



LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on *EXCELLENCE* in Leadership

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Field Trips and Tours

Leadership, [NAD Principals' Handbook](#) (excerpt)

Field trips provide experiences that enhance the academic life for each student. Field trips should be planned and arranged by the classroom teacher. The principal should ensure that the school has a process for the:

- Approval of trips.
- Arranging of transportation.
- Budgeting and collection of funds

Approval of Trips

The union Education Code and LCOE policies will provide direction regarding the approval process.

Transportation

Transportation arrangements should be made in accordance with school policy. Adventist Risk Management and state/provincial laws must be followed. When using cars and/or vans, drivers must provide evidence of minimum insurance coverage, have been screened as a volunteer, and undergo a driving record review.

Budgeting and Collection of Funds

A budget should be prepared for each trip. This may be as simple as listing expenses and income to ensure that each trip is financially sound and within school policy. Policy for proper handling of funds collected should be in place and clearly reviewed with faculty.

Step Out the Door

Stephanie Gates, Principal, Cascade Christian Academy

During the years that I taught the primary grades, field trips were a highlight. Not just for the students, but for me too. I loved to take little ones out the door into the real world. We would climb into parents' vehicles through the rainy days of Seattle, headed out on an adventure of discovery. Watching salmon swim up the fish ladders and rest in the shallow streams where they lay their eggs was a surprisingly quiet field trip as the children stood in awe. Donning rain boots and coats, we explored the coastline for bird and animal tracks, which yielded squeals of delight as the young students found even the simplest indentation that might have been an animal track! These varied expeditions were whole-student learning—engaging all five senses—learning about the world and the community outside the classroom door. Gaining knowledge through experience, watching as their minds processed new information through what they could see, touch, smell, and hear, brought understanding. Learning was alive and real!

Field trips were a spring board for me as I took off into a new unit of study. When we began studying about oceans, we were out the door to the ocean, experiencing it before the young students read about it, wrote about it, asked questions about it, or engaged in discussions about it. Immersing my students in what they were about to learn got them excited! It tapped into their natural curiosity and engaged their interest. Of course, field trips can be saved for the end of a unit study to celebrate what

students have learned.

The view from the principal's desk is quite different. Now as my teachers plan field trips for their students, my first thoughts (and responsibility) is ensuring student safety. The paperwork includes permission slips, board approval, conference approval, insurance, making sure there are medical release forms, and so on. While there is much to think about, I am still encouraging my teachers to get the kids out the door into the real world!

As our kids step out the doors of our school, they enter our community in a new way. They participate in structured experiences, which put the grocery store in a different light. They have a chance to use real-life skills by interacting with community members. Recently learned skills in writing are practiced in recording observations in journals, notebooks and worksheets. Math can be found in nearly everything. And science can be practiced when they test the water, examine the soil, and collect the bugs. Reading books, watching videos, and completing assignments within the walls of the classroom give students only a limited perspective.

Your fondest memories of school are probably like mine. These highlights include field trips, some of which you may recall in specific detail. Field trips are an important part of every student's learning experience. Let's encourage our teachers to make the learning come alive! 🌍

Worth the Cost

The school field trip has a long history in education. The expense and disruption created by a class field trip was considered worth the effort because these experiences were central to preparing students to be good citizens in their community. Education exists to provide students more than economically useful skills in numeracy and literacy, it must also yield career-ready and mission-focused young men and women. Students need to experience arts and culture, interact with the community, participate in Christian service and become acquainted with God's revelation in nature. But field trips come at great expense.

Schools are increasingly experimenting with digital media—videos and virtual tours—to replace costly field trips. For some schools the increased focus on student academic performance as measured by tests has moved field trips off the yearly school calendar. As Adventist educators, we know that whole-student learning—spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social—requires engaging, realistic teaching and learning. Recent research out of the University of Arkansas has confirmed real-world learning is vital. The first-ever, large-scale, random-assignment experiment of the effects of school tours of an art museum showed that students improved in knowledge retention, developed high-level thinking skills, and increased in interest and empathy for their culture when they participated in off-campus learning.

Adventist educators across the northwest were asked to share their perspective on the value of off-campus learning. Following are some insights that will, hopefully, inform your leadership.

1) Why is off-campus learning important and “worth it” in meeting student learning goals?

- *“Learning about God while exploring His creation is the best way to connect spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually.”* – Michael Lee (Bozeman, MT)
- *“Many students engage more quickly when it is off-site and hands-on learning.”* – Larry Marsh (Spokane, WA)

- *“Off-campus learning extends and supplements the classroom instruction in a way that makes the lessons real.”* – Sheldon Eakins (Eugene, OR)
- *“There is no better way to show relevancy and connect students with the reason for why they are learning in school.”* – Laurie Hosey (Anchorage, AK)
- *“It is very important in stimulating the student’s natural curiosity to learn.”* – Patti Revolinski (Ridgefield, WA)

2) What “tip” would you share with principals to ensure a successful off-campus trip/tour?

- *“Communication must occur early and often between the wise teacher, experienced principal, qualified bus driver, coordinating office assistant, and the students, parents, and board members.”* – Ed Tillotson (Hillsboro, OR)
- *“Ensure the field trip is aligned with the learning goals and not just a ‘tradition’ that a class has participated in every year.”* – Barbara Plubell (Portland, OR)
- *“First, make sure you have the “right” chaperones/parents on your trip. Letting everyone who wants to come isn’t always the best strategy. Second, prepare students well. You don’t want take all the ‘surprise’ out of the adventure, however, a better time will be had by all if students have an idea of what to expect.”* – Keith Waters (Ridgefield, WA)
- *“Plan to capture the opportunities for small group learning, peer collaboration, and team building that are available in the off-campus context.”* – Craig Mattson (Puyallup, WA)
- *“Ensure that teachers and board members are knowledgeable about school, conference, and union education code policies and that these are met faithfully for every trip or tour to meet our obligation to protect all concerned.”* – Dennis Plubell (Ridgefield, WA) ☩

Field Trips and Tours

An effective principal recognizes that a school's program is enhanced by providing opportunities for students to participate in field trips, study tours, organization performance tours, promotional tours, and mission service trips.

Evaluation of Activities

The principal should measure the effectiveness of all co-curricular activities. The following are questions that may be asked in evaluating programs:

- Is the activity based upon a clearly stated purpose consistent with the school's mission and goals?
- Is the activity being implemented according to school policies?
- What is the extent of student participation?

- Is the co-curricular program well-balanced and comprehensive?
- Are students' interests and needs being met by the program?
- Are the activities well organized and efficiently run?
- Are there suitable facilities to safely conduct the activities provided?
- Is there a qualified sponsor(s) for the activity who is willing to assume leadership?
- Are activities adequately supervised?
- Are costs to participating students reasonable, or do they exclude some students from participating? ☩