

# **Fieldwork and Overnight Policy**

Venture Academy provides compelling learning experiences both within the school walls and outside of them in the larger community and natural surroundings. The Board recognizes the value of direct research at relevant sites of interest, conferring with local experts, and visiting resource rich locations like museums, libraries, research institutions, operating businesses, farms, etc. Consequently, students at Venture participate regularly in fieldwork that may also involve overnight excursions.

In order to maintain the safety, welfare, and educational interests of students, teachers, and volunteers, the following policy shall apply.

## **Fieldwork Approval Procedure**

All proposed fieldwork must be approved by the School Administration in advance of any trips. Trip planners will follow guidelines established by Administration that provide adequate advance notice to parents and students and sufficient time for review and preparation by Administration and office staff.

## **Participation Requirements**

Fieldwork excursions trips are intended to provide direct, rare, and compelling educational experiences. Consequently, the School hopes to have all students participate. However, in situations where parents prefer not to have their child participate in overnight trips, such participation is not required and students will not be penalized for failure to attend. Under circumstances of non-participation, the school is not responsible for any missed experiences that students forgo for having elected not to attend.

## **Fieldwork Costs**

1. The School must stay within the budget raised and allocated for the experience.
2. Students will be given enough time to know costs, and will be required to make a reasonable effort to provide for needs through fund-raising, borrowing of equipment, etc.
3. The School will provide necessary funds and equipment for school wide experiences (such as opening camp) if a student (and family) is not financially able to cover the costs.
4. For optional intensive fieldwork, students will be responsible to pay for the experience.

## **Parental Consent and Release of Liability**

1. For each fieldwork excursion, a note must be sent home to parents/guardians describing the date, time, location, and purpose of the trip.
2. A consent and release of liability form must accompany this note and be returned to the school with the parent's signature prior to departure.
3. For certain trips parents and students shall receive and provide signed consent to abide by the safety rules and submit to the consequences of breaking rules.

- a. Fieldwork is an extension of the school boundaries. Consequently, the school dress code policy and all rules related to the prohibition of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and weapons with regard to both adults and students apply in all aspects of the trip including night-time, while in transport, and at all fieldwork locations. It is expected that the teacher(s) leading the fieldwork enforce these rules.
- b. As part of this agreement parents accept the responsibility, as a consequence of their child breaking the rules, to pick up and transport their child home from a trip at any time during the trip should the need arise.

### **Basic Fieldwork Safety**

1. The safety of both students and chaperones will be the top consideration in planning all fieldwork experiences. Safety guidelines based on vision, sound and presence will be assigned and followed during all fieldwork excursions.
2. School safety protocols for fieldwork shall be adhered to, including, but are not limited to:
  - criminal records background checks for volunteers;
  - frequent “roll calls” and other means of ensuring attendance;
  - clear supervision responsibilities for volunteers and staff;
  - special medical consideration for designated students;
  - communication methods and procedures both within the excursion group and from the group to the school, including procedures and guidelines to be followed in the event of an emergency.
  - No one-on-one grouping of adult with student. If, for instance, a private conference is needed, this must be done in view of other adults and students unless it is a parent child relationship.
3. Prior to fieldwork, students and chaperones will receive training in their respective responsibilities and in the basic safety considerations appropriate to the nature of the fieldwork. With respect to overnight trips, chaperones are required to acknowledge and sign a compliance form. There shall be strict enforcement of the rules.

### **Transportation**

1. When students leave campus for any school-sponsored activity not within walking distance, the preferred mode of transportation is a school bus.
2. When acquiring bus services is not possible or practical, volunteers may transport students in their own vehicles. All volunteer drivers are subject to the requirements of the volunteer policy including criminal records background checks.
3. All Volunteer drivers will complete the State Risk Management Online Driving Test prior to driving on any fieldwork for a school year.
4. Volunteer drivers shall submit their current driver’s license and proof of insurance to be photocopied and kept on file in a secure location at the school.
5. Teachers do not serve as drivers to transport students on fieldwork except in rare

circumstances where it is necessary.

6. Volunteer drivers must have at least three students assigned to each car. They may transport fewer if one of the two is their child.

### **Supervision Ratios**

Maintaining prescribed student to adult ratios serves a very important role in fieldwork. The role of chaperone is to assist teachers in keeping students safe, following rules, and facilitating participation as directed by teachers. Venture reserves the right to choose both who will serve as chaperones and the number. In determining ratios, more chaperones is not necessarily better.

### **Day Ratios**

A student to adult ratio will be maintained of no more than 8:1 for K-8 trips and 12:1 for 9-12 trips. Exceptions to the student/adult ratio may only be granted or required by administration on a case-by-base basis prior to the announcement of any fieldwork.

### **Overnight Fieldwork**

Student to Chaperone ratios are as follows (exceptions to the student/adult ratio may only be granted or required by administration on a case-by-case basis prior to the announcement of any fieldwork):

#### **6-8 POD**

**-8:1 ratio** (in order to meet sleeping requirements, a lower ratio may be required at night to meet sleeping arrangement requirements)

#### **High School**

**-10:1 ratio** (in order to meet sleeping requirements, a lower ratio may be required at night to meet sleeping arrangement requirements)

### **Sleeping Arrangements**

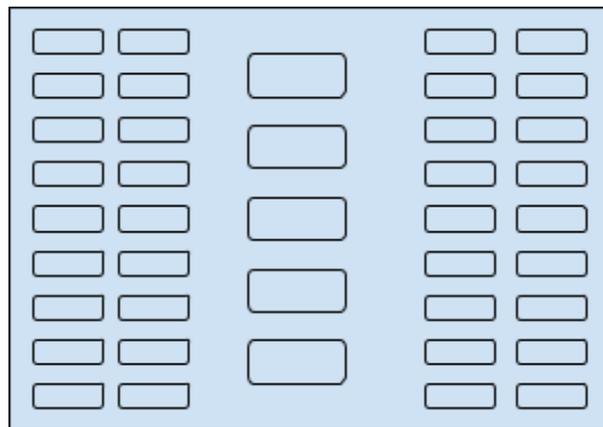
Gender specific camps/sleeping areas shall be clearly separated from one another. Care will be given by staff to assign or change sleeping arrangements to ensure the safety of all students.

In line with policy descriptions below, administration shall create specific guidelines that mitigate potential risks; keep students, teachers, and chaperones safe; and allow for appropriate fieldworks to take place. Teachers planning overnight fieldworks must consult with their principal and obtain and satisfactorily complete the assigned guidelines prior to announcing all trips.

Students who are not registered as a specific gender, must consult with the principal about options.

**Large, single-room lodging (this is the school preferred option for all overnight trips):**

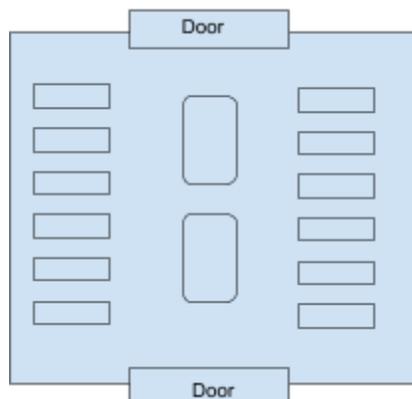
- A. The room will be clearly divided into a gender-separated student sleeping areas and adult sleeping areas that maintain at least 5 feet between adult and any student.
- B. Appropriate measures will be taken to maintain individual privacy when needed (individual washroom time, only one person is allowed in any washroom at any given time).



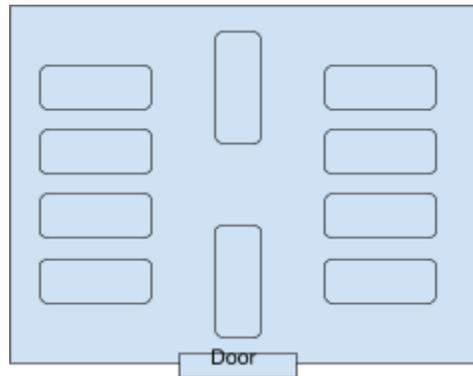
**Tent Lodging**

To maintain the safety and well-being of all involved, all tent lodging plans aim to meet the highest preference level possible for the given event.

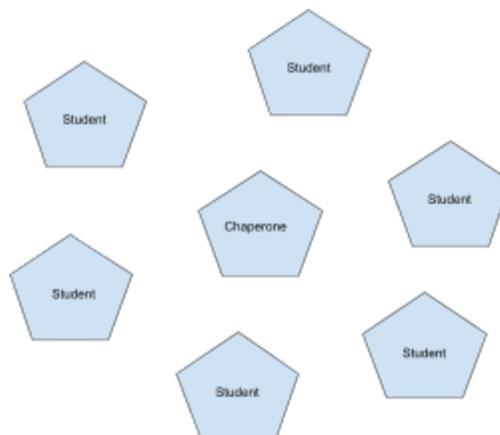
**1st Preference--[Very Large one-room Tent](#) (at least able to accommodate [14 people](#))** : Two or more adult chaperones/teacher(s) share a large tent with students. The sleeping arrangements for the adults and students must be separated by three feet and adults must be able to monitor both the activity within the tent and the activity entering and leaving the tent at all times.



Medium-sized tents (8-12 person) should only be used when necessary after fully utilizing the Very Large one-room Tents. Note: doing so will increase the number of chaperones needed because there *must* be two adults in each tent.



**Not preferred, but necessary for the situation (e.g., backpacking).** Small tents (1-6) arranged in close proximity to one another and to assigned chaperones. In this case, chaperones do not sleep in tents with students. This option must be arranged in consultation with the principal *and* prior to announcing trips. Special focus on groupings/couplings is given to assure safety of all. As part of announcing said trip, parents must be notified that it requires sleeping arrangements of less than three per tent.



**Hotel/motel/large house lodging** are not preferred, but are allowed where necessary. All reasonable measures must be taken to minimize the risks associated with these venues (e.g., such as access to inappropriate media or lack of supervision). Other preferred options such as Large Single Room must be explored prior to using this option. These options must be arranged in consultation with the principal *and* prior to announcing trips. A minimum of three students must be in each room.

### **Maximum Annual Overnight Thresholds**

High School students (9th-12th) have no maximum trip allowances, however, care will be taken to reflect the Venture Values including respect for family time in planning and carrying out trips, as well as the impact on other classes that are missed. All overnight trips that are longer than 5 nights and/or span a weekend must be approved by the board.

Middle School students (6th-8th) may have a maximum of four (4) overnight trips (camping or otherwise) with no single trip consisting of more than five (5) consecutive nights (Mon.-Sat.) and the total number of nights for all trips in a given year shall not exceed twelve (12).

Upper Elementary (3rd-5th) students do not have overnight trips as a general rule with the exception of the 5th grade Passage overnighter. If there is a rare, clear, and compelling educational opportunity which cannot be had by other means, one (1) overnight trip per year maybe proposed by the teachers. Though single night trips are preferred, the total number of nights for a single trip shall not exceed two (2).

Lower Elementary (K-2nd) students may have day trips only.