer projects that show the positive impact youth can have on their communities. Students should keep an eye on their email in early April for details from PAX—this celebration takes place in over 100 countries around the world!



Community Engagement Activities

OVERVIEW

As part of your scholarship responsibilities, FLEX students are required to complete at least 30 hours of community activities. Through these experiences, students develop leadership, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and organizational skills while making a positive impact in their communities. Whether completed on your own initiative or through PAX, your school, your host family, or a community organization, community engagement is an important way to learn about your host community and build mutual understanding. After your program ends, you will be able to use the skills and experiences you gained to give back to your home community.

To qualify as a volunteer activity, the activity must be unpaid and should benefit the broader community beyond you and your host family. In return, you will gain valuable experience, learn new skills, and strengthen your leadership abilities, helping you grow into a future leader.

WHAT COUNTS AS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

A few examples of qualifying activities are:

- Assisting not-for-profit organizations with community events, outreach, or promotions
- Interacting with residents at a senior center or assisted living facility
- Assisting in community activities that honor or support veterans
- Tutoring or mentoring younger students outside of required school hours
- Participating in community projects organized through school clubs such as Honor Society, Key Club, and similar organizations
- Assisting a teacher before or after school with educational or classroom-related activities
- Volunteering with a parent/teacher organization within the school or school district
- Supporting community festivals, cultural events, or charity walks
- Sharing cultural presentations at libraries, community centers, or churches (beyond the presentation required by the program)
- Selling tickets, working concession stands, or ushering at sporting events, concerts, or theater productions (if not required for a class)
- Assisting at business fairs or community innovation events

Note: Students can participate in outreach events, such as fairs organized by PAX, up to 10 hours.

WHAT IS NOT A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY?

Examples of activities that do not qualify include:

- Doing chores or assisting your host family
- Completing the required cultural presentation for the program
- Attending classes, trainings, or workshops for personal or academic benefit
- Tutoring or helping during school hours if it replaces a class (even if no grade is received)
- Raising funds for personal benefit, such as for a trip, field trip, or dance
- Participating in regular extracurricular activities, such as clubs, student council, school plays or musicals, and sports teams (including team manager roles)
- Activities that are required as part of a class or academic assignment

Note: While on program, exchange students may not volunteer for or participate in political campaigns, political activities, or any form of public demonstrations, including protests. However, students may observe partisan political activities, such as campaign speeches or rallies. They can also participate in non-partisan civic activities, such as a get-out-the-vote drive or volunteering at polling locations. These are great ways to learn about democracy, civic engagement, and freedom of speech.

For help identifying volunteer and leadership opportunities in your area, you should talk with your PAX coordinator, host family, or school counselor. You can also reach out to the PAX national office at sponsored@pax.org.

TRACKING & SUBMITTING HOURS

You can log in to pax.org/volunteers using your PAX ID (FSA00126, for example) and date of birth. Once logged in, you can easily submit and track your volunteer activities. Review the PAX Volunteers help page (pax.org/volunteers/help/students) for a complete guide.

APRIL 15 DEADLINE

The final deadline to submit your hours is April 15. Please be sure to start early and allow enough time. Once completed, let your coordinator know, so s/he can approve your logged hours on time and check your reflection forms.

USDOS CERTIFICATE (100+ HOURS)

Many FLEX students set a goal of developing the leadership skills that come with completing more than 100 hours of community engagement. For those who reach 100+ hours, the U.S. Department of State (USDOS) offers a certificate of appreciation. At the end of the program year, PAX sends this digital certificate to students who have submitted the proper documentation of their 100+ hours by April 15.

If in early springtime, you find yourself very close to your goal of 100 hours but think you may need a few more hours to reach 100 by April 15, please write to sponsored@pax.org ahead of time to receive further instruction.

Please note that although all FLEX students are required to complete 30 hours of community activities by April 15, only students who submit 100+ hours will receive a certificate. Students who do not complete the minimum requirement of 30 hours of community activities during their stay in the U.S. will not receive a PAX Certificate of Completion at the end of their program.



Student of the Month

OVERVIEW

Each month, PAX selects a Student of the Month. The selected student is featured in the *PAX Press* newspaper. In addition, PAX submits the nomination to the U.S. Department of State (USDOS). If selected as USDOS Student of the Month, the student will be recognized within the broader FLEX scholars community, and their story will be shared with a wider audience.

PAX staff, Community Coordinators, or host families may nominate a FLEX student. Winners receive a certificate and small prize in addition to the honor of being featured on program websites and social media platforms.

SELECTION CRITERIA

In selecting the Student of the Month, the USDOS considers such factors as:

- The impact of a student's activities in the community and/or at school
- How well the student represents his or her home country
- Whether the student has shown a positive and thoughtful spirit within the host family and community
- Evidence of personal growth and development on program

Additional factors may include:

- Total community activity hours
- Leadership and entrepreneurship activities
- Number of cultural presentations about a student's home country held
- Specific awards or recognitions received

Before submitting entries to the USDOS, PAX must verify that candidates are in good standing.

SUBMITTING NOMINATIONS

- Nomination form: Fill out the nomination form at pax.org/som, and describe the qualifications and achievements of the candidate in the written narrative field (300 words or fewer).
- Photos: Remember, a picture says a thousand words! For this reason, be sure to upload several photos (full resolution) at pax.org/som. Photos should show the student in action with their host family, in school, or out in the community!

Nominations should be submitted no later than the 10th of each month. Please do not send nominations directly to the USDOS.

QUESTIONS?

For further questions, please email the PAX sponsored programs team at sponsored@pax.org.



FLEX Calendar 2026/27

August/September

- Student orientation with Community Coordinator
- ReliaCard (reloadable prepaid debit card) mailed according to arrival date and loaded with \$200 for August (if August arrival) or \$200 for September (if September arrival)
- Students email sponsored@pax.org to provide own email address (must not change during year)
- Students invited to attend PAX webinar on the FLEX program (watch email for instructions)
- With the help of coordinator, students identify local resources for community engagement
- Students complete first volunteer project and record hours (watch email)
- Students join a school club or sport by end of September

October

- Stipend for October (\$200) loaded onto ReliaCard on October 1 or earlier
- Students attend Money Matters webinar (watch email)
- Students begin preparations for cultural presentations and related PAX contest (watch email)

November

- Stipend for November (\$200) loaded onto ReliaCard on November 1 or earlier
- Students make cultural presentations and participate in PAX contest
- Students submit a PAX survey, documenting delivery of a cultural presentation (watch email)

December

- Stipend for December (\$200) loaded onto ReliaCard on December 1 or earlier
- FLEX students receive information on their return dates
- Students begin preparing “Virtual Exchange” projects (watch email for PAX student contest)

January

- Stipend for January (\$200) loaded onto ReliaCard on January 1 or earlier
- Mid-year meeting with Community Coordinator and evaluation of first semester
- “Virtual Exchange” projects due for PAX contest

February

- Stipend for February (\$200) loaded onto ReliaCard on February 1 or earlier
- FLEX students begin to be notified (by PAX) of their individually assigned return dates

EVERY MONTH

Submit forms/receipts for reimbursable Incidental Fund expenses: pax.org/scholarship-reimbursement

Student of the Month nominations due 10th of each month (September to May): pax.org/som

Submit monthly student survey via SurveyMonkey

Record hours soon after volunteering

March

- Stipend for March (\$200) loaded onto ReliaCard on March 1 or earlier
- Students participate in CSIET art contest

April

- Stipend for April (\$200) loaded onto ReliaCard on April 1 or earlier
- FLEX students receive return itineraries from American Councils (PAX also sends info to host families)
- Students begin preparing “America Excellence” projects (watch email for PAX student contest)
- Volunteer hours logged and coordinator approved at pax.org/volunteers by April 15
- Students submit Leadership and Mentorship projects by April 15
- Students participate in volunteer projects the weekend of April 23-25 to celebrate the impact youth make on their communities every day of the year
- Re-entry orientation with Community Coordinator (April or May)
- Students register on U.S. Department of State alumni website (watch email from American Councils for instructions)

May

- Last stipend and return travel allowance loaded onto ReliaCard on May 1 or earlier (students departing in June receive both May and June stipends)
- “America Excellence” projects due for PAX contest
- Students demonstrate appreciation to school administrators and host community through letters to-the-editor and thank you notes
- Last chance to submit reimbursement forms and receipts for Incidental Fund expenses
- Students receive certificates of completion and U.S. Department of State certificates along with the PAX Distinguished Leaders Award for 5+ leadership activities (if earned)
- FLEX students begin returning home

June

- Remaining FLEX students return home
- Students complete final survey

IMPORTANT WEB ADDRESSES

Reimbursement Form
pax.org/scholarship-reimbursement

Volunteer Hours Form
pax.org/volunteers

PAX Distinguished Leader Award Report
pax.org/distinguished-leader-award

Enhancement Activity Reflection Form
pax.org/enhancement-reflection

Student of the Month Nomination Form
pax.org/som

USDOS Alumni Website
alumni.state.gov/user/register