

MESA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOPIC: Optional Student Travel
GOVERNING BOARD POLICY	DISTRICT CODE: IICA

DEFINITION

"Optional student travel" means student travel that meets each of the following criteria:

- A student or team/group is not required to participate as a requirement of a specific course or an educational or extracurricular program;
- The purpose of the travel is curricular or extracurricular; and
- The travel is provided by the district or arranged under the direction of a district employee acting in his or her official capacity.

Optional student travel includes:

- A field trip, such as travel to a science camp, zoo, museum, or national park.
- An informal outing organized by a teacher who uses district resources to communicate information to students and parents about the event.

Optional student travel does not include:

- Student transportation service routinely provided by the district to or from a student’s home or bus stop.
- Student transportation service provided by the district to or from an AIA-sponsored athletic or other competitive event.
- Student transportation service provided for an individual student as a result of a medical or other emergency.
- Student travel that is organized by a district employee who is not acting in his or her official capacity, and that is selected by the student — such as ski trips, summer travel programs, and professionally organized group travel — and funded by a source other than the district.

APPROVAL

All optional student travel must receive one or more levels of administrative approval. Optional student travel is intended to supplement the curricular or extracurricular program in a manner not possible to achieve on campus. When approval of optional student travel is requested, the administrator will consider all of these factors:

- the educational value of the experience,
- the financial cost to the student and district,
- instructional time lost in core academic classes,
- distance of the travel destination,
- equitable opportunity for all students, and
- the safety of students.

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No optional student travel will be permitted if the travel poses an unreasonable safety risk to students and, for this reason, optional student travel may be limited or canceled by the Governing Board or member of the superintendency at any time.

Approval for In-State/Single-Day Optional Student Travel

Travel by students of any grade that would be completed within a single day and remain in the state must be approved by the school principal.

Travel Packet: The district employee who is organizing the travel must complete an Optional Student Travel Packet for In-State/Single-Day Trips and obtain full approval, including all required signatures on employee travel requests, at least one month prior to the travel.

Approval for Out-of-State or Overnight Optional Student Travel

The Governing Board does not encourage such travel by students in grades 2 through 6. Out-of-state and overnight travel may be approved for such students only when special circumstances exist. Examples of special circumstances include travel to participate in a school competition or band performance, or to attend a science camp or visit an art museum. It is the responsibility of the school principal to ensure that all approvals are obtained in a timely fashion and to demonstrate why special circumstances exist for out-of-state or overnight travel.

Kindergarten - Grade 1: Out-of-state or overnight travel by students in kindergarten through grade 1 is prohibited.

Grades 2 - 6: Travel by students in grades 2 through 6 that would take the students out-of-state for any length of time or that would require overnight accommodations must be reviewed by the SIAC and approved by the school principal, area assistant superintendent, and Governing Board. The Governing Board may, in its discretion, designate out-of-state or overnight travel for specific events as not requiring its approval. If approved, the area assistant superintendent will conduct a final review of the approved travel at least ten working days before the departure date.

Grades 7 - 12: Travel by students in grades 7 through 12 that would take the students out-of-state for any length of time or that would require overnight accommodations must be reviewed by the SIAC and approved by the school principal and area assistant superintendent.

Parent Surveys: As part of the planning and approval process for out-of-state or overnight optional student travel, parents must be surveyed to determine interest by using the Notice of Proposed Student Travel form.

Travel Packet: The district employee who is organizing the travel must complete an Optional Student Travel Packet for Out-of-State/Overnight Trips and obtain full approval, including all required signatures on employee travel requests, at least three months prior to the travel.

Out-of-Country Optional Student Travel

Travel out of the country by students in kindergarten through grade 8 is not permitted. Travel out of the country by students in grades 9 through 12 must be reviewed by the SIAC and approved by the school principal, area assistant superintendent, and Governing Board. The Governing Board does not encourage such travel and will require special circumstances for approval. As part of the planning and approval

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process for out-of-country optional student travel, parents must be surveyed to determine interest, using the Notice of Proposed Student Travel form.

GENERAL RULES

The following rules apply to all categories of optional student travel unless an exception is expressly indicated:

Eligibility

Generally, no student group may be approved for more than one out-of-state or out-of-country travel opportunity during each school year.

Students who have completed graduation requirements may participate in optional student travel following graduation, as representatives of the district, provided that the purpose of the travel is to participate in a competition that the students qualified to compete in prior to graduation.

To be eligible to participate in optional student travel, the teacher and school principal should require that students meet specific academic and disciplinary requirements.

Finance

Approval for all student travel requests is at the discretion of the school administrator, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and the appropriate area assistant superintendent. Regardless of the availability of funds for these trips, both school and district approval is required.

All costs for optional student travel (single-day, overnight, out-of-state, and international) for students and “required chaperones” (defined in the “Supervision” section of this policy) must be funded from student club funds, school athletic funds, ECA funds, gifts, grants, and/or community education. Determination of the types of funds to use is dependent on the type of trip and availability of funds. These costs may include, but are not limited to, admissions, registrations, airfare, ground transportation, rental vehicles, fuel, lodging, substitutes, and meals.

Purchase orders and/or cash envelopes are required for all expenses associated with optional student travel. Exceptions must be approved by the district’s Chief Financial Officer (CFO). It is the responsibility of the school to obtain purchase orders and/or cash envelopes prior to the trip being taken.

If a parent organization, i.e. PTO or booster club, is paying for part or all of the expenses, the organization must deposit the money into the school’s gifts and grants account or into a student club account prior to the trip being taken so that purchase orders/cash envelopes can be obtained.

Restrictions:

The following State of Arizona Travel Policy restrictions apply to any district employee acting in the capacity of a required chaperone:

- The employees must pay for his or her own meals for single-day trips.

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- The employee must pay for meals and/or lodging expenses for overnight travel within a 50-mile radius from the traveler's home or duty post unless prior written approval by the CFO has been obtained. (See the Section II-D of the State of Arizona Travel Policy in the Arizona Accounting Manual for guidelines.) If approval is not obtained prior to the trip, the employee is responsible for paying for all meals and/or lodging.

The cost for lodging should be in compliance with the State of Arizona Travel Policy (see Supplement 1, Maximum Transportation, Lodging and Meal Rate Schedule). However, the Governing Board authorizes lodging expenses to exceed the amounts set forth in the State of Arizona policy if it is determined by the district that it is not feasible to stay within those limits due to factors such as safety of the students, conference locations, etc.

Expenses for chaperones who are not district employees, but who are traveling with students and acting in the capacity of a "required chaperone," may be funded from student club funds, school athletic funds, ECA funds, gifts, grants, and/or community education if available and applicable to the trip.

Any chaperones who are not considered "required chaperones" must pay their own expenses. Monies for expenses can be collected by the school before the trip and deposited in a student club account or paid directly to the vendor(s). The school will determine who is a "required chaperone" and who is not based on district guidelines.

A chaperone-to-student ratio of one adult to 10 or fewer students will be maintained for optional student travel for elementary students. A chaperone-to-student ratio of one adult to 15 or fewer students will be maintained for optional student travel for secondary students. If it is felt that additional chaperones are required and that their expenses should be covered by one of the above-mentioned funds, appeals must be approved by the school administrator and the area assistant superintendent in concurrence with verification that funds are available for optional student travel use.

Factors, such as needing a male and female chaperone, the age and maturity of students, or the type and location of the activity, will be taken into consideration when determining whether or not funds should be used to pay for additional chaperones.

Optional student travel requests must receive final approval before students and parents begin any fundraising activities. The school principal must approve the specific fundraising activity.

When student club funds are used to defray the cost of a trip, the appropriate student group needs to vote and reflect this in their club minutes. Student club funds may be used to pay the cost of required chaperones within the district chaperone-to-student ratio guidelines. Before voting, students should be told what portion of their trip cost will be used to cover the costs of required chaperones. All non-required chaperones must pay their own expenses.

When ECA monies are used to defray the cost of a trip, state law prohibits the use of these funds to pay for "recreational, amusement or tourist travel." Optional student travel may include recreational, amusement or tourist travel, provided that such activities are not the primary purpose of the optional student travel and the cost of such activities is not paid with ECA monies. (For example, a music group performs in Flagstaff and, without using ECA monies, attends a movie after the performance before returning to Mesa the following day.) The term "recreational, amusement and tourist travel" includes water parks and amusement parks, but this term does not include museums, national parks, and other destinations with significant educational opportunities for students.

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Instruction

Optional student travel must be scheduled to minimize loss of instructional time in classes that do not relate to the travel. Optional student travel will not exceed two instructional days unless the area assistant superintendent approves an exception.

Students who choose not to participate in optional student travel must be provided with other appropriate educational experiences and must not be adversely affected in terms of course requirements, grades, or eligibility to participate in other activities.

Insurance

Travel insurance is required for all travelers (students and chaperones) participating in any trip outside the country and is optional for other out-of-state travel. The trip sponsor is responsible for submitting the necessary application and participant list to an insurance company approved by the district to provide this coverage. Prior to the group's departure, the area assistant superintendent will confirm that coverage has been obtained for international travel.

Housing

Students must sleep in hotel or motel rooms, or other accommodations appropriate for the educational experience, during overnight travel. Placement of students as guests in homes is not permitted without approval of the Governing Board.

Parent/Guardian Approval

The certificated employee supervising the optional student travel will obtain written permission from the parent/guardian before a student may participate in the trip, and will maintain in a file all signed parent/guardian permission forms for not less than 12 months after the trip is concluded.

Supervision

Certificated employees will supervise all optional student travel. It is the responsibility of the certificated employee supervising the activity to ensure the appropriate number of "required chaperones" is obtained.

- For elementary schools: A chaperone-to-student ratio of one adult to 10 or fewer students will be maintained for optional student travel.
- For secondary schools: A chaperone-to-student ratio of one adult to 15 students will be maintained for optional student travel.
- For athletic optional student travel for secondary schools: Use either a chaperone-to-student ratio of one adult to 15 or fewer students or the number of coaches on the district's athletic extra-factor schedule, whichever is greater.
- Whenever there are both male and female students on the same trip, it is recommended that both male and female chaperones accompany the students.

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With approval of the school administrator, additional chaperones may be taken on the trip as long as additional costs are not incurred. If it is felt that additional chaperones are required and that their expenses should be covered, appeals must be approved by the school administrator and the area assistant superintendent in concurrence with verification that funds are available for optional student travel use.

Spouses, classified employees, parents/guardians, and other responsible adults may serve as chaperones. However, any chaperone who is not a classified employee, a student teacher, or a parent or guardian of a student participating in the trip must be approved by the district as a volunteer. Human Resources should be contacted at least three weeks prior to the travel dates to arrange for fingerprinting.

All chaperones will be under the direction of the certificated employee supervising the activity. All chaperones are expected to provide close supervision of students and conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. Both male and female chaperones must accompany mixed student groups on all overnight trips unless an area assistant superintendent approves an exception.

Transportation

District Transportation: District buses and other vehicles may be used only for in-state travel. Requests for district transportation must be submitted to the Transportation Department at least 15 working days prior to the date of the optional student travel. The request must be signed by the certificated employee responsible for supervising the travel and approved by the school principal. The request must also include the account number or other source of funding for the travel. Requests for district transportation may be denied if other identified needs of the district are of a higher priority.

A district employee must possess a valid Arizona driver's license to transport students. If the students will be transported in a van designed to carry 12 passengers, the driver must also possess either a school bus driver certification card or an authorization card indicating that the required district van safety training has been successfully completed. If the students will be transported in a vehicle designed to meet state regulations as a school bus, the driver must possess Arizona school bus driver certification.

Commercial Transportation: Commercial transportation may be used if requested by the certificated employee responsible for supervising the travel and approved by the school principal. Commercial transportation must be used for out-of-country travel and must be reviewed and approved by the area assistant superintendent.

Private Vehicle Owned and Driven by District Employee: A private vehicle owned and driven by a district employee with a valid Arizona driver's license may be used as a means of transporting students. Prior to transporting students, the employee must have on file in the office of the school principal proof of minimum auto liability coverage limits of \$100,000 per person and \$300,000 per occurrence.

Private Vehicle Driven by Parent, Student, or Third Party: Students will use district transportation when provided unless the parent/guardian has indicated on the permission form that the parent is driving the student or has given permission for the student to drive himself or herself, to drive another student, or to ride with another student or adult who is driving. When a student or adult provides transportation in lieu of the student taking district-provided transportation, the driver is subject to the same provisions for licensure and insurance as a district employee using a private vehicle.

The Superintendent may adopt administrative regulations to implement this policy.

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Adopted: October 14, 1986

Revised: October 10, 1989
August 9, 1994
September 9, 1997
August 27, 2002
October 14, 2003
March 7, 2006
June 5, 2007
September 9, 2008
July 12, 2011

CROSS REF.: GEA – Volunteers
IKEA – Assignment Make-up Opportunities
JHCD – Student Medications and Dietary Supplements

MESA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOPIC: Optional Student Travel
ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION	DISTRICT CODE: IICA-R

School employees will use the Optional Student Travel Packet for In-State/Single-Day Trips or the Optional Student Travel Packet for Overnight/Out-of-State Trips, whichever is appropriate, when planning and requesting approval for optional student travel. These booklets contain instructions and sample forms and are available in the school office.

Adopted: September 9, 2008

Debra Duvall
Superintendent

FORMS: Optional Student Travel Packet for In-State/Single-Day Trips
Optional Student Travel Packet for Overnight/Out-of-State Trips