
Field Trip Guidelines and Protocol 2025



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I. INTRODUCTION

School-sponsored field trips are a valuable supplement to a student's educational experience. The purpose of the Newton Public Schools (NPS) Field Trip Guidelines and Protocol is to assist NPS staff members when planning a field trip; to ensure a safe and positive off-site learning experience for students; and a positive experience for staff members and volunteers that meet the educational and/or programmatic goals of the trip.

All overnight out-of-state and international field trips (see page 4 and 5), except those required for student participation in tournament competition or contests, must have advance approval of the School Committee. Fundraising activities for such trips will be subject to approval by the appropriate administrator.

It is the responsibility of the staff member organizing the field trip to discuss the possibilities of a field trip with the appropriate administrator prior to submitting a formal request for approval. Trips should be an outgrowth of the instructional or enrichment program and should be directly related to the program curriculum and goals.

School Committee Policies ([IJOA - Field Trips](#) and [JJH - STUDENT LATE NIGHT OR OVERNIGHT TRAVEL](#)), specific guidelines and appropriate administrative procedures have been developed to screen, approve and evaluate field trips and to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken for the safety of the participants.

The superintendent has established these Guidelines and Protocol to assure that:

1. all students have parent/guardian permission for trips,
2. all trips are properly supervised,
3. all safety precautions are observed,
4. all trips contribute substantially to the educational program, and
5. all trips allow equal access and reasonable accommodations, financial and other, by all interested students

Students are expected to comply with NPS Rights and Responsibilities expectations and behave appropriately while participating in field trips. Additionally, in some circumstances, students may not be allowed to participate in a field trip as a consequence for a disciplinary offense. Field trip participants must be currently enrolled students and actively attending an NPS school. Graduated seniors are not eligible to participate in school field trips.

Guiding Principle for Field Trips

At Newton Public Schools, we believe that school-sponsored field trips are an essential part of our students' educational experience. We are committed to ensuring that all field trips are accessible to every student, regardless of ability, financial status, or any other need for accommodation. This commitment extends particularly to students with disabilities, those requiring financial assistance, and students needing any form of accommodation to participate fully and equitably. Communications related to field trips must be accessible to all families, including being provided in home languages when necessary, to ensure parents/guardians are fully informed. Financial assistance, when provided, will be offered confidentially to maintain the privacy and dignity of families in need. All field trip planning and execution must take these considerations into account to create inclusive, safe, and enriching opportunities for all students. **Planning with adequate time to ensure full participation of all students, especially those requiring accommodations, is essential.**

Additional Planning Considerations:

1. Inclusive Transportation for Students with Disabilities (SWD)

Ensure that whenever possible, students who require specialized transportation are joined by their typically developing peers. This promotes inclusion and provides students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the full social experience of the trip.

2. Accessible Field Trip Components

Plan field trip activities with accessibility in mind. For example, when showing IMAX films or similar experiences, consider offering accommodations such as adjusting sound levels, avoiding flashing lights, or providing alternative equivalent experiences for students with sensory sensitivities or other needs.

3. Gender Affirming Accommodations

While researching and planning a trip, trip leaders should proactively research the accessibility of all sites being visited. For example, ask about single stall bathrooms and room assignment options for overnight trips. Some students may wonder about safety, in light of their identity, depending on the destination (particularly true for overnight trips that are further away from Newton.)

Please consult [NPS Guidance on the Basis of Gender Identity](#)

4. Coordinated Bus Departures

Ensure that transportation for students with special needs is coordinated so that all students depart and return together. This allows all students, including those with disabilities, to experience the trip fully and equally without disruptions or early departures.

5. Proactive Communication with Families

Engage families of students with disabilities early in the planning process, inviting their feedback and concerns to ensure the trip is fully accessible and inclusive. Communications should emphasize collaboration and partnership, ensuring that all choices made about the trip are inclusive and respectful of the student's needs.

6. Provide Alternatives for Full Participation

When certain field trip activities are not accessible, offer meaningful alternative options that allow students with disabilities to engage in the trip in a way that feels equitable. If a student must opt out, ensure they are provided with equivalent educational experiences rather than being marked absent.

7. Engage with Accessibility Coordinators

Many institutions (e.g., museums, aquariums) have accessibility coordinators. Staff involved in planning field trips should reach out to these accessibility coordinators ahead of time to ensure that field trips are fully accessible for all students.

II. DEFINITIONS - TYPES OF TRIPS

DAY FIELD TRIP - an academic or extracurricular field trip which does not require a student to be away from home overnight. Day field trips may be in-state or out-of-state.

ACADEMIC FIELD TRIP - an off-campus field trip that is organized as part of the class curriculum which occurs during the daytime. Full class participation is expected. Provision for a comparable instructional experience during the school day must be made for students unable to attend.

EXTRACURRICULAR FIELD TRIP - an off-campus trip organized by a school-sponsored club or group. Participation is optional and voluntary. An extracurricular field trip must offer an educational benefit consistent with the club or group's focus and may not occur during regular school hours (special circumstances may seek Principal's permission).

OVERNIGHT DOMESTIC FIELD TRIP - an academic or extracurricular field trip which requires a student to stay overnight within the United States.

OVERNIGHT IN-STATE FIELD TRIP - an academic or extracurricular field trip which requires a student to stay overnight entirely within Massachusetts.

OVERNIGHT OUT-OF-STATE FIELD TRIP - an academic or extracurricular field trip which requires a student to stay overnight that occurs partially or entirely outside of Massachusetts. Requires School Committee Approval.

RECURRING OVERNIGHT OUT-OF-STATE FIELD TRIP - an overnight out-of-state field trip which has been approved and organized through NPS in a prior year, and will take place again with minimal changes to itinerary or format. Only requires School Committee approval if itinerary or other details will be changing substantively from prior years.

INTERNATIONAL FIELD TRIP - an academic field trip or exchange program which requires a student to stay overnight in a foreign country.

RECURRING INTERNATIONAL TRIP - an international field trip regardless of prior approval will require School Committee approval.

NEW INTERNATIONAL TRIP - an international field trip which has not previously been approved or organized through NPS. Requires School Committee approval.

III. NPS FIELD TRIP POLICIES - IJOA and JJH

Click on [Field Trips Policy-IJOA](#) and [JJH - Student Late Night or Overnight Travel](#) to review the District Policies.

IV. FIELD TRIP CRITERIA

A. Field Trip Purposes

Staff members will work within the following guidelines in the selection of appropriate field trips:

1. **Field trips that are integral to a specific curriculum unit**

These field trips include a focused visit to locations such as a museum, a theatre production, the seashore, an historical location or government building.

2. **Field trips that build group identity**

These field trips might include an outward bound-type day trip or camping trip experience with an overnight commitment. Community building trips might reinforce relationships in an existing group of students; they might also prepare students for a significant transition into a new structure or community (e.g., students entering grades 6 and 9). The context of such field trips is to help children work collaboratively, make decisions, evaluate success, and prepare for the future.

3. **Field trips that enrich general curriculum goals**

These field trips might include visits to foreign countries for drama festivals or language

immersion; visits to governmental bodies, such as the United Nations, would be viewed as extra opportunities for those students who are interested in participating on a voluntary basis.

4. Field Trips that celebrate or culminate group work

These field trips, for example, include a trip at the end of a school year for 8th grade students to mark the completion of their middle school years.

B. Trips are appropriate for the age group involved in the activity.

C. Trips are reasonable in terms of time, distance and cost.

D. Trips are planned with careful consideration of student safety which includes, without limitation, an appropriate number of additional support staff, including medical staff, as specified in Section IX below and adult chaperones as specified in Section VIII below and confirmation that all chaperones have approved criminal background checks on file with the Newton Public Schools.

E. Trips are planned with equal access and reasonable accommodations, financial and other, by all interested students. Detailed plans are in place to ensure access and full participation for students with disabilities. Plans should provide appropriate support to meet student needs in order to fully participate and include the costs of all components needed to ensure equitable access and participation

F. Provisions are made for medical emergencies.

G. Transportation - see Section VI regarding transportation requirements.

H. Costs associated with an optional/voluntary extra-curricular field trip will be the responsibility of the individual student/family. Where appropriate, fundraising may be organized to help defray costs. See Section XI regarding fundraising.

I. Trips are not scheduled during any standardized examination periods for students taking those exams.

Students who attend field trips must be given a reasonable and adequate opportunity to complete assignments for other classes. Communication about school trips should occur between faculty members.

There is to be no solicitation of privately run trips by teachers, students, or other school personnel. Under no circumstances is school property or school time to be utilized in the promotion, advertisement or discussion of any privately planned and organized non school sponsored trips.

Cancellation of Field Trips

The Superintendent reserves the right to cancel any field trip up until the time of departure.

V. FIELD TRIP APPROVAL PROCESS

A. Day Field Trips

- Approval required by principal and/or designee;
- Application for approval must be submitted to principal and/or designee six (6) weeks in advance and will then be submitted to assistant superintendent for final approval;
- *NO* overnight travel involved;
- *NO* bus or automobile travel occurring between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.;
- *NO* trip requiring more than one driver per vehicle.

B. Overnight Domestic Field Trips

For IN-STATE overnight trips and recurring OUT-OF-STATE overnight trips, applications for approval must be submitted to principal and/or designee six (6) weeks in advance and then submitted to the assistant superintendent for final approval.

For NEW OUT-OF-STATE overnight trips, approval required by principal and/or designee, superintendent and School Committee *before* trip is announced or information is distributed to students or families (if recurring trip) and application for approval must be submitted to principal/vice principal eight (8) weeks in advance.

The school must schedule an informational meeting with parents prior to the trip. Trip coordinators must file accurate itineraries and appropriate telephone numbers including hotel numbers and mobile numbers of trip leaders.

***NO* bus or automobile travel occurring between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.
NO trip requiring more than one driver per vehicle.**

C. International Field Trips

1. Recurring International Trips

Coordinators should first notify their principal and or/designee, department head, and Global Education Specialist (GES) Star (Yixing) Lew via email by May 31 for trips taking place in the fall or by the last week in September (at the beginning of the school year) of the intent to renew, names of chaperones, proposed dates, and any substantive changes to the trip. The GES will pass these notifications along to the Academic Standards Committee (North) and Global Programs Proposal Review Committee (South) for approval.

After approval is given by the appropriate committee, the official Application for Approval (Part I) must be submitted no later than four (4) months in advance of the departure date to the department head, principal and/or designee for signature. If approved, the signed

application must be forwarded to the superintendent's office. Simultaneously, the GES will ask the School Committee secretary to place the trip on a School Committee docket during an upcoming meeting for approval.

Trip coordinators may begin to advertise the trip to students prior to School Committee approval with the understanding that School Committee approval is necessary to move forward.

Part II of the official application along with all required documentation should be received by the superintendent's office no later than one (1) month prior to the date of departure. The superintendent has final approval and has the right to cancel a trip at any time.

Important to note:

- The school must schedule an informational meeting with parents prior to the trip.
- The trip coordinator must file accurate itineraries and appropriate telephone numbers as well as all required documentation with the department head, principal and/or designee no later than three weeks prior to departure date. For a list of documents please see Part II of the application.
- **NO bus or automobile travel occurring between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. is permitted.**

2. New International Trips

New programs should craft a program proposal following the guidelines.

The proposal must be submitted to the Global Education Specialist (GES) Star (Yixing) Lew, who will assist trip leaders in readying the proposal for review.

Once ready for review, the GES will submit the proposal to the Academic Standards Committee (North) or the Global Program Proposal Review Committee (South). The proposal must be submitted no later than five (5) months in advance of the proposed trip date.

If the proposal is approved by the appropriate relevant committee, the proposal along with the official Application for Approval (Part I) must be submitted for signature to the department head, principal and/or designee. The signed application and proposal is then forwarded to the superintendent's office four (4) months in advance of the departure date. Simultaneously, the GES will ask the School Committee secretary to place the trip on a School Committee docket during an upcoming meeting for approval.

Trip coordinators may begin to advertise the trip to students prior to School Committee approval with the understanding that School Committee approval is necessary to move forward.

Part II of the official application along with all required documentation should be received by the superintendent's office no later than one (1) month prior to the date of departure. The superintendent has final approval and has the right to cancel a trip at any time.

Important to note:

- The school must schedule an informational meeting with parents prior to the trip.
- The trip coordinator must file accurate itineraries and appropriate telephone numbers as well as all required documentation with the department head, principal and/or designee no later than three (3) weeks prior to departure date. For a list of documents please see Part II of the application.
- **NO bus or automobile travel occurring between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. is permitted.**

More information on international trips can be found on the NPS website - [Newton North & Newton South International Travel](#)

VI. TRANSPORTATION

Domestic Transportation

The Office of Transportation manages the procurement of the contracts for school transportation. This includes regular daily busing, athletic trips and field trips. The Office of Transportation will provide information to teachers and staff planning school trips and will confirm that all contractors meet all Newton Public Schools specifications. This includes confirmation that each company complies with all state and federal transportation rules and policies that pertain to vehicle safety and driver requirements.

All teachers planning day trips must work with the school system's Office of Transportation to secure school sponsored transportation whenever possible. Planning and consideration must be made with respect to any students that may require specialized transportation. Please plan in advance when making arrangements for specialized transportation as it can take additional time.

Rental vans will not be approved to transport students.

As set forth in Section VIII(B), all volunteer drivers must be approved through an application process for private automobile transportation to be utilized for day field trips. Elementary school field trips may not utilize volunteer drivers. Additionally, a "Volunteer Driver Consent Form" must be obtained by the parent/guardian of any student that will be transported in a private

automobile by an approved volunteer driver prior to the trip. A student who is 18 years of age and has a valid Massachusetts driving license may drive themselves to the trip after completing the requisite release form. Under no circumstance may a student provide transportation to another student to, from or during a field trip.

Teachers planning overnight trips should utilize common carriers or school contracted transportation and may not utilize private automobile transportation. Teachers should contact the Office of Transportation for information on recommended motor coach providers to obtain an approval code for motor coach transport.

International Transportation

Please reference the international field trip approval application or contact the Global Programs Manager for policy details.

VII. REQUIRED CONSENTS

Parents/Guardians must sign consent forms for students participating in field trips. The forms can be submitted electronically via [ParentSquare](#) or provided in paper form for any Day/Overnight field trips. **Please note:** electronic submission of consent forms is not allowed for international trips.

Staff leading/organizing field trips must be sure to identify the process used for collecting consent forms by completing the checklist section on Consent Forms. All consent forms must be kept for a minimum of three (3) years by the school.

A. Parent/Guardian Consent

Trip leaders must obtain the applicable signed parent/guardian consent and release forms including Overnight Medical Information Form (if applicable) for each participating student. If the student is 18 years or older, consent and release forms must be obtained from the student.

B. Parent/Guardian Consent for Volunteer Driver for Middle and High School Field Trips

A middle or high school day field trip may utilize private transportation in automobiles driven by approved, responsible, volunteer adults that have completed the requisite paperwork and criminal background checks as set forth in Section VIII (B) under Volunteer Drivers. A signed [Parent/Guardian Consent for Volunteer Transportation](#) from the parent/guardian of the student that would be transported in this manner must be obtained prior to the trip.

C. Water Activities and Swimming Consent

As set forth in Section X, all field trips involving water activity and/or swimming require additional parent/guardian consent for the specified water and/or swimming activity. The Swimming Addendum to the Parent/Guardian Consent Form must be obtained for each and every student prior to the field trip or the student cannot participate in the water and/or swimming activity.

D. Students Not Traveling with NPS To/From Field Trips

Parents who choose to drive their student to or from a field trip location must complete and sign the [Students Not Traveling with NPS To/From Field Trips](#) consent form. This form must be received by school staff **PRIOR** to the field trip departure/return to school.

Note: parents/guardians are only able to drive their own child to/from the field trip. This form is not used as an application or approval for chaperones and volunteer drivers (see below).

VIII. CHAPERONES AND VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

A. Chaperones and Supervision

The chaperone-student ratio must be appropriate to the age level of the student. Parents may be used as chaperones, but the coordinating teacher must assume the leadership and responsibility for the trip. All chaperones must submit and pass a criminal background check that will be on file with the Newton Public Schools.

Guidelines for numbers of trip chaperones:

Elementary: Eight (8) students per adult chaperone
Middle Schools: Ten (10) students per adult chaperone
High Schools: Twelve (12) students per adult chaperone

In addition, particular student needs may necessitate adult support above and beyond the guidelines set forth above, which must be determined and planned by the trip leader in the first stages of planning. This includes factoring the costs of additional staff, as applicable.

The coordinating teacher will prepare a list of students participating in the trip and will use that list to check attendance at the beginning and end of each activity.

B. Volunteer Drivers

All chaperones must fill out a [Chaperone & Volunteer Driver Application including Guidelines and Rules](#) and submit and pass a criminal background check that will be on file with the Newton Public Schools.

All volunteer drivers, including staff and/or parents, must be responsible adults who have completed a Volunteer Driver Registration Form, provided proof of a valid driver's license, current vehicle registration, and requisite automobile insurance, agreed to a CORI/SORI check if one has not already been conducted, and agreed to comply with the Rules for Volunteer Drivers. A student, who is 18 years of age and has a valid Massachusetts driving license, may drive themselves to the trip after completing the requisite release form. Under no circumstance may a student transport another student to, from, or during a field trip.

C. Waivers

Any waivers for exceptions to the "Field Trip Guidelines and Protocol" relative to drivers, use of public transportation or private vehicles and number of chaperones must be submitted to the principal or designee in writing using the [Field Trip Waiver Request Form](#).

IX. SAFETY AND MEDICAL GUIDELINES

In order to plan a field trip that is safe for every student, the following guidelines must be followed. Safe and equal access must be provided for all students. For all day and overnight field trips, the plan must include consideration of and details around, whether additional supports or services are needed, such as securing a nurse and/or additional, trained chaperones for behavior support, the procurement of specialized transportation, and the costs associated with all such components.

If any student has any medical or allergy needs, consult with the school nurse regarding allergy management (which may include restricted foods on the trips), daily and emergency medications, and, if applicable, to ensure staff members trained to administer the medication (such as epinephrine) or provide necessary medical support attends the field trip.

In some circumstances, a physician's recommendation may be necessary to ensure that it is safe for a particular student to attend a field trip. This is based on the distance or time from an emergency response, severity of a medical need and risk to student's safety. Please consult with the school nurse **before selecting venues** if there are any concerns regarding the appropriateness of a particular trip for a student.

Overnight Field Trip Medical Information Forms must be obtained for all students attending an overnight field trip (including in-state/ out-of-state/international trips) *prior* to the overnight trip.

Request a first-aid kit from the school nurse, bring a list of students with any medical or special needs, and a list of parents' emergency contact phone numbers on the trip. If a student on the trip may require emergency administration of epinephrine or medical support, a trained staff member must accompany the student at all times.

Medication Administration - Confirm that at least one staff member trained in medication administration will be present for the **entire duration of the field trip**.

X. SWIMMING AND WATER ACTIVITIES

Swimming and water activities (e.g. kayaking, canoeing) are not permitted without specific approval. Each swimming experience must be approved by the appropriate administrator. This includes multiple swimming experiences during one extended field trip. All field trip application contain a section specifically for approval for swimming and water activities. For all domestic field trips (which does not include international field trips), each swim site must be staffed with adequate lifeguard supervision at all times.

The Swimming Addendum to the Parent Consent Form must be obtained for a student to participate in the swimming/water activity.

XI. FIELD TRIP COSTS AND FUNDRAISING

Cost of Field Trips

The estimated cost of all field trips and sources of funding must be provided in the Field Trip Application for approval. Consideration must be given to costs associated with providing access to all students such as special transportation, additional chaperones, and nursing staff. More information on funding and fee collection can be found [here](#).

Field Trip Funds - Collection and Payments

Student Activity Funds

- Funds collected from students or families for student use should be handled as student activity funds.
- Do not deposit these funds into PTO accounts.
- If an event is fully covered by the PTO, no funds should be collected for the school's activity account.

Forms of Payment

- Payments for field trips should be made via MySchoolBucks (MSB) or check.
- Cash should never be collected or kept.
- The MSB platform charges a fee, which should be included in the quoted price to families.
- Teachers will receive MSB payment notifications, and Bursars/Administrative Assistants will have access to track funds.

Payment Submission

- Teachers must submit checks or any rare cash collections daily to the Bursar/Administrative Assistant, with an itemized list of funds.
- Do not take school funds home.

Fund-Use Timeline

- Funds take 3 weeks to become available in MUNIS.
- Plan for student payments to be due at least 3 weeks prior to any event-related payments.
- If a check is required for an event, submit an invoice 2 weeks in advance.

More information on Student Activity Account collection and payments for field trips can be found [here](#).

Credit Card Use for Field Trips

In limited situations, for approved field trips, the district has a credit card that can be used to confirm hotel, airline, and registration reservations to limit out-of-pocket travel expenses for staff.

All credit card use requests should be coordinated between the school Bursar and NPS Purchasing, allowing 48-72 hour advance notice prior to travel arrangements needing to be confirmed with the credit card.

The staff member coordinating the trip should work with the school Bursar to prepare the [Credit Card Usage Request Form](#). The form should be submitted to Purchasing with a copy of the Field Trip Application approval and confirmation by the Bursar that funds are available prior to using the district credit card.

Questions about use of the district credit card should be directed to NPS Purchasing at ext. 9050.

Financing and Insurance Information

Teachers will provide information on costs, supervision, dates, and all other logistics in writing to students and parents. Trip planners will arrange for trip cancellation insurance for overnight or international trips as an option for families to purchase. When financial assistance is required, the teacher will work with the principals or curriculum coordinators to access available funds. *No student shall be denied access to any school trip due to financial constraints.* In such cases, parents/guardians should contact the principal.

Voluntary trips

When trip expenses are more than \$500 per student, the following steps will be taken to ensure equal access to all interested students:

- The teacher will propose a trip for the principal's approval three months in advance of the trip. Once the trip is approved, eligible students and their parents/guardians will receive formal notification of trip specifics, as well as the availability of scholarship money.
- The teacher coordinating the trip will be available to parents/guardians and students to answer questions and assist families in developing viable financial arrangements.

Fundraising

Fundraising events and activities may be planned to offset the costs for trips. The amount of time to be devoted to fundraising should be reasonable and commensurate with students' obligations for homework, after-school activities, and jobs. Group fundraising activities are preferred. Students should not be assigned individual fundraising targets.

Any fundraising shall take place in accordance with Newton Public Schools policies and practices and must be identified on the field trip approval forms and approved by the school principal.

Disclosure Form for Public Employees for Free or Discounted Travel or Admission

In accordance with G.L. c. 268A, Section 23(b)(3) and 903 C.M.R., Section 5.05 all public employees must complete [Disclosure by Appointed Public Employee](#) forms for all travel or admission fees in excess of \$50.00. These forms must be submitted for approval to the Superintendent's Office prior to the departure date of the field trip.

XII. LIST OF FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

Applications for Field Trip Approval

[Application for Day Field Trip](#)

[Application for IN-STATE Overnight Domestic Field Trip](#)

[Application for OUT-OF-STATE Overnight Domestic Field Trip](#)

[Application for INTERNATIONAL Field Trip - New Trips](#)

[Application for INTERNATIONAL Field Trip - Recurring Trips](#)

Checklists

[Checklist for Day Field Trip](#)

[Checklist for Overnight In-State Domestic Field Trip](#)

[Checklist for Overnight Out-of-State Domestic Field Trip](#)

Checklist for INTERNATIONAL Field Trip can found within the Application

Consent Forms

[Parent/Guardian Consent and Release for Day Field Trip](#)

[Adult Student Consent and Release for Day Field Trip](#)

[Adult Student Consent for Overnight/International Field Trip](#)

[Parent/Guardian Consent and Release for Overnight/International Field Trip](#)

[Parent/Guardian Consent for Volunteer Transportation](#)

[Students Not Traveling by NPS Consent](#)

Other Forms

[Overnight Field Trip Medical Information Form](#)

[Chaperone & Volunteer Driver Application including Guidelines and Rules](#)

[Field Trip Waiver Request Form](#)

[Disclosure Forms](#)