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FAQs Regarding School Trips

1. What Regulation governs school trips?

Chancellor’s Regulation A-670 sets forth the rules and procedures governing school trips for students in the school system. The regulation provides guidance for planning and executing field trips for students, and outlines the responsibilities of Superintendents, principals and staff. It also clearly establishes defined supervisory ratios and rules for handling emergencies. Please refer to the website attached for the full text of Chancellor’s Regulation A-670: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/381F4607-7841-4D28-B7D5-0F30DDB77DFA/109108/A67081811FINAL.pdf>

2. What is the purpose of a School Trip?

School trips should have an educational purpose or support learning outcomes. A trip that is celebratory in nature (e.g., senior class trip) should only be approved if the students plan on fundraising to participate in the trip. Trips should not be cost-prohibitive and should aim to include as many students as possible. Trips should not be approved if there are not a sufficient number of students interested in the school trip since the purpose of a school trip is for students to engage in an educational trip with their peers. (E.g., A school trip to Europe in which only 3 or 4 students are scheduled to participate generally is not acceptable.)

3. What is considered a DOE Sponsored School Trip?

School trips organized by special programs within the school (e.g., clubs) or trips that are planned by the school are DOE sponsored school trips and therefore must comply with Chancellor’s Regulation A-670. When a trip is sponsored by a parent association or an outside group such as a community based organization that has a relationship to the school, the principal should consult with his or her Senior Field Counsel to determine whether the trip is a DOE trip or whether it is an independently run trip. For example, if a community based organization that works with the school during the day/after school is organizing a trip, to determine whether that trip constitutes a DOE sponsored school trip, the principal should look to the following factors: (a) what is the purpose of the trip, does it support the curriculum/purpose of the school or is it simply a travel opportunity, (b) what involvement does the DOE have in planning the school trip, and (c) are there any DOE staff members chaperoning the trip?

If the trip is an independently run trip, parents must be advised in writing that the DOE is not sponsoring the trip and therefore is not responsible and will not be providing supervision.

4. May DOE Employees Accept Free Lodging, Airfare, or Stipends for a DOE Trip?

Yes, DOE employees may accept free lodging, airfare or stipends from an outside organization or community based organization if the trip is a DOE trip, however, the employee must comply with certain requirements.

The DOE employee must complete the “Travel Related Expenses Paid for by Non-Government Entities” form. Principals must sign the form for school staff and Superintendents must sign the form for Principals. An agenda must be attached to the form and then the form must be sent to the **DOE Ethics Officer for review**. The form should be filled out as much in advance as possible, but at minimum, at least 3 weeks before the trip. Accepting travel and lodging in these circumstances is considered a gift to the City. Please be advised that this form must be filled out in addition to any other forms that are required for travel and all DOE personnel must receive approval from the DOE Ethics Officer before attending the trip. The form is available at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/8670218B-20FF-49E2-BDFF-CE0B8F9D3A94/0/TravelRelatedExp.pdf>

DOE employees may not accept free lodging or airfare or stipends for a non-DOE trip (e.g., a celebratory trip). In these circumstances, travel, lodging, or stipends are considered either compensation and/or a gift to the employee under the New York City Conflicts of Interest Rules, and therefore cannot be accepted. Please contact the DOE’s Ethics Officer for further guidance.

5. How many Chaperones do you need on a School Trip and who may serve as a Chaperone?

All school trips require appropriate supervision as set forth in Chancellor’s Regulation A-670. Principals should designate a licensed teacher, assistant principal, or other supervisor participating in the trip as the individual with overall responsibility for the trip. There must be supervision of students at every stage of a school trip.

Principals must ensure that the ratio of staff and adults to students on a school trip is appropriate given the type of trip, the age of students, and type of activities.

Type of Trip	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Routine Day Trips within NYC ¹	1 staff member + 2 additional adults for up to 30 students. For each additional 10 students, an additional adult is required.	1 staff member + 2 additional adults for up to 30 students. For each additional 15 students, an additional adult is required.	1 staff member + 1 additional adult for up to 30 students For each additional 15 students, an additional adult is required.

¹ If a trip involves swimming please see question number 13 for more information on the number of chaperones needed.

One day out-of-the-city or overnight trips	2 staff members+ 1 adult for up to 30 students. For each additional 10 students, an additional adult is required.	2 staff members+ 1 adult for up to 30 students. For each additional 15 students, an additional adult is required.	2 staff members+ 1 adult for up to 30 students. For each additional 15 students, an additional adult is required.
International Trips		2 staff members + 1 other adult are required for up to 15 students. For each additional 10 students participating, an additional adult is required.	2 staff members +1 other adult are required for up to 15 students. For each additional 10 students participating, an additional adult is required.

All schools trips must have one teacher or supervisor present on the trip. If a trip requires a second staff member, that staff member may be a member of the instructional staff, a paraprofessional, a school aide, a guidance counselor, or a parent coordinator. The other chaperones on the trip must be parents of students attending the trip. The term “parent” means the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s), or any person(s) in a parental or custodial relationship to the student, or the student, if he/she is an emancipated minor or has reached 18 years of age.

The term parent does not include adults who are not in a custodial relationship with the student. For example, a parent’s friend or boyfriend, or a parent’s adult child, or a parent of a student on another school trip may not serve as chaperones on a school trip.

6. Who may come on a School Trip?

As described above, parents may attend a school trip as a chaperone. It is a violation of Chancellor’s Regulation A-670 for relatives of DOE personnel to be involved in or otherwise affiliated with school trips. Thus, a parent may not bring other siblings or family members along on the trip, even if the sibling is an adult. A staff member may not bring his or her spouse or boyfriend/girlfriend, other family members, or child on the school trip. School trips are for students only and staff members/parents who are acting as chaperones.

Additionally, involving relatives may also violate the New York City Conflicts of Interest Law and Chancellor’s Regulation C-110 on Conflicts of Interest. City employees cannot use their city position to benefit themselves or family members. Therefore, as these school trips are often offered at a discounted rate for adults and/or are not otherwise available to the general public, it is a potential conflict for a DOE employee to include a family member on the trip. Violators may be reported to the Special Commission on Investigations for possible conflicts of interest violations.

7. When can Payment be made or Tickets Purchased?

All school trips must be approved in advance by the principal before payment may be made or tickets are purchased. International trips must be approved by the Superintendent. There will be no exceptions to this rule. Trip organizers may not purchase tickets or move ahead with scheduling the trip until they have received explicit approval from the principal or in the case of international trips approval from the Superintendent to move forward. No school should enter into an agreement with a tour company or make any payments for travel until the trip has received approval.

All trip proposals must be submitted well in advance of the anticipated date of the trip. For domestic trips, it is recommended that required information be submitted to the principal 6 weeks in advance of the trip. In cases involving international trips, it is recommended that first round approval information be submitted to the Superintendent 12 weeks in advance and then all required information in round 2 of approval should be submitted at least 6 weeks in advance.

Trips will not be approved by the Principal or Superintendent unless the trip has the correct number of chaperones as described above.

8. What information must a Trip Organizer Submit to a Principal when proposing a DOE School Trip?

First, the trip organizer must describe in detail the purpose of the trip, which must be educational in nature, and the reason for the trip (i.e., is it a celebratory trip, or is it a trip that is sponsored by a club or group within the school) in a document to the principal. The trip organizer must project how many students he or she anticipates will participate in the trip and the number of chaperones who will attend the trip. Principals must determine whether the trip as proposed meets the guidelines for a DOE sponsored school trip (i.e., will the trip include the correct number of chaperones to students and is the trip educational?). Principals should check to see whether the trip will be organized by an outside entity and whether that entity is reputable. Principals should determine whether the trip will be cost prohibitive and therefore will not involve a large number of students.

If after reviewing all the information, the principal determines that the trip should be approved, then the trip organizer should submit a Trip Plan in accordance with Chancellor's Regulation A-670. See Attachment 1 to Chancellor's Regulation A-670. That information should be reviewed by the Principal to determine whether there will be adequate supervision on the trip and whether proper transportation will be used to and from the trip. The trip organizer and Principal must also ensure that all parents sign the parent consent form as attached to Chancellor's Regulation A-670. Furthermore, the trip organizer and Principal must ensure that all students sign the student declaration form as attached to the regulation.

9. What information must a Trip Organizer Submit to the Principal and Superintendent when proposing an International Trip?

There are two steps that trip organizers must be aware of when proposing an international trip.

I. Approval from Principal

- a. Similar to domestic trips, international trip organizers must describe in detail the purpose of the international trip, which must be educational in nature, and the reason for the trip (i.e., is it a celebratory trip, or is it a trip that is sponsored by a club or group within the school). Trip organizers must project how many students they anticipate will participate in the trip.
- b. Principals must determine whether the trip as proposed meets the guidelines for a DOE sponsored school trip. Principals should check to see whether the trip will be organized by an outside entity and whether that entity is reputable. Principals should determine whether the trip will be cost prohibitive and therefore will not involve a large number of students.
- c. Principals should check to see whether there are any travel advisories in place regarding the destination country.
- d. If, after reviewing all the information, the principal determines the international trip should take place, the principal must submit the proposal to the Superintendent for approval well in advance of the trip.
- e. Trip organizers may not move ahead with planning the trip until the trip receives **final approval** from the Superintendent. Therefore no tickets may be purchased at this point, nor may the school enter into a contract with any outside entity for the purpose of going on this trip until the Superintendent's approval is received.

II. First Round Approval from the Superintendent

- a. Principals must submit a detailed trip itinerary to the Superintendent, along with a statement explaining the educational purpose of the trip, the number of students who are likely to participate in the trip, and the cost of the trip and any fundraising ideas associated with the trip.
- b. Superintendents should review the proposal to determine whether the international trip meets the guidelines of Chancellor's Regulation A-670. Among the questions that should be asked when considering the proposal:
 - i. Why are students traveling to the destination country? Is it educational or celebratory in nature?
 - ii. Is the trip cost-prohibitive and therefore will only a small number of students participate in the trip?
 - iii. Will the students fundraise in order to participate in the trip?
 - iv. How many students are likely to attend the trip?
 - v. Who will be organizing the trip? Outside entity? Is it reputable?
- c. Senior Field Counsel is available to consult with the Superintendent about the proposal.

III. Second Round Approval from the Superintendent

- a. Once a school receives first round approval from the Superintendent, the school may begin to plan the international trip and distribute information regarding the trip to students.
- b. The trip organizer should complete the Trip Plan which is attached to Chancellor's Regulation A-670. Principals should review the Trip Plan to ensure it is complete and that the trip meets the regulation's guidelines.
- c. Principals must check the following information:
 - i. Check to see whether an appropriate number of students are anticipated to participate in the trip. If not, the trip should be cancelled.
 - ii. Check to see whether there are an appropriate number of chaperones. Refer to section above on chaperones to determine whether the criteria has been met. If there are not enough chaperones, immediate steps must be taken to find additional chaperones.² The principal must ensure that at least one of the staff members accompanying the students on an international trip carries a phone with international service.
 - iii. Check all passports for students attending the trip to ensure that students' passport do not expire before the trip or during the trip. Check whether students need visas to enter the country, including whether non-US citizen students need visas. If a student does not have the appropriate visa, the student cannot participate.³
 - iv. Check for trip advisories on the U.S. State Department's website and Center for Disease Control's website prior to submitting a proposal. If there is an advisory and you choose to go forward with the proposal, please advise parents that there is an advisory in place. Parents must sign a consent form agreeing to allow their child to participate in the trip despite the travel advisory.
 - v. Check if any immunizations are required in the country where students will be traveling. If immunizations are required, students must sign a consent form indicating that they have received the required immunizations. Senior Field Counsel will help with revising the consent form.
- d. The following information must be submitted to the Superintendent:
 - i. Information about each student participating in the trip and signed permission forms.
 - ii. Trip itinerary including all transportation detail.

² As explained in Question 16, waivers will only be granted in exigent circumstances.

³ Some countries have more stringent rules that require that a passport not expire within 3 months of the time of travel. Check each country's website for further information.

- iii. An explanation of who each chaperone is. (i.e. a teacher, parent, staff).
- iv. Copy of each travelers' passport and any necessary visas.
- v. Insurance information including health insurance for each participant per Chancellor's Regulation A-670 (this must be international insurance valid in the countries students are visiting).
- vi. International phone numbers of chaperones (in case of emergency).
- vii. Emergency contact sheet for all students and chaperones.
- viii. Letter to parents indicating whether or not travel advisories are in effect. If an advisory is in effect, each parent must sign the letter sent by the principal indicating they are aware of the advisory and that they are permitting their child to travel despite the advisory warning. Each student's signed letter must be included in the binder submitted.
- ix. Signed declarations from all adult chaperones indicating that they have read and are familiar with A-670 and that they will follow all school rules and Chancellor's Regulations while on the trip including no alcohol consumption; this includes parent participants.
- x. Letters to families explaining the purpose of the trip as well as information from parent meetings including sign in sheets, agendas, and other materials/information distributed to parents.
- xi. Signed consent forms per regulation.

10. What steps must be taken when School Requests Approval for an International Homestay?

Although Chancellor's Regulation A-670 does not specifically include reference to homestay programs, more and more schools are participating in homestay programs. A superintendent may permit a homestay program, but the principal of the school participating in the homestay must advise parents that given the nature of a homestay program, supervision of the students will be limited. Principals/Superintendents should speak to their Senior Field Counsel about the homestay because the permission slips for such a trip must be adjusted to reflect the trip and homestay.

As described above, homestay programs require the same number of chaperones as other DOE school trips. All chaperones must stay in the same city as the students who are participating in the homestay and chaperones should not travel outside of the local city or town where the students are located for the homestay, unless it is a group trip with all students involved. Chaperones must be present and available for all students who participate in the homestay program. The principal must ensure that at least one of staff members accompanying students on an international trip carries a phone with international service. That staff member should distribute contact information to students prior to leaving for the homestay so that students will be able to easily contact him or her should there be a problem. Principals should advise chaperones on a homestay trip to check in frequently with all students.

Each principal must send the superintendent a detailed letter about how the relationship with the host school has been established, as well as how the host families have been vetted. The information submitted to the Superintendent must also include a list of host families, contact information for each host family, and names of students staying with the host family. The school should also submit all of the information that is described above in the international school trips section.

11. What if a School Trip involves more than One School?

Schools may organize a trip that involves more than one school, and may combine chaperones from both schools to meet the ratios of appropriate chaperones to students per Chancellor's Regulation A-670, but in such cases parents must be notified and there must be adequate supervision provided at all times.

12. What types of Activities are permitted on School Trips?

If a school trip involves activities that require protective gear, students must wear it. For example, students who go horseback riding, skiing, biking, or kayaking must wear helmets. Students who participate in water activities must wear a life jacket. Where a trip involves activities with inherent risks (e.g., swimming, horseback riding, skiing, ice skating, use of physical fitness equipment) the principal/designee must ensure that there is appropriate adult supervision while the student engages in the activity.

Consent forms must identify activities with inherent risks (e.g., swimming, horseback riding, ice skating, use of physical fitness equipment) that students will engage in on the trip and must contain specific requests for parent permission to engage in those activities. 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.

13. What if a School Trip Involves Swimming?

Prior to approving a trip in which swimming will be involved, the principal/designee must ensure that a lifeguard will be on duty at all times students are permitted to swim. No swimming may be permitted unless there is a lifeguard on duty.

Additional Requirements for Swimming and Water Based Activities

a. Ratio of Staff to Students for Swimming and Water Based Activities

If students will be swimming or will participate in water based activities (e.g., rowing, kayaking) the following ratios must be used:

1. For elementary and middle school students, at least two (2) staff members and two (2) adults are required for up to thirty (30) students.
2. For high school students, at least two (2) staff members and two (2) adults are required for up to thirty (30) students.
3. With respect to the staff member(s) noted above, one **must be a teacher or supervisor**. The other staff member may be a member of the instructional staff (e.g., teacher, dean, guidance counselor, social worker)

or a paraprofessional or school aide.

4. The other two (2) adults noted above may be parent volunteers or members of the instructional staff (e.g., teacher, dean, guidance counselor, social worker) or paraprofessionals or school aides.

5. At the elementary level, for each additional ten (10) students, two adults are required. At the middle and high school levels, for each additional fifteen (15) students, two additional adults are required.

b. Students may only be permitted to swim when a lifeguard is on duty. The lifeguard must be on duty the entire time that students are swimming.

c. Students who participate in water based activities other than swimming such as kayaking, tubing or rowing must wear a lifejacket at all times.

d. For international trips, the principal/designee must ensure that there is adult supervision appropriate to the activities in which the students engage.

14. What types of transportation may a School use?

Schools may use any of the following means of transportation:

1. Public transit systems (e.g., subways, buses);

2. Registered commercial airlines;

3. Intercity buses or transit systems (e.g., Amtrak, Greyhound); and/or

4. Private authorized buses, including school buses, as set forth below:

a. Any vehicle utilized to transport students must comply with all federal, state, city, and Department of Education 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 Office of Pupil Transportation must be contacted to obtain a list of companies which provide service in compliance with these standards.

b. To request a bus for a school trip from the Office of Pupil Transportation, please contact the Field Trip Unit at 718-784-3313. This unit sends information to all schools prior to the start of each school year about the procedures for obtaining buses for trips. Please refer to these procedures when requesting bus service from the Office of Pupil Transportation.

c. Students may not be transported to or from the trip site on an unauthorized or private vehicle.

15. When are yellow school buses mandated for DOE school Trips?

The use of yellow school buses is absolutely mandated only when a particular leg of the trip begins and/or ends within New York City. If a particular leg of a school trip begins and/or ends in a remote location, then a yellow school bus is preferred, but not mandatory, especially if a yellow school bus is not readily available or would add substantially and unnecessarily to the cost of the trip.

For instance, if a school organizes a trip that involves flying to another city and the trip will include lodging at a national chain hotel that provides courtesy van/bus service to and from airports as part of the room rate package, then it is acceptable to use the courtesy van/bus for

pupil transportation from the airport. But, the school must obtain information about the qualifications and licensing requirements that the hotel has for its drivers (and must ask to see the vehicle operator's driver's license when reaching the vehicle) and the automobile liability insurance that the hotel maintains for its vehicles. If the information provided is unacceptable, the school must arrange for a local school bus company in the region of the airport to provide transportation to and from the hotel and to other destinations.

Schools should use yellow school buses to travel to and from NYC airports.

16. When will the DOE issue a Waiver in regards to Chancellor's Regulation A-670

All schools must follow protocol in Chancellor's Regulation A-670 when organizing a trip. Waivers will be issued only if there are extenuating circumstances.

17. Who to Contact When You Have Questions?

In planning a domestic trip, questions should be directed to your Principal first, and then your Senior Field Counsel. Questions about international trips should be directed to the Superintendent, and then your Senior Field Counsel. International Trips require advance approval from the Superintendent. As noted above tickets should not be purchased for international trips until your Superintendent has given preliminary approval for the trip. All schools should purchase trip insurance for international trips or domestic trips that include air travel.