

# Culturally-Enriching and Arts-Based Field Trips

In recent years, there has been a dramatic decline in the amount of students attending enrichment field trips to museums, zoos, historical sites, and arts venues (McCord and Ellerson, 2009 as cited in Watson et al., 2019). Some argue that this decline is occurring because organizing and funding these trips can be burdensome for teachers and school leaders and take from in-classroom learning time (Greene et al., 2014). Additionally, some of these learning-based field trips have been exchanged for more “fun”, rewards-based trips for students, such as attending sporting events, amusement parks, and movie theaters (Greene et al., 2014). However, recent research suggests that there are many benefits to student learning and wellbeing that come through visiting museums and attending live theater and musical performances. Watson and colleagues (2019) argue that these culturally enriching field trips increase students' tolerance, social perspective taking, critical thinking and historical empathy. In addition, arts-based field trips can improve classroom engagement and behavior (Erickson et al., 2019).

As you plan a cultural field trip for your classroom or school, we encourage you to reach out to local museums, universities, and arts venues to determine the fees that may be associated with your visit. Many of these organizations may offer free or discounted experiences for students. In a review of arts museums throughout the United States, Randi Korn and associates (2018) found that 51 percent of museums never charge a fee for school groups, and only 14 percent

always require a fee. Some museums are also willing to help cover transportation costs (Randi Korn and Associates, 2018).

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<b>Grade Level:</b>	<b>All</b>
Materials:	Potential admission and transportation costs
Duration:	Half day- Full day (varies depending on length of tour or performance and transportation time)
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Reach out to local museums or performing groups to determine if they hold school tours or events and to determine potential admission, transportation, and lunch costs</li><li>2. Determine what day you plan to attend and seek administrative approval for the trip</li><li>3. Arrange for supervisors and volunteers to attend, and plan transportation</li><li>4. Send out student permission slips</li><li>5. Before the trip, discuss with students the objectives for the trip, and what you hope they will learn or understand</li><li>6. Follow up with students following the trip about what stood out to them, what they enjoyed, etc.</li></ol>

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### **Does it work?**

A few recent studies have been done assessing the social, emotional and cognitive benefits of culturally-enriching and arts-based field trips. In 2014, Greene and colleagues completed a study of the effects of a local art museum tour on students' critical thinking skills, historical empathy, and tolerance. Surveys were administered to over 10,000 students at 123 schools in Northwest Arkansas who had participated in a free school tour at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Students were also asked to complete a short essay about a work of art they had learned about on the tour. Students who attended the tour displayed higher level critical thinking skills, as evidenced by the observations and details included in their essays, as compared to the control group. Additionally, students who attended

the tour reported higher levels of tolerance and historical empathy than those who did not attend. The increase in tolerance and historical empathy was most significant among students from rural and underprivileged areas of the state, and among students from minority populations (Greene et al., 2014).

Watson and colleagues (2019) also assessed the impact of arts-based field trips on critical thinking, tolerance and social perspective taking, but instead included a live theater performance and symphony performance in addition to an art museum field trip. Social perspective taking was defined as the ability to understand that “people view the world in different ways” (Watson et al., 2019, p. 5.). For this study, fourth and fifth grade students in an urban area were randomly assigned to attend three arts-based field trips (art museum, live theater, symphony performance) or a control group which did not attend any of the field trips. Students’ answers to post-intervention surveys indicate some improvements in the tolerance and social perspective taking of students who attended all three field trips. In addition, the level of conscientiousness of female students was increased, as evidenced by more careful and thoughtful responses to survey questions (Watson et al., 2019). In a separate report of the same study, Erickson and colleagues (2019) assessed the impact of arts-based field trips on student engagement in school. Engagement was assessed by a reduction in behavioral infractions, and a survey, in which students reported their response to the statement “School is boring” from “disagree a lot” to “agree a lot” (Erickson et al., 2019, p. 15). It was found that students who attended the field trips reported more enjoyment of school and had fewer behavioral infractions following the field trips (Erickson et al., 2019).

#### **References:**

Erickson, H. H., Greene, J., Watson, A., & Beck, M. I. (2019). Does Art Make You Smart? A Longitudinal Experiment of the Effects of

Multiple Arts- Focused Field Trips. *Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications*. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-CtsR>

Greene, J. P., Kisida, B., & Bowen, D. H. (2014). The educational value of field trips. *Education Next*, 14(1). <https://edtechbooks.org/-YfWB>

Randi Korn & Associates (2018). *Survey of Single-visit K-12 Art Museum Programs*. Unpublished manuscript, National Art Education Association, Reston, VA. <https://edtechbooks.org/-Cidz>

Watson, A., Green, J., Erickson, H.H. & Beck.M. (2019). *Altered attitudes and actions: Social-emotional effects of multiple arts field trips*. University of Arkansas: EDRE Working Paper. [https://edtechbooks.org/-YrfFuser=jC6f\\_o8AAAAJ&alert\\_preview\\_top\\_rm=2&citation\\_for\\_view=jC6f\\_o8AAAAJ:zYLM7Y9cAGgC](https://edtechbooks.org/-YrfFuser=jC6f_o8AAAAJ&alert_preview_top_rm=2&citation_for_view=jC6f_o8AAAAJ:zYLM7Y9cAGgC)

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Fawson, S., Bates, M., & Boren, D. M. (n.d.). *Addressing Wellbeing In Schools*. EdTech Books.  
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