

Field Trip Guidance for Preschool

Preschool programs can be enriched through the inclusion of carefully planned field trips. Firsthand experience can provide children with information and a level of understanding that adds elements of realism to their play and enriches their overall learning.

At all times, the age and developmental level of the children who will be attending the field trip should be taken into consideration. Many trips that would be educational for older children are simply too overwhelming for younger children (i.e., trips that require long bus rides or require children to be out of the center for the entire day) or that may not be safe for younger children (i.e., a trip to a water park). The special needs of all the children should also be considered when choosing and planning a trip. The trip should be appropriate for all children in the class. Special arrangements that can be made to ensure that all children are included should be researched and planned ahead of time.

In order for children to gain the greatest benefit from field trips, they should not only be thoughtfully chosen, but should also relate to the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards; the district chosen curriculum; and/or children's interests. If children are interested in farm animals, a trip to a real farm could greatly enhance children's understanding. If children have not had any exposure to farm animals, the trip would provide the first-hand experience that the teacher will be able to build upon. However, first field trips should be to places that are familiar in some way to young children. Many of the best trips build not only on their interests and the curriculum but involve the community. Trips to local grocery stores, libraries, flower shops etc. can enhance relationships between family members, the school and the community and can often be planned with little or no cost. Field experiences can also take place in-class or in-school by inviting guests, using books, and setting up an area of the room.

Best Teaching Practices for Field Trips

Effective teachers will use recommended best practices to introduce the field trip in advance and also provide follow-up in the days after the trip. The teacher may use a storybook and props to set the stage for the trip. She/he will discuss the trip with the children and chart their predictions of what they might see; any concerns; and questions.

On the day of the trip, the adults will interact and discuss the sights, people etc. as they experience the trip. Adults may take photographs to record the day and to create a book with the children. The teacher may return to the class chart the day of or the day following the trip to compare their actual findings. She/he will also promote dramatic play in the classroom by adding props or materials that will extend and deepen their understanding. The opportunity for developing new vocabulary will be stronger and children will add more roles to their play.

Districts have an obligation to make sure that all field trips, children in their district attend are safe, age appropriate and planned to enhance the curriculum. Districts should have a clear policy in place that ensures that all field trips, whether planned by a private provider or an in-district school, go through a central district approval process. This policy should also include the stipulation that parents are not to be charged for field trips. Policies regarding procedures should be the same for both in-district classes and private providers. With this in mind, district administrators and community provider directors should require teachers to fill out a field trip form that designates the purpose of the field trip and its relationship to the Expectations.

Field Trip Preparations

In addition to preparing for the learning experience, the teacher should prepare the children for each trip by reviewing and rehearsing safety precautions, the buddy system, positive behavioral expectations, and emergency procedures. Other adult staff and chaperones should also be prepared. Review responsibilities and rules with all adults. The teacher should assess and determine if children and other adults are adequately prepared to take field trips. Readiness on the part of all responsible adults is critical to the safety of the children.

The staff should prepare identification tags for all children that include the name of the school/center and phone number. Caution should be used in placing children's names on tags as this may result in alerting strangers to the individual child's name. You may consider that name tags be worn inside shirts or tops. Some schools/centers have shirts printed with their logo, name and address so that children and staff will easily be identified.

The teacher should explain the planned field trip to parents and receive permission slips for each child for each trip. The teacher must have children and parents' names, phone numbers

and emergency numbers with them at all times. An accurate list of children in attendance on the day of the trip must be supplied. A copy should be also left at the school/center. The teacher should decide how children will be grouped with adults. The adult chaperones must have lists of the children in their care with the telephone number of the school/center.

A place for regrouping and checkpoints should be identified at each trip site. Supervision of all children at all times is of course essential. A designated staff person for each group should have the responsibility of carrying a first aid kit, money and needed supplies. A school nurse in attendance, required medications, allergy concerns, and nutritional needs must all be considered. Safe and healthy foods should be provided that follow the food service guidelines. Staff should be aware of any steps necessary for safe handling of the food. Whenever possible, adults who are responsible for carrying items should not be directly responsible for a group of children.

Deciding on a Field Trip Location

Many districts have developed lists of recommended field trips. Contracted providers should be required to submit field trip plans to the district as part of the budgeting process and must understand that asking children/families to pay for field trips is not allowed. Policies and forms for securing transportation should be followed. Children should never be transported in cars owned by private individuals.

Attached to this memo you will find some examples of common field trips. Please note that this list encompasses trips that are generally considered appropriate for preschool children. For example, not every farm or theatre production will be an ideal site for a class trip. Discretion and common sense must always be used when determining if a field trip is safe and has educational value.

All sites for field trips should be visited by a staff member prior to scheduling the trip for children. A follow-up evaluation of the value of the trip and any pertinent highlights or significant features should be noted.

Field Trip Examples

Appropriate

- Small Local Airport/ Train Station
- Animal Shelter/Pet Shop
- Bagel Shop/Bakery
- Children's theatre production
- Children's museum
- Doctor's/Veterinarian's Office
- Farm
- Florist/Garden Shop
- Fruit/Vegetable Store/Grocery Store
- Hospital
- Library
- Local Restaurant/Pizzeria/Cafeteria
- Post Office
- School
- Zoo

Inappropriate

- Carnival
- Movie theatre
- Theme park
- Water Park