

Navigating K–12 Expat Education: 7 Tips from a Teacher

MAKING THE MOVE ABROAD INVOKES SUCH A SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE AND EXCITEMENT that we often don't stop to think about the sometimes overwhelming details. As exciting as it can be to throw ourselves into new cultures, there are some aspects of our lives we shouldn't leave to chance. One of these is the education of our children. While most countries in the world have public school options, being able to anticipate their quality, their ability to target the specific needs of your child, or your child's ability to thrive in this foreign environment may be severely limited—as these are all difficult things to measure effectively beforehand.

So you have a choice: Do you place your child in the school that happens to be the shortest walk from your new home, or do you take matters into your own hands by choosing a school that was designed for people in your situation?

Pearson Online Academy offers targeted solutions to meet the needs that are specific to your situation. Our curriculum meets and exceeds U.S. education standards and actively changes to stay ahead of the standards set by leading educational organizations. We are constantly adopting new and creative ways to keep students engaged. Furthermore, our exclusive College Acceleration Program enables students to earn college credits and reduce college tuition costs.

1. How will I deal with the bureaucratic issues of enrolling my child in a local school?

Many countries will not simply let you drop your child off and pick him or her up fully educated. Like in the U.S., schools across the globe run on tax money, and many countries will require you to get student visas for your child to be educated in their schools. Pearson Online Academy is based in the United States and is completed 100 percent in an interactive online environment, so it'd be the same as if your child were in the neighborhood school.

2. Will my child be at a disadvantage at a local school if he or she can't speak the local language?

Most likely, yes. If your child doesn't have a background in the local language, he or she will be unable to capture all of the intricacies of speech from both teachers and peers. All Pearson Online Academy classes are taught in English, with many of our teachers even having backgrounds working with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). All of our students speak English, and there are many opportunities for kids to make friends!

3. Will my child be accepted by the local community if I enroll him or her in a local school?

Some countries will be more accepting than others. The more important question to ask is whether your child's learning needs will be met by a staff without an international background. Pearson Online Academy has some of the strictest hiring practices, and screens candidates based on their experience, content background, value added, and most importantly, on their ability to anticipate the learning needs of a global community of students.

4. What if I want my child to experience other cultures?

Pearson Online Academy has you covered there too! We have students from across the globe and teachers from a variety of backgrounds. Our clubs and activities aren't just American in focus; we celebrate the cultures of all our students. We've found that "sweet spot" between local school and international school. There are no insiders and outsiders at Pearson Online Academy—we're all in this together, and our culture of diversity embraces this.

5. My child struggles with ___ class, and we'd hate to lose that individual attention.

One word: LiveTutor. Pearson Online Academy is the only school you'll find with a tutor always available during your child's workday. When I say tutor, I don't mean a college kid making a quick buck on the side—I'm talking one of our certified teachers being available for an interactive, one-on-one, live tutoring session! Need help with that bizarre geometry question? Join the Math LiveTutor room and you're all set! Shaking your head trying to figure out Shakespeare? Join the English LiveTutor room! We've got you covered for whatever subject you need additional assistance with.

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6. How can your school help us with our schedule or our relocation?

If you move around a lot or are constantly dealing with time zone issues, our teachers are on a flexible work schedule and are able to help you at all hours. In addition, all of your child's lessons are available 24/7, from anywhere you have an internet connection. Your child may also work at his or her own pace, so if you want to take a family trip, you're able to set your child's schedule.

7. What about missing out on the traditional school experience?

Fear of missing out, or FOMO, is something that many people consider before making the jump to virtual school. While we have many clubs, events, and chances to interact with peers, there's no denying that your child will have a different educational experience online. However, we believe this is beneficial to help students develop the skills they need to thrive in today's world. Interacting with adults by having intelligent conversations now replaces the classroom version of the teacher randomly calling on kids in a desperate attempt to keep them engaged. Forming friendships with students from all over the world replaces friendships with students who simply happen to be next to them when the teacher seats them in alphabetical order. Group projects take the form of online collaboration—not all that different from what is expected in college. We have regularly scheduled, interactive LiveLesson® sessions; more than 25 clubs and activities; LiveTutor for one-on-one extra help; a useful tech support hotline; and a student body made up with talented individuals from across the globe. So we really should be asking you, don't you fear missing out on what Pearson Online Academy has to offer?

Our website can be useful for you, the expat parent, as you attempt to climb the mountain that is expat education. As you climb this mountain, you may often feel as if you are alone. Consider us your Sherpa, always by your side, pushing you on, helping you to not get lost, and shining the light when you can't see the way! Bookmark us, add us to your favorites, add us to your RSS reader, make us your home page—don't take this journey alone. Nobody wants to help your child succeed more than you do as a parent. Let Pearson Online Academy help your family achieve these goals.

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