

SCHOOL-SPONSORED TRIPS & STUDENT TRAVEL

The North Middlesex Regional School Committee recognizes that it is desirable and valuable, on occasion, to supplement and extend activities with voluntary and optional academic field trips, field work, and domestic and international travel to broaden the perspectives and educational experiences of students.

The School Committee encourages activities that augment classroom instruction and promote healthy social development.

A. Definitions & Standards

The following definitions apply for the purpose of this policy:

- **Academic Field Work** trips include all off-campus trips organized as part of the class curriculum. There must be pre- and post-trip activities and/or assessment. Participation of all members of the class is expected. Provisions for comparable instructional experiences during the school day must be made for students not on the academic field work trip.
- **Extracurricular School Field Trips** are those off-campus trips that are organized by a faculty sponsor or a school-sponsored club or group. These school trips can include domestic and international student travel. Participation is optional, voluntary, and not eligible for financial assistance from the district.
- **Athletic or Academic School Trips** are those away competitions, games, matches, scrimmages, and training camps that are part of the official academic and/or athletic programs of the North Middlesex Regional School District.
- **Overnight Travel** is an academic field work trip, an extracurricular school field trip, or an athletic and/or academic school trip that is planned which requires a student to stay overnight away from home, or which involves travel that is to occur between midnight and 6:00 a.m., the procedures for planning and approving overnight trips apply. It is understood that overnight trips include all such travel within Massachusetts, in other states, and internationally.
- **Chaperones:** is any employee of the North Middlesex Regional School District, parent/guardian, or any adult that attends a trip and is vested with the responsibility of monitoring student safety.
- **Trips** as referred to in this policy include all academic field work trips, extracurricular school field trips, and athletic or academic school trips, as defined above.

B. General Condition for Approval – Domestic and International

Only trips meeting the following conditions are permitted. The sponsoring faculty member shall ensure that:

- Trips are appropriate for the age group involved in the activity;
- Trips are reasonable in terms of time, distance and cost, and have limited impact on school calendar;
- Trips are not scheduled during the MCAS examination periods for students taking the MCAS exams. If unique and special circumstances present an academic opportunity, the principal and superintendent will consider and evaluate each request with care;
- Trips are planned with careful consideration of student safety which includes, without limitation, an appropriate number of adult chaperones as specified in Section D of this policy and confirmation that all chaperones have approved Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checks on file with the Superintendent;
- Students, parents, guardians, and chaperones will receive written notice that all North Middlesex Regional School District policies on student behavior, student handbook rules and regulations, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) rules and regulations, and trip rules regarding student conduct will apply and be in effect at all times for academic field work trips, extracurricular school field trips, and athletic and academic school trips;
- Provisions are made for medical emergencies, including attending medical personnel, when necessary;
- When school bus transportation is required, the school district's regular transportation contractor may be utilized, if available. If the school district's regular transportation carrier is not available or not appropriate (i.e. coach bus necessary), only contractors licensed for passenger transportation by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) or the Department of Defense's approved list of motor carriers may be used. Carriers with an FMCSA or Department of Defense safety rating of "conditional" or "unsatisfactory" cannot be used. FMCSA carrier ratings are available online at <http://www.safer.fmcsa.dot.gov> by providing the carrier's D.O.T. identification number;
- Any contract with a private carrier prohibits the use of subcontractors unless approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall not approve use of any subcontractor unless the subcontractor meets the criteria referenced above in item seven (7) of this section;
- No student is denied the opportunity to participate in an academic field work trip because of the inability to pay;
- Costs associated with an optional/voluntary extracurricular school field trip will be the responsibility of the individual student/family. Where appropriate, there may be fundraising to help defray costs. All fundraising must be done in compliance and accordance with North Middlesex Regional School District and individual school policies;

- Should an emergency situation occur, the sponsoring faculty member is responsible for notifying the Principal by telephone as soon as possible but no later than twenty-four (24) hours after the emergency situation occurs. The faculty member is also responsible for notifying the parent/guardian of record by telephone, text, or email once the emergency situation stabilizes but no later than twenty-four (24) hours after the emergency situation occurs;
- Participants in activities shall wear safety equipment at all times which is appropriate to the specific activity, e.g., suitable helmets for bicycle and ski/snowboard trips;
- Trip cancellation insurance shall be made available for all multiple day out-of-state travel and international travel. Families are responsible for the cost of such insurance;
- All chaperones on trips shall agree to adhere to North Middlesex Regional School District school policies and codes of conduct. All chaperones must also agree to take a CORI for any field trip and also agree to fingerprinting for any overnight trip. Finally, chaperones that are not employed by the district will be held to the same standard as those that are district employees with regard to alcohol, drug, and tobacco/e-cigarette/vape policies and
- Complimentary trips for trip organizers to “scout” a potential location cannot be accepted.

C. Authority to Approve/Disapprove/Cancel – Domestic and International

- All school-sponsored in-state day trips must receive the approval of the program advisor (HS only) and the principal.
- All school-sponsored day out-of-state trips must receive prior approval of the principal, superintendent, and school committee.
- All school-sponsored trips which involve overnight travel (in- or out-of-state) must receive prior approval of the program advisor (HS only), principal, superintendent, and school committee. In addition, trips that require airline or train travel require approval six (6) months in advance of scheduled trip. Approval must be sought prior to any planning being shared with students.
- All school-sponsored international trips must receive prior approval of the principal, superintendent, and school committee at least twelve (12) months in advance of the scheduled trip. Approval must be sought prior to any planning being shared with students.
- North Middlesex Regional School District, acting through the School Committee or the Superintendent, reserves the right (a) to cancel trips up to departure and (b) to recall trips in progress, if national and/or international conditions so warrant or if security and safety concerns over which North Middlesex Regional School District has no control render it appropriate to cancel the trip. The following criteria will be taken into consideration: (a) U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory;

(b) Homeland Security Advisory (alert status); and/or (c) Declaration of War or armed conflict. Additionally, the critical judgment of the School Committee, with input from the Superintendent, principal, and faculty sponsor, will be taken into consideration.

- The Superintendent will alert the School Committee to final deadlines regarding required commitment of funds if there are national and/or international events/situations/conditions which might cause the School Committee to cancel or recall a trip due to safety concerns or other reasons. In the event that a trip must be cancelled in accordance with this Section C, school officials will make a reasonable effort to obtain a refund of monies paid by students and parents. However, such refunds are not guaranteed. The student and parents understand that he/she/they may lose any and/or all of the funds he/she/they have expended for the voluntary trip.
- While there must be adequate supervision the Principal must minimize the number of teachers who will miss classes due to performing activities as chaperones.
- Pursuant to M.G. L. Chapter 71, Section 37 N and MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Regulations 603 CMR 27.00, the School Committee is responsible for approving out-of-state and/or overnight trips. However, in the event that approval is required for an academic or athletic contest, competition or tournament and the schedule is such that the contest, competition, or tournament will occur before the next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, said approval authority is delegated to the Superintendent of Schools.
- Where reasonably practical, the School Committee requires that final approval be sought no less than six (6) months prior to the scheduled trip dates.
- The approval process for a specific trip shall be completed prior to promoting, advertising, or making any preparations for the trip, taking deposits from students, or engaging students in fundraising activities for the trip.

D. Approval Documentation – Domestic and International

Approval for all trips which involve contractual arrangements with any third party(ies) must be obtained prior to making any such arrangements. All trips must be approved in writing by the appropriate authority as specified in this policy. The initial documentation to request approval of a trip must include:

- Proposed dates and itinerary;
- Description of student eligibility;
- Estimated number of students expected and percentage of eligible students participating;
- Cost per student (if applicable);
- Mode(s) of transportation and schedule;

- The ratio of chaperones/teachers to students for the trip. The recommended ratios for extracurricular school field trips, academic school trips, and overnight travel are as follows: HS 1:10 minimum; MS 1:10 minimum; Elementary 1:10 minimum; International 1:6 minimum);
- Description of arrangements for meals and lodging (if applicable). Accommodations will include enough rooms so that no chaperones are rooming with students;
- Description of security features for transportation and accommodations;
- Means of financing;
- Draft copy of all contract(s) and copies of the travel company's insurance policy (and relevant riders), and refund policies associated with the trip;
- Draft copy of the letters to be sent to parents and guardians referencing the specifics of the trip including all of the above and any rules specific to the trip which are in addition to the North Middlesex Regional School District student conduct policies, student handbook rules or regulations, and the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) rules and regulations. For international trips, the sponsoring faculty member will provide parents/guardians a copy of the State Department travel advisory and Homeland Security Alert Status for all countries to be visited;
- In the case of academic field work, a description of the educational alternative and mapping of that alternative for students who are not participating, if applicable;
- For international trip requests a printout of the State Department Travel Advisory and Homeland Security Alert Status for all countries to be visited.

Additional information may be requested by the appropriate authority prior to making a decision.

Should external circumstances change after the initial trip approval detailed modifications to the relevant approval documentation (see above) will be required.

E. Fundraising & Financial Assistance

- Fundraising events and activities may be planned to offset the costs for trips. Any such fundraising shall take place in accordance with the North Middlesex Regional School District and individual schools' policies on fundraising.
- Where an individual fee is charged for academic field work trips which are part of the approved curriculum, the principal may provide financial assistance to a student if, due to financial hardship, such financial assistance is necessary to allow a student's participation.
- Eligibility for financial assistance shall be available to families earning less than double the Federal poverty guideline and reduced fees for

families earning less than three and one-half times the Federal Poverty Guideline. All documents submitted to North Middlesex Regional School District are kept confidential and are not included in any student file. All documentation submitted is retained for three years, at which time it is shredded and destroyed. Copies can be provided to a requesting parent or guardian at the Business Office, at no charge, if the application is submitted in person. If the application is faxed or mailed, documents will not be copied and forwarded.

F. Discipline of Students on Trips – Domestic and International

- All North Middlesex Regional School District policies on student behavior, student handbook rules and regulations, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) rules and regulations, and trip rules as specified in Section B, Item 5 above, regarding student conduct will apply and be in effect at all times for trips.
- If a student violates any North Middlesex Regional School District student conduct policies, student handbook rules or regulations, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) rules and regulations, trip rules as specified in Section F Item 1 above, or otherwise misbehaves while on a trip, the student will be immediately suspended from the trip and sent back to school or home, if that is appropriate, practical, and can be done in a manner which protects the student's safety, by the faculty sponsor at the parent's/guardian's expense. In addition to being sent home, the student will be subject to the consequences for the action/infracton upon his/her return to school as defined by the aforementioned student conduct policies, student handbook rules and regulations, and Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) rules and regulations.
- North Middlesex Regional School District policies on student behavior, student handbook rules and regulations, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) rules and regulations, and trip rules as specified in Section B, Item 5 above, regarding student conduct will be given to chaperones. Chaperones shall agree to implement and enforce them; failure to do so will result in disqualification from acting as a chaperone for future trips.

G. Administration of Medications on Trips – Domestic and International

In accordance with the North Middlesex Regional School District's (JLCD) - Administering Medicines to Students, the administration of medications while on a day trip is discouraged if medically feasible. In the event that it is medically necessary for a student to be administered medication while on a trip the procedures promulgated in the Policy on Administration of Medications will apply. Parents/legal guardians will receive a copy of the North Middlesex

Regional School District Policy - Administration of Medications in advance of the trip as part of the trip materials. Students (if appropriate) and parents/guardians must sign an Emergency Treatment and Medications Consent in order for the student to participate in the trip.

H. Transportation, Lodging, & Scheduling - Domestic and International

- The use of private vans and automobiles for student travel is not permitted. Such trips will use commercial vans or motor coaches and employ professional licensed drivers pursuant to Section B, items 7 and 8 of this policy.
- With student safety and security in mind, the faculty sponsor shall ensure that the travel company with which he/she has contracted has an emergency evacuation plan in place should the need arise to evacuate students from their location to a secure location.
- With student safety and security in mind, the faculty sponsor shall arrange for security personnel to be on the premises during the overnight hours when staying in a hotel, motel, guesthouse, dormitory or any other place of overnight accommodation in the parts of the world where it is possible to arrange for such security personnel to be on the premises.
- Accommodations shall include enough rooms so that no chaperones are rooming with students.
- Parents, who are also chaperones, may share a room with their own children only.
- Whenever possible, the faculty sponsor shall avoid planning student travel between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m., due to the increased risk of vehicular accidents during this time period.
- Trip itineraries must allow sufficient time for drivers to rest in conformity with federal hours-of-service requirements and common sense. If a planned trip exceeds ten (10) consecutive hours of driving, a second driver must be utilized or the driver must be off duty for eight (8) consecutive hours before driving again.

I. Permission, Consent, & Release Forms – Domestic and International

- A condition of participation in any trip is execution of an agreement by the participant and by his/her parent/legal guardian to hold North Middlesex Regional School District harmless and to indemnify North Middlesex Regional School District from any and all claims, liabilities, damages, losses, or other harm resulting from the trip, from activities associated with the trip, from the actions of third persons, or from the participant's own actions. Such agreement must also hold harmless and indemnify North Middlesex Regional School District from any and all claims, liabilities, damages, losses or other harm resulting from cancellation of a trip at any time. For purposes of this Section I, "North Middlesex Regional School District" shall include all District Schools, the

North Middlesex Regional School Committee, the Towns of Ashby, Pepperell, and Townsend, and their members, officers, officials, employees, agents, insurers, and representatives. Accordingly, every student who intends to participate in a trip must submit a properly completed and signed "Permission Slip and Indemnity and Waiver Agreement" in the form attached hereto as Exhibit A. This consent/release form must be signed by the student (if appropriate) and in any event by the student's parent or legal guardian prior to a student taking part in any trip. No fundraising activities or other preparations for the trip may be undertaken until the completed and signed documents are obtained from every student who will participate in the trip.

- For athletic and/or academic teams or other extracurricular school groups that routinely travel as part of their activities, the student (if appropriate) and the student's parents/legal guardians may submit one consent/release form to cover all events for the season.

J. Non-School Sponsored Trips

- Teachers and other school staff sometimes privately conduct educational tours involving the participation of North Middlesex Regional School District students. The School Committee and North Middlesex Regional School District neither sanctions nor prohibits such activities, nor assumes any responsibility for them. Teachers and other school staff are prohibited from soliciting students for privately run trips through the school district, through the use of school facilities and supplies, or through school personnel during their work day.

In any information provided to students, parents/guardians, or any other person regarding non-school sponsored trips, teachers and other school staff must clearly state in plain, unambiguous, and prominent language that such trips are not school-sponsored and that the School Committee and North Middlesex Regional School District do not sanction, sponsor, promote, or support the trip and do not assume any responsibility or liability in connection with such trip. Any teacher and other staff who are involved in non-school-sponsored trips in which North Middlesex Regional School District students participate must obtain a written acknowledgement signed by the student and/or parent/legal guardian, confirming that they are aware of the information stated in the preceding sentence and that they are not relying in any way or to any extent on the School Committee or the District in choosing to participate in the trip. In addition, trips not sanctioned by the district or school committee must indicate whether or not district field trip protocols are being adhered to.

- The Program Advisor (HS only), Principal, Superintendent, and School Committee will only review for approval school-sanctioned trips which include a trip request and required documentation as defined by Section

D, items 1-14, above. The School Committee will not review or approve trips that are privately organized and/or operated without school sanctioning and the required documentation.

- Parents/legal guardians have a duty to obtain a copy of the School Committee/Superintendent/Principal approval of any trip to ensure that a trip is a school sponsored trip. [This policy shall be distributed in all North Middlesex Regional School District schools and shall be made available in the administrative office of each school and in the North Middlesex Regional School District administration offices. Notice of the adoption of the policy and of its availability shall be sent to each student's parent/legal guardian].

Legal References:

Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603 CMR 27.00
Massachusetts Department of Education Time on Learning Regulations
Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71§ 37M and N
Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71§38R

Additional Resources: US Department of State Advisory <http://travel.state.gov>
Homeland Security Advisory <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic>
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Carrier Ratings
<http://www.fmcsa.gov>
United Motorcoach Association – Student Motorcoach Travel Safety Guide
<http://www.uma.org/consumerhelp/syudentguide.asp>
Department of Defense's approved list of motor carriers
<http://www.mtmc.army.mil/content/504/approvedlist.pdf>

Adopted by the NMRSD School Committee:

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