



**M**ake field trips meaningful experiences by planning them properly and using them as integral components of learning. Indeed, well-planned field trips produce optimal learning experiences for students that also are gratifyingly manageable for the teacher.

## Preparation

A meaningful field trip integrates a unit of study. The trip may take place at the onset of a unit, in the middle, or as a concluding activity. Begin planning by first checking with the principal or field-trip coordinator about funds and procedures.

Next, telephone the intended site to determine fees and requirements, such as visiting rules and lunch arrangements, as well as available times and dates for the visit. With that information, calculate costs, including busing, entrance fees, and lunch money, and then finalize approval.

Set the date of the trip contingent upon bus availability. Check that date with the transportation department and confirm the date with the field-trip site. Obtaining parental help at this stage is crucial and relatively easy if volunteers were established early in the year. During the school's fall open house, supply a sign-up sheet for parents to indicate their preferred months and days of availability along with contact information. When you begin planning, contact those

parents available around the trip's date. Use this checklist as an aid.

- Trip approval
- Student cost (consider admission, lunch, and other fees)
- Bus arrangements
- Time required between arrangements and the trip (schools may plan a year in advance)
- Parental supervision measures
- Trip date coordinated and confirmed with site and transportation hub
- Parent helpers enlisted

## Permission Letter

Compose a professional and gracious note to parents regarding the field trip and permission. Double-check date, times, and cost, and then carefully proof the note before copying. The letter should be sent home about three weeks before the trip with the following information.

- Purpose of the trip and how it correlates with the curriculum
- Fees involved and payment information (include how checks should be made out)
- Lunch plans and expectations (indicate whether disposable or nonperishable items are required or, if students will purchase lunches, how much money students should bring)
- Return slip for parent signature

As students return the permissions, track receipt of permission slips, money, and the names of parents promising to attend. Ask one or two parents to serve as alternate helpers in case a parent supervisor cancels.

## Student Groundwork

Delineate purposes for field trips using the KWL method (What do I know, what do I want to know, and what do I hope to learn?), correlating unit lessons with the field trip. Begin discussing your expectations of students.

- Review the reasons for the trip
- Discuss and model the behavior you expect of students on the trip
- Request return of permission slips
- Explain color-coded groupings
- Remind students what type of lunch to bring
- Determine amount of spending money allowed
- Suggest weather-appropriate clothing the day before the trip
- Call supervising parents to remind them about the field trip

## Supervision

Be considerate of your parent volunteers. Four is generally a good number of students for each parent to supervise. Incidentally, though it may be tempting to lighten *your* load by giving “challenging” students to parents, you absolutely cannot. They should be in your charge. To guide parents’ supervision, prepare a list of their charges’ names and important information, such as allergies and other emergency data. Color-code each group, using adhesive-backed color strips to match students with a parent. To protect students’ privacy, do not put their names on their shirts.

## Parent In-Service

Ask parents to arrive at least 30 minutes before departure to acquaint them with procedures and expectations. Hand each parent his or her group’s list of names and color strips, and then discuss this list with the entire group.

- Goals of the trip
- Agenda for the trip—include meeting times and places
- Behavior expected of the children for bus, trip, and lunch, and what to do if someone misbehaves or becomes ill
- Procedure for misbehavior

- Cell phone number or walkie-talkie, if available
- Questions

## Teacher Requisites

Don’t overlook trip essentials. As you make final preparations, check off these items.

- First-aid kit
- Basket to hold lunches
- Class list with emergency phone numbers and allergies noted
- Parent volunteer phone numbers and color designations
- Cell phone or walkie-talkie and school phone numbers
- Weather-appropriate clothing
- Money for bus driver, if needed
- Head count/group match *before* leaving the school

## Trip Follow-Up

Allow yourself a good night of sleep after the trip. Before returning to daily routines, conduct a few follow-up activities.

- Thank-you letters to parent volunteers
- Volunteer certificate for each parent volunteer
- Praise and, if necessary, consequences for students
- KWL-chart review
- Related lesson

## Personal Reflection

Soon after the trip, take time to reflect on the experience as a whole. Contemplate the following items regarding the entire trip—from planning to returning.

- What do you want to continue doing?
- What occurred that you *never* again want to experience?
- What would you like to do in the future that you didn’t plan for this trip?
- How successful was the event overall?
- Commend yourself for planning, coordinating, and carrying out a meaningful field trip for your students! ■



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