

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 30, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees  
FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools  
SUBJECT: Out of Province Field Trips  
ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Assistant to the Superintendent  
RESOURCE  
STAFF: Kevin Stevenson, Leadership Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Board Policy HICA.BP Field Trips as amended and outlined in APPENDIX I be approved.

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Board Policy HICA.BP Field Trips be amended as outlined in APPENDIX I to indicate the board's support for out of province and international field trips.

The administrative regulations for field trips have been revised to reflect more stringent safety and reporting guidelines (APPENDIX II). Both the revised administrative regulations and consent letter (APPENDIX III) have been communicated to schools.

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APPENDIX I: HICA.BP Field Trips  
APPENDIX II: HICA.AR Field Trips  
APPENDIX III: Consent Letter  
APPENDIX IV: Background Information on Out of Province Field Trips  
APPENDIX V: List of High Risk Activities Identified by Insurer

# Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

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CODE: HICA.BP  
TOPIC: Field Trips

EFFECTIVE DATE: 28-11-2000  
ISSUE DATE: 30-11-2000  
REVIEW DATE: 11-2005

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The board recognizes field trips as valuable educational activities that may be used to enhance student learning and development. *It also acknowledges the value of out of province and international trips as a means to extend the learning that takes place in the classroom.* The board's commitment to providing a safe learning environment for students extends to include school activities which occur outside the boundaries of the students' schools.

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Reference(s):

[HICA.AR](#) - Field Trips

[AD.BP](#) - District Priorities

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON OUT OF PROVINCE FIELD TRIPS

**Introduction:** On May 13, 2003, the board approved a motion by Trustee Hansen that “the administration conduct a review of present policies and regulations that relate to international travel for students. That the report either reaffirm the relevancy of present policies and regulations or recommend amendments required to address current global situations.”

This report provides information on the review of board policy and regulation pertaining to out of province field trips. Based on the review, the administration proposes no changes to Board policy but several amendments to the administrative regulation to address current conditions. As well, it proposes an extension of indemnification to cover legal fees that might be incurred.

**Background:** Historically, out of province and international travel has been strongly supported by parents. Parents, staff and students have viewed such trips as enriching. All field trips are expected to have curricular links.

During the 2002-03 school year, there were 91 out of province field trips, including some out of country. Approximately 2,300 students were involved in these field trips and all trips were successfully concluded without incident.

The current district field trip administrative regulation, HICA.AR-Field Trips requires that the superintendent be informed of all overnight trips. As well, field trip information packages are submitted to the superintendent and reviewed by Leadership Services staff to ensure compliance with the regulation. Principals are informed if there are deficiencies and are expected to remedy.

As a result of recent local and world events, concern regarding the safety of travel as it relates to field trips has been heightened. Thus, in the spring, the district implemented a number of additional safeguards prior to allowing approximately 500 students and staff to travel out of province and internationally. These safeguards included daily check-ins with Leadership Services by lead teachers, daily review of government travel advisories and additional meetings with parents of students involved to ensure informed consent. Also, at the request of the Board of Trustees, schools were informed that the superintendent had the authority to approve, alter or cancel trips depending on his perception of the risk associated with a particular destination.

Field trip policies from selected jurisdictions across Canada have been reviewed. A wide range of policies and accompanying resources were acquired from eight large urban boards. Of those examined, only Edmonton Catholic Schools has imposed a one-year moratorium on out of country trips. A number of the other boards did delay or cancel some trips because of the destination but have since reverted to their existing policies.

**Action:** As a result of this review, the administrative regulation HICA-AR-Field Trips was amended to incorporate the changes instituted this spring as well as others related to the consent form. These changes include:

- approval by the Superintendent for out of province field trips
- daily contact by phone or e-mail to Leadership Services by lead teachers
- authority of the Superintendent to cancel or alter a field trip at any time due to forces, conditions or threats outside the control of the district
- revision of the parental consent forms to include:
  - consent from parents authorizing the supervisors to arrange for necessary medical treatment
  - specifically require parents, or a qualified instructor, to indicate a child's skill level in any high-risk activity (see Appendix V for list of high-risk activities identified by the insurer) such as swimming or skiing
  - allow parents to consent to particular activities and withhold consent to others within the same field trip
  - information about the superintendent's authority to reserve the right to cancel, postpone or modify any field trip to ensure student safety and that Edmonton Public Schools will not entertain any requests for refunds or other forms of compensation.

Leadership Services will continue to review field trip information packages. A letter to parents and a form have been developed to help schools with their planning and ensure that parents receive sufficient information to enable them to provide informed consent. The letter includes specific wording indicating to parents that the superintendent retains the authority to cancel, postpone or modify any field trip at any time to ensure student safety and that no request for compensation will be entertained. This letter and the forms will be made available in the on-line forms section of the district's intranet.

Finally, a recent amendment to the School Act provides protection from liability for trustees, employees of the board, school council members and volunteers. However, it provides no protection for the cost of legal fees incurred in defending an action unless the Board of Trustees chooses to extend the indemnification. Thus, the administration will bring a report to board recommending that, for the protection of trustees, staff and volunteers, the indemnification be extended to cover the cost of any legal fees that might be incurred.