FIELD TRIP SAFETY

Background

The health, safety and security of students are paramount when participating in curricular or extra-curricular field trips.

The school district wishes to offer educationally enriching field trips without exposing students to unacceptable risk.

Procedures

1. This administrative procedure should be used in conjunction with Administrative Procedures 562 Student Transportation and Travel and 490 Provision of Volunteer Services.

2. This administrative procedure applies to all persons involved in the planning, sponsorship or supervision of field trips.

3. This administrative procedure applies to day trips, overnight trips, in-district trips and out-of-district trips.

4. Schools should operate on the basis that:

    4.1 Parents have a right to give consent or refuse consent to their child's participation in all field trips, and in curricular activities and extracurricular activities that include significant physical risk beyond what would normally be involved in school attendance; and

    4.2 Parents need information relevant to those risks before they make the decision.

    4.3 These principles underlie the issue of informed consent.

5. The school district owes students a duty of care to protect them from the risk of reasonable foreseeable harm.

6. The standard of care is that of a careful and prudent parent. What that means depends upon all the circumstances, including:

    6.1 The nature of the activity;

    6.2 The number of students being supervised;

    6.3 The age, training and degree of skill of the students;

    6.4 The competency and capacity of the students involved; and

6.5 The proclivity of young boys and girls to act recklessly in disregard, if not in actual defiance, of authority.

7. In considering field trips three questions that must be addressed are:

7.1 Should we be engaging in this activity from both educational and safety perspectives?

7.2 If we do, what are the risks?

7.3 How do we reduce those risks?

8. Risks need to be assessed and a plan made for each and every trip involving risky activities:

8.1 Identify risks of injury;

8.2 Identify strategies to manage and minimize risk;

8.3 Implement risk reduction strategies;

8.4 Monitor the results and implement changes.

9. Schools must ensure that all relevant information is provided to parents and that information is provided in a format that engages, motivates, and enables parents to assume parental responsibilities, so that they may make or withhold fully informed consent.

10. Schools cannot justify activity choice and trip selection based upon a past history of success. Ongoing reassessment, particularly of programs that have been in place for a number of years, is necessary. Past program decisions should not drive current program planning.

11. “Consent” is the permission of the parent for a child to participate in an activity while “waiver” is abandonment of the right to sue for harm caused by another’s negligence. Waivers should not be used for School District No. 57 field trips unless required by a third party.

12. Where there is a question as to the risk level acceptability of a field trip, the principal must consult with and obtain approval in principle from an Associate Superintendent before proceeding with the trip’s arrangements.

13. Field trips may not take place unless the field trip safety plan is approved in writing by the principal and, if applicable, by an Associate Superintendent.

14. Schools should refer to and be cognizant of the “YouthSafe Outdoors” guidelines, available at www.youthsafeoutdoors.ca.

15. A consent form should be signed by the parent to indicate understanding of the risks and that the activity is appropriate for their child.

    15.1 The higher the risk, the greater the obligation to communicate the risks to the parents, including how those risks will be managed. Communicating with parents in writing may not be enough. Where there is a question as to what communication is appropriate, the principal shall consult with an Associate Superintendent.

    15.2 A consent form should include at least the following:

        15.2.1 A full description of the activities involved;

        15.2.2 The means of travel;

        15.2.3 A description of known risks; and

        15.2.4 The measures that will be taken to try to deal with the identified risks.

        15.2.5 One consent form may be used to provide "blanket" consent for multiple low-risk, "routine" urban area field trips (examples: trips to a public library, municipal sports centre or museum or inter-school extra-curricular league play at various district schools). Where multiple trips are included on one form, all references in this administrative procedures referring to a singular field trip apply to the multiple trips. <u>For all other cases, a separate consent form must be completed for each field trip</u>.

16. Where a "blanket" consent is in effect, schools must ensure that they notify or remind parents of planned activities prior to each trip, on a trip-by-trip basis.

17. A student may not participate in a field trip unless a signed consent form is filed with the school. An exception to this may be made if a staff member receives verbal authorization from the parent by phone after the consent form information has been reviewed with the parent. In this case, the staff member signs the consent form, noting phone contact details.

18. When, in the opinion of the principal or assistant superintendent, there are high risks involved in a field trip, a meeting must be held with parents to discuss the trip and obtain their input. When such a meeting is held, parents not in attendance must meet in person with a school staff member to discuss the trip prior to the school accepting written consent from them.

19. Examples of field trips that would not typically involve consultation with and approval from an Associate Superintendent include:

    - Commercial ski hill trips;
    - Day hikes;
    - Berg Lake Trail trips.

20. Examples of field trips that would typically involve consultation with and approval from an Associate Superintendent include:

- Canoe trips;
- Rafting trips;
- Wilderness area trips

21. Examples of field trips that may be combined on a multiple field trip consent form include:

21.1 Low risk local area trips to:

- Public library
- Municipal sports centre
- Museum
- District schools for extra-curricular league play

21.2 Multiple trips under this section should all be of a similar nature. For example, trips to a public library and trips to a museum may be "bundled together. Trips to an aquatic centre should not be combined on the same form as a trip to the public library. However, all urban-based activities connected with a course such as PE 12 may be "bundled", provided the diversity of venues is clearly outlined on the original consent form.

22. Field Trip Safety Plan

22.1 Prior to completing this plan, the sponsoring teacher(s) should become knowledgeable of the content of this administrative procedure, Administrative Procedures 562 Student Transportation and Travel and 490 Provision of Volunteer Services

22.2 The sponsoring teacher(s) should complete this form and submit it to the principal for review and modification as required. The principal shall review the application, modify it if required, and if authorization is to be given, sign the form.

22.3 It is the principal's responsibility to ensure all aspects of this administrative procedure has been complied with before signing this form.

22.4 If the field trip travel involves a motor vehicle, a completed Student Travel Safety form must be attached. This form is available in the appendix of Administrative Procedure 562 Student Transportation and Travel.

23. Retention of Forms

Copies of the signed forms, Field Trip Safety Plan and Field Trip Consent, should be held by the sponsor(s) for the duration of the trip and should be retained in the school's files for one year.