

Field Trip Safety Preparation

The following strategies should be considered in part of the lesson planning for field experiences:

School Policy: The very first thing to do before considering a field experience is to check the board of education policy of out-of-lab learning activities either on or off-site.

Pre-Visit: Teachers should always visit potential out-of-doors areas to review safety hazards prior to students carrying out activities.

Chaperones: In most cases, the ratio of adult chaperones to students should be around 1:10. However, if there are younger students, students with special needs or other situations requiring closer supervision, a smaller ratio like 1:5 or in extreme cases 1:1 should be considered.

Behavioral Expectations: A list of acceptable behaviors is a must. The standards must be shared and also the consequences of not following the rules!

Hazardous Chemical Exposure: Keep clear of out-of-doors areas when may have been treated with pesticides, fungicides, and other hazardous chemicals. Check with the school district's facilities director to make sure no chemical applications have been made in the areas where students will be working. In the location is off school property, attempt to secure pesticide and any other hazardous chemical application information from the owners or operators of the site.

Use of PPE: When working out-of-doors, students should use appropriate personal protective equipment or PPE including safety glasses or safety goggles (when working with hazardous chemicals), gloves, close toed shoes, hat, long sleeve shirt and pants, sunglasses, and sun screen protection. When working near deep water, use life preservers or other floatation devices. It is strongly recommended that students with immune suppressed medical issues wear vinyl gloves when handling animals (e.g. amphibians, etc.).

Exposure to Allergens: Caution students relative to poisonous plants (ivy, sumac, etc.), insects (bees, wasps, ticks, mosquitoes, etc.), wild animals (poisonous snakes, etc.) and hazardous debris (broken glass, pieces of metal, other sharps, etc.). Show pictures of poisonous plants and animals so students can easily identify them. Review habitat locations where ticks and/or mosquitoes are likely to be found, e.g. leaves, ponding water, etc.

Trip/Fall Hazards: Caution students about trip/fall hazards like rocks, string/rope, etc. when walking out-of-doors. Also use caution for impalement instruments such as rusty nails, sharp sticks, etc. Make sure students are warned about climbing trees, standing too close to the edge of a cliff, etc.

Signed Acknowledgement Forms: Teachers need to inform parents in writing of field trips relative to potential hazards and safety precautions being taken. Require parents and students to sign the acknowledgement forms and keep the forms at least for the balance of the year.

Medical Issues: Teachers need to check with the school nurse relative to student medical issues; e.g., allergies, asthma, etc. Be prepared for medical emergencies. The teacher again should let parents know and secure permission to administer appropriate medication should an emergency develop requiring it.

Communications: Teachers need to have a form of communications available such as a cell phone or two-way radio in case of emergencies. Always test the communications equipment ahead of time to make sure they are operational and within range.

Hand Washing: Wash hands with soap and water after completing activities dealing with hazardous chemicals, soil, biologicals (insects, leaves, etc.), or other materials. If soap and water are not available, use appropriate sanitizer hand-wipes.

Contact Administration: Be certain to contact the main office prior to bringing classes out of the building for science activities.

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