

# Planning a Successful Field Trip

## ...a few suggestions from your local museum educators

Prepared by: [Lower Mainland Museum Educators](#)

Congratulations on your decision to take your students on a field trip. Field trips are a wealth of learning opportunities just waiting for you and your students.

### Finding the perfect field trip

- Teachers are often the best source of information about great field trips. Talk to colleagues at school, send out an email through your district internal email or ask your Provincial Specialist Associations for tips on field trips to meet your students' needs.
- Most museums send out promotional materials to schools - it might take a bit of sleuthing on your part to find out whose desk at school the information ends up on.
- Community events in your area might make excellent field trips for your class. Contact the event organizers to discuss whether they can accommodate a class in their program.
- Check out the web for good resources. Sites such as [www.bcfieldtrips.ca](http://www.bcfieldtrips.ca) provide current information about field trips through a searchable database.
- Many field trip destinations align their programs with specific Provincial prescribed learning outcomes. This information is probably available on the destination's website or in their marketing materials.
- Can't find a program to meet your needs? Talk to the educator at a field trip destination you would like to visit. They may be able to develop a program to meet your specific needs.
- Some programs are ideally suited to introduce a unit while others may be a great way to conclude a unit. Consider the timing of your field trip with the teaching of your unit.

### Booking your field trip

- Book your program early to avoid disappointment.
- When you book your program have the following information ready:
  - number of students and grade
  - specific program or experience you want to participate in
  - preferred date and time and a couple of optional dates
  - unique learning needs of your class - do your students with specific needs, are support staff coming, etc. Be prepared to reiterate this information with staff on the day of your field trip.
- When booking get the following information:
  - total cost of field trip and when payment is expected
  - number of parent chaperones that are required and cost, if any, for parent chaperones
  - cancellation policy
  - other activities that may be of interest to your students in the area
  - confirmation of program date and arrival time (which might be different than program start time)
- What about...
  - food - is there time during the field trip for students to have a snack and/or lunch? Is there a place to eat? Is any food available for purchase?
  - younger siblings - can they attend the field trip?
  - specific clothing required for the field trip - is this an outside experience where students will need to be dressed for weather? Is the location colder than your school's site (eg. if your school is inland and your field trip destination is by the water it will probably be colder)?
  - does the site have a sample letter describing the details of the field trip you can use to send home to parents?

## Planning the important details

The success of the field trip for you and your students will rely, in part, in having all the nitty gritty details addressed before you leave your school. When you are planning your field trip consider the following:

- Many field trip venues allow teachers to preview their site for free. Inquire while you are booking.
- Permission slips and/or waivers - check with your school administration about what is required. Leave lots of time as some districts may require as much as 21 days written notice
- Required supervision - check your school district guidelines for the type of trip you are considering. Also check with the field trip site you plan to visit as they may have recommendations for supervision.
- Transportation - parent drivers, chartered school buses, public transportation or walking may all be options for your field trip (and the form of transportation you choose could be part of the learning experience for your students). Make sure you check district and school policies regarding parent drivers. Inquire about parking at your field trip site and include any costs in your total for the field trip. Bring a map with directions from your school to the field trip site, with copies for parent drivers, or one for the bus driver. If you plan to charter a bus make sure you book it well in advance.
- Payment - most field trip sites would prefer payment as one lump sum (not 30 payments handed over by children). Please organise the payment before you leave school.
- Financial support for field trips - funds to help cover program and transportation costs may be available from a number of different sources. Check with your local PAC and school administration. Other sources for information about funding include Daytrippers ([www.daytrippers.ca](http://www.daytrippers.ca)) and BC Field Trips ([www.bcfieldtrips.ca](http://www.bcfieldtrips.ca)). Most field trip venues are non-profit organisations and rely on program fees to cover their costs. They may have some funds available to support visits by 'inner city' schools.
- Chaperone expectations - parent chaperones play a vital role in the success of the field trip. Brief them on how you need them to help during the field trip. This could include supervising a group of students, helping students to access components of the experience (for example if you have younger students parent chaperones can help by reading exhibit text), and enjoying the experience with them.
- Planning for groups - the program may require your class to split into smaller groups. Please make sure you have students in groups that they will work well in.
- Planning for "Murphy" - If you are going by transit or charter bus it might be useful to have an 'exit strategy' for a student who is either overwhelmed by the experience, gets sick, falls in a mud puddle, etc. Back up plans could include; a parent driver meets the group at the destination and you now have a car if a child needs to be returned to school or designate a parent or someone at school to carry a cell phone - this person can come and help if extra hands, or a driver are needed.

## Preparing your students

- Brief your students before you leave school. This could include showing them pictures of the field trip destination to help familiarize them with a new setting. Check the website of your field trip destination for pictures.
- Make sure they understand why they are going on the field trip - is it an introduction to a new unit, an opportunity to experience something first hand, a chance to ask questions of a specialist, an opportunity to practice a skill?
- Review expectations for behaviour.
- Your field trip destination may have pre-visit activities for you to use in your classroom. Ideally these activities will suite a variety of learning styles and activities to prepare students for a positive and meaningful

experience e.g PE games, science activities, stories, newspaper articles. Check their website or inquire while booking.

- Nametags - nametags will help staff at the field trip destination interact with your students. Either prepare nametags for your students or have them make their own.
- Not all of your students may adapt well to a field trip experience. Be prepared to provide these students with extra support and guidance to ensure they have a successful experience.

### **Continuing the learning back in class**

- Your field trip destination may have a post visit package of activities for you to use as follow up to the field trip. Check during booking or look at their website.
- Museum staff love to receive letters and/or drawings of your students' experiences. Staff use these to help evaluate the success of programs and often use them to show sponsors/donors of the impact of the experience on students.
- At the very least provide your students some time in class to de-brief about the field trip - what did they enjoy the most, what surprised them, what they wish to learn more about, ...