

Policies in education



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Excursions are recognised as important activities in the overall education provided by the school. Therefore they are an essential part of the curriculum. A focus on outcomes education means that there will be an emphasis on students displaying skills that are observed by the teacher/facilitator. Excursions play an important role in providing educational experiences outside the school setting.

The policy document I have used for this analysis is the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009. https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/student_admin/excursions/excursion_pol/PD20040010.shtml. I have included three hypothetical scenarios that will offer insight into the implementation of the policy.

They will help explain why it is important that the teacher be familiar with the policy and procedures and how it would assist in managing various situations on an excursion. The first scenario deals with the planning of an excursion, the second with problems that can arise during an excursion, and the third deals with planning the transport for a school activity. The apparent rationale for this policy is to ensure that all excursions provide the opportunity for students to engage in education in a way not available on the school campus. Excursions take place out of school premises, but the students are still in the care of the teachers. They need to have a new set of procedures which ensures the students safety and learning opportunities, plus safeguarding the teachers, should any of the guide lines be violated. Whenever learning takes place outside the normal learning environment there poses risks to students, teachers and school staff. The NSW

Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy is directed at managing such risks.

It has clear and concise set of objectives. One such objective is that of the educational value as established in the policy and states that ??? the educational value of an excursion must take account the needs and resources of the school, the needs of the students and the total learning program???. The excursion must have a direct and demonstrated connection with the curriculum.

The second objective – Inclusivity – states that ??? Unless exceptional circumstances exist, all students should have the opportunity to participate in the excursion???. (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy Implementations Procedures, 2009) This guarantees fairness in learning. It explains that provisions should be made for students with special needs, activities should be appropriate for the student??™s age, experience and capacity, and costs kept to a minimum to enable all students to participate. One of the most important issues that the policy addresses is Duty of care. It covers a vast number of planning procedures for the excursion.

??? A duty of care is owed to students in the school environment and while on excursions???. (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009). A risk assessment must be carried out to minimise harm and emergency response planning for staff and students. There must be a member of staff who has current emergency care training (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy

Implementations Procedures, 2009). It further states that adequate and appropriate supervision must be provided to ensure the safety of participants considering the number of students, their maturity, anticipated behaviour, and activities planned.

Where appropriate a gender balance of staff is to be considered. . The policy demonstrates the importance of consent forms and medical forms to be signed by parents or caregivers. Consent forms are important as they help in assessing the teacher to student ratio, while medical forms help with risk assessment, enabling the teacher to provide for students that may have special needs. Another area covered is the expected behaviour of students. The policy states that ??? students must behave appropriately at all times while on excursions, including when animals are encountered??? (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009).

To guarantee good behaviour all students must be informed prior to the excursion of their teacher??™s expectations, regarding their behaviour. The policy applies to all schools. Residential high schools are subject to specific additional procedures with regard to students in residence. Preschools are subject to specific protocol under the Children??™s Services Regulations 2004. It outlines the responsibility of all parties involved in the excursion process, including teachers, the principle and the department.

Teachers have to ensure that departmental policy is carried out. In addition, they have the responsibility of exercising proper care and supervision throughout the duration of the excursion. The duty of care of a teacher requires that the teacher shall take all measures as are reasonable in all

circumstances to prevent injury to a student. The principal must nominate a teacher to be in charge of the excursion and give written approval for the management plan for the excursion. The teacher-in-charge must take reasonable steps to foresee the potential for injuries and areas of danger participants. And create a management plan. Another important issue in the policy is the relevance and importance of the excursion to the curriculum. ??? Excursions are a valuable teaching and learning vehicle, often integral to quality curriculum delivering that they provide access to teaching content and learning experiences not available at school??? (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009).

This Policy is important because it makes it possible for the school to examine the value of the excursion, review and update the procedures, to ensure the continued safety of all involved. It outlines the rules and procedures and creates standards of quality for learning, as well as expectations and accountability. It explains the rights and responsibilities of teachers and students and covers all parties involved and what their role in the planning process is. This includes the department, school directors, principles, teachers, students, parents, and volunteers. To demonstrate the policy using the three hypothetical scenarios, will give a clearer understanding of the importance the policy plays in the planning of an excursion. Scenario one ??“ A primary school teacher decides to take her students for a walk through a nature reserve to help them with a unit of work.

Once the teacher has assessed the value of the excursion to the learning program, then she will have to determine whether the excursion can be

inclusive of all students. ??? Excursions are inclusive, and all students within the specific learning group are to be given the opportunity to participate??? (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009).

Pre-excursion planning may then include a visit to the proposed excursion site by the teacher, so that decisions on supervision and injury prevention are well informed. Then a risk assessment of the excursion must be completed. ??? A risk assessment is to be conducted and a risk management plan developed before seeking approval for any excursion??? (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009). The teacher must consult with and identify the number of staff required, identify the costs and draft the information and permission note for the parents.

Once all the details are complete the policy states that signed consent forms granting permission for students to participate in excursions and a medical information form are to be obtained from parents and caregivers (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009).

Scenario two ???“ Year two are participating in a swimming program at the local pool when a child becomes ill due to an asthma attack.

To deal with this situation the teacher supervising would have taken with them a copy the child??™s parent and emergency contacts and medical information. The child??™s parents must be informed. While the sick child is being treated, calm must be kept and other students supervised. This refers to the duty of care. The incident would then be reported to the principle. ??? Principals are to report controversial issues or incidents occurring while staff and students are on excursions, consistent with the Incident Reporting Policy??? (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions

Policy, 2009). Scenario three ??“ An excursion is being organised for a small group of students to participate in the local eisteddfod. There are not enough participants to require a bus for transportation but the venue is in walking distance.

The teacher organising the excursion must take steps to ensure the movement of the students is done in a safe manner. As stated in the policy, ??? safe transport or a safe walking route is to be organised for excursions??? (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009). The teacher will have to find the safest route and ensure that enough time is to be allocated to the excursion for this to take place.

A risk assessment will have to be conducted before approval from the principle is to be sought. If more supervision is required for the walk then additional help from another teacher will be organised. ??? Duty of care cannot be delegated from the school to parents, caregivers, volunteers, or employees of external organisations??? (NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009). Approval from the principal will be needed and consent forms completed. In conclusion The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Excursions Policy, 2009 is important because it establishes rules and procedures and creates standards of quality for learning and safety, as well as expectations and accountability. Without these, the experience would lack the structure and function necessary to provide the educational needs of students. Ultimately, the policy is necessary to the success and safety of the excursion. Reference ListACT Department of Education and Training.

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