PLANNING & PROMOTING YOUR SCHOOL TRIP

A practical guide for Trip Leaders

Great school trips don't just happen. They start with a great idea, a clear purpose and a plan that gets students and families excited to take part. Whether you are introducing students to a new culture, connecting classroom learning with the real world, exploring future careers or taking learning somewhere completely unexpected, we're here to help you turn your idea into an experience your students will remember. This guide will help you prepare, promote and build interest in your trip, from that first announcement through registration.

1 | START WITH YOUR "WHY"

Before announcing the trip, think about what makes this particular experience important for your students. Families will naturally want to know **where** you are going, **when** you are traveling and **what it costs**, but the most compelling story is often **why you are going**.

Consider:

- How does the trip connect to what students are learning?
- Does it introduce students to possible careers or areas of future study?
- Will students develop practical skills or work toward a certification?
- What cultural or global perspectives will they experience?
- Are there opportunities for conservation, community engagement or service?
- What can students experience on this trip that simply cannot be recreated in the classroom?

Our tip: Lead with the experience, not the logistics.
Instead of: *We are taking a 7-day trip to Costa Rica.*
Try: *Our students will take their learning beyond the classroom as they explore Costa Rica's extraordinary ecosystems, experience another culture firsthand and discover how science and conservation are being applied in the real world.*
Then give them the itinerary.

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2 | GET YOUR INFORMATION READY

Once students begin talking about a trip, questions can come quickly. Having the basic information ready from the beginning makes it much easier for students to take the idea home to their families.

Your trip information should include:

- Destination and travel dates
- A brief overview of the experience
- Educational highlights
- What is included
- What is not included
- Current trip price
- Registration instructions
- Payment information and important deadlines
- Travel Insurance requirements
- Passport or visa considerations, when applicable
- Who families should contact with questions

Keep it straightforward. Families should be able to understand the opportunity without having to sort through pages of information.

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3 | LAUNCH YOUR TRIP

Your first announcement matters. Rather than simply sending home an itinerary, introduce the **story behind the trip**.

Consider a combination of:

A Family Information Meeting - Give families a chance to see the itinerary, understand the educational purpose of the program and ask questions.

A Launch Letter or Email - Introduce the program personally. Explain why you selected the experience and what you hope students will gain from participating.

A Student Presentation - Show students where they could be going and, most importantly, what they could be doing there.

A Shareable Trip Overview - Give families a simple resource containing the essential information and instructions for learning more or registering.

Clear Registration Information - Make the next step obvious. If families are ready to participate, they should know exactly where to go and what to do.

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4 | GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

Students can be some of your greatest advocates. **Student Ambassador Team** - Invite a small group of students to help build interest in the experience, with school approval and appropriate teacher oversight. Students might help with:

- School or club announcements
- Trip displays and posters
- Newsletter content
- Approved social media content
- Classroom presentations
- Information for school publications
- Promoting an upcoming information meeting
- Sharing the program with other relevant departments or clubs

And think beyond your own classroom. A science-focused program might also appeal to students interested in technology, engineering, sustainability or environmental studies. A European program could complement history, art, languages or literature. A conservation experience might interest science clubs or sustainability groups.
The bigger the educational connection, the wider your potential audience.

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5 | HELP FAMILIES SEE THE VALUE

For many families, a school trip represents a significant commitment. Give them more than a list of places their student will visit. Help families understand what students will **do, learn and experience**. Educational travel research reports student outcomes associated with travel, including greater willingness to learn and explore, increased interest in future travel, independence and confidence, intellectual curiosity, adaptability, cooperation and cultural understanding. *Source: Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA) research.*
Tell the complete story. Your itinerary tells families **where students are going**. Your communication should tell them **why going there matters**.

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6 | MAKE THE TRIP MORE ACCESSIBLE

Cost can be one of the biggest obstacles to participation. Fundraising won't be appropriate for every school or every group, but where permitted, a well-organized campaign can help families offset some trip expenses. Rather than trying everything, choose a few activities that make sense for your school and community.
Business & Community Sponsorships - Students can identify businesses or organizations that may be interested in supporting educational opportunities in their community. For STEM programs in particular, consider contacting businesses whose work connects with the subjects students will be exploring. When appropriate, help students prepare a short explanation covering:

- Where they are traveling
- The educational purpose of the program
- What they hope to learn
- Why the experience matters to them

School & Community Events - Depending on your school's policies, possibilities could include:

- Community sales
- Car washes
- Bake sales
- Fun runs
- Themed events
- Silent auctions
- School-community nights

Restaurant & Product Fundraisers - Some restaurants and retailers offer fundraising programs through which a portion of qualifying sales supports a school or organization. Because participating businesses and program terms can change, look for current opportunities available in your community rather than relying on an old list.
Online Fundraising - Where permitted by your school, crowdfunding can provide another way for extended family, alumni and community supporters to contribute.
Alumni & Family Networks - Don't overlook people who already have a connection with your school. Parents, extended families and alumni may be willing to support fundraising activities, provide introductions to local businesses or help promote an event.
Important: Fundraising activities should always be approved by the school or appropriate organization and comply with applicable school policies and local requirements. Activities involving raffles, public events, food sales, cash collection or students approaching businesses may require additional approval or controls.

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7 | THINK THROUGH THE DETAILS EARLY

You don't need every answer on day one, but identifying common questions before families ask them makes the planning process much smoother. Consider:

Travel Documents - Will passports or visas be required? Encourage families to investigate requirements early and use the appropriate government authorities for current entry requirements.

Getting to the Departure Point - Will travelers meet at school, another designated location or directly at the airport?

Meals & Spending Money - Which meals are included? What might students reasonably need personal funds for?

Luggage - What are the anticipated luggage arrangements? Will travelers need to budget separately for checked baggage?

Clothing & Packing - Are there special clothing or equipment requirements for activities on the itinerary?

Travel Insurance - Make sure families understand any travel insurance requirements applicable to their specific program.

Accompanying Adults - Families may want to know who will accompany students from the school and how the group will operate while traveling.

You do not need to overload families with every operational detail at launch. Give them what they need **at the point they need it**.

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8 | KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

Launching the program isn't the end of promotion. Families are busy. Students forget. Information gets buried. Keep the trip visible through appropriate school communication channels and make important deadlines easy to find. Useful reminders might include:

- Registration milestones
- Family information meetings
- Passport reminders for international programs
- Fundraising activities
- Upcoming trip meetings
- Required traveler information
- Pre-departure preparation

And don't forget to celebrate progress. As participation grows, remind students that the experience they have been talking about is becoming real.

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9 | IF ENROLLMENT ISN'T WHAT YOU EXPECTED

Don’t assume the trip has failed. Talk to us before giving up. Depending on the individual program and circumstances, there may be opportunities to review the itinerary or dates, explore other available options or determine whether collaboration with another compatible school group may be possible.

Let us help you explore the possibilities.

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10 | YOUR QUICK PLANNING CHECKLIST

Before launching your trip:

☐ Define the educational purpose

☐ Identify the strongest student outcomes

☐ Finalize your trip information

☐ Confirm that the program has received the necessary school approval

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☐ Confirm that the program has received the necessary school approval
☐ Confirm current pricing and inclusions
☐ Prepare family-facing information
☐ Establish your launch plan
☐ Plan an information meeting if appropriate
☐ Identify student ambassadors
☐ Determine whether fundraising will be offered
☐ Identify important registration milestones
☐ Review passport or visa considerations where applicable
☐ Make sure families know where to direct questions

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

Planning a school trip takes work, but you shouldn't have to figure everything out by yourself. **STEM Study Tours is here to help you turn an idea into a meaningful educational experience.** From developing the right program and preparing trip information to helping answer questions as your group prepares to travel, our team will work with you throughout the planning process. Most importantly, we understand that this isn't simply about getting students from one destination to another. **It's about where the experience can take them next.**

Ready to start planning? Let's go.
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