

REGULATION MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: EEA-RA, EIB-RA, EIC-RA, EIF-RA, EJB-RA, GCA-RA, IPD, IRB-RA, JHC, JHC-RA, JPC-RA
Responsible Office: Deputy Superintendent of School Support and Improvement

Travel-Study Programs, Field Trips, and Student Organization Trips

I. PURPOSE

To establish the requirements for field trips, student organization trips, and travel-study programs sponsored by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS); and to publish procedures for planning, obtaining approval for, and implementing approved trips

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. A *Chaperone*, for the purposes of this regulation, is a volunteer who accompanies a trip to assist staff in providing supervision for students. Chaperones are subject to requirements for volunteers as set forth in MCPS Regulation IRB-RA, *Volunteers in Schools*, and related guidance.
- B. A *Field Trip* is a school-sponsored activity that is directly related to the instructional program. A field trip may be an overnight trip.
- C. *School-sponsored* means any activity which has a staff member assigned as an agent of the school, and has been approved by the principal and/or an appropriate associate superintendent in the Office of School Support and Improvement (OSSI).
- D. A *Student Organization Trip* is an activity which provides extended opportunities related to a school-sponsored student organization. Participation is usually limited to members of the organization or club. Student organization trips should be scheduled during non-instructional hours or days when classes are not in session.
- E. A *Travel-Study Program* is an activity which combines instruction and travel for an extended period of time. Some programs include a specific course of study to be completed, while others place emphasis upon participation in an arts, cultural, athletic, or other cocurricular or extracurricular activity. Participating students may

be from different grade levels or classes. Travel-study trips should be scheduled for days when classes are not in session.

- F. A *Trip*, for the purposes of this regulation, is a school-sponsored field trip, student organization trip, or travel-study program, as defined above.

III. PROCEDURES

A. GUIDELINES FOR ALL TRIPS

In order to be approved, trip plans must address and meet the following guidelines:

1. The objectives of the trip must be specifically related to the instructional program or to a regularly scheduled school-sponsored extracurricular activity.
2. The trip will not significantly adversely disrupt the overall learning environment of the school.
3. Individual student grades, eligibility, or course requirements will not be adversely affected by participating in a trip.
4. Students participating in a trip during school hours are permitted and expected to make up any school work missed, and the student's absence is recorded as "excused."
5. Appropriate educational experiences will be provided for those students who do not participate in a trip.
6. If a trip is integral to the curriculum and the instructional program, no student may be denied participation for financial reasons. Schools must provide financial options to enable maximum participation by all interested and eligible students regardless of their economic circumstances.
7. The proposed trip is feasible within the time allotted.
8. If possible, there should be a preview visit by the teacher or another staff member unless the trip has been experienced previously.
9. Teachers not participating in a trip, who have regularly scheduled activities for students for whom the trip is planned, are informed of the proposed plans.

10. School staff must provide orientation to chaperones regarding the following:
 - a) All chaperones must complete the MCPS online Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect volunteer training, provided on the MCPS website in English and the languages most requested by MCPS students and parents/guardians, as set forth in MCPS Regulation IRB-RA, *Volunteers in Schools*.
 - b) Criminal background checks, including fingerprinting, are required for chaperones for –
 - (1) overnight trips,
 - (2) trips that extend beyond 7:00 p.m. in the evening (e.g. out of area, out of state), and/or
 - (3) trips that require OSSI approval, as determined by OSSI.
 - c) Chaperones' children may not accompany their parents/guardians if they are not otherwise students for whom the trip was designed.
11. Chaperones should be assigned based on the age and number of students, location, and type of activity.
12. A plan must be developed for administering medication or implementing an Individual Health Care Plan for any student for whom medication or other care are essential during the trip, as set forth in MCPS Regulation EJB-RA, *Emergency Care and First Aid in Schools*, and MCPS Regulation JPC-RA, *Administration of Medication to Students*.
13. School staff members are responsible for the following:
 - a) Setting behavior expectations and communicating these expectations and the consequences for failure to meet them to students, chaperones, and parents/guardians prior to the trip
 - b) Emphasizing responsible student behavior during the trip and ensuring appropriate adult supervision at all times
 - c) Carrying a list of the names of students and chaperones participating and their emergency information and medical information as

appropriate, and submitting a copy of the list to the principal prior to the field trip

- d) Adhering to the itinerary approved for the field trip, as appropriate
- e) Notifying the principal of any situation which will require a change in plan
- f) Reporting incidents that impact the health, safety, and security of trip participants (e.g., a student missing from the group or an accident involving any participant) according to MCPS Regulation COB-RA, *Incident Reporting*, and established procedures.

14. The principal is responsible for the following:

- a) Signing any contractual agreement with a commercial carrier (see III.F. below) and/or any other service provider, according to procedures developed by the Department of Materials Management
- b) Reviewing documentation provided to participants and their parents/guardians
- c) Overseeing appropriate orientation for participants, parents/guardians, chaperones, and staff
- d) Obtaining and retaining on file all appropriate written parent/guardian permission forms for students to participate in the trip

15. Parents/guardians are provided with the following information in writing, as appropriate for the trip:

- a) objectives of the trip,
- b) the itinerary,
- c) the standards of conduct established for the trip, the responsibilities students assume by participating in the trip, and consequences for failure to meet behavioral expectations,
- d) transportation arrangements, including drop-off and pick-up locations, departure time, and approximate time of return,

- e) appropriate permission forms,
- f) any special equipment and clothing needed, as appropriate, and
- g) costs included in the basic fee (e.g., transportation, admission fees, meals, and accommodations, as appropriate) and alternative payment options as appropriate, as well as any expenses not included in the basic fee (e.g., costs of a personal nature),
- h) arrangements for coping with illness, accidents, or other emergencies, and
- i) information regarding cancellation procedures, as outlined in section III.J of this regulation.

B. APPROVAL

Approval procedures vary according to the distance traveled, and whether the trip occurs during or beyond the instructional day, or as otherwise specified in OSSI procedures.

1. Approval, according to procedures set forth in III.E., by the appropriate associate superintendent in OSSI is required for –
 - a) extended-day trips (for which the departure time is before the normal school start time and/or the return time is after the normal dismissal time),
 - b) overnight trips, and
 - c) trips outside of the Washington metropolitan area (beyond a 50-mile radius of Carver Educational Services Center).
2. Approval by OSSI is not required for trips –
 - a) during the instructional day, and
 - b) within the Washington metropolitan area (within a 50-mile radius of Carver Educational Services Center).

Such trips are approved by the principal.

3. The principal is responsible for providing a monthly summary to OSSI of all pending trips in accordance with procedures established by OSSI.

C. PROCEDURES FOR A FIELD TRIP

1. Plans for field trips are developed by staff and students, when appropriate, according to the guidelines in section III.A above and submitted to the principal for approval.
2. A field trip must be approved according to procedures established by OSSI before staff members may –
 - a) make contractual commitments,
 - b) schedule orientation sessions involving students and their parents/guardians, as appropriate, and
 - c) distribute and collect permissions forms and trip fees.

D. PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL-SPONSORED STUDENT ORGANIZATION TRIPS AND TRAVEL-STUDY PROGRAMS

Plans for school-sponsored student organization trips and travel-study programs are cooperatively developed by staff and students, when appropriate. The preliminary plan must address and meet trip guidelines set forth in section III.A.

1. The principal is responsible for reviewing this preliminary plan. If the principal approves the preliminary plan, the staff and students, in cooperation with parents/guardians, jointly develop and prepare a detailed written proposal for further review as described in section III.E below.
2. A student organization trip or travel-study program must be approved according to procedures established by OSSI before staff members may–
 - a) make contractual commitments,
 - b) schedule orientation sessions involving students and their parents/guardians, as appropriate, and
 - c) distribute and collect permissions forms and trip fees.

E. CONTENT OF A PROPOSAL FOR A SCHOOL-SPONSORED STUDENT ORGANIZATION TRIP OR TRAVEL-STUDY PROGRAM

1. A proposal jointly developed by staff and students, in cooperation with parents/guardians, should address the guidelines in section III.A. Depending on the complexity, length, and distance of the trip, additional details should be provided to fully address the following:
 - a) A statement of the objectives of the student organization trip or travel-study program and an outline of anticipated educational experiences and/or of the course of study to be followed
 - b) The detailed itinerary, which includes departure time and location, travel schedule, and expected return time and location
 - c) An itemized statement of costs included in the trip fee, including transportation, meals, and accommodations, as appropriate, with evidence that the fees charged are competitive for the services provided,
 - d) A statement of any expenses not included in the basic costs, such as costs of a personal nature and any trip insurance obtained privately.
 - e) Procedures for maintaining financial records for purposes of auditing
 - f) The names of qualified individuals who will serve as chaperones
 - g) The plan for appropriate adult supervision at all times
 - h) Identification of a travel agency, as appropriate, and evidence that the agency–
 - (1) has experience in handling school groups,
 - (2) can provide proof of satisfactory service,
 - (3) can provide customer references (individuals who have used the service for similar group programs),
 - (4) has quoted a fee which is competitive for services provided, and

- (5) has well-defined procedures for handling personal emergencies of the participants.
2. The fully developed proposal, with supporting data, is submitted to the principal for review and approval, prior to submitting to OSSI. The proposal must demonstrate that –
 - a) guidelines in section III.A are addressed, and
 - b) every effort has been made to provide a learning experience that is aligned with or enhances the instructional program,
 - c) all reasonable provisions are made for the safety of the participants, and
 - d) no student will be excluded from participating in the activity on the basis of any individual’s actual or perceived personal characteristics.
3. The principal submits proposals that meet these requirements to OSSI, along with the principal’s recommendation, MCPS Form 210-4, *Approval for Extended Day, Out-of-Area, and Overnight Field Trips*, and any additional supporting documentation. These materials must be submitted to OSSI a minimum of four weeks in advance of the scheduled departure date and prior to parent/guardian notification of and the collection of any payments for the proposed trip.
4. The appropriate associate superintendent in OSSI is responsible for reviewing the proposal, notifying the principal of the decision to approve or disapprove, maintaining a file of approved proposals, and approving professional leave for participating staff members when appropriate.
5. Subsequent to approval from OSSI, school staff may proceed with –
 - a) scheduling orientation sessions involving students and their parents/guardians, as appropriate, and
 - b) distributing and collecting permission forms and trip fees.

F. TRANSPORTATION

Once the trip is approved, school staff arrange for transportation as follows:

1. MCPS buses
 - a) MCPS transportation should be utilized where available and economically feasible, as set forth in MCPS Regulation EEA-RA, *Transportation of Students*.
 - b) When transportation is provided by MCPS, all students are transported as a group, and individual students are not permitted to drive or ride in a privately owned vehicle, except under unusual circumstances approved in advance, in writing, by the principal/designee.
 - c) Parents/guardians must sign MCPS Form 555-6, *Parent/Guardian Approval for Trips MCPS Transportation is Provided*.
2. Commercial carriers and public transportation
 - a) When commercial carriers are used, only those approved by the Office of the Chief Operating Officer may be utilized.
 - b) When public transportation is required, only a government approved carrier with a certificate of insurance may be utilized.
 - c) When transportation is provided by a commercial carrier or public transportation, all students are transported as a group, and individual students are not permitted to drive or ride in a privately owned vehicle, except under unusual circumstances approved in advance, in writing, by the principal/designee.
 - d) MCPS Form 560-31, *Parent/Guardian Approval for Trips MCPS Transportation is Not Provided*, must be completed for each student.
3. Privately-owned vehicles
 - a) If MCPS buses, commercial carriers, or public transportation cannot be arranged, privately-owned vehicles may be used with approval from the principal.
 - b) MCPS Form 560-31, *Parent/Guardian Approval for Trips MCPS Transportation is Not Provided*, must be completed for each student. Students who have reached the age of majority (eligible students) may authorize their own participation.

- c) All designated private drivers will observe the following safety rules and requirements. These rules will be distributed to the drivers and will be followed by them or excess coverage shall not be in force:
 - (1) Every driver and passenger must use safety belts
 - (2) The driver must hold a valid driver's license and the vehicle must be insured
 - (3) Approval will only be given for travel to the trip site and back to the school or home as specified on Form 560-31.
- d) Private vehicles must be driven by designated adults over 21 years of age, except as provided below.
- e) If transportation with a designated adult driver over 21 cannot be arranged, it is permissible to utilize student transportation under the following conditions:
 - (1) Student drivers must meet all the requirements above.
 - (2) The owner of the motor vehicle must provide written consent and proof of insurance. When the student owns the car, consent of the driver's parent/guardian is still required.
 - (3) Parents/guardians of student passengers must provide written consent for their student to ride with a driver under the age of 21, and written consent shall likewise be obtained and retained on file. Eligible students may authorize themselves as passengers.
- f) Drivers of private vehicles should be advised that their own insurance coverage is primary.
- g) Teachers will not be required to drive students.
 - (1) However, MCPS staff may do so voluntarily with the advance approval of the principal/designee or immediate supervisor.
 - (2) Staff will not transport a student in a personal vehicle without written permission from a parent/guardian and a

school administrator, and, if possible, a second adult will accompany the driver and the student.

- (3) MCPS staff will be compensated at the rate per mile (specified in the negotiated agreement) for all driving done in their own automobiles.

G. INSURANCE

1. Liability insurance — Any insurance or indemnification provisions in contracts with venues to which trips are planned need to be reviewed by the MCPS risk management specialist, Benefits Strategy and Vendor Relations.
2. Health insurance
 - a) Students are not required to have health insurance to participate in a trip.
 - b) Optional student accident insurance through MCPS is only available to students at the beginning of the school year or upon enrollment, as set forth in MCPS Regulation EIC-RA, *Student Accident and Football Insurance Program*. The parent/guardian submits any claims related to student accident insurance directly to the insurance carrier.
3. Any accident or injury involving a volunteer chaperone or staff member should be reported consistent with MCPS Regulation EIB-RA, *General Liability Insurance*, and/or MCPS Regulation EIF-RA, *Worker's Compensation Insurance and Personal Property Loss*.

H. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

1. MCPS does not provide school-sponsored international trips or exchange programs unless expressly approved by the chief academic officer as directly connected to an educational program. Staff members are not discouraged from working privately to organize international study trips, but they should be handled independently of the school; and MCPS disclaims any responsibility for them.
 - a) No MCPS resources, including student databases and communication tools, school time or facilities may be used in the planning, promotion, or administration of a privately organized international study trip or exchange program (private trip).

- b) Payments for private trips should be made directly to the travel company and may not be run through the staff member's school's Independent Activity Fund (IAF)
- c) Staff who organize student international travel must use clear language indicating that the trip is not school-sponsored.
- d) As such trips are not school-sponsored, neither principals nor any school staff may approve such trips.

I. PROCEDURES FOR AVOIDING CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 1. MCPS employees who participate in a trip are expected to be knowledgeable of Montgomery County Board of Education Policy BBB, *Ethics*, and MCPS Regulation GCA-RA, *Employee Conflict of Interest*, and to assume responsibility to ensure that their behavior and activities are consistent with the expectations of Board policies, and MCPS regulations and rules and are not susceptible to conflict of interest in the areas such as those outlined in Regulation GCA-RA.
- 2. Employees who act as chaperones are not in conflict with MCPS Regulation GCA-RA, *Conflict of Interest*, if their basic expenses, comparable to those of the other chaperones, are defrayed by a travel agency.

J. CANCELLATION OF TRIPS

- 1. Cancellation of trips may occur due to weather, safety, world events, or local school need. Trips will be cancelled only under circumstances under which appropriate school authorities believe it is reasonably cautious and prudent to do so in order to ensure the safety of students, staff, or volunteers, 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.
- 2. MCPS is not responsible for financial losses to students, parents/guardians, and/or volunteers due to cancellation of trips.
- 3. The authority to cancel trips rests with the superintendent of schools/designee.

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