

# MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## Policy # 546: STUDY-TRAVEL PROGRAMS

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### I. PURPOSE

The School Board of the Minnetonka Public Schools believes that study-travel programs add value to learning. The purpose of Study-Travel programs is to provide opportunities for the teacher to enrich and extend the learning experiences of students beyond those that can be provided through regular classroom activities. They can be valuable means for motivating, increasing understanding, and providing students with a way to initiate new learning or culminate unit(s) of instruction.

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction for staff members, students, and families who participate in a Study-Travel Program trip. The intent is to encourage study-travel and provide structures that will make for a safe and educational experience. Staff members organizing the trip, students who are participating in the experience, families who are supporting the study-travel trip, and all School District personnel need to know the rights, responsibilities, requirements, and the consequences of participation.

### II. POLICY STATEMENT

The Board encourages and supports the interest in domestic and international study-travel programs that include, but are not limited to, academics, athletics, music, the arts and other activities. Because the experiential learning achieved through study-travel programs cannot be achieved through reading, electronic media, or classroom activities and discussions alone, it is the policy of the Board to authorize certain school-sponsored study-travel trips as a complement to the District's E-12 curriculum.

The District expects that each school-sponsored trip is a properly planned, well organized, and carefully supervised educational experience. To meet this high standard, requests for all student travel must be submitted to and tentatively approved by the building Principal, or designee, and by the Superintendent, or designee, in concept before involving students and parents/guardians in planning and implementation. Requests for approval in concept should be made by submitting the Student Travel Preliminary Concept Form. The Superintendent, or designee, will either (1) give tentative approval so that the trip can be planned in full to meet all other timelines specified in this policy and accompanying regulations, (2) return the request for revision, or (3) deny the request.

The Preliminary Concept Form requires that those planning Study Travel experiences must address issues including but not limited to chaperone expectations, cost projections and fundraising plans, educational objectives, required planning meeting dates for students and

chaperones, and potential safety and/or health-related concerns. The Trip Confirmation and Itinerary Form requires that those planning Study Travel experiences must provide information that includes but is not limited to final itinerary details, insurance coverage, student and chaperone rosters, social media and cell communication strategies, and assurances that all relevant policies have been reviewed.

The Board believes that students, parents, and the community perceive any student travel activity connected with a school to be school-sponsored. Therefore, this policy shall cover any student travel that results from District/school promotion of the activity through distribution of information materials, coordination of arrangements by District/school personnel, receipt of participation fees, collection of permission slips, and/or arrangements for chaperones.

This policy covers all E-12 Study-Travel Trips including Minnetonka Community Education, the Elementary Schools, Middle Schools, and High School.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Study-Travel Program—any District initiated and sponsored trip for E-12 students which is a supplement to the learning and takes students away from home overnight.
- B. Field Trip—these are available to all students and are visits to locations beyond the school’s property that may involve an overnight stay for the purpose of providing students with educational experiences otherwise unavailable to them. There are two kinds of field trips:
  - 1. Regular Field Trip—a field trip that is integral to a course of study, requires student attendance, is funded by the District, and may be graded.
  - 2. Supplementary Field Trip—a field trip that is not integral to a course of study, for which student attendance is voluntary, and no grades will be received. Parents/guardians may be asked for a financial contribution to support a supplementary field trip.
- C. School-sponsored travel—any school-initiated or District-initiated local, regional, national, and international trip where primary consideration has been given to the educational value as well as the safety and welfare of the students involved. This includes trips that occur within the school day, on weekends, over the summer, or trips that require overnight stay.
- D. Non-school-sponsored travel—any trip where employees or community members enter into contracts or agreements without formal District approval. Any trip not approved by the District is considered a private venture. The District shall not be a co-sponsor of any such trip.

#### **IV. PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL-SPONSORED TRAVEL**

- A. All Study-Travel Program trips are optional for students.
- B. Study-Travel Program trips and all related planning should take place during time outside of class hours.
- C. Study-Travel Program trips should occur when school is not in session (i.e. Spring Break or Summer) and should minimally disrupt the regular classroom day.
- D. All adults accompanying the trip are responsible for student safety and behavior from departure until return.
- E. Travel arrangements for school-sponsored trips will be made by school personnel. Travel outside the five-state region (MN, WI, IA, SD, ND) will be arranged through bonded travel agencies if the services of the School District's contracted carrier are not used.
- F. The District reserves the right to cancel or postpone a trip and will not be responsible for non-refunded deposits or other expenses that have been incurred.
- G. After trip concept approval by the Principal, or designee, and Superintendent, or designee, school personnel requesting approval for student travel will complete the Student Travel Request Form for approval by the building principal or supervisor.
- H. Co-curricular activities and competitions for which school groups qualify are generally exempted from these guidelines. That is because the time and location are established by the governing body of the sponsoring organization. It is not within this policy to prevent students from participating even in the case when those activities or competitions occur when school is in session.
- I. The District will communicate procedural expectations for the planning and implementation of all Study-Travel Programs and will submit the necessary documentation for Board approval.
- J. In cases where students will participate in home-stay arrangements with hosting groups, the District will secure an assurance from host group leaders that appropriate measures have been taken to guarantee student safety and well being. Procedures that identify alternative accommodations will be included in situations where the home-stay arrangements do not meet District standards.

## **V. DURING THE TRAVEL**

### **A. Code of Conduct**

1. All District policies will be in effect for Study-Travel Program and Field Trip students and chaperones, including but not limited to drug and alcohol policies.
2. International Study-Travel Programs must register with the U.S. Embassy and must communicate to participants the consequences for those who violate foreign drug and alcohol laws.

### **B. Emergency Procedures**

1. All Study-Travel Programs will submit anticipated health/safety concerns as well as detailed emergency procedures and protocols in an effort to ensure student safety.
2. All Study-Travel Programs will identify a communications plan that includes electronic media communication in an effort to relay information to parents/guardians in the most effective and efficient manner.

## **VI. CANCELLATION POLICY**

- A. Cancellation of trips may occur due to weather, safety, world events, or local school need. Trips will be cancelled only under circumstances where school authorities believe it is reasonably cautious and prudent to do so in order to ensure the safety of students and staff or to ensure the effective operation of the local school. In such cases, every effort will be made to provide as much advance notice as possible.
- B. The District is not responsible for financial losses to students and parents due to cancellation of trips.
- C. The authority to cancel trips rests with the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

## **VII. NON-SCHOOL-SPONSORED TRAVEL**

- A. Non-school-sponsored travel: In an effort to emphasize that non-school-sponsored travel is not supported by the District, the following will be broadly communicated when local organizations are engaged in non-school-sponsored travel:
1. All materials and communications must state that the trip is not school-sponsored
  2. No meetings or communication regarding the trip may be held on District property
  3. Organizations responsible for non-school-sponsored travel will not be able to utilize District communication tools

*Approved: November 15, 2007*

*Reviewed: November 17, 2016; December 15, 2016; January 19, 2017*

*Approved: February 2, 2017*