GENERAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR ALL FIELD TRIPS

This Superintendent's Circular provides instructions for implementing policies relating to field trips passed by the Boston School Committee on June 29, 2011.

This circular MUST be read in its entirety first by Principals/Headmasters (or the District Department sponsoring the trip) and chaperones as it outlines important guidelines and procedures for ALL field trips. After reading this entire circular, please refer to the circular appropriate for your type of trip for further details on guidelines, procedures, and permission forms.

Principals/Headmasters (and/or the District Department sponsoring the trip) are responsible for ensuring that all field trip policies and procedures as outlined in all of the field trip Circulars are adhered to.

Types of Field Trips

BPS has divided field trips into three types: 1) Day Field Trip, 2) Overnight Field Trip, and 3) International Field Trip. This division ensures that permission forms and procedures are directly relevant to the type of trip and activities students will be engaged in.

For more information about the policies for the type of field trip you are planning and permission forms, refer to the applicable Circular listed below:

1. “Day Field Trips,” Superintendent Circular No. CAO-23
2. “Overnight Field Trips,” Superintendent Circular No. CAO-24

Purpose of Field Trips

Field trips provide an important avenue for student learning and personal development that complements the classroom experience in important respects. They can enrich and extend the curriculum and, in doing so, often motivate students. Field trips expose students to new ways of thinking and being that are often best understood when experienced firsthand.

Community-based field trips can introduce students to specific examples of career choices within the community, thereby showing them how the skills that they develop in school can be put into practice in the “real" world. In addition, local field trips allow students to gain a more in-depth perspective and appreciation of their own neighborhoods and history.

International field trips expose students to world cultures, enabling them to fully appreciate the breadth and depth of the human experience. In an increasingly interconnected planet, contextualized world experiences develop more thoughtful and informed global citizens.

It is important to note the serious obligations that BPS staff members have to ensure that all field trips are not only educationally sound, but also safe and secure learning experiences. To meet this obligation, we must partner with students and families to ensure we understand the responsibilities we share when students are engaged in experiences outside of the classroom. This memorandum provides field trip guidelines and procedures that will help fulfill this obligation.
Field Trip Categories
(All field trips must be educational in nature; a trip often meets more than one category.)

A. Curricular Field Trip: A field trip that enhances a specific curriculum unit or serves a broader educational purpose. This might include a focused visit to a college, museum, an historic location, or a nature reserve.

B. Cultural Field Trip: A field trip where the content of the trip is cultural in nature. These field trips might include a visit to a dance or art exhibition or a visit to a foreign country for a language immersion experience.

C. Community Building Field Trip: This type of trip may reinforce relationships in an existing group of students, prepare students for a significant transition into a new structure or community (e.g. students entering grades 6, 7, or 9), help students work collaboratively, or assist in the development of leadership and decision making skills. These trips might include an Outward Bound day trip or camping trip experience with an overnight commitment.

D. Service Learning Field Trip: This is a field trip where students learn the value of helping others in their own community and beyond. These trips show students how empowering service to others is while developing students’ leadership skills.

E. Personal Growth and Development: This is a field trip where students are exposed to new group or individual activities whereby they learn new skills, new ideas, develop identity, build self-esteem, grow strengths and build camaraderie. These trips might include an outdoor or sporting activity.

General Guidelines for All Types of Field Trips

- **Principals/Headmasters** or the District Department sponsoring the trip have the primary responsibility to ensure that all procedures pertaining to field trips are followed by their school.

- All field trip lead chaperones (the BPS employee organizing and leading the trip) must be approved by the Principal/Headmaster or District Department sponsoring the trip.

- All field trip IDEAS must be preliminarily approved by the Principal/Headmaster or District Department Sponsoring the trip prior to the distribution of any informational materials on the proposed trip to students and their parents/guardians, prior to fundraising efforts, or other detailed preparations. (Document this approval for your records.)

- Lead chaperone must consult with the Principal/Headmaster on potential chaperones and student recruitment.

- Permission for field trips must be in written form only. Without a signed permission slip, the student may not attend the field trip. Trip leaders are responsible for seeing that permission slips are filled out completely and signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

- Permission slips are legal documents and may not be altered.

- Permission slips must be used for any excursion that is school-sponsored, including those scheduled after-school and on weekends.

- No staff member may solicit students for any privately arranged field trip or excursion without the Principal/Headmasters’ permission.

- Students not enrolled in the Boston Public Schools may not participate.
“Blanket” authorization (i.e. parental/guardian approval through the use of a single form for multiple trips to be taken during the school year) should never be allowed. A separate parent/guardian permission slip must be obtained and filed for each field trip.

Parental/Guardian permission slips must be sent home in English and in the language of the home. The following languages are available online: Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Only Parent/Guardians are authorized to sign permissions forms. For questions regarding legal guardianship, refer to the SIS site or the local Welcome Center.

Staff should be aware that errors, late submissions, and poor security for a field trip at one school or site may have negative side effects on field trips for other schools and students.

Please follow approval process timelines below to ensure that guidelines are adhered to, safety procedures are followed, and parents/guardians, the Principal/Headmaster, and the district are informed and prepared to support the trip. If these deadlines are not met, then a field trip application may be rejected.

**Approval and Filing Process for Field Trips**

It is necessary that the proper procedures are followed and that copies of all checklists, permission forms, and if applicable, medical forms are kept on file in the school office and when appropriate, filed with the district. Details regarding the approval process and record keeping are outlined below:

- **DAY FIELD TRIP**
  - “Day Field Trip” forms are submitted to the Principal/Headmaster **AT LEAST 4 weeks in advance** (or at the Principal/Headmaster’s discretion) and approved by the Principal/Headmaster;
  - All forms, including signed checklist form, are filed at the school.

- **OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP**
  - “Overnight Field Trip” forms are submitted to the Principal/Headmaster **AT LEAST 12 weeks in advance** and approved by the Principal/Headmaster;
  - All forms, including the signed checklist form, are filed at the school;
  - Overnight Field Trip Request Form, the list of student and chaperone names, the itinerary, and if applicable, train and flight information are sent to the district to notify the district of trip plans **AT LEAST 4 weeks** in advance. (Please email or fax the Overnight Field Trip Request Form and information to the appropriate Network Superintendent as well as to the Department of Global Education. In addition, please follow up with a phone call or email to ensure documentation has been received.)

- **INTERNATIONAL FIELD TRIP**
  - “International Field Trip” forms are submitted to the Principal/Headmaster **AT LEAST 12 weeks in advance** and approved by the Principal/Headmaster;
  - All forms filed at the school;
  - Copies of original International Field Trip Request form, Signed Cover Letter from Principal/Headmaster, International Trip Narrative, Itinerary and Emergency Action Plan are submitted to the district **AT LEAST 12 weeks in advance** and approved by the Department of Global Education, the appropriate Network Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer, the Superintendent, and the School Committee;
  - Copies of all forms are also filed at the district. Please send district forms to the Department of Global Education.
• **FILING/RECORD KEEPING FOR ALL TYPES OF TRIPS**
  Retain completed field trip request forms, original permission slips, medical forms, if applicable Fire Prevention and Safety forms, and all other signed documents for field trips in the school office. Legally, these records must be kept for the current fiscal year plus three additional years after all field trips have occurred. (When in doubt, keep it!)

**General Trip Planning Guidelines**

• Please note that trip planning timelines (i.e. “Twelve Weeks (Or More) Prior to the Field Trip”, etc.) in each Circular chronicle the minimal amount of time for planning. **More time for pre-trip planning is strongly recommended for all types of field trips.**

• The Principal/Headmaster should establish clear and transparent internal protocols for field trip requests and approvals at the school level so staff are clear and if applicable, substitute teachers are distributed equitably and according to school priorities.

• Together, the Principal/Headmaster and lead chaperone must review and complete the appropriate type of field trip Circular and Checklist throughout the planning process.

• **The student’s and his/her family’s ability to pay may not be a criterion for field trip participation. Trips must be open and accessible to all students regardless of their financial situation.**

• Sites for field trips should be carefully selected to enrich student learning and increase students’ exposure to new people, places, and activities. It is recommended that a school plan its trips from grade to grade and subject to subject to avoid duplication.

• Discuss with students the trip’s purpose and learning goals in the weeks prior to the trip; engage students in activities before, during, and after the trip so that the field trip’s learning potential is maximized.

• Teachers and staff at the school should be consulted with and/or informed about the trip well in advance so they may plan their schedules accordingly.

• Staff are not allowed to sign contracts on behalf of the Boston Public Schools.

• Be sure students and their parents/guardians have signed the “BPS Media Appearances” release section of the Parent/ Student Agreement document so that the trip may be showcased upon your return. (This document can be found in the Guide to the Boston Public Schools for Families and Students.)

**Chaperone Guidelines**

• At least one chaperone on every field trip must be a BPS employee. Other authorized chaperones may include parents and volunteers who are 21 years of age or older.

• The trip leader must be sure that all chaperones including non-BPS chaperones are familiar with the **BPS Code of Conduct** and other district and school-based rules.

• Chaperones who have BPS students on the trip must fully understand that they must provide the same level of care and attention to ALL children. (chaperones’ students on the program must be in the same grade or age range as participating students.)

• Non-BPS employees who chaperone on a field trip are not covered for liability by the Boston Public Schools.
All chaperones are subjected to a CORI FORM check and must submit an authorization form to the BPS Office of Human Capital (OHC). (Allow approximately 4 weeks for this process to ensure that chaperones are CORI/SORI cleared well before the trip.) For more information on this process, please contact Rose Santos in OHC at rsantos@bostonpublicschools.org.

Principals/Headmasters and the lead chaperone are responsible to submit authorization forms to OHR and must not allow chaperones to take part in activities until they have been CORI/SORI cleared.

All non-BPS employee chaperones must submit a yearly CORI/SORI authorization form to the Office of Human Resources.

For all field trips, every effort should be made for chaperones to be representative of the student group and include males and females.

The student-to-chaperone maximum ratios must be:
- Day Field Trips:
  - Grades K-5, 10:1
  - Grades 5 and up, 15:1
- Overnight Field Trips: 10:1
- International Field Trips: 10:1

Please note the following: For students with disabilities, the ratio of staff to students must be at least the same as the ratio mandated in their IEPs for their classes.

Transportation for Field Trips

- School buses or approved transportation vendors' vehicles MUST be used to transport students to and from field trips or athletic events (regardless of how the trip is paid for.)

- Privately owned vehicles, vehicles from non-approved vendors, or leased vans are not to be utilized to transport students to and from field trips or athletic events, except in the case of a bona fide emergency.

- Staff are not permitted to transport students. Staff who utilize their own vehicles risk being legally liable if students are injured while riding in their automobiles.

- Please refer to TRN-3 for information and regulations regarding field trip transportation.

Safety Guidelines

- Review Superintendent’s Circular on Medical Emergency Management, FSE-5 and Incident Data-Reporting and Release, SAF-4 for important safety protocols.
  - For Day Field Trips, the Department of Safety Services (617-635-8000), must be notified in the event of a serious medical or other emergency and should be used as a resource for questions regarding safety on day field trips.
  - For Overnight or International Trips, the Department of Global Education (617) 510-7724 (24/7 for emergencies), must be notified in the event of a serious medical or other emergency and should be used as a resource for questions regarding safety on trips.
  - In case of a medical or other emergency, the chaperones must immediately contact the Parent/Guardian and the Principal/Headmaster.

- Review each student’s Emergency Information Card (Form 460 or electronic equivalent) to ensure/cross-check accuracy of all field trip permissions and forms.
Please be specific when completing the “School Portion” of the Parental Authorization for Field Trip Form. Parents/guardians must be given sufficient information to understand the nature and scope of the activity(s).

- Carefully analyze all field trip activities. If you are unsure as to whether or not an activity is appropriate in terms of safety or educational content for a school-sponsored trip, please consult with the Department of Global Education.

Planning, organization and preparation are critical to a successful experience for all participants. As part of trip planning and itinerary development, ensure the major aspects of health, safety and security have been addressed with appropriate due diligence. Trip leaders should be able to articulate in an informed manner what decisions were made, why they were made, and the sources that informed that decision making.

- Students are prohibited from operating or being a passenger on any motorbike during a field trip.

- All chaperones must carry with them at all times during the trip a copy of the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) (which can be found under the “Day,” “Overnight” and “International” Circulars) that outlines procedures for calling 911 in the US or the EAP for foreign countries which outlines emergency procedures for the respective country.

- Consult with and, when necessary, receive training from and obtain written comments from the school regarding students participating in field trips. For day field trips, please see the nurse at least two weeks in advance of the trip. For overnight and international trips, please see the nurse at least eight weeks in advance of the trip. Please see appropriate trip type circular for more information regarding support from school nurses.

- If any student has a serious medical condition, please be sure that his/her doctor writes a letter indicating that the child may safely attend and participate in trip activities. Keep this document on file with other key permissions slips and medical forms.

- For overnight and international trips, students and staff must have had a recent doctor’s visit and physical exam prior to departure. See CAO-24 and CAO-25 for details on healthy travel requirements.

- The district reserves the right to require additional training and/or certifications such as CPR/AED and First Aid depending on the location and purpose of the trip.

- The Superintendent and/or Boston School Committee reserves the right to cancel any field trip up to and including the day of departure to ensure safety.

- If a Principal/Headmaster or lead chaperone finds the behavior of a student unacceptable on a field trip, with Parent/Guardian permission, the child may be sent home. The Principal/Headmaster or lead chaperone must document the Parent/Guardian permission. File an Incident Report appropriate for your trip type.

- Conduct regular “head counts” throughout your trip to ensure that all participants are accounted for.

- After the trip, be sure to follow-up and communicate with the student and Parent/Guardian, as well as the Principal/Headmaster, and if applicable, the appropriate Network Superintendent, Department of Safety Services or the Department of Global Education if there are any student safety concerns (health or otherwise) during the trip that require further attention.
Student Attendance Logistics

- Provisions must be made for any student not attending the trip and staying at school.
- If applicable, provide alternative arrangements and/or comparable activity for students not attending the trip or unable to participate in a portion of your trip.
- Participation in field trips is voluntary. If a student does not attend a field trip for any reason (e.g. illness, parent does not sign permission slip, religious reasons, etc.), he/she may not be penalized through their grade or otherwise.
- Attendance forms should indicate when a student is physically absent from the school building on a field trip, but participating in a school-sponsored program being conducted off school grounds. The use of “constructively present” (“CP”) should be used. (Note: It is important to know and document where students are at all times.)

Swimming (In the Water)

- **Instructional Swimming** is permitted only if proper swimmer-lifeguard ratios are maintained (20:1); the swimming teachers hold valid American Red Cross or YMCA Lifeguard Instruction/ Water Safety Instruction, CPR/AED, and First Aid certificates; the site is nationally recognized for swim instruction (e.g., YMCA); and parents/guardians are informed in the appropriate Parental Authorization for Field Trip form. Parents/Guardians must be given sufficient information to understand the nature and scope of the activity(s).

  Principals/Headmasters are responsible for ensuring these requirements are met and must receive written documentation of all listed guard and instructor certifications. Copies of these certifications must also be faxed or emailed to the Department of Global Education at least 2 weeks prior to the instructional experience. In addition, please make sure to follow up with a phone call or email to ensure the documentation has been received.

- **Recreational Swimming** is not permitted on a BPS field trip unless a request is submitted and approved by the district. These requests are submitted to and reviewed by the Department of Global Education. Significant lead time is needed (12 weeks or more) to allow for safety requirements to be met. Instructions are posted on-line; however, contact the Department of Global Education at (617) 635-9157 or bwood@bostonpublicschools.org to receive necessary “Request” and “Permission” forms.

Water Activities (On the Water)

- Water activities are permitted involving larger commercial or passenger vessels which meet the US Coast Guard standards for safety and hold a valid Certification of Compliance for the state or its international equivalent (Please note: There must be one life jacket per passenger.) In addition, be sure the water-related activity is clearly listed in the appropriate Parental Authorization for Field Trip form. Parents/Guardians must be given sufficient information to understand the nature and scope of the activity(s).

- **Water Activities** such as kayaking and canoeing (or the equivalent where the movement of a craft depends on the physical endurance of its operator) and travel in small water crafts are not permitted on a BPS field trip unless a request is submitted and approved by the district. These requests are submitted to and reviewed by Bethany Wood. Significant lead time is needed (12 weeks or more) to allow for safety requirements to be met. Instructions are posted on-line; however, contact the Department of Global Education at (617) 635-9157 or bwood@bostonpublicschools.org to receive necessary “Request” and “Permission” forms.
For more information, questions, or support with this circular, contact:

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