

Planning a Fun & Successful Field Trip to the Seattle International Children's Festival (SICF)

Field trips offer an exciting opportunity to extend learning outside of the classroom. Students and teachers alike benefit from stepping off school grounds for a day of "real world discovery." While planning, consider the following:

Ask Questions: Some may wonder, "Why go on field trips? They break routine and they're extra work to organize. Are the children really getting something out of them?" A successful field trip broadens horizons and makes learning more concrete because classroom concepts are applied to the real world.

Experiential Learning: A fun *and* successful field trip is entertaining *and* simulates the senses. The two driving factors to consider in choosing a worthwhile field trip destination are *curriculum enhancement* and *age appropriateness*. Successful field trips should augment classroom through experiential learning and be suitable for specific age groups.

The Paperwork: Be sure to cinch up any administrative obligations before scheduling a field trip. Most schools require prior approval from a principal or director before funds are allocated. Some schools have specific off-campus policies such as adult to children ratios, parent permission slips, duration, distance from school, curriculum tie in, etc. Securing proper transportation and lodging (if needed) then follows.

Prepare Everyone: Review any curriculum materials prior to attending the Festival. SICF provides detailed curriculum materials, including an audio CD sampler of music, to teachers attending the Festival. Additional materials can be found anywhere from a teacher's personal library of lessons to a vast array of online resources.

Getting There Is Half the Fun: Involve students in the planning process – it's a wonderful way to teach important life skills. Students can help coordinate "the logistics" of their Festival trip. This helps mount excitement and involves students in something they'd otherwise be left out of. Students can access the SICF website to see the schedule of the performances they'll attend and map out a "game plan" for the day.

Discuss your method of transportation to and from the Festival. Students can calculate time needed for travel, performances, lunch and recess, as well as time to enjoy any other Festival activities available at Seattle Center. Students can even trace out a route by printing out a map of Seattle Center. If taking Seattle Metro bus, ask students to help by reading bus timetables and locating pick up and drop off points. Students can visit the Metro bus website and help plan the most efficient bus route to the Festival.

Get the Word Out: Teachers can rev up excitement through presentations and newsletters to parents. Along with field trip details such as arrival/departure times, include information on the performances and a few online resources parents can read with their children at home. Parent chaperones will especially appreciate such information.

The Day Of: Encourage students and parents to watch the weather forecast for their day at the Festival, emphasizing the importance of dressing for the weather. Comfortable shoes are a must. Keep in mind that students are not allowed to bring backpacks into Festival venues.

Encourage students and parents to pack healthy sack lunches with a disposable drink – the sacks should be clearly labeled with the students' name. Avoid foods that are easily squished like bananas. Place as many sacks in a large plastic bag so that it is comfortable to carry – the plastic bag should also be clearly labeled with the school's name. Adults can then tote the lunches and distribute accordingly.

Have Fun: SICF is a wonderful celebration of expressive cultures, so take it all in and have fun! Enjoy the performances, take pictures, discuss the shows over lunch at the Fountain (be sure the sea gulls don't fly off with your sandwich!) and stroll around Seattle Center. Take note to locate important resources such as First Aid, restrooms, enrichment activities, ground maps, food, info booths, etc. If seeing multiple shows in a day, consider providing a healthy snack for students to eat between shows. If unfamiliar with Seattle Center, have a map of the Center grounds handy to help find your way. (Maps are also mounted throughout the Center.)

Share Experiences & Evaluate: In the days following the Festival, teachers can plan post-trip activities that build on the knowledge gained from the preparation and field trip itself. Begin with a discussion of the performances. Students and teachers can create engaging displays of their experiences. Consider sharing with other classes, parent/teacher groups and the school board. Include short reports, maps, the class itinerary and pictures. (Note that while most artists do not allow still or video photography during their SICF performances, many have photos available online.)

Ask teachers and administrators to dedicate time at the next staff meeting to evaluate the field trip. Discuss the trip and its relevance within the overall curricula. Did the trip meet curricular goals? Strategize ways to improve the trip, performances and curriculum materials. It is helpful for a teacher to take notes during this discussion. These can then be compiled and shared with staff. An additional copy can be placed into the school's field trip file for reference.

Feedback: Lastly, the Festival welcomes feedback on your experiences. SICF mails evaluation forms to all Festival participants. Please take a moment to complete the evaluation. This helps the Festival improve the quality of programming and materials provided to schools. Again, SICF is a celebration of expressive cultures from around the world for children and adults alike - your feedback helps improve the educational benefits and overall experience for generations of festival-goers to come.

For more information on curriculum materials and evaluations, please contact Bruce Hall, Director of Education, Seattle International Children's Festival at (206) 684-7336 or by email at bruce@seattleinternational.org.