

TORRANCE SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION (TSCA)

# Student Cultural Exchange Program DETAILS

A. **WHAT**

The annual student cultural exchange program with Kashiwa, Japan.

B. **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Torrance and its sister city, Kashiwa, Japan, have had many rewarding civic, educational, and cultural exchanges since February 20, 1973, when the two cities became affiliated. Under this program, over the past fifty years, the Torrance Sister City Association has sponsored hundreds of exchange students.

C. **QUALIFICATIONS**

1. Any high school student who is a sophomore, junior or senior at the time of applying. (19-year-old maximum age at the time of the trip.)
2. **The student must be a FULL-TIME resident of the City of Torrance.**
3. The student must be mature enough to benefit from the experience and be a creditable Ambassador representing the Torrance Sister City Association, the City of Torrance, and the United States of America.
4. The applicant must be a student in good academic standing at his/her school.
5. The student must be interested in learning about Japanese customs, culture, and language.  
**This trip is far more than a vacation in a foreign country; it's a cultural experience!**
6. If selected, the student's family **must** be able to host a Kashiwa student in their home for 10-12 days during August.

D. **EXPECTATIONS OF ALL APPLICANTS**

1. Each applicant and his/her family are expected to attend an Alumni Reunion potluck luncheon hosted by the TSCA on **Saturday, January 9, 2027**. At this luncheon the applicants and their families will meet many TSCA members, including former exchange students, and learn more about the student exchange program.
2. Each applicant and his/her parents will be interviewed by the Student Selection Committee during a weekend in January, beginning at 8 a.m.
3. Each applicant is expected to participate in TSCA scheduled selection activities during January, February, and March. If selected, additional activities will follow throughout the spring and summer.
4. Each applicant is **required** to submit a TSCA family membership application and dues of \$40.00 when the student applies for the Exchange Program (if multiple siblings, each sibling must submit one). Make check payable to: TSCA. Alternately, electronic payment accepted on membership page of website.

E. **EXPECTATIONS OF SELECTED STUDENTS – REQUIRED ACTIVITIES**

1. Each student and his/her parents must participate in **Bunka Sai**, a festival of Japanese culture (the major fund-raising event for TSCA). This is a three-day event starting Friday, April 16, 2027 evening, Saturday, April 17, 2027, and Sunday, April 18, 2027.

2. Prior to departing for Japan, each student shall attend ALL orientation meetings (approx. 8) which cover the language, customs, clothing, protocol, etiquette, behavior, etc. in Japan, as well as facts about the City of Torrance. Attendance is mandatory, and active participation is required.
3. Each student is expected to participate in activities planned for the Kashiwa exchange students visiting Torrance in August. Most admission costs for students to attend events will be paid by TSCA.
4. Each student and his/her parents shall sign 1) **Memorandum of Understanding** detailing their obligations; 2) a letter of permission to participate in the program; and 3) a medical release form. Host parents and others in the home over age 18 will be required to undergo a background check with fingerprints.

F. **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

1. The student's portion of the airfare shall be \$1200, payable in two checks (\$600) at the first and last orientation session.
2. The TSCA is to provide the balance of the airfare costs and all expenses related to the three-day tour of other areas in Japan.
3. The student shall provide his/her own spending money during the three-week stay in Japan, as well as gifts for their host families.
4. The student **must** possess a current, **valid passport** at least 60 days before leaving for Japan. Passport must also be valid for at least six months from the departure date (January 2028 or later). Please indicate expiry date. If a visa is also required, the student is responsible for obtaining such visa.

G. **PROCEDURE FOR SELECTION**

1. The TSCA Student Selection Committee will review all applications.
2. The applicants and their families shall attend the Alumni Reunion potluck luncheon in January.
3. The Committee will interview applicants and their parents on a scheduled weekend in January. See **Calendar of Applicant Activities** below.
4. Committee member(s) will conduct a home visit interview with each applicant and his/her family during the month of February.
5. The applicants shall participate in all the scheduled activities during January, February and March.
6. Final selections will be made by the Committee in early March, and delegates notified.

H. **CRITERIA FOR STUDENT SELECTION**

1. A sincere interest in Japanese culture, language and customs.
2. A willingness to participate in all TSCA pre-selection activities and related exchange activities throughout the program.
3. Good citizenship.
4. The ability to handle new or stressful situations gracefully.
5. The ability to get along with others and work together.

TORRANCE SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION (TSCA)  
**Student Cultural Exchange Program**  
**APPLICATION**  
**LINK & INSTRUCTIONS**

Each individual applicant must submit the following on or before **November 14, 2026**.  
**INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE REVIEWED**

1. **Complete** online application form (link at bottom of this packet).
2. **List** two contacts for recommendations. Provide a reliable email address to reach them directly (i.e., their work email) and notify them they will hear from TSCA:
  - a) A teacher and
  - b) A member of the community not related to student (i.e., coach, employer, pastor, etc.).
3. **Include** a statement from the applicant stating why he/she wants to participate in this program and how he/she expects to benefit from it.
4. **Upload** a letter from the applicant's parents stating why they recommend their child for this program and how they will support their child's participation in this program.
5. **Upload** a current individual photo of applicant. This should be an individual headshot photo only.
6. **Submit** electronic payment of \$40 membership dues - must be paid by PayPal (link on website).

*[Form below for information only – information to be completed in online application]*

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| <b>TORRANCE SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION</b><br><b>Membership Application</b><br><small>Except for Life Membership, all annual are in effect from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup></small>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Name: _____<br>Address: _____<br>City: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____<br><br>Telephone (____) _____ Email: _____<br><br>My membership is: NEW _____ RENEWAL _____ I do not want to be listed in the TSCA Directory _____<br>Directory update: New address _____ New telephone number _____ New Email address _____<br><br>I am interested in participating in TSCA activities: _____<br><br>Enclosed is a donation to TSCA (in addition to my annual dues) in the amount \$ _____.<br><br>This form and electronic payment for \$40 for a family membership must be submitted with application.<br><br>TSCA meetings are held on the <i>third Tuesday</i> of each month, except in August and December, at the <i>West Annex Commission Room</i> , 7:00 p.m. | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Individual.....\$20.00 per year<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Family .....\$40.00 per year<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting.....\$75.00 per year<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor.....\$125.00 per year<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Life member.....\$2,000.00 + one time donation</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px; margin: 10px auto;"></div> <div style="text-align: right;">Total enclosed:\$ _____</div> |
| <b>TorranceSisterCity.Org</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

*Each individual application must submit this form and payment of \$40 for a family membership.*

# Torrance Sister City Association

## Memo of Understanding

### Student Cultural Exchange (Ambassador) Program

*Torrance and its sister city, Kashiwa, Japan, became affiliated on February 20, 1973. Over the past fifty years, the Torrance Sister City Association has sponsored hundreds of cultural exchange students through its annual student cultural exchange program. The rigorous application process ensures that students who are selected understand, and are committed to, the participation required for cultural exchange between the cities as part of this signature program.*

#### Calendar of Applicant Activities

*(subject to change at any time)*

| DATE                                                                | ACTIVITY                                                                                                                                                                  | Attendees Required                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| November 14, 2026                                                   | <b>Application Deadline</b>                                                                                                                                               |                                                   |
| January 9, 2027                                                     | <b>Alumni Reunion Luncheon (Potluck)</b> Applicants will be asked to introduce themselves and their families as a part of the event program.                              | Applicants and Families                           |
| January 23 or 24                                                    | <b>Student Interviews</b><br>Interview sign-up sheet will be available at the Alumni Reunion Luncheon. You will select <u>either</u> January 23 or 24 for your interview. | Applicants and Parents/Guardians                  |
| January 29 or 30 (to be confirmed)                                  | <b>TSCA Dinner (No-Host)</b> at Mitsuwa Marketplace                                                                                                                       | Applicants and Families                           |
| February 6 or 7                                                     | <b>Home Visits</b><br>Home Visit sign-up sheet will be available at the Alumni Reunion Luncheon. You will select <u>either</u> February 6 or 7 for your home visit.       | Applicants and Families                           |
| February 21                                                         | <b>Game Night</b> with Adult Leader                                                                                                                                       | Applicants Only                                   |
| March 6                                                             | <b>Picnic</b> at Riviera Hall Lutheran School (Location to be confirmed)                                                                                                  | Applicants Only                                   |
| March 7                                                             | <b>Students will be notified if they have been selected</b> for the Summer 2027 Student Cultural Exchange Program, no later than this date.                               |                                                   |
| March 9 or 23 (to be confirmed)                                     | <b>City Council Meeting</b><br>Introduction of 2027 Selected Delegates                                                                                                    | Selected Delegates and Families                   |
| March 11 [likely] or 18 (to be confirmed)                           | <b>Student Delegate Orientation Begins; First Deposit Due</b><br>Weekly on Thursday nights at 4:30pm, ends in June.                                                       | Selected Delegates (and Parents at first meeting) |
| March 16                                                            | <b>Torrance Sister City Association Meeting</b><br>Introduction of 2027 Selected Delegates                                                                                | Selected Delegates and Families                   |
| April 4                                                             | <b>Cherry Blossom Festival</b>                                                                                                                                            | Selected Delegates                                |
| April 16-18                                                         | <b>Bunka Sai weekend</b>                                                                                                                                                  | Selected Delegates and Families                   |
| <i>Additional events to be shared once selection process begins</i> |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                   |

*As the parents/guardians of an applicant to the Student Cultural Exchange (Ambassador) Program, we understand and agree to the following conditions (if our child is selected):*

- Orientation (Delegate).** He/She will be on time to all TSCA events and actively participate in ALL **mandatory** orientations. No cell phone use permitted during sessions. To be held after school once a week at the West Annex Building. *TSCA emphasizes the importance of punctuality and participation as a reflection of cultural respect, locally and abroad.*
- Orientation (Parents/Guardians).** Parents/guardians are required to attend two Student Orientation meetings- specifically, the first one and one of the final sessions. In addition, at least one parent must attend a Bunka-Sai planning meeting. Additional delegation meetings may be scheduled to prepare for Bunka-Sai and the exchange.

3. **Bunka-Sai Festival Participation.** We understand that **both** parents (or legal guardians) are expected to volunteer at the April Bunka-Sai Cultural Festival for all three days: Friday set-up, Saturday and Sunday event days, and Sunday night clean-up. If one parent is unavailable, we agree to arrange for another responsible adult (18+) to fulfill the commitment so that two adults are present.
4. **Cherry Blossom Festival Participation.** Each student must participate in the City of Torrance's Cherry Blossom Festival on Sunday, April 4, 2027 to promote Bunka-Sai and the TSCA program.
5. **Host Family Orientation.** Parents/guardians are required to attend the host family meeting. To be held on a weeknight after business hours in the West Annex Building.
6. **Driving.** We understand that our child is not permitted to drive a Kashiwa student at any time during their stay in Torrance.
7. **Parental Presence.** We understand that a parent/guardian must be in the home whenever the Kashiwa student is there.
8. **August Activities.** He/She will actively participate in activities planned for the Kashiwa delegation in August, including going to the airport to welcome the Kashiwa delegation, The Welcome Potluck, Chili Cook-off/Square Dance, and Sayonara Banquet are mandatory events. We understand that attendance at the August Activities is a respectful reciprocation for the students visiting from Kashiwa. Parents may be required to sign up and participate in some events.
9. **TSCA Priority.** We understand that he/she cannot participate in summer activities that conflict with the TSCA programming (such as take an online summer course, work or participate in an internship, etc.)
10. **Program-Wide Conduct Expectations:** We understand and agree to TSCA's strict zero-tolerance policy on alcohol, smoking, and drugs for all student ambassadors. This policy also applies to Kashiwa student guests during their time in Torrance; host families are expected not to provide or permit access to alcohol, tobacco, or any illegal substances at any time. Student Ambassadors are expected to maintain appropriate and respectful behavior and language at all times while serving as a representative while in Japan and in the United States.

***TSCA reserves the right to rescind its offer to join the Student Cultural Exchange (Ambassador) Program at any time if these conditions are not met. Dates for events above will be communicated in advance.***

In the online application, student will type name acknowledging receipt and review of this information.

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Questions? Email [tscaexchange@gmail.com](mailto:tscaexchange@gmail.com)

Link to online application (or QR code) below:

[TSCA Student Cultural Exchange Program online application](#)

