



Independent AB Authority	Footprints for Learning Society (Academy)
Policy Number	Number HSE 1.0
Policy Title	Safety for Off-Campus Outdoor Education and Field Trips Policy
Date of Review	August, 2023

OVERVIEW

Off-campus outdoor educational activities and educational field trips provide valuable learning opportunities, especially when designed to supplement and enhance school programs. The board expects that the principal and staff will ensure a safe learning environment for any organized or school-supported off-campus outdoor educational activity or field trip. Care shall be taken to ensure that such activities are organized to maximize educational benefit and protect the safety and well-being of students.

Legal Reference

- Education Act, Section 29, 30
- Alberta Regulation (AR 93/2019) Sections 9 (Policies), 13 (principal), 17 (Insurance)

Definitions

- a) Excluded activity - means an off-campus outdoor activity that is deemed not acceptable by the board and included in Schedule A: Excluded Activities (to be developed by the board, if applicable).
- b) Key supervisor - means the responsible adult in charge of an off-campus activity, designated by the principal, where the individual must be a teaching or non-teaching staff member organizing an off-campus activity and accompanying the student(s) on the activity.

c) Known risk activity - means activities related to a student's participation in outdoor physical activity on land, water, ice or snow, and self-sustained outdoor living, including camping, where conditions may present a safety risk due to the activity itself or arising from natural phenomena, such as weather, terrain or conditions.

d) Off-campus outdoor activity - means an instructional activity or a student activity, sanctioned by the school, that occurs at any place, and for any duration, away from the school/school grounds. The activity may include:

- National off-campus activities that occur out of the province of Alberta, but within Canada;
- International off-campus activities that involve travel to a country other than Canada.

e) Overnight accommodations - means any off-campus activities that requires sleeping arrangements for students.

f) Parent - means, for the purpose of this Administrative Procedure, any individual who meets the definition as set out in the Family Law Act.

g) Participant - means a student, teacher or parent/community volunteer or any other employee of the Division who participates in an off-campus activity.

h) Safety Guidelines - means the most recent version of the Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools, or any replacement document, as published and updated from time to time by Alberta Education.

Limitations

Work Experience/Work Study Programs or Registered Apprenticeship Programs as defined by the Off-Campus Education policy of Alberta Education or community-based program activities for students with special needs, where such activities are specified in each student's Individualized Education Plan, are considered exempt from the requirements of this Administrative Procedure.

Procedures

Educational context:

1. Each off-campus activity shall have educational outcomes established in alignment with the Alberta Programs of Study and/or the school's educational program (co-curricular or extra-curricular).

2. National or International off-campus activity proposals (where permitted and approved by the board) shall indicate an appropriate link to curriculum and/or to the mission and vision of the school.

Approval and/or cancellation:

3. All off-campus outdoor educational and/or field trip activities require appropriate authorization as specified within these procedures and identified on the Outdoor Education and Field Trip Education Form (to be developed), specifically:

3.1. Local and provincial off-campus activities, including those requiring overnight accommodations, shall normally be authorized by the Board and principal;

3.2. Prior to approval, student safety and risk mitigation considerations shall be reviewed by the principal and Board and Supervisors;

3.3. Prior to approval, principals shall ensure that any off-campus outdoor activities deemed to represent activities of known risk are communicated to and acknowledged by the Board.

4. The approval process for any national or international off-campus activities shall ensure preliminary Board approval at the early stage of planning, and a final approval prior to departure:

4.1. With respect to national or international off-campus activities, the principal must seek preliminary approval by the Board a minimum of 90 days in advance of the departure date of the proposed activity.

4.2. Prior to any national or international excursion being promoted to participants, the principal shall submit to the board for approval a succinct summary of the planned itinerary for any national or international excursions, detailing known risks, mitigation strategies and insurance provisions. Final approval must be received no later than 21 days prior to the travel departure date.

4.2.1. Once approved, the principal and supervisors shall seek to avoid any substantial variance from the approved itinerary except in the case of an emergency situation. Where changes are deemed necessary by the principal and/or identified key supervisors, the changes shall fall within the approved known risks, mitigations and insurance coverage.

5. Notwithstanding any of the guidelines set out in this Administrative Procedure, the Board may cancel or interrupt any approved off-campus activity, at any time, up to the point of return from that activity where the board considers the safety and well-being of students and supervisors to be at unusual risk, real or potential, due to emerging circumstances:

5.1. Such a decision shall consider any emergent change in social, political, health, legal or physical environment that may have created risk(s) greater than that which existed

5.2. principals are expected to ensure that strategies are in place to address the financial implications of cancellation/interruption of off-site activities for emergent reasons, e.g., cancellation or interruption insurance, any refunds on payments, distribution or retention of fundraising monies; and

5.3. Parents, students and staff shall be given written information about the potential for loss of some or all of monies they pay or fundraise for each off-campus activity, without any recourse to the board for financial loss.

6. All outdoor education activities and field trips shall be organized in a manner that conforms to Board policies and Administrative Procedures regarding student transportation and the use of private vehicles.

Parental information and consent:

7. Parents shall be given prior information and opportunity to make informed decisions about their child's participation in any off-campus activities, including the right to withdraw their child from such activities.

8. Depending on the nature and venue of each off-campus activity, the Board, principal and identified key supervisor(s) shall determine what information about the following or any additional topics shall be provided to parents, and ensure it is delivered in a timely manner:

8.1. Purpose/goals of the activity.

8.2. Proposed/final itinerary and arrangements for overnight stays.

8.4. Description of the activities or events.

8.5. Need for any additional medical insurance and/or trip cancellation/interruption insurance.

8.6. Potential hazards and safety planning information for dealing with activities involving significant risk.

8.7. Emergency procedures to be followed in the event of injury, illness or unusual circumstances.

8.8. Supplies/equipment/documentation students are to bring.

8.9. Accommodation (including billeting).

8.10. Transportation arrangements.

8.11. Arrangements for supervision.

8.12. Cost to the student/parent.

8.13. Provisions/implications for addressing unplanned or emergency trip cancellation or interruption.

9. A signed parental permission form shall be required for each participating student. The form:

9.1. will help ensure parents have access to necessary information, in a timely manner, regarding off-campus activities;

9.2. shall be required for all local, provincial, national or international off-campus activities that require overnight accommodation, and/or for any activity beyond what parents would expect their child to participate in at a school or where the risks are beyond what is normal to the operations of the school;

9.3. shall ensure parents are fully informed regarding foreseeable risks inherent in any off-campus activity;

9.4. may be required, at the discretion of the principal, for local off-campus activities not requiring transportation, such as walking trips in the neighbourhood of the school, or to a series of curricular lessons at local sports, health, cultural, educational or municipal facilities that require brief transportation;

9.5. May be used, at the discretion of the principal, for repeated off-campus pursuits which may include scheduled and unscheduled walking trips in the neighborhood of the school, trips to swimming lessons, outdoor education classes, inter-school sports, etc.; and

9.6. Notwithstanding 9.5 above, separate field trip and off-campus parental consents must be obtained for any activity deemed by the principal to involve a known risk.

Supervision of off-campus outdoor education and field trip activities:

10. Each activity shall be adequately supervised to ensure appropriate student behavior and safety as outlined elsewhere in relevant Alberta legislation, Board policies, Administrative Procedures, and current *Alberta Physical Education Safety Guidelines*.

11. The principal is responsible for designating a key supervisor for each off-campus activity and ensuring, to a level of satisfaction, the nature and amount of preparations that are made for all off-campus activities:

11.1. Where an administrator (principal or Assistant) is attending the off-campus activity, the Key Supervisor shall be the administrator.

11.2. In multi-school off-campus activities, key supervisors are expected to coordinate their supervision responsibilities.

11.3. Principals are responsible to ensure that all participants in a multi-school off-campus activity understand, and demonstrate an understanding of the duty of care that all supervisors hold for all students.

11.4. In any multi-school off-site activity, all supervisors share the duty of care for all students at all times.

12. The principal shall take into consideration, and ensure, with the Key Supervisor, that the number of supervisors present on the off-campus activity is reasonable to provide supervision for each activity and ensure effective response to emergency situations.

13. Prior to each off-site activity, the principal(s), in consultation with the key supervisor, shall ensure that all staff and volunteers have been briefed on their specific roles and behavior standards for the students and themselves.

13.1. For off-campus events that will include overnight accommodation of male and female students, both male and female supervisors shall be present.

14. For each off-campus activity, the principal shall ensure one or more supervisors has training in a recognized First Aid/CPR program and that supervisors have access to an appropriately equipped portable first aid kit.

15. The key supervisor shall have appropriate emergency information available, with consideration given to at least the following items, depending on the nature, duration and destination(s) for each off-campus activity:

- 15.1. Student names and emergency contact information.
- 15.2. Student Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan numbers (for national or international travel).
- 15.3. Details of any requirements for additional health/medical insurance and/or trip cancellation insurance (for national or international travel).
- 15.4. Student health/medical concerns and medications as necessary.
- 15.5. Contact numbers for a school administrator or alternate staff member.

16. For off-campus educational activities that require overnight accommodations and/or those in excess of a full school day, supervisors who are not current staff members of the board shall be considered Volunteers, and therefore:

- 16.1. Volunteers shall ensure that an appropriate Vulnerable Sector Check document or corresponding police security clearance is on file with the principal prior to their participation in any off-site activity.

Organizational procedures:

17. The principal and the key supervisor shall make reasonable provision that off-campus activities with a curricular focus are affordable for all eligible students.

Known risk activities:

18. Where an off-campus outdoor activity or field trip involves known risk activities, the principal is responsible for ensuring that a reasonable assessment of the risks involved is completed in cooperation with the key supervisor.

- 18.1 The principal shall communicate these risks on the Off- Campus Outdoor Education and Field Trip Education Form.

19. For all outdoor pursuits and/or all other activities that may include known risks, the principal shall ensure that the board is aware of the risks and that the board's liability insurance provides coverage for claims that could arise from planned activities.

20. In regard to any planned off-campus activity, the principal, in consultation with the key supervisor is responsible for considering all foreseeable risks; including:

20.1. That the activity proposed shall be suitable to the age, mental and physical condition of each student;

20.2. That students shall have been progressively taught and coached to perform expected activities properly and to avoid foreseeable dangers;

20.3. That each student's equipment shall be thoroughly checked and approved by the key supervisor to ensure that all equipment is suitable to the activity prior to participation;

20.4. That the activity shall be fully and sufficiently supervised;

20.5. That a contingency plan shall be predetermined and readied to respond to unforeseen severe weather emergencies; and

20.6. Notwithstanding the additional requirements of this Administrative Procedure, a detailed permission form, requesting acknowledgement of known risks, including the elements detailed in (20) above, shall be signed by the parent or guardian and secured prior to the occurrence of the activity.

21. The principal shall be satisfied that supervisors assigned to accompany students in any outdoor pursuit where known risk activities may exist are sufficiently trained for the activity and have been appropriately briefed on at least the following topics to make informed choices about participating:

21.1. Behavior expectations/responsibilities for supervisors and students;

21.2. Foreseeable risks that may arise from participation in the activity;

21.3. Appropriate roles during the activity or in emergency circumstances;

21.4. Plans and strategies for any of the activities, e.g., site, conditions, routes, etc.;

21.5. Safety precautions and plans for responding to emergency situations/accidents, including supervisor knowledge of and ability to use an appropriately equipped first aid kit;

21.6. Feasible contingency plans and emergency equipment/procedures have been established to address foreseeable emergencies, e.g., weather conditions, medical/health issues, accidents; and

21.7. Implications arising from possible cancellation.

22. The principal and key supervisor must ensure that volunteers who accompany groups for outdoor pursuits and activities with known risks are selected on the basis of their ability to effectively support all participants, with their knowledge, skill, fitness and experience helping to minimize risk.

23. Notwithstanding sections 18 – 22 above, the principal shall ensure that school staff and parents are aware of off-campus activities identified as “excluded activities” by the board and that no students participate in such excluded activities at any time or under any circumstance.

References:

AISCA Policy 14

Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools

The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation

Safety Guidelines for Secondary Inter-School Athletics in Alberta

Family Law Act, Section 20