

FIELD TRIPS AND EXCURSIONS

Background

Student learning can be enhanced through field trips and excursions. The benefit of field trips is that they enable students to participate in quality, off-site educational experiences that are at the heart of the educational process; and are connected to the Guide to Education, Programs of Study, and curriculum and learning outcomes. Despite these benefits, Elk Island Catholic Schools will not compromise the safety and security of staff and students. Therefore, all decisions related to field trips and excursions will be based on a safety and security-first criteria.

Definitions

Category 1.0 – Day Trips – Low Risk to Moderate are learning experiences conducted off school grounds during the day which do not extend overnight and present themselves as moderate to low risk activities. Principal approval is required.

Category 2.0

- (a) Day Trips – High Risk are learning experiences conducted off school grounds during the day which do not extend overnight and present themselves as high risk activities. Principal approval is required.
- (b) Overnight – Low to Moderate Risk are learning experiences that are conducted off school grounds where students remain overnight at a destination and are involved in low to medium risk activities. Principal approval is required.
- (c) Overnight – High Risk are learning experiences that are conducted off school grounds where students remain overnight at a destination and are involved in high risk activities. Principal approval is required.

Category 3.0 – National Field Trips/Excursions - Principal and Superintendent Approval is required.

Category 4.0 – International Field Trips/Excursions - School Leadership *requires preauthorization by the Superintendent prior to exploration* of any International Field Trip and subsequent communication with parents or students. A written proposal must be submitted to the Superintendent a minimum of six months prior to any planned International Field Trip.

Procedures

1. The Superintendent or designate has the power to authorize requests for field trips provided that the proposal includes:
 - 1.1 Attention to the safety, security, and appropriate supervision of students;

- 1.2 Attention to risk management of the proposed activities;
 - 1.3 Protection of students, staff and volunteers of the Division;
 - 1.4 An itinerary that would be deemed safe by a reasonable parent and that meets the needs of all students on the field trip;
 - 1.5 Accommodation and travel arrangements that would be deemed safe by a reasonable parent;
 - 1.6 A budget that is reasonable and does not preclude individual students from participating in the **required** field trips/excursions;
 - 1.7 Provision for alternative educational programs for those students whose parents do not wish them to participate;
 - 1.8 Information being provided to, and in some cases consultation with, the parents of the students affected and/or the School Council; and
 - 1.9 Parent permission or approval.
2. In the event that a field trip/excursion needs to be cancelled for whatever reason, attempts will be made to refund field trip/excursion fees that may have been paid by students and/or parents.
3. Planning
- 3.1 Teachers are expected to submit a plan for a field trip/excursion to the Principal as per the schedule/timeline indicated in the **Field Trip/Excursion Authorization Form**. The plan must address the following:
 - 3.1.1 Educational goals established for the field trip/excursion which are compatible with the objectives of the course(s) being taught;
 - 3.1.2 The extent to which the field trip/excursion will interfere with the student's entire educational program;
 - 3.1.3 The field trip/excursion budget, ensuring that students who are unable to pay associated fees are not excluded from the field trip/excursion;
 - 3.1.4 The type of transportation required;
 - 3.1.5 When deemed appropriate based on activity and distance travelled, access to an emergency support vehicle is recommended if one is not readily available.
 - 3.1.6 An itinerary outlining approximate times at which the field trip/excursion will be conducted at specific locations;

- 3.1.7 The numbers and names of adults who will attend as supervisors; and the proposed level or ratio of supervision;
 - 3.1.8 Information related to safety procedures and medical procedures for those that may require such; and
 - 3.1.9 A thorough review of the Excluded Activities and the variety of risks involved in the field trip/excursion as outlined in the **Appendix Risk Assessment Guidelines**, and completion of the **Risk Assessment Checklist**.
- 3.2 Teachers are also to:
- 3.2.1 Consider the support, or lack thereof, of other teachers, parents and the community toward the proposed field trip/excursion;
 - 3.2.2 Assess the merits and educational value of the trip versus time taken from in-school classroom activities;
 - 3.2.3 Review staff, supervision and liability implications;
 - 3.2.4 Estimate the costs associated with the trip;
 - 3.2.5 Have an initial discussion with the Principal to review policy requirements and obtain approval to proceed with planning;
 - 3.2.6 Consult with other teachers who teach courses to students who will be affected by the trip; and
 - 3.2.7 Ensure meaningful alternative in-school learning experiences are made available for those students not going on the trip.
 - 3.2.8 Employees are expected to comply with the Division's Drug and Alcohol Administrative Procedure 306 at all times while on field trips.
- 3.3 For Out-of-Province and International Field Trips/Excursions, teachers must consult the Canadian Consulate Web Page at <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories> for Travel Advisory information at the initial and final stages of the planning process.
- 3.3.1 One (1) day prior to the trip the teacher must verify that the Canadian Consulate is permitting travel to that specific destination.
- 3.4 Teachers must obtain signed copies of the **Consent for Participation, Risk Acknowledgement, Waiver and Indemnity for National and International Field Trips** from parents at the time of initiating a Category 3 (National) or Category 4 (International) field trip.

- 3.5 For field trips/excursions that involve being away on a Saturday, Sunday, or Holy Day of Obligation, the group shall make every effort to attend a Catholic Mass. If this is impossible, the group shall participate in a religious celebration that they arrange.
 - 3.6 Field trips/excursions that are not directly sponsored by a school or the Division are the total responsibility of the planners, tour agencies and transportation agencies involved.
 - 3.6.1 Division staff is advised that they must not in any way be involved, even on an advisory basis, in such field trips/excursions as outlined in 3.6 above.
 - 3.7 Staff are prohibited from undertaking an activity that is cited on the Excluded Activities list included in the Appendix. Additionally, all non-ATA staff are prohibited from undertaking any activity that is listed on the High Risk Activities / Programs list included in the Appendix.
 - 3.8 All staff and authorized supervisors are protected by the Division's liability insurance when acting within the scope of their duties as approved by the school administration. Notwithstanding this matter, it is incumbent upon field trip/excursion planners to ensure that appropriate insurance coverage exists for the activity to be undertaken.
 - 3.8.1 Liability coverage is normally effective only for activities held within Canada or continental U.S.A. (Contact is to be made with the Superintendent or designate for advice concerning insurance coverage beyond these borders).
 - 3.8.2 When using a vehicle (e.g., private bus) other than a public or school bus to transport children, the supervisory teacher must make certain that the vehicle has adequate insurance, the driver is appropriately licensed, and the Principal is informed of the driver's name.
 4. For any field trips/excursions involving participation in sports and other physical activities, all staff members must adhere to the "Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools" which is available on the website at:
https://education.alberta.ca/media/160206/sg_pa_final_2014.pdf
- This document contains a wealth of information related to recommended supervision ratios and instructional considerations.
5. Parents who are driving students using their own personal vehicles are required to carry their own liability insurance at a minimum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000). It is to be understood that said coverage is over and above that which is available

under the Division's umbrella liability insurance policy. Before driving any students, parent/volunteer drivers are required to complete the **Volunteer Driver Declaration and Authorization Form (552-1)**

6. If the school provides transportation to a field trip/excursion, and a student wishes to transport him/herself, the student and his/her parent must sign a form stating that:
 - 6.1 The student was offered school bus transportation and that s/he declined it;
 - 6.2 The parent accepts responsibility for the student's transportation;
 - 6.3 The parent does not or will not hold the Division liable for any accident or injury that may occur during the transportation to/from the field trip/excursion
 - 6.4 The student will not transport any other student other than a sibling; and
 - 6.5 The parent accepts that the Division's Student Accident insurance does not apply during the transportation portions of the trip, and the student is only covered from when the student arrives at the school sponsored field trip/excursion, until the student leaves the field trip/excursion.
7. Dismissing a student directly from a field trip venue to the care of the custodial parent is allowed, but if the student is dismissed to a parent of a friend, the parent must sign a form stating that the parent accepts full responsibility for the student's transportation and is allowing their child to be transported home by the parent of a friend, and that they will not hold the Division liable for any accident or injury that may occur during the transportation to/from the field trip/excursion.
8. Supervision and Volunteers
 - 8.1 All field trips/excursions must be under the direct supervision of at least one (1) teacher;
 - 8.2 Both male and female supervisors will be provided for overnight (or longer) co-educational field trips;
 - 8.3 The teacher is responsible for ensuring that an acceptable level of student discipline is maintained;
 - 8.4 To ensure appropriate student behavior and safety the principal is responsible for adhering adequate supervision for different activities as outlined in the Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools.
 - 8.5 Instructors who are not employed by the Division are eligible to be supervisors.

- 8.6 Everyone involved in the field trip/excursion must be dressed/equipped in a manner appropriate to the activities to be undertaken;
- 8.7 Volunteers must comply with the requirements of Administrative Procedure 490 – Volunteers in the Schools. In addition, volunteers are to:
 - 8.7.1 Know the details of the planned activity, and their specific duties and authority prior to departure;
 - 8.7.2 Support and follow the school code of conduct;
 - 8.7.3 Report any inappropriate conduct to the teacher in charge;
 - 8.7.4 Adhere to the schedule on itinerary;
 - 8.7.5 Dress appropriately according to the type of activity; and
 - 8.7.6 Fulfill their duties for the duration of the field trip/excursion.
- 8.8 The teacher in charge will ensure that appropriate communication devices are taken on the field trip/excursion so that constant communication within the group and access to external communication is available as required.
- 8.9 Overnight field trips require volunteer parents/supervisors to provide a current (within the last two years) clean Criminal Record Check and a Child Intervention Check. In consultation with Superintendent or designate, unclean record checks will be reviewed.

See **Volunteer Confidentiality Undertaking Form (490-1)**

For information related to recommended supervision ratios and instructional considerations, visit: “Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools” which is available on the website at: https://education.alberta.ca/media/160206/sg_pa_final_2014.pdf

9. Safety Guidelines

- 9.1 With respect to student safety, the Principal and staff are to take reasonable measures to minimize the risk to students participating in field trips/excursions. Safety guidelines are as follows:
 - 9.1.1 Outdoor activities should not be conducted when extreme environmental factors present a danger to student health and safety; and,
 - 9.1.2 There is a pre-planned itinerary from which the field trip supervisor will not deviate unless, in the opinion of the supervising teacher, it is absolutely necessary to do so in emergency or extenuating circumstances.
- 9.2 When field trips/excursions are planned for remote wilderness areas, the supervising teacher is to provide:

- 9.2.1 A report written by the supervising teacher or other qualified individual that provides an on-site visit review of the area prior to requesting permission to take students on a field trip/excursion to that particular location; such previews are to be undertaken whenever a new location is being considered for use, or when a location is being used for a different season of the year;
 - 9.2.2 Be familiar with the area and with seasonal variations for the location they plan to visit;
 - 9.2.3 Use professional guides when appropriate or as directed;
 - 9.2.4 Have established safety and emergency procedures understood by all participants;
 - 9.2.5 Ensure that appropriate communication devices are taken on the trip and contact number(s) should be made accessible to school administrators and the Superintendent;
 - 9.2.6 Ensure constant communication within the group and access to external communication as needed;
 - 9.2.7 Inform appropriate local authorities such as the RCMP, forestry or park officials about the program, the location and route;
 - 9.2.8 Be aware of the location of the nearest accessible medical station;
 - 9.2.9 Establish procedures to contact the Principal via RCMP, forestry, or park officials in the event of an emergency;
 - 9.2.10 Ensure that required permits, fishing licenses, and area use permits have been obtained from appropriate authorities; and
 - 9.2.11 Ensure that if a group splits into two (2) or more independent travelling groups, each group must have a Division approved supervisor.
- 9.3 The possession and use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs by all participants, including staff and volunteer supervisors, is strictly prohibited during the duration of the field trips/ excursions and applies to all field trips/excursions regardless of the age of the participants or local laws, customs and culture. All participants shall be made aware of the local laws and customs that may impact their conduct and decisions.
- 9.3.1 Students, staff, parents, voluntary supervisors may receive sacramental wine at the celebration of the Eucharist.

10. Specialized Activities

10.1 Water Activities

- 10.1.1 Each trip that includes water-related activities must have a safety assessment, unless the trip is on an approved activities list.
- 10.1.2 All participants involved in sailing or boating activities must wear a Transport Canada approved lifejacket or Personal Flotation Device, unless otherwise specified in the procedures manuals.
- 10.1.3 For activities involving canoeing, sailing and power craft, the activity must meet or exceed the Safety Guidelines.
- 10.1.4 When canoe trips take place on lakes or rivers, the teacher-in-charge must have visited the site prior to the trip, and be familiar with the proposed route and the seasonal conditions at the time of the trip.
- 10.1.5 Adequate instruction and demonstration must be given to all participants involved before allowing the participants to undertake any water-related activity.

10.2 Hot Tubs/Swimming Pools

- 10.2.1 Students may not use swimming pools or hot tubs in proximity to swimming pools, unless there is a lifeguard on duty.
- 10.2.2 If the facility operator does not provide a lifeguard at a hot tub or swimming pool, students may use the hot tub/swimming pool if the school provides a lifeguard over the age of twenty (20) years with current certification in National Lifeguard Service (NLS), Standard First Aid, and CPR Basic Rescuer, for every fifty (50) participants using the swimming pool.

Skiing and Snowboarding

- 10.2.3 Downhill skiing, snowboarding and snowblading, while considered High Risk activities, are acceptable for students in grades 4 to 12, as long as all the following conditions have been met:
 - 10.2.3.1 Skiing or snowboarding are part of a well-balanced yearly program, and reflect the school's commitment to a quality physical education program; and
 - 10.2.3.2 The activity includes, at a minimum, one (1) mandatory ski/snowboard lesson by a qualified instructor to identify student level of proficiency and provide safety guidelines on the hill.

- 10.2.3.3 Additional educational opportunities must be provided on each consecutive day for trips longer than one day.
- 10.2.4 Prior to the skiing or snowboarding trip, the teacher-in-charge must:
 - 10.2.4.1 Be familiar with the ski resort;
 - 10.2.4.2 Make contact with the ski operator in order to arrange student identification and controls procedure; and
 - 10.2.4.3 Understand the ski resort's emergency protocol.
- 10.2.5 Upon arrival at the ski resort, the teacher-in-charge must:
 - 10.2.5.1 Divide students into levels of ability as described by the parent's signed acknowledgement of the student's skier or snowboarder's classification;
 - 10.2.5.2 Assist the ski resort staff with grouping students for their mandatory lesson;
 - 10.2.5.3 Along with the ski resort staff, emphasize to the students that they will be given permission to use specified slopes or trails, and that the use of other slopes or trails is prohibited; and
 - 10.2.5.4 Assist the ski resort staff with controlling student access to slopes or trails.
- 10.2.6 At the conclusion of the mandatory lesson:
 - 10.2.6.1 The ski resort instructor will identify the level of ability of the students, and assign appropriate ski or snowboarding slopes or trails; and,
 - 10.2.6.2 Students may begin supervised skiing and snowboarding on the assigned slopes or trails.
- 10.2.7 During the supervised ski time, students must ski in pairs or groups of three or four (3 or 4).
- 10.2.8 The minimum supervision ratio for skiing and snowboarding is one supervisor to 15 students (Grades 4 – 6), 20 students (Grades 7 – 9), 30 students (Grades 10 -12), including at least one (1) supervisor in the ski lodge.
- 10.2.9 Supervision of ski slopes must be carried out by supervising on a constant rotation system by supervisors.
- 10.2.10 All participants in skiing and snowboarding activities must:

- 10.2.10.1 Wear a CSA approved ski helmet; and
- 10.2.10.2 Ski or snowboard only on open runs within the ski area that match the student's level of ability as determined by the parent.
- 10.2.11 Snowboard Terrain Parks are excluded.
- 10.2.12 Use of snowblades, mini-skiing and ski boards are considered as high risk activities and are permitted for grades 7 to 12 students only, and require careful consideration and assessment of the risk factors.

11. Accidents and Emergencies

- 11.1 If an accident occurs during a field trip/excursion, the supervising teachers must:
 - 11.1.1 Assess the situation and, if injuries have occurred, attend to the immediate medical concerns;
 - 11.1.2 Determine whether or not the field trip/excursion will continue based upon all the circumstances;
 - 11.1.3 Notify the Principal or designate at the earliest opportunity, if serious injuries have occurred so that the Principal or designate may inform the parents; and
 - 11.1.4 Complete an Accident Report Form within forty-eight (48) hours of the incident, or as soon as possible upon return to the school, and forward it to the Superintendent or designate.

12. National and International Field Trips

Protocol: School Leadership *requires preauthorization by the Superintendent prior to exploration* of any International Field Trip and subsequent communication with parents or students. **A written proposal must be submitted to the Superintendent a minimum of six months prior to any planned trip.**

Travel requests (i.e., Italy for faith-formation, or North & South America) may be considered only after the following criteria has been applied:

- a. *Has there been exploration to achieve this experience in Canada?*
- b. *Does this experience directly align with Student Learning Outcomes in the curriculum?*
- c. *Is the potential destination considered safe to travel by Canadian Government Travel alert websites?*

12.1 **Guiding Principals** (*Appendix A –Elk Island Catholic Schools National and International Field Trip Guiding Principles*)

In order for a national or international trip to be approved, the following must take place:

- 12.1.1 Adherence to Administrative Procedure 260: All timelines must be met or the trip will not be approved. No promotion of the trip or monies collected prior to the trip receiving preliminary approval a minimum of 6 months prior to the trip starting.
- 12.1.2 Adherence to travel advisories: A trip may be cancelled up to the moment of departure if a travel advisory occurs. All parents will be instructed to purchase travel insurance; Elk Island Catholic Schools will not be help liable for any losses should a trip be cancelled by the Superintendent of Schools.
- 12.1.3 Sunday Mass Attendance: Students will attend Sunday Mass each Sunday that students are on a national or international trip. This trip will not receive preliminary or final approval if this is not part of the itinerary
- 12.1.4 Staff Compensation: Staff will not be in a position to benefit from organizing or participating on a trip. If the travel company pays a stipend to the teacher for organizing a trip, the balance is to be remitted to reducing the fee of the participants. Staff are not to accept free trips or credits from a travel company. A travel company that does not comply will not be approved to host a trip.
- 12.1.5 Staff Involvement: Staff opportunity to organize national and international trips will be equitably shared amongst the staff. It will not be the domain of a small group of teachers.
- 12.1.6 Student Sleeping Arrangement: All students must have their own bed. Students are not permitted to share a bed. Specific sleeping arrangements for all nights must be pre-arranged with the travel company prior to preliminary approval and then re-affirmed prior to receiving final approval.

12.2 National Field Trips are acceptable for grades 7 - 12.

12.3 International Field Trips are only for grades 9 - 12.

12.4 The guideline for adult supervisor/student ratio is one to eight (1-8), with co-ed supervisors if both genders of students are attending the trip; additional supervision is required for special needs students.

- 12.5 All trips require a minimum of two supervisors.
- 12.6 Supervisors are expected to be Division employees of the school community.
- 12.7 All suitable staff must be notified by the Principal of possible international trip(s) at the school; if there are not enough suitable Division employees to fulfill the minimum supervision requirement, the Principal will consult with the Superintendent.
- 12.8 In order to meet the minimum number of required adult supervisors, staff supervisor's expenses are to be paid through the collection of international trip fees.
- 12.9 Non-supervisory adults cannot participate in a field trip.
- 12.10 Travel credits are not to be used for personal or family use; these credits must be turned over to the school to offset the cost of travel for students or to purchase merchandise for student use.
- 12.11 The **Consent for Participation, Risk Acknowledgement, Waiver and Indemnity for National and International Field Trips Form** is to be accompanied by the Canadian Government Travel Advisory.
- 12.12 The Government of Canada strongly recommends that Canadian children carry a consent letter if they are travelling abroad alone, with only one parent/guardian, with friends, or relatives or with a group. Guidelines regarding Consent Letters are provided by the Government of Canada on their website here: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/children/consent-letter>
- 12.13 Government of Canada Recommended Consent Letter for children travelling abroad, and FAQs is available here: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/children/fag>

13. Approval

- 13.1 Written approval for the trip is obtained by the teacher from the Principal prior to any expectations on the part of the students and/or parents that the field trip/excursion will occur. (Please refer to Point 12 for the Protocol for National and International Field Trips.) In seeking this approval, the teacher will complete and submit to the Principal:
 - 13.1.1 A plan that includes all of the elements noted in section 3 of this administrative procedure;
 - 13.1.2 A completed **Field Trip/Excursion Authorization Form**;
 - 13.1.3 A completed **Field Trip/Excursion Planning Checklist**;
- 13.2 Parents are to be advised of the nature of the trip and written permission for the child(ren) to attend is to be provided.

- 13.3 Once the Principal has approved the field trip/excursion based on all the requirements of this Administrative Procedure, if the field trip/excursion is Category 3.0 or 4.0, then the Principal will then submit the **Field Trip/Excursion Authorization Form** to the Superintendent for final approval as appropriate.
- 13.4 Superintendent will review the proposed field trip and may, depending on the type of field trip, grant preliminary approval, which would indicate permission to proceed with the final planning and communication processes or final approval. (Please refer to Point 12 for the Protocol for National and International Field Trips.)
- 13.5 If preliminary approval is granted by the Superintendent, the **Field Trip/Excursion Authorization Form** will be routed back to the Principal for final approval.

TIMELINES

For Consideration, Review and Approval of Field Trip Requests, the timelines as shown below are strictly enforced.

Category 1.0	Day trip – low to moderate risk	3 days
Category 2.0 (a)	Day trip – high risk	1 week
Category 2.0 (b)	Overnight – low to moderate risk	1 month
Category 2.0 (c)	Overnight – high risk	1 month
Category 3.0	National	3 months
Category 4.0	International	6 months (written proposal)

Reference: Section 1, 11, 31, 32, 52, 53, 196, 197, 222 Education Act
 Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
 Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools
 Safety Guidelines for Secondary Inter-School Athletics in Alberta
 Physical Education Safety Guidelines