

International Travel Procedures

These procedures cover all New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) Sanctioned Field Trips Involving International Travel by students. The notification and approval process is designed to ensure consistency in processing trips. This includes: consistency in advertising the educational opportunities to parents and students; behavioral expectations of students and chaperones; selection process of students; liability and medical forms; and cost development considerations. There are a number of parts to this process including:

1. Board Policy 7552, Field Trips, Domestic and International Travel
2. International Travel Procedures
3. Request for Approval for NHCS Sanctioned Field Trips Involving International Travel
4. International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver
5. Chaperone Agreement

Principal, Superintendent and New Hanover County Board of Education approval is required in advance of any new destination or significant modifications to a previously approved trip. **For any NHCS Sanctioned Field Trips Involving International Travel, the principal shall hold the responsibility for making sure all policies and procedures are followed.** One full time staff member from the sponsoring school shall be designated as the person in charge and known as the **Travel Coordinator**. Prior to initiating any plans for international travel, the Travel Coordinator shall first review the NHCS policies and procedures governing such travel. If the Travel Coordinator believes that the trip meets the criteria for international travel, the process to obtain approval for the trip may be initiated. Whenever possible, international travel should take place when school is not in session. **No soliciting, announcement or deposits may be made prior to obtaining proper approval.**

The following procedures shall be followed when planning trips that require international travel for students.

1. Approval Process, the Travel Coordinator shall:

- a. Complete the application for “Request for Approval for NHCS Sanctioned Field Trips Involving International Travel” and file a copy with the principal. Subsequent approvals are required by the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Accountability, the Superintendent or designee and Board of Education prior to announcing the trip. This approval process should begin at least six months prior to travel dates.
- b. As part of planning the trip, check with the U.S. Department of State and Center for Disease Control or other appropriate agencies to determine the advisability of U.S. citizens traveling to the country(ies) of destination.
- c. Secure approval of student travel by obtaining the required signatures on the “Request for Approval for NHCS Sanctioned Field Trips Involving International Travel” Form. Signed forms should be kept on file in the principal’s office. Time lines for approvals must be followed.
- d. Ensure that all documents related to each trip are kept on file at the school, are accurate and complete and subject to being audited.

2. Student Eligibility

- a. All student participants must be New Hanover County School students at the time of application, initial payment and for the duration of the trip.
- b. All students must have a valid international passport and all other travel documents as required by the receiving country by the time of travel. The Travel Coordinator shall notify parents and chaperones that there may be additional cost for student and chaperone passports.
- c. Each student must have written permission from their parent or guardian to participate using the **International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver**. All forms must be submitted by the established deadline to the Travel Coordinator. The International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver is a legal document and cannot be altered. Each trip requires a new permission form. The International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver shall go home in the language specified in Power School.
- d. Fundraisers shall be made available to all students to offset the expenses of any international travel. Fundraisers shall be clearly defined and approved by the principal prior to the announcement of the trip.

3. International Travel Permission form and Liability Waiver and Parent Meeting

- a. Travel Coordinator shall conduct parent/guardian orientation meeting(s) and also communicate information conveyed at meetings in writing to parents of all participating students within ten business days of the meeting. The first parent/guardian meeting must be held prior to a deposit being collected. Parents shall be informed of the potential risks associated with international travel as stated in the International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver.
- b. Students and their parents/guardians are required to participate in orientation meetings as a pre-requisite to participation in the trip.
- c. A parent/guardian shall sign an International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver verifying that they have received information and accept the risks and conditions of the planned travel. Orientation should include but is not limited to information about:
 - Payment schedule
 - Fees
 - Penalties
 - Policy 8410: Policies, Rules, and Procedures Relative to Student Discipline in NHCS
 - Cancellation policy
 - Insurance (medical, trip cancellation, etc.)
 - Adult/student ratio
 - Passport procurement

4. Code of Conduct

- a. The Travel Coordinator shall inform Parents/guardians, chaperones and students in writing that New Hanover County Policy 8410: Policies, Rules, and Procedures Relative to Student Discipline in NHCS are in effect for the entire trip.

- b. A parent/student packet with all applicable policies, procedures, fees, payment dates, trip dates, and consequences shall be developed and signed as being received by each parent, student and staff member attending the trip as well as chaperones.
- c. If, for disciplinary reasons, it is necessary to send a student home, the parent/guardian shall be responsible for making all arrangements to ensure the student's safe return home in a timely manner. A staff member or chaperone shall not leave the group to escort a student home. This action may cause the parent/guardian to come to the student's location and return home with him/her. Parents/guardians may incur significant costs should there be a need to send their child home early. Parents shall be liable for any costs incurred by the NHCS related to the early return of a student.
- d. Students and their parents/guardians shall be required to sign an International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver.
- e. It shall be stated in written materials for parents/guardians and students that: "New Hanover County School's students are expected to follow NHCS guidelines concerning use of alcohol or illegal drugs on school-sanctioned activities. Just like on a school field trip or at a school dance, students may not drink alcohol or use drugs considered illegal in the United States regardless of the laws in the country being visited. Engaging in this behavior shall subject a student to disciplinary action up to and including the possibility of being sent home. It shall be the Travel Coordinator's judgment that determines the appropriate consequence for a student while abroad. Student and parent/guardian signatures on the International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver indicate an understanding that the student's failure to abide by this rule can result in the student being sent home at the parent's/guardian's expense and the student receiving disciplinary consequences upon returning to school. Parents/guardians shall review district policies related to alcohol and drug use and discipline."

5. Insurance

- a. The Travel Coordinator shall include in the cost of the trip: travel insurance for each student and chaperone that will cover the time period

of when the travel begins which is defined as time of departure on the date of travel.

- b. This coverage will be paid by the student, staff member or chaperone as included in their trip fees and include:

- Medical coverage outside of the United States
- Medical evacuation
- Trip cancellation
- Trip interruption
- Baggage and personal effects

The Travel Coordinator shall obtain such insurance on behalf of participating students, staff members and chaperones and provide a copy to the NHCS Risk Manager for prior approval. Students who already have existing comparable major medical insurance that adequately covers them in the destination country(ies) may not be required to obtain additional medical insurance for the trip, in the discretion of the NHCS Risk Manager.

- c. All students, parents and chaperones must sign the International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver stating they understand and have received the Coverage Brochure explaining what is covered and what is excluded from this short-term policy.
- d. The Travel Coordinator shall contact the NHCS Risk Manager at the time of the initial submission of the Request for Approval for School District Sanctioned International Travel to the Principal so that NHCS may obtain a quote for the purchase of additional liability insurance to cover the NHCS Sanctioned Field Trips Involving International Travel, if determined advisable by the NHCS risk manager or General Counsel.

6. Finances

- a. Once the trip is approved by the principal, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Accountability, Superintendent and the NHCS Board of Education, the collection of fees may begin.

- b. As part of the contract with the travel agency, the Travel Coordinator shall include a statement that the travel agency is able to collect payments and provide the Travel Coordinator with a record of the payments. The Travel Coordinator shall track individual student payments on a Google Spreadsheet that is shared with the school treasurer and principal. Payments may be made directly to school name and given to the teacher to receipt. The money is then given to the school treasurer who shall follow normal receipting procedures. All contracts with travel agencies and any other vendor are to be signed by the school principal and contracts may not go beyond the fiscal year end of June 30th.
- c. Failure to abide by the financial policies of the district shall cause the travel to be classified as a non- sanctioned trip and can expose the staff member to questions, accusations of improprieties and liability issues.
- d. For payments, all normal NHCS financial policies and procedures shall apply. Payment must be requested and approved by the principal. The Travel Coordinator shall follow established procedures to obtain cash through a check request process for the purpose of accessing funds from within the destination country. Funds shall be accounted for in United States currency upon return when filing an expense report.

7. NHCS Staff and Supervision of Students

- a. Adult/student ratios must be age-appropriate and appropriate to the conditions of the trip; a minimum of two staff members are required on each trip. The travel costs (transportation, lodging and meals) of the NHCS staff members can be built into the student costs or are given a consideration by the travel agency, and in such cases the Travel Coordinator shall make full written disclosure to the participants and their parents before they commit to the trip.
- b. Parents/guardians must be notified of the adult/student ratio in advance of the trip.

8. Travel Coordinator

- a. The Travel Coordinator shall check with the U. S. Department of State, Center for Disease Control and other appropriate agencies immediately prior to departure to determine if travel advisories have been issued. The principal

and Superintendent are to be notified immediately in writing by the Travel Coordinator of any travel alerts for the destination countries. The Superintendent or designee may cancel any trip due to these travel advisories or any other reason pertaining to the safety of the participants, and in that event, the NHCS shall not be liable for any costs to staff, chaperones, parents/guardians or students including but not limited to loss of deposits or inability to get refunds for travel tickets or lodging expenses, whether or not covered by travel insurance.

- b. The Travel Coordinator shall create a specific itinerary that includes on-site contacts and phone numbers. A copy shall be filed with the principal, the Superintendent/designee and each staff member and chaperone on the trip.
- c. A roster shall be submitted to the principal prior to the trip date. If travel is taken during school days, the Travel Coordinator shall submit a roster of students attending the field trip to the data manager so that attendance policies can be followed.
- d. The Travel Coordinator shall give a copy of the itinerary with contacts and phone numbers to the students to carry and give a copy to the parents/guardians for reference at home.
- e. A communication plan shall be generated by the Travel Coordinator to handle information and notification needs. A copy of the plan shall be filed with the principal and given to parents/guardians prior to departure. The Travel Coordinator shall verify with participating staff members and chaperones that their contact information is accurate and complete prior to departure.
- f. The Travel Coordinator, staff members and chaperones on the trip shall carry contact phone numbers for the school principal and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Accountability. When any unusual circumstances arise during the course of the travel they shall be communicated promptly. Contact must be made for illness and/or for major disciplinary issues, but when in doubt the Travel Coordinator shall err on the side of contacting the principal.
- g. The Travel Coordinator shall carry copies of medical insurance documentation and emergency contact information for all students, staff and chaperones on the trip at all times. The Travel Coordinator shall leave a copy of this information with the principal.

- h. The Travel Coordinator shall carry the address and phone number of the local United States Embassy and emergency overseas phone numbers.
- i. The Travel Coordinator shall carry emergency first aid supplies.
- j. The Travel Coordinator, staff and chaperones on the trip shall comply with all NHCS policies on conduct of students, staff members and volunteers.
- k. Travel Coordinator shall document all expenses incurred during the course of the trip. For reimbursement, detailed receipts noting method of payment are required. The Travel Coordinator shall contact the school treasurer in advance of the trip to review the documentation required for reimbursement.
- l. The Travel Coordinator shall conduct a headcount each time loading and disembarking from any form of transportation. Ridership numbers shall include all students, staff and chaperones.
- m. At the conclusion of the trip; if there are excess funds, these funds shall be given to the school treasurer and shall be distributed equally to all participating families.
- n. Copies of the following forms shall be carried by the Travel Coordinator and kept on file in the principal's office:
 - Copy of passports/required travel documents
 - International Travel Permission Form and Liability Waiver
 - Chaperone Agreement

9. Chaperones

- a. Chaperones who are not NHCS employees shall be considered Level II volunteers and must undergo a background check located on the NHCS webpage under the Parent tab and the Volunteer Programs Portal.
- b. Chaperones must read and understand the NHCS Volunteer Handbook. All chaperones who are going to attend the international trip must be approved by the principal. Chaperones must be at least 21 years of age. A NHCS Chaperone Agreement must be signed by each chaperone prior to attending the trip.

- c. Adults are not to consume alcoholic beverages or other intoxicants on field trips so as not to risk having impaired judgment should they need to make a decision on a student's behalf.
- d. Parents/guardians must be informed in writing by the Travel Coordinator if part of the itinerary is unscheduled such that students are given "free time". Expectations for this unscheduled time shall be discussed with parents/guardians and students in orientation meetings and in written communications.
- e. Chaperones shall receive instructions on the method of communication relevant to their travel experience. The Travel Coordinator, staff members and chaperones on the trip shall be accessible by cell phone at all times. The phone numbers shall be provided to the school principal prior to departure. It is the responsibility of the Travel Coordinator, participating staff members and chaperones to make arrangements at their expense for a cell phone that functions in the destination country or countries and to make arrangements for an international phone plan to have a working phone in that country.
- f. Personal motorized vehicles shall not be used by employees, students or chaperones for international travel to transport students. This includes transporting students to or from school or to or from an airport or other place of departure or return. Any and all transportation of students shall be approved in writing by the principal or designee. Transportation of students to and from airports or other points of departure from this country, and in other countries, shall be in compliance with the requirements of NHCS Field Trip Procedures which are applicable to domestic field trips. The use of passenger vans with a capacity of 11 or more passengers, including the driver, are prohibited by the NHCS, whether in this country or in other countries. These vans are commonly referred to as "Fifteen Passenger Vans".
- g. Chaperones and participating staff members shall not reside in the room with students, however parents may reside in a room with their children as long as no other children are in the room.
- h. The supervising adult to student ratio shall be at least one supervising adult for every eight students. This ratio shall allow for a supervising adult for every two rooms.

- i. Parents shall be notified in advance of departure by the Travel Coordinator of the room arrangements and as soon as possible of any changes in such arrangements.

10. News Media Coverage. Any requests for news media coverage shall be made to the school principal or Superintendent. Employees, chaperones and students shall not make direct calls to any newspapers/media outlets.

11. Teacher Compensation/Travel Agency Benefits

If the school or school employees or chaperones, or their immediate family members, receive benefits (financial, in-kind or otherwise) from the trip's sponsor (Travel Agency) or anyone else, notification of the arrangement prior to submission of approval to the Superintendent or designee, shall be detailed in writing to the parents/guardians, principal, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Accountability, Chief Financial Officer and Superintendent. The Superintendent must approve or deny any proposed arrangement.

12. Non-District Sanctioned Student Trips Involving International Travel

When a teacher or other NHCS employee wishes to organize, lead, or otherwise promote International Travel that is not NHCS/school sanctioned, the employee shall distribute a statement that clearly explains the trip's non-affiliation with the NHCS to parents/guardians of all participants and obtain the signatures of the parents (and students who are adults). A copy of the statement signed by the parents of participating students (and participating students who are adults) shall be submitted to the principal of the school and the Superintendent or designee. The form of the statement shall be approved by the General Counsel.

13. Trip Announcements

Trip announcements shall be clear and easily accessible to all students. Each school shall:

- a. Distribute the information to students and post it on the school's website.
- b. Post announcements of all NHCS Sanctioned Field Trips Involving International Travel at least 180 days prior to the date of travel.
- c. Include in the announcement:
 - Eligibility
 - Departure dates
 - Trip length
 - Detailed itinerary
 - Estimated costs
 - Important dates (application due date, lottery date (if necessary), selection notification date, payment dates, etc.)

References

NCGS 115C-307: Duties of teachers

http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_115c/gs_115c-307.html

Board Policy 8550, Fundraising Policy and Procedures

https://boardpolicyonline.com/bl/?b=hanover_county_old&s=877699

<https://nhcsk12ncus.finalsite.com/faculty-staff-portal/internal-auditor#fs-panel-41976>

Board Policy 7112 Curriculum Guide and course Outlines

https://boardpolicyonline.com/bl/?b=hanover_county_old&s=857791

Board Policy 8212 Attendance of Students

https://boardpolicyonline.com/bl/?b=hanover_county_old&s=874832

Treasurer Manual, collection of money

<https://nhcsk12ncus.finalsite.com/faculty-staff-portal/internal-auditor#fs-panel-41968>

Field Trips-Policies and procedures

<https://www.nhcs.net/faculty-staff-portal/elementary-secondary-education>