Field Trips: A new World Awaits!

Child and Youth Programs
Commander, Navy Installations
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Field Trips: A New World Awaits!

Are you and the children feeling stifled? Consider taking the children on a field trip. Field trips provide children with the opportunity to experience a new world!

This field trip curriculum guide contains information on how to plan and conduct a successful field trip. The guide includes the following sections:

- Choose, Plan and Go!
- Follow-up Activities (Back at the center and home)
- Selecting the Right Trip
- Checklist for Success
- Sample Permission Slips

Children are continually gaining knowledge of themselves in relation to the world in which they live. A child's universe begins with himself and soon extends to his family, community, and eventually to the world in which he or she lives. To help children expand their knowledge, caregivers must provide a quality curriculum that exposes children to many experiences.

This curriculum should include the social sciences and the study of humans and their relationships with the environment in which they live. Social sciences encompass communication, transportation, producer-consumer concepts, cultural differences, basic processes (i.e., resources for food, clothing, shelter), ecology, celebrations, community resources, and field trips.

Field trips give children the opportunity to gain immediate experience and firsthand knowledge of the world around them. Field trips also set the foundation for valuable teaching experiences in science and math; language and reading; art, music and acting; and ideas to discuss after the children return to the Center or Family Home Care.

Field trips are one of the best avenues of learning for children of all ages. No matter how many books you read to children about baby animals, visiting the zoo brings these animals to life. Caregivers can talk about how to build houses for days, yet one visit to a nearby construction site to see the process will achieve more.

This field trip guide will help child caregivers accomplish their goals and objectives. Advanced planning -- choosing a trip to fit your curriculum and ensuring the trip is age-appropriate and suitable for the size of your group -- will add to the success of the trip. Conducting related activities following the trip will reinforce the topic and ensure a successful learning experience for the children.
Choose Wisely and Plan Well

Like most activities, field trips pay the greatest dividends when meticulously planned. A well-planned trip combines fun and education and contributes to the child's understanding of the world in which they live.

Field trips should be conducted as part of the overall curriculum and should be selected based on the interests of the children.

• Field trips are most effective if they coincide with subjects already under discussion. As part of your yearly curriculum, develop weekly themes to study such as fruits and vegetables, zoo animals, health and environment.

Determine whether there are special events scheduled to take place on the base each month, i.e., Nutrition Week, Month of the Military Child, Dental Health Week, Fire Prevention Week.

There are usually activities planned to take place on the base or in the community that relate to these themes.

A simple walk around the block can be a field trip. Pick an area of concentration for each walk. Take a walk to explore the five senses, expand on a learning activity, or to collect objects.

Field trips may simply be an extension of the children’s current interests. For example, a caregiver may observe children developing misconceptions regarding the roles of police officers. One way of clarifying such misconceptions is to plan a field trip.

If a caregiver discovers that children aren’t aware that police officers are helpful, a trip to the base security office may be helpful. The children can watch the officers perform their jobs. They may observe the dispatcher and fingerprint clerk, ask the police officers about their uniform and why they wear them.

For children who have a special interest in police activity, a trip to the security office will certainly have great meaning. Following the trip to the security office, invite a police officer (or “McGruff the Crime Dog”) to visit the children at the Center.

• Choose field trip sites with care. A field trip should offer children the opportunity to see something happening and a place where children can touch or manipulate objects. The site should offer learning opportunities through actual participation.

Select a site that doesn't require excessive travel (and limit the length of your stay). Choose a site that is not prohibitively crowded or noisy; a site that allows trip leaders visual access to the children at all times.
Planning the Trip

If possible, a caregiver should visit the trip site prior to taking children on a field trip. (If a visit isn't possible, the caregiver should call the prospective trip site.)

The following questions must be answered prior to undertaking a field trip.

- Are reservations necessary? Recommended?
- Is the field trip site safe for young children?
- Is the site appropriate for the age-group you care for?
- Is the site accessible to children in strollers?
- How much travel time is involved? (Check the route and destination ahead of time to avoid heavy traffic and unnecessary delays.)
- Are there things the children may be sensitive to (sirens, loud horns, etc.).
- Does the trip site provide children with the opportunity to explore, touch and try out things on their own?
- What special learning opportunities are available?

Carefully plan the learning activities you hope to accomplish while at the trip site. Determine items that may be of particular interest to children taking part in the field trip.

Formulate questions you can ask the children in order to help their understanding of what they are likely to see during the field trip. Explain what it is you hope the children will gain from the experience.

Additional factors to Consider when planning a field trip.

- Will you need to provide snacks or lunch?
- How will you get to the field trip site (i.e., bus, van, walk)?
- Will the children need any special clothing such as swim suits, boots, extra sweaters?
- How much supervision is needed to ensure a safe and successful trip?
Group Size

Group size will directly affect the goals you establish for a field trip. It's unreasonable to expect to accomplish the same goals with a large group of children as you would with a small group. When a large group of children travels together, they often have to wait for some of the group to reassemble. If there is something in particular to see or handle, it may be difficult to give everyone the opportunity to see or touch without avoiding long delays.

All children will not be interested in the same things, and it's likely that some will become distracted easily and create a disturbance that could interfere with the learning of others.

Safety is easier to ensure with small groups.

Preparing the Children

A caregiver can prepare children for an upcoming field trip with books, songs and conversation about the trip. Look for books and posters that you can share with the children to help increase their vocabulary of words related to the trip.

Be sure the children understand how you expect them to behave. For example, “inside voices” are used at the library and the need to hold hands while crossing the street. Explain the sequence of scheduled events.

While the children may not remember all the details of the trip, they will at least have a basic understanding of what to expect.

Designate and concentrate on a specific theme for each trip and save something for the next trip. Keep it simple so the children are not overwhelmed.

For instance, let the children know that they will only be seeing the hooved animals at the zoo or the special exhibit on Eskimos at the museum.
Let’s Go

Take time to look along the way. You will see many people doing things for others and this gives children a firsthand opportunity to learn about the interrelationships of people in their community.

For instance, you may see a fire station, street repair crew, ambulance, or a police officer directing traffic. The caregiver should listen to the children's conversations en route to the field trip site. You are likely to find out what they know and what they don't know about where they are going.

During the trip itself, remain as close to the children as possible and stay alert. Listen to their discussions, talk with individual children about their experiences, and answer any questions they may have. For the most part, you'll watch as the children learn.

You may want to bring a camera to take slides or photographs to use for follow-up activities. However, picture taking should not be done at the expense of the caregiver's alert attention to the children.

To the greatest extent possible, allow the children to explore the field trip site at their own pace so they can better absorb what they see.
Keep in mind the original goal for a field trip is to broaden each child's understanding of the world in which they live. To achieve this goal, the caregiver must devote an equal amount of time and energy expanding on the field trip experience once the children return.

Follow-up activities provide opportunities for children to deepen their understanding of what they saw on the trip. Extended activities clarify and build on what the children have previously seen, heard, and shared.

What can you do? Encourage children to play out the trip in the way most suited to them. For example, following a trip to a bird sanctuary the children may wish to simulate the movement of birds, construct a replica of the sanctuary out of blocks, look at picture books, build a bird feeder, or investigate different types of bird feathers.

The following are ideas caregivers may consider as follow-up activities to field trips.

- Provide children with props and supplies that relate to the trip. This will encourage children to reenact what they learned during the trip.
- Plan circle games or sing songs related to the trip. For example, sing “Who Took the Cookie From the Cookie Jar” following a trip to the local bakery.
- Have the children dictate stories to you; cut pictures from magazines to go with their stories and make them into books to display or take home.
- Display photographs taken during the trip and encourage discussion among the children.
- Send a newsletter home with ideas for parents and children to share.
- Plan creative art experiences related to the trip.
- Invite a guest speaker from the trip site or with expertise on the trip's subject to visit the Center and discuss the subject with the children. Repetition will reinforce the concepts learned. For example, after visiting an animal shelter, arrange to have the veterinarian bring a kitten to the Center.
- Books with photographs, displays of familiar objects, and group discussions are all effective means of extending and solidifying the field trip experience.

Offer the children a variety of activities following a field trip. When limited to the same activity following each trip -- such as painting a picture of what they most enjoyed about the trip -- the activity is likely to become redundant and boring.

Observe the children at play following the field trip. Plan future trips based on the children's interests. Keep a logbook to record ideas for trips and followup activities.

- Books with photographs, displays of familiar objects, and group discussions are all effective means of extending and solidifying the field trip experience.
Selecting the Right Trip

Your installation's community offers the caregiver one of the richest and least expensive resources for providing varied experiences and activities for children.

Consider walks. Take a walk to a different location each week.

Take a walk that focuses on the five senses, such as sounds or smells. Keep a list of what the children say or notice for follow-up discussion and activities.

Take a walk that relates to the theme of the week. For example, have the children examine the leaves on the trees, touch the bark, and collect twigs and grass. When the children return to the classroom, use the items they've collected to make a nature collage.

The following list offers a variety of possibilities for interesting and informative field trips on the installation.

**Possible Field Trip Sites on the Base**
- local recycling center
- construction site
- car wash
- dental clinic
- parades
- annual lighting of the base
  - Christmas tree
- commissary
- bakery
- meat or produce department at the commissary
- fire station
- security office
- the local airport
- animal shelter
- arboretum
- aquarium
- bakery
- beach
- bus station
- courthouse
- dairy
- bread factory
- potato chip factory
- canning factory
- animal farm
- library
- the local park
- a radio station
- stables
- the gymnasium
- the enlisted or officers' club
- marina
- fast food restaurant (Burger King, McDonald's)
- homeported ships or submarines
- the base hospital
- planes and helicopters operated at the base
- firehouse
- florist
- greenhouse
- a nearby lake
- library
- museums
- nature trails
- an open air market
- a nearby orchard
- the local park
- pet shop
- zoo
- police department
- pool
- post office
- pumpkin patch
- radio or television station
- the state capitol
- a state park
- the meat or produce department at the local market
- train station
- vegetable stand
- weather station

Your local librarian can help you locate a visitors guide to your area. Many states and cities have tour books specifically aimed at children.
A Checklist for a Successful Field Trip

The following tips will help to ensure a successful field trip.

• There must be at least two caregivers with each group of children on each field trip. Ratios outlined in OPNAVINST 1700.9 (Series) must be maintained.

• The driver should have the route to and from the field trip site well planned in advance of departure.

• Permission slips must be submitted for each child going on the field trip.

• Copy of children's registration card in event of emergency.

• Be sure to bring a first aid kit and container filled with water in case of emergencies.

• Check attendance when boarding vehicle(s); when you reach the field trip site; when reboarding vehicle(s) for the return trip; and again when back at the CDC or CDH home.

• Develop behavior guidelines for the children to follow both while in transit and at the field trip site.

• Allow children to enter vehicle(s) only from the sidewalk.

• Seatbelts must be fastened at all times.

• Each caregiver should be assigned specific children to monitor for the duration of the trip.

• All children and staff members should wear name-tags at all times.

• Parents should be informed about all fees and charges related to the field trip well in advance of the scheduled date of the trip.

• Entry fees should be collected by CDC staff responsible for planning and implementing the field trip prior to departure.

• Locate parent volunteers to serve as chaparones.

• Post a reminder to parents the day before the trip.

• While away, leave note on the classroom door indicating where you are and when you will return.
SAMPLE PERMISSION SLIP

You may want to simplify or refine this Sample Permission Slip depending on the size of your Center or the age of the children taking the trip.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO:</th>
<th>CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Name of Base)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FROM:</td>
<td>THE PARENTS OF _____________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Permission is hereby granted for bus, van or private automobile transportation to the following place during the month of ____________________, 1991.

| Place: _____________________________ | Date: ___________________________ |

It is agreed that the United States Government, the Department of the Navy, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Department and its employees or agents will be and are held harmless and released from any liability in the event of accident or injury to my child sustained in connection with the aforementioned trips.

| PAID: _____________________________ | (Parent’s Signature) |

| GROUP: _____________________________ | (Date) |

| FEE FOR TRIP: _____________________________ |