

TO: School Committee

FROM: Emily Parks, Superintendent

DATE: Oct. 4, 2019

RE: International Travel Policy

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The agenda for next week's meeting includes the first reading of a proposed new policy regarding international travel with students.

We had intended to review this policy last year, but other issues ended up taking priority. I am bringing it to you early this year with the intention of having a policy in place to guide the next round of requests for international travel.

The proposed policy language affirms the value of these trips and our intention to support them, while clarifying the process for trip approval, scheduling, supervision, fundraising, and various other issues that we think need clarification based on our prior experience. Our school attorney drafted this language for your consideration based on our input, her review of policies in other districts, and in alignment with other policies already established by the Westwood School Committee.

## **JJH-E - INTERNATIONAL/OUT-OF-COUNTRY FIELD TRIPS**

The Westwood School Committee believes in the educational value of occasional field trip experiences for students. These experiences enrich a student's understanding of the course of study and the world. Specifically, international field trips expose students to different cultures and allow them to develop as global citizens.

### **A. Trip Approval Process**

1. Teachers who sponsor international field trips must obtain School Committee approval, with the recommendation of the Superintendent, six (6) months prior to the trip. Only those international trips approved by the School Committee shall be construed as officially school-sponsored.
2. International trips must have at minimum 2 teachers who will serve as chaperones. In addition, on all such trips there must be at least a chaperone-student ratio of 1 to 10.
3. Trips must offer significant educational benefits to students that clearly justify the time and expense of the trip. Such trips must be appropriate for the grade level and take into account safety considerations
4. Teachers and other school staff are prohibited from soliciting privately run trips through the school system. The trip approval process only applies to school-sanctioned trips. The School Committee will not approve trips that are privately organized and run without school sanctioning.<sup>1</sup>
5. Policies and procedures for trip approval should take into account all logistical details involving transportation, accommodations, fundraising required of students, and the educational value of the trip in relation to its costs.
6. The School Committee and/or the Superintendent reserves the right to cancel or recall an international trip at any time. The parent/guardian will sign to acknowledge and affirm that he/she may lose any and/or all of the funds expended for the trip
7. Pursuant to state law, District employees organizing international travel must make written disclosures to the Superintendent if they have a financial interest in the trip. The disclosure must describe any arrangements, including but not limited to, free or discounted travel, lodging, or meal expenses. The Superintendent must make a written determination in advance that the interest is “not so substantial to be deemed likely to

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<sup>1</sup> Teachers organizing the international trip must make written disclosure to the Superintendent if they have a financial interest in the trip and must describe the arrangement (for example, free or discounted travel, lodging, etc.) The Superintendent will make a written determination in advance that the “interest is not so substantial to be deemed likely to affect the integrity of the services that the school district may expect from the employee”. The forms for such disclosure can be found in the Superintendent’s Office.

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## **B. International Trip Scheduling**

1. International accommodations must be made in advance with student safety and security in mind. The trip schedulers are not to plan student travel between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. due to the increased risk of vehicular accidents during this time period.
2. International trips should be scheduled on weekends or during school vacations to minimize lost classroom time. No more than three school days may be missed as it relates to an overnight trip. Non-academic field trips are considered "optional school programs" and do not count toward meeting structured learning time requirements under 603 CMR 27.00.
3. International trip scheduling is to take into account the likelihood of delays due to weather, traffic, stragglers and other unanticipated factors.

## **C. Fundraising**

1. The approval process must be completed prior to engaging students in any fundraising activities or other preparations for the trip.
2. The amount of time to be devoted to fundraising must be reasonable and commensurate with students' obligations for homework, after-school activities and jobs.
3. Group fundraising activities are preferred. Students must not be assigned individual fundraising targets.

## **D. Student Supervision**

1. Students must be accompanied by a sufficient number of teacher chaperones, (as outlined in subsection A.2) taking into account the trip scheduling and logistics, but all trips must have at least 2 teacher chaperones
2. All chaperones, including parents and volunteers, must have a CORI check in accordance with M.G.L c. [71 S.38R](#).
3. All chaperones must solicit and receive documentation of completed background checks for any tour guides provided on the international trip.

4. CORI checks are strongly recommended for bus drivers who do not regularly work for the school district. A teacher chaperone must always be present whenever students are on the bus.
5. Teacher chaperones and all adults are expected to observe all school rules and policies while on the trip.
6. All participating students must submit a signed parent/guardian permission form. Such form must include appropriate authorization for emergency medical care and administration of medication.

#### **E. International Trip Preparation and Expectations/Rules**

1. Teacher Chaperones must meet with all students participating in the trip and conduct at least one parent/guardian meeting to review the purpose of the trip, itinerary, travel procedures, security provisions, rules of conduct, expectations and other relevant information.
2. All school rules and disciplinary consequences in the District's policies and student handbook are in effect for all students and teacher chaperones on the trip. Parent/guardian and students will sign a document indicating that they agree to abide by all rules for the trip before they will be able to participate.
3. Drugs and/or alcohol are prohibited on the trip for both students and chaperones. Drug and alcohol use is prohibited even if otherwise permitted in the location.
4. Parent/guardian are notified that they are responsible for any medical expenses incurred on the trip or any expenses associated with the violation of a school rule or host country law while on the trip.

#### **F. Transportation**

1. International trips planned to include late night student travel must involve pre-trip checks of companies, drivers and vehicles.
2. In general, late night student travel should generally be avoided and such trips must use commercial motor coaches. Overnight bus, van or car travel is not permitted except in those instances when the students are returning to local accommodations from evening events or traveling to and from transportation terminals, (i.e. traveling between the hours of 11:00 p.m. And 5:00 a.m.)
3. The contract with the carrier will prohibit the use of a subcontractor unless sufficient notice is given to the District to allow verification of the subcontractor's qualifications.

Cross references to [IJOA](#), Field Trips; JJH, Student Overnight Travel; JJH-R Student Travel Regulations.

First reading: October 10, 2019