

# questions & answers

## International Travel Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are you moving ahead with international student travel?**

The CBE is resuming planning for all international trips for the 2016-17 school year, except for those traveling to France and/or Belgium.

### **How was this decision made?**

The decision was made based on a number of factors.

1. We gathered the perspectives of more than 1,000 parents, teachers and students at in-person meetings at schools. We also received almost 500 perspectives online.
2. We reviewed travel advisories from a variety of sources.
3. We consulted with colleagues from other school districts locally, provincially, nationally and internationally
4. We looked at the financial impact of cancelling the trips.

### **Did families whose trips were cancelled get their money back?**

We worked with tour operators and service providers to minimize the financial impact to families. All parents were invited to a meeting at their school to discuss specific details about their trip.

### **Will other trips be cancelled as well?**

The CBE follows a rigorous process for all international travel. We continually monitor travel advisories for all destinations, and as always, we respond to any change. Responses may range from changing itineraries to cancellation of trips.

### **Why haven't you cancelled all trips, like Calgary Catholic or Edmonton Catholic?**

Each school district follows its own processes and procedures. After carefully reviewing our own processes, and after significant consultation with parents, teachers, students, other school districts, we felt confident to resume planning for all of our trips except for France.

### **Why have you cancelled all France trips, including Besancon?**

The travel advisories cover all of France, not just Paris.

### **Why do you think other school districts have cancelled all trips?**

We cannot speak for other school districts. Each of us follows our own processes and procedures.

### **Will you change any of your processes and procedures going forward?**

We have reviewed our current off-site procedures for international trips and can confirm that those procedures take into account the aspects necessary for safe and successful experiences for our students and staff. We have added some additional training for our teacher supervisors around emergency preparedness specific to group travel. In addition, parents will be asked to sign a more comprehensive acknowledgement of risk form going forward.



### **What is the trip planning process?**

Our typical trip planning process is rigorous. The Teacher-in-Charge discusses the potential trip with their Principal. If the Principal supports the trip, they have a conversation with the Area Director to receive approval to continue planning.

The Teacher-in-Charge may need to complete a site visit if they haven't been to the site within the last 2 years.

The Teacher-in-Charge then completes a trip proposal document that includes, but not limited to:

- Overview – dates, destination, purpose of trip
- Educational outcomes – the trip must have a clear connection to Alberta Programs of Study
- Hazard Assessment
- Supervision considerations
- Teacher-in-Charge preparation
- Emergency Planning/Procedures
- Transportation arrangements
- Budget
- Supporting documents, including:
  - Parent letter
  - Acknowledgement of Risk form
  - Student, staff, and volunteer Medical Information forms
  - A proposed itinerary
  - Student conduct & behaviour expectations contract
  - Electronic device policy for the trip
  - A summary of the Teacher-in-charge Off-Site visit experience

The proposal and supporting documents are reviewed by the Off-Site Activities Specialist, who provides detailed feedback to the Teacher-in-Charge, who then makes any necessary changes.

The proposal is presented to a committee who reviews the trip and works through common potential trip scenarios, including emergency scenarios, with both the Teacher-in-Charge and the Principal. This committee can request changes and makes a recommendation in regard to approval of the trip.

A mandatory parent meeting is required for all overnight trips. For international trips, there is often either a letter or meeting early in the trip planning process to gauge interest in the potential trip and a final parent meeting before the trip departure date to provide additional information on the specifics of the trip.

The Area Director makes the final decision in regard to approval of the trip.

### **What is the emergency protocol? Communication protocol?**

Emergency protocol and planning is an essential part of every trip.

Standard emergency protocols are followed on every trip, such as site orientations, agreed upon emergency meeting points, key contact information, and how to alert a supervisor in the event of an emergency.

If you have questions about how students are briefed before and during the trip and emergency plans for your specific trip, speak to your Teacher-in-Charge.

**How do you assess risk of these trips?**

Every trip is required to undergo a standard risk assessment process. We consider current events, environmental conditions, suitability of activities, risk vs educational value, and overall supervision arrangements.

We also use the services of tour operators familiar with the destination when travelling overseas and public and private sources that advise us on risk present in locations around the world.

**Will the CBE share the government/travel advisory information they obtain?**

We will share relevant and emergent information. Government travel advisories can be found here: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>

**Can adjustments be made to itineraries? What about adjustments, if necessary, while the students are on the trip?**

Adjustments can be made to itineraries. Often, these will be at a cost, depending on what adjustments are requested and when they are requested.

If an adjustment is needed due to a safety concern during a trip, the Service Provider is expected to assist in making these arrangements. If that support is for some reason unavailable, the Teacher-in-Charge has access to a purchasing card and can make alternative arrangements with assistance, if necessary, from CBE staff in Calgary.

**What additional measures are tour providers taking?**

At this point in time, tour providers have expressed that they are willing to work with the CBE in adjusting itineraries, if requested.

**Who made this decision? Who initiated this review?**

The decision maker is CBE senior administration, led by the Chief Superintendent, informed by objective sources related to international travel and our insurance policies. The responsibility of the final decisions rests with the Chief Superintendent.

It is important to remember that parents are the ultimate decision makers regarding withdrawing their child from any trip.

**Why are you making this decision now?**

In December, we reviewed international travel following recent global events. This decision needed to be made in a timely manner to ensure that we take into account factors such as the safety of trip participants as well as the costs associated with cancelling travel.

**Does this decision apply to trips scheduled for the 2016/17 school year?**

Yes.

**What is the refund policy for my trip?**

Each service provider has a different policy. This information was provided to you when you signed up for your trip. In the event that a trip is cancelled, we will work with service providers to minimize the financial impact.

**If my trip is cancelled and an alternative can be considered, will I be consulted on the alternative destination?**

Any alternative trip arrangements will follow the standard trip planning process. Parents will be invited to a parent meeting to discuss options with their school.

**Will the feedback from these meetings be made public?**

Perspectives shared by impacted parents, staff and students was shared.