

Policies

Westerly Public Schools Field Trips – Student Travel

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Westerly Public Schools recognize that field trips are opportunities for expanding educational experiences for all students. Field trips are off-campus extended learning opportunities directly related to and supportive of the curriculum.

Westerly Public Schools supports and encourages field trip activities which are a.) aligned to specific educational objectives, b.) carefully planned, c.) designed to foster equitable opportunities for all students, d.) established in a way that imposed limited or no cost to the District and at no cost to the students.

A field trip is a school-sponsored instructional activity and/or learning experience provided outside of the regular classroom environment, off school premises, and generally during at least some portion of the instructional day for the purpose of clarifying, reinforcing, and/or enriching a particular skill and/or concept embedded within the district's educational offerings, and designed to improve education results, consistent with the purpose of the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Basic Education Program (BEP). *See RICR 200-10-1.1.1.*

It is the expectation of the Committee that students at all grade levels (K-8) shall be provided a minimum of one off-campus extended learning opportunity (i.e., "field trip") each school year. It is further expected that such opportunities will be planned for and provided to ensure common extended learning experiences across grade levels at any particular school. All students at a school's grade level are to be provided the same (or substantially similar) opportunities, "aligned to specific educational objectives" for that grade. Just as with learning in the classroom, access to off-campus learning extended learning opportunities is not to be denied to any student.

Students, staff, and volunteer chaperones shall adhere to all district policies and procedures throughout the course of a field trip, including, but not limited to the Student Handbooks.

The district shall comply with any and all applicable laws, rules, regulations or district policies related to fees for school programs. In addition, the district shall maintain its obligations to comply with any and all applicable federal and state laws and regulations throughout the duration of a field trip, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Accommodations

Written assurances are required that all accommodations needed for students with disabilities to participate in field trips are prearranged prior to the approval of the Field Trip. Failure to comply with this provision shall result in the cancellation of the Field Trip.

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District Approval

Field trips with the following characteristics require pre-approval by the building principal and Assistant Superintendent:

- The round-trip travel is less than 120 miles, and/or
- An overnight stay is not required, and/or
- Fundraising activity is not required.

Field trips with the following characteristics require pre-approval by the building principal, Assistant Superintendent, and Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee:

- The round-trip travel is more than 120 miles but less than 400 miles, and/or
- The trip requires one overnight stay and/or
- A fundraising activity is required for the field trip.

Field trips with the following characteristics require pre-approval by the building principal, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee, and the School Committee:

- The round-trip travel is more than 400 miles, and/or
- The trip requires more than one overnight stay and/or
- Requires a district subsidy.

Trips that require School Committee approval must be scheduled at least 90 days in advance unless there are special circumstances. Trips that require significant fundraising should be presented for approval well in advance of the 90 days. Trips arising due to special circumstances which cannot be approved 90 days in advance must be approved by the School Committee. The availability of funds for the trip does not ensure that the trip will be approved or conducted.

The district shall provide adequate transportation for field trips through the district budget, fundraising, or in partnership with the community, such as the PTO or other organization. The district shall comply with applicable laws, regulations, and district policies related to the transportation of students when providing field trip transportation for their child, at the discretion of an appropriate administrator, and subject to the parent or guardian executing a district-promulgated release and/or waiver.

Field trip proposal forms shall be submitted to the appropriate school administrator in advance of the proposed trip, with time sufficient for district evaluation and approval, and for collecting executed permission slips from parents/guardians. The appropriate administrator shall evaluate each field trip proposal and approve those that meet the criteria above.

In the event that the fee from a single field trip provider will be greater than \$7,500, the district must adhere to the bidding procedures and/or competitive negotiation procedures outlined in RI General Laws § 45-55-1 *et seq.*

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Parent/Guardian Approval

No student shall participate in any field trip unless, prior to the commencement of the trip, a parent/guardian of the student, executes and submits to the appropriate school administrator, a district-promulgated field trip permission form, which shall include a waiver of liability, assumption of risk, release/hold harmless, and indemnification provision.

Chaperones

Field trips shall, at a minimum, adhere to a staff/volunteer chaperone-to-student ratio of one adult to 10 students except if the location requires a smaller staff/volunteer chaperone-to-student ratio.

The School Committee and school administrators reserve the right to require additional staff/volunteer chaperones to supervise field trips, depending on the circumstance.

Parent, teacher, and community chaperones may not bring additional children on the field trip and must be dedicated solely to the supervision of students for the duration of the trip, including overnight trips.

Only volunteer chaperones who have obtained the requisite background checks and signed a district-promulgated waiver of liability, assumption of risk, release/hold harmless and indemnification form may be used to assist school staff on field trips. All chaperones must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate administrator. All volunteers must meet and adhere to the certification requirements contained in the Background Investigation Check - Volunteers Policy 4180.2.

Funding

The School Committee will appropriately budget for District-sponsored educational field trips. Such field trips shall meet Rhode Island's Basic Education Program (BEP) Regulation's definition of a quality expanded learning opportunity.¹ Individual students and families will not be charged for District-sponsored field trips. District funds may not be used to support activities that have little or no relationship to approved curriculum or program of studies.

Special fundraising efforts may be permitted for the purpose of supplementing a school's field trip budget. Students shall not be required to either participate in fundraising efforts or to meet individual fundraising targets in order to participate in a District-sponsored field trip.² The School Committee may accept grants, federal and state funds, gifts and donations to support field trip participation in accordance with Policy 3090 Grant Funding, Policy 3091 Grant Procedures and Policy 3087 Donations and Gifts.

No student shall be ineligible to participate in a field trip on the basis of their family's ability or willingness to pay, or on their level of participation in fund-raising activities.

¹ 200-RICR-20-10-1.1.2(A)

² R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-38-6

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Recreational Trips

Recreational trips are trips, within state, out-of-state or international, which fall outside of the regular school day or year, are not connected with any academic or school sponsored activity and are not sanctioned by School Committee approval or paid for with District funds or resources (including staff time). Such trips may not be promoted in the school during school hours.³

Recreational trips organized by, coordinated by, or participated in by staff or faculty members:

- Staff or faculty members organizing or participating in a recreational trip shall act only in their individual capacity and not as employees or representatives of the District.
- Such trips shall not be promoted as an activity of the District.
- Staff and faculty shall not be paid by the District for such time on recreational trips.
- Staff and faculty members may not use personal leave or sick days for such recreational trips and any staff absences will be unexcused.
- Recreational trips are not covered or included within the District's liability insurance.
- Parents shall be advised that these recreational trips are privately arranged by the organizers, meetings or informational sessions may not take place during school hours, and students' participation is dependent upon their parents' approval.
- Any loss of student school time due to a recreational trip will be an unexcused absence.

Social Events

Social events, such as prom, are excluded from the prohibition of fees described in this policy. (*Opinion Letter of the Commissioner to Supt. Sheehan, December 22, 2008*)

Adopted: September 6, 1995
Revised: November 4, 2002
Revised: January 3, 2007
Revised: October 7, 2009
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Revised: September 4, 2024
Revised: July 15, 2026

³ R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-38-6