

ORGANIZING STUDENT GROUP STUDY AND TRAVEL ABROAD PLANNING TOOL

The purpose of this planning tool is to provide information for teachers, or other student group travel organizers, for student group study and travel abroad. The planning tool is intended to provide suggestions, but should not be understood as comprehensive for all types of study abroad activities, all school district and independent school contexts, or all contingencies. It is critical that you contact your school or school district administration to determine all necessary requirements for undertaking study abroad activities with your students.

Please read through entire planning tool for areas of consideration before undertaking your abroad activity.

PHASE 1 - PLANNING

- Establish strategic and educational goals for the trip and clearly define how these will be met
- Check for existing sister school or other institutional relationships and establish contact with foreign partner (if applicable)
- Consider package programs (organized with travel companies) versus locally developed programs (organized solely by school staff) – balance the benefits
- Apply for necessary approvals within school, district or governing body
 - Find out your individual school and/or district processes and policies (e.g., refund policy or prohibited destinations)
 - Determine whether it would be appropriate to invite the sister/partner school's students to visit British Columbia
 - Check to see how the program can be integrated into the overall international strategic plan for the School or School District
- Check for:
 - Passport/visa requirements for all students
 - Insurance requirements (What is your school and/or district policy?)
 - Vaccination requirements (will not apply in all countries)
 - Travel advisories (check during planning stage and prior to departure)
- Develop budget and consider funding options:
 - Budget considerations: airfare and transfers, accommodation, planned group activities while abroad (including group meals and tips for group guides, if applicable)
 - Fundraising (to cover costs or as a team-building activity)
 - Alternative funding opportunities (e.g., BC Student and Teacher Exchange and Mobility Awards)
 - Collection of student/parent fees/funds
 - Refund policy in case of cancellation (e.g., under enrollment, in-country emergency prior to or post departure, students sent home due to misconduct, health, or other reasons)
- Determine student recruitment
 - Carefully consider the size and composition of the group when selecting students in relation to the nature of the study abroad activity
- Select chaperones
 - Take group composition (e.g., age, gender, etc.) into consideration when selecting the specific type of chaperone(s) - teacher(s), parent(s), or other type of volunteer(s)
 - Consider ratios (i.e., chaperones to students) – may be determined by district/school policy
- Talk to colleagues and administrators who have run student trips in your school or district

PHASE 2 – PRE-DEPARTURE

- Organize pre-travel learning activities and orientations
 - For student orientation – potential topics include: clearly explain rules and expectations for student behaviour early on (e.g., drinking, free time , etc.), refer to field trip and other school rules; go over cultural expectations, ordering and bringing money, what can and cannot be purchased on the trip (refer to school policies and border control), and phone usage abroad
 - For student pre-learning – include in-class activities or out-of-class workshops with a clear learning component; topics could include history/geography/culture of destination country, discussion on stereotyping, cultural expectations, culture shock, and other relevant topics
 - Chaperone orientation – potential topics include emergency procedures, rules for travel, student expectations, cultural orientation, culture shock, and other relevant information
 - Parent orientation – important topics to cover include refund policy for all situations, prescription medication policy, emergency contact details/phone tree, other expectations
 - Get copies of student’s passports AND visas, medical insurance, consent forms, and any other documents required by your school for travel/field trips

PHASE 3 – TIME ABROAD

- Determine and review personal safety and security considerations
- Designate passport (and photocopies) responsibilities
- Monitor student health (e.g., sleep and jet lag, hydration, proper nutrition)
- Remind students about local cultural expectations, including tipping practices (how much? Who collects and distributes?)
- Journal (e.g., photos) activities abroad, and if possible collect souvenirs, to share experiences with students/teachers in BC upon return
- Schedule nightly meetings with students and chaperones to review next day itinerary and respond to any concerns

PHASE 4 – POST-TRAVEL

- Hold review meeting with chaperones and administrators (if appropriate) as soon as possible after return to identify successes/challenges for future study abroad activities
- Send thank-you letters/emails to foreign partner(s) (if applicable)
- Organize in-class post-travel learning/reflection activities for students, and information session for parents (if applicable)
- Organize sharing activities (e.g., presentation or social event) for students in school and/or district. Contact your local newspaper and have them run a story on the cultural experience
- Start planning/recruiting for next trip while the successful trip is still fresh in mind

FAQs available on BC Study Abroad Website
www.bcstudyabroad.ca/k-12educators