

UNION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIELD TRIP ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

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I. Objectives

These guidelines have been written to establish the minimum standards for student travel in Union County Public Schools ("District"). Student travel includes field and activity trips which are sponsored by the District. All student travel must be conducted in compliance with District approved guidelines and Board Policy governing trips and student behavior.

Student trips afford students the opportunity to observe, explore, discover, and engage in hands-on experiences. Schools may sponsor trips before, during or after school hours.

Student trips must provide educational value and be aligned to the academic curriculum, unless otherwise permitted consistent with Board Policy.

The principal shall be responsible for ensuring that appropriate care is taken to ensure the safety of all participants of school trips.

II. Trip Types

1. Field Trips

A field trip is a school or District planned activity in which a class or group of students leave the school grounds for the purpose of continuing or extending the program of instruction. Field trips must be designed to further the learning of a student outside the classroom environment and must be aligned to the curriculum.

2. Co-curricular Activities

Co-Curricular activities are activities that are an integral part of a class, but which take place away from the classroom setting. These activities may include, but are not limited to, drama, vocal and instrumental music, club-sponsored competitions and annual meetings, foreign language classes, and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC).

3. Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are held during or after the completion of the academic school day, are not graded, do not offer credit, and are not connected to the curricular program. These activities include athletics, drill and spirit teams, and any other similar activity or event.

4. Trips not sponsored by UCPS

Non-sponsored trips, including international travel, may include trips where District employees participate as private citizens who are not acting within the course and scope of their employment.

It must be made clear to participants, to include students and their parents/guardians that the trip is not a school/District-sponsored activity and that any students and/or parents/guardians who may attend, do so at their own risk. Promotional materials and meetings must clearly state that the trip is not school/District-sponsored and that staff members are not participating as a part of their official duties. Staff may not use District resources, to include email and classrooms, to advertise these trips.

Monies must not be raised or collected during school hours and all fundraising and communications regarding non-sponsored trips must not be done during school hours or using school resources.

The District assumes no responsibility in connection with non-sponsored trips.

III. Planning

1. A field trip plan must be prepared and **retained in the school files for all trips**. The plan must specify:
 - a. Name of staff member with overall responsibility for the trip, including cell phone number
 - b. Names of students to include a signed copy of the Parent Permission Form.
 - c. Names of approved chaperones to include proof of approved volunteer status and signed Field Trip Chaperone Code of Conduct verification.
 - d. Daily itinerary with departure and return information, as well as activities and locations to be visited)
 - e. Lodging (including hotel name, address, and phone number). If staying with a host family, name, address, and phone number and completed criminal background checks for all adult members of the household or living in the house.
 - f. Plan for students requiring medication on the trip (consents and self-carry forms, if applicable)
 - g. Transportation information
 - h. Plan for communication between school, home, etc.
 - i. Plan for the needs of students with disabilities
 - j. Carrier and insurance coverage
2. Employee Compensation:
 - a. No UCPS employee may accept compensation, stipends, gifts, or any other form of remuneration from any company with which a school or other school-related group contracts to provide services related to a field trip, except for the following:
 - i) The donation of one (1) free trip for no less than five (5) students which must be used equally by all UCPS employees accompanying students on the trip. ONLY UCPS employees may receive free or reduced trip costs.
 - b. UCPS staff may not self-organize a non-UCPS sponsored field trip and build a free trip into the cost, unless full written disclosure is made to the families of the students going on the trip.
 - c. UCPS employees who accept compensation or other remuneration in violation of this provision are subject to discipline under Board Policy.
3. Medical emergencies: Medical emergencies and contingencies must be considered and a plan developed when planning a trip. Approved adult chaperones must travel with first aid kits, telephone numbers for emergency services in the area, any student medication, and emergency home contact numbers.
4. Approved Volunteers:
 - a. Only approved UCPS volunteers, who are identified as chaperones for the trip by the principal may attend.
 - b. All costs associated with participation in the trip are the responsibility of the volunteers, and volunteers are not eligible for travel agency donated trips. In the event a school elects to include some or all chaperone expenses as part of the per-student cost of the field trip, the school must provide written notice to parents/guardians prior to collecting payments. Such notice shall

clearly state the amount of student fees which will be allocated toward chaperone expenses and parents/guardians must have the option to decline the additional fees.

- c. To maintain proper chaperone ratios, approved volunteers must ride on district buses, activity buses, and any vehicles secured for travel on the field trip. In the event of parent attendance in excess of minimum chaperone requirements resulting in independent parent-provided transportation to the field trip venue, principal is responsible for implementing a check-in process at the venue to confirm that any parents who arrive independently are approved volunteers and assigned chaperones. If a parent arrives at the venue independently and is not an approved volunteer and an assigned chaperone, they must not be permitted to participate with the field trip group.
5. Non-UCPS Employees: The only non-UCPS employees who may attend the trip are chaperones. No non-chaperones may participate with the group.
6. Government Rates: When planning a trip, staff must inquire whether government or school rates are available for lodging, transportation, etc. Tax exempt status must always be requested, and proof of that exemption must be included in communications with suppliers.
7. Fees: Fees, such as the cost of admissions and lodging, must not be excessive, and may not be such as to exclude students who would otherwise participate. A student may not be excluded due to an inability to pay the required fee. Schools shall consider fundraisers to assist students in financial need so that they will be able to participate
8. School Level Planning:
 - a. Out-of-County and Out-of-State day trips that **do not include an overnight stay** will be arranged by the school and must include a proposed daily itinerary, restaurants, tours, and mode(s) of transportation.
 - b. When a school-sponsored club must use a hotel designated by the club's local, state or national organization, the trip sponsor must include the school bookkeeper in the payment process. A proposed daily itinerary, restaurants, tours, and mode(s) of transportation must be included when submitting for District approval.
9. Travel Agency Planning:
 - a. Overnight Out-of-County, Overnight Out-of-State, and International trips must use a UCPS approved travel agency for all aspects of travel to include a proposed daily itinerary, hotel, restaurants, and modes of transportation.
 - b. Contractual obligations or agreements must be reviewed and signed by the Principal. **Teachers may not enter into contracts or agreements related to the field trip.**
 - c. It is the responsibility of the principal or trip sponsor to communicate to the travel agency UCPS guidelines regarding donations, to include "comped" trips, found in #2 and #4 of this section of these Guidelines.
10. Parental Notification, Consent, and Documentation
 - a. Parent notification must be in advance of the trip, must be in writing and must include a detailed itinerary (including daily activities, meals, and means of transportation, etc.). After

reviewing the information, a parental consent form is required for each school trip. No student will be allowed to participate in a school trip unless his or her parent or guardian has signed a consent form allowing the student to attend. An emancipated minor may give consent for him/herself.

- b. The UCPS Risk Manager must be contacted at least 10 days prior to any trip that includes a high-risk activity as referenced in the UCPS Risk Manager Field Trip Guidance. The high-risk activities will be reviewed carefully by the risk manager after a detailed itinerary is provided. For a parent/guardian to provide an **informed consent** (signature on the Assumption of Risk and Acknowledgement), the parent/guardian must be properly informed of all activities and potential risks involved in the field trip.
- c. If medical pre-clearance is required for a student to take part in the trip and/or participate in certain activities, it must be obtained in advance of the trip.
- d. Upon request, a parent shall be notified of the names of all chaperones that will attend a trip with their child.
- e. Where a student trip is sponsored by a teacher, parent/parent-teacher association or by an outside agency and not by the District, parents must be advised explicitly of this fact and all documentation related to the trip must so indicate. There can be no advertising for the trip at the school, no meetings held on school property and no trip activities held at the school or during the school day.

11. Transportation

- a. Principal and trip sponsor must review and follow all guidelines set forth by the UCPS Transportation Department, to include:
 - i) Yellow and activity bus procedures
 - ii) Charter Bus Process
 - iii) UCPS Athletic Van process
- b. Schools may use any of the following means of transportation:
 - i) Public transit systems (e.g., subways, buses)
 - ii) Registered commercial airlines
 - iii) Taxi (may not use any ride-sharing agency)
 - iv) Intercity buses or transit systems (e.g., Amtrak, Greyhound)
 - v) Private authorized buses, including school buses or activity buses, as set forth below:
 - (1) Any vehicle utilized to transport students must comply with all federal, state, city, and UCPS rules and regulations for the transport of students. This shall include, but is not limited to, standards established for vehicles, drivers, insurance, and companies. The Transportation Department must be contacted to obtain a list of companies which provide service in compliance with these standards.
 - (2) Travel Agencies must be informed of the UCPS Approved Charter Bus List and must be advised that only approved companies may be used.

- (3) To request a bus for a school trip from the UCPS Transportation Department, contact the UCPS Transportation Department. The UCPS Transportation Department maintains information about the procedures for obtaining buses for trips. Please refer to these procedures when requesting bus service from the UCPS Transportation Department.
- (4) To request a UCPS Transport Van, please complete the proper reservation information and follow all Van Usage Guidelines found on the Transportation website.
- vi) Students may not be transported to or from the trip site in an unauthorized or private vehicle.
- vii) Cargo-like vans (i.e., 15-passenger) are not permitted.

IV. Submission of Requests and Approvals

Staff members must review and follow all guidelines and Board Policy when planning a trip. Failure to follow guidelines may result in cancellation of the trip.

1. Prior to approval, trip sponsors must:

- a. Complete a trip request to include educational alignment to the curriculum, unless otherwise permitted pursuant to Board Policy
- b. Provide a daily itinerary
- c. Provide estimated cost to students
- d. Submit all paperwork to their school's designated administrator to gain approval from their principal

2. In-County Day Trips

- a. In-County day trips are reviewed and approved by the Principal and must be entered into the spreadsheet kept by each school bookkeeper. If there are any activities that may be considered high-risk, the Principal must contact the Risk Manager for guidance prior to approval.

3. Out-of-County and Out-of-State Day Trips

- a. Out-of-County and Out-of-State day trips that **do not include an overnight stay** will be arranged by the school and must include an itinerary, restaurants, tours, and mode(s) of transportation.
- b. Out-of-County and Out-of-State day trips require the approval of the Principal, and,
 - i) Co-curricular trips: Principal or Assistant Principal must submit the trip request and supporting documents to the School Performance Office at least 10 days prior to the date of the trip for District approval.
 - ii) Extracurricular trips: Principal or Assistant Principal must submit the trip request and supporting documents to Administration and Operations at least 10 days prior to the date of the trip for District approval.

4. Overnight Trips

- a. Overnight trips on UCPS property are not permitted.
- b. Overnight trips must be coordinated through an approved travel agency for all aspects of travel, to include collection of money, a daily itinerary, hotel, restaurants, and modes of transportation. Any contractual obligations or agreements must be reviewed and signed by the Principal. **Teachers may not enter into any contracts or agreements related to the field trip.**
- c. Overnight trips require the approval of the Principal, and,
 - i) Overnight Co-curricular trips: Principal or Assistant Principal must submit the trip request and supporting documents to the School Performance Office at least 10 days prior to the date of the trip for District approval.
 - ii) Overnight Extracurricular trips: Principal or Assistant Principal must submit the trip request and supporting documents to Administration and Operations at least 10 days prior to the date of the trip for District approval.

5. International Trips for Middle and High Schools Only

- a. Prior to submitting a UCPS International Field Trip Planning Request, the trip sponsor should consult with the school principal. Together, they should coordinate an interest meeting with students from their school. If there is adequate interest, the UCPS International Field Trip Planning Request (along with a draft itinerary) should be submitted to the School Performance Office for review.
- b. International trip sponsors must utilize an approved travel agency for all aspects of travel which includes collection of money, a daily itinerary, hotels, restaurants, and modes of transportation. Any contractual obligations or agreements must be reviewed and signed by the Principal. Teachers may not enter into any contracts or agreements related to the field trip.
- c. Upon District approval for planning, the principal will receive a packet of information to be reviewed with the trip sponsor. The packet will include forms for completion by participants.
- d. Student and chaperone applications and medication consent must be completed within the same school year as the planned trip.
- e. The International Trip Packet must be submitted to the School Performance Office at least 90 days prior to the departure date of the trip for District review.

V. Supervision and Chaperones

1. Supervision Ratios

- a. Every field trip (co-curricular and extracurricular) requires at least two (2) staff members (one must be a teacher or administrator)
- b. **Elementary** chaperone-to-student ratio: 1:8 (25% of required chaperones must be staff members)
- c. **Middle and High** chaperone-to-student ratio: 1:10 (10% of required chaperones must be staff members)
- d. International chaperone-to-student ratio for middle and high schools only: 1:15 (10% of required chaperones must be staff members)
- e. For any school trip involving Students with Disabilities, the ratio of staff to students must be at least the same as the ratio mandated on the student's plan or as necessary to meet the student's needs. This staff member(s) shall not be considered in the overall chaperone-to-student ratio.

2. Staff Chaperones

- a. The principal must designate a licensed teacher or an assistant principal, participating in the trip, as the individual with overall responsibility for the trip.
- b. Students must be always accompanied by a responsible adult, and appropriate, adequate supervision must be provided at every level of a school trip, including transportation. No student may be left unsupervised during any phase of a trip.
- c. If a student must leave a school trip prematurely, she/he must be accompanied by a staff person if a parent cannot come for the student.

3. Non-UCPS Adult Chaperones

- a. Approved Adult Chaperones:
 - i) Must be a current approved parent volunteer.
 - ii) Must have a signed Chaperone Code of Conduct on file dated for the current school year.
 - iii) Must be designated by the principal as a chaperone. No other adults may attend a field trip and/or participate in the activities of the trip.
 - iv) Must be over the age of 21 years.
 - v) Must always remain with the group. Leaving the trip for anything other than an emergency is not allowed.

4. Siblings of students whose parents are accompanying them on a trip are not permitted to attend the trip.

5. Children of chaperones may not attend the trip unless they are students of the school scheduling the trip and are the age, and in the club, class, or activity scheduling the trip.

VI. Expectations

1. No staff/chaperone shall stay overnight in a room with students.
2. Only students within the same **grade span (i.e., elementary, middle, and high)** may stay overnight in a room together.
3. **Policy 5-16: School Trips:** “Students are prohibited from sharing sleeping quarters with anyone of the other biological sex as defined in G.S. 12-3.3 during a school trip unless (1) the member of the other biological sex is the student’s immediate family member (i.e., a parent, sibling, or grandparent, including step or half relationships) or (2) the parents of all students sharing the sleeping quarters have provided written permission to the school.”
4. Principal is responsible for reviewing hotel sleeping arrangements for students and proximity of staff to students in case of emergency as well as compliance with Board Policy.
5. All students attending a field trip must be current students of UCPS. If a student is graduating prior to the trip, the trip cannot be more than 4 months after graduation.
6. Staff members must ensure supervision ratios are followed throughout the trip, to include transportation, meals, and any “free time” included in the itinerary.
7. Adequate security must be provided at the hotel/motel, especially applicable to inns in which room doors open to the outdoors. Chaperones shall monitor throughout the evening to ensure security/safety.
8. A plan for communication/travel notification must be developed and relayed to the students’ parents/guardians prior to departure. Parent/guardians must have an emergency contact for the staff member supervising the trip.
9. It is recommended that the staff members accompanying the students come from the same school sponsoring the trip. On occasion, where appropriate, the principal, in his or her discretion, may approve requests that staff from another school be used.
10. Trips that include air travel must include a drop-off and pick-up procedure established by the principal prior to departure.
11. Regardless of the type of trip, it is not permissible for students to meet at or be dismissed from a site other than the school unless the consent form specifically authorizes it. The principal or her/his designee must assume overall responsibility for receiving returning students. In cases where intervening circumstances make it impossible for the students to be dismissed from the agreed upon site, parent(s) must be contacted and advised of the situation and appropriate school staff must remain with the student(s) until such time as the parent(s) arrives. If a parent fails to pick up a child and repeated attempts to reach a parent or contact person are unsuccessful, the principal or designee must refer to district procedures for handling students left after school or must contact the nearest police precinct.
12. Siblings of students whose parents are accompanying them on a trip are not permitted to attend the trip.
13. Students are expected to abide by all behavioral expectations, including but not limited to the Code of Student Conduct, as if they were in the school building. Violations of such expectations may result in the student being sent home from the trip at parental expense and discipline upon returning to school. Students are also expected to abide by all laws of the jurisdiction visited. Any costs associated with the student’s failure to follow such laws will be the responsibility of the parent. Even if lawful in the jurisdiction visited and with a properly issued license, students will not operate motor vehicles while on a field trip. Additionally, even if lawful in the jurisdiction visited, no students may consume alcoholic beverages of any kind while on a field trip.

VII. Emergency Circumstances

1. Missing Students

- a. If one or more students cannot be accounted for at a trip site, the authorities with jurisdiction over the site must be notified immediately and a search organized. If, following the search, the student(s) cannot be located, local police must be called immediately. School officials must call the local police no later than 30 minutes after identification of the disappearance of a student. The staff member in charge must make every effort to contact the parents as well as his/her administrator immediately.
- b. A staff member must remain at the site until all the students are accounted for. The staff member in charge shall determine whether other students and adults may leave the site. All such decisions shall be made in consultation with the staff member's administrator. Parents must be kept updated as to the status of the search for their child.

2. Illness/Injury

- a. If a student becomes ill or is injured and needs assistance, appropriate health officials must be notified immediately. A determination must be made by health officials regarding the severity of the illness or injury. If hospitalization is required, an adult must accompany the student. The parents must be notified immediately of the nature of the illness or injury and the whereabouts of their child (hospital, etc.).
- b. The staff member in charge shall determine whether other students and adults shall leave the site, but a staff member must remain until the ill or injured student is able to leave or a parent arrives. All such decisions shall be made in consultation with the staff member's administrator. Parents must be informed about the child's condition if they are not able to travel to the site.

VIII. Superintendent's Right to Cancel

1. The Superintendent reserves the right to cancel field trips with little or no notice due to the security/safety concerns issued by the following entities:
 - a. U.S. Department of State (travel alerts and warnings)
 - b. The National Terrorism Advisory System (Imminent Threat or Elevated Threat warnings)
 - c. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Watch Level 1, Alert Level 2, Warning Level 3)
 - d. National Weather Service
 - e. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 - f. Other emergencies deemed as critical by the Superintendent
 - g. Failure to follow any of these guidelines
2. In the event of cancellation by the Superintendent, UCPS has no obligation to refund fees or deposits paid to travel agencies or providers of transportation, lodging, or other trip-related services. Parents are responsible for payment of such fees by travel companies and waive any claims against the district for cancellation under this section.
3. The contents of this section must be communicated to all parents/families of participating students in writing.

IX. Insurance

1. For school trips in which students engage in high-risk activities (e.g., swimming, water sports, horseback riding, etc.), schools must consult with the UCPS Risk Manager regarding:
 - a. Documentation that the facilities being visited have a general comprehensive liability insurance policy in an amount not less than \$2,000,000 per occurrence.
 - b. Written assurance from the facility that health, fire and safety standards conform to those required by their locality for the use of persons 4-21 years of age must also be provided.
 - c. If such documentation is not received, the UCPS Risk Manager shall determine whether it is appropriate to proceed with the trip.
2. Emergency medical group insurance must be purchased to cover all international field trip participants.
3. All questions regarding insurance must be referred to the UCPS Risk Manager.
4. Students participating in any field trip will also be required to provide proof of individual health insurance. Parents of students who do not have such coverage must, before their children may participate in a field trip, agree in writing to be liable for any expenses incurred because of medical treatment rendered to their child while on a field trip.

X. International Field Trip Guidelines

1. Read and follow UCBOE Policy and Administrative Guidelines regarding field trips and administration of medicines.
2. Read and follow UCPS Field Trip Administrative Guidelines, to include International Guidelines.
3. Read and follow UCPS Risk Manager Field Trip Guidance.
4. Prior to submitting a UCPS International Field Trip Planning Request:
 - a. The trip sponsor should consult with the school principal. Together, they should coordinate an interest meeting with students from their school.
 - b. If there is adequate interest, the UCPS International Field Trip Planning Request must be submitted along with a draft itinerary, any excursions that will be offered, etc.
5. Upon District approval for planning:
 - a. The principal will receive a packet of information to be reviewed with the trip sponsor. The packet will include forms for completion by participants. Student and chaperone applications and medication consent must be completed within the same school year as the planned trip.
 - b. International trip sponsors must utilize an approved travel agency for all aspects of travel which includes collection of money, a daily itinerary, hotels, restaurants, and modes of transportation.
6. Any contractual obligations or agreements must be reviewed and signed by the Principal. Teachers may not enter into any contracts or agreements related to the field trip.
7. The International Trip Packet must be submitted for review to the School Performance Office at least 90 days prior to departure.
8. If Staying with Host Families:
 - a. Background Check/Criminal Records Checks must be completed for the host family including each adult residing in the household. Host Family Process for the host family must be completed by entities in the country in which the students will stay while on the trip.
9. All non-UCPS employee chaperones must be approved volunteers and over the age of 21 years. No other adults may attend a field trip and/or participate in the activities of the trip.
10. Contact the UCPS Chief Finance Officer to determine process for all monies that sponsor wishes to take on an international trip to pay for student admissions, etc.
11. Any trip that is advertised through the school or by a school system employee using his/her position or the school is used as a meeting site for pre-trip meetings will be considered a school trip and all guidelines will apply. If a staff member is planning a trip that is not school sponsored she/he may not advertise the trip at school or through school communication platforms. No field trip activities for a non-school sponsored trip may be conducted during the school day, and the Community Use of Facilities process must be followed for any meetings held on school property (facility use fee and insurance cannot be waived by the principal).
12. Any school system employee who chaperones an international trip will depart with the students and return with the students. No school system employee shall leave early or depart late unless extreme exigency as they must chaperone the students.
13. All International Field Trip paperwork must be current/up-to-date, unexpired, complete, and properly signed.

XI. Frequently Asked Questions

- **Question:** With regards to insurance, we understand that students must have their own medical insurance, however, are they required to purchase the trip insurance options that the companies provide?

Answer: No, however, parents must be advised that the trip could be cancelled, and the district is not responsible for monies lost at cancellation

- **Question:** Since fees are set by the individual companies, we are unable to adjust fees for affordability issues, is fundraising our only option for students who require "scholarships"?

Answer: If a family states that a student wants to attend, but cannot afford the trip, and the school is unable to cover the cost, the school must make every attempt to help the student find ways to obtain the necessary money.

- **Question:** Some of our groups only include 5 or 6 students. Are we required by UCPS to have 2 staff chaperones for as few as 5 students?

Answer: Yes, sometimes emergencies require a staff member to be separated from the group due to personal needs or those of a student. Someone employed by UCPS must always be present for supervision during the trip.

- **Question:** Some groups must pay cash in local currency for tips for bus drivers, tour guides, etc. What must be the procedure for the handling of these gratuities?

Answer: This has already been set up in our guidelines. Please review #9 under the section International Field Trip Guidelines.