

PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL FIELD TRIP

Field trips expand children's learning through active hands-on experience with the rich resources of the local community. Field trips increase student knowledge and understanding of a subject and add realism to the topic of study.

Good planning must precede field trips. When considering a field trip, teachers are advised to first consult with their administrator regarding existing school board policies and follow those recommended procedures.

Trip Selection

- Identify the rationale, objectives and plan of evaluation for the field trip.
- Select the site to be visited. Contact the educational coordinator for the site and arrange the date and time. Obtain the pre-trip information package if one is available. Record addresses, directions, contact persons, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.

Logistics Planning

- Apply for administrative approval from departmental chairperson, curriculum administrator, or building principal
- File requisition for bus transportation reservation
- Make arrangements for meal or sack lunch if needed
- Develop schedule for the day
- Prepare name tags for students and chaperones
- Collect money for admission fees
- Compose parent permission letter including date and location of field trip and transportation arrangements, Educational purpose of field trip, Provision for special needs students, Cost, Lunch arrangements, Trip schedule, Whether a child will need prescribed medication administered, Parent signature
- Send a letter to parents or include in the class newsletter a request for help as chaperones, communicate assigned duties/responsibilities, review field trip objectives, and list activities and schedule.
- Provide alternative arrangements for pupils who will not be going on the trip.
- Inform the cafeteria staff if students will be away during the lunch hour.
- Submit a list of students who will be attending the field trip to other teachers if their schedules will be affected.
- Collect the money for the trip and deposit it in your school's account. If required, send the advanced fee to the field trip site.
- Create a list of all student names and home phone numbers for use in an emergency.

Preparing Students Before the Trip

- Discuss the purpose of the field trip and how it relates to the current unit of study.
- As a class brainstorm a set of standards of conduct for the trip and discuss suggested spending money, lunch plans, appropriate clothing to wear for the trip including gear for rainy weather.
- Discuss with students how to ask good questions and brainstorm a list of open-ended observation questions to gather information during the visit. Record questions on chart paper or in student field trip journals.
- Overview the field trip schedule.

Final Planning

- Check all permission slips the day before the field trip.

Conducting the Trip

- Divide class into small groups and assign chaperones to groups
- Place a class list and student emergency forms in a folder
- Secure a cell phone if possible
- Take along an emergency kit

Activities that will Occur During the Field Trip

Plan activities that allow students to work alone, in pairs or small groups. Activities might include:

- Ask follow-up questions as students make observations and listen to presentations.
- Provide time for students to work in their Field Book writing questions, describing favorite displays or making sketches of artifacts, structures, scenery, etc. If they cannot complete their sketches, encourage them to label them for future completion as to color, detail, etc.
- Provide time for students to use (tape recorder, camcorder, digital camera) for recording important resources viewed/heard.

Post-Field Trip Activities

Just as quality pre-planning is essential to the success of a field trip, planning for appropriate follow-up activities will facilitate student learning and multiply the value of hands-on experiences outside the classroom. The following activities provide a general guide when planning for post-field trip classroom experiences.

- Provide time for students to share general observations and reactions to field trip experiences
- Link field trip activities to multiple curricular areas. For example, students can develop vocabulary lists based on field trip observations; record field trip observations in a classroom journal; complete math problems related to actual field trip budget planning; etc.
- Share and evaluate student assignments/activities from the Field Book.
- Have the class compose and send thank-you letters to the field trip site host, chaperones, school administrators and other persons that supported the field trip. Include favorite objects or special information learned during the field trip.
- Create a short news report about what happened on the field trip. Publicize the trip via an article in your local newspaper, school bulletin board, trip presentation for parent's night, or class Web page.