

Field Trips - Complementing Classroom Experience: Learning Away from School

Not everything that students learn takes place in the formal classroom. Most parents have signed permission slips to allow their children to go on special trips – class visits to the fire station, post office, or newspaper office. When carefully planned, these trips provide important and necessary experiences to help children understand the world, learn facts, practice skills, and gain information about vocations and careers.

Naturally, the school is limited in the number of such trips it can permit because of time and cost. Herein lies a great opportunity for parents. One of the most common questions that a teacher receives from parents is, “What can I do to help my child learn?” While there are as many teacher responses as there are parents who inquire, educators agree that field trips are excellent learning experiences. With a little thought and planning, children from preschool through high school can gain much from a family field trip, whether it’s an everyday outing or a major vacation. After all, that which seems commonplace to us as adults is new and almost mystical to children.

A simple trip downtown to shop or a visit to a friend’s home can provide all kinds of surprises and interesting and worthwhile events – if the parent takes a little time to consider neighborhoods, buildings, parks, businesses, and

construction activities along the way. Trips to the library are worth repeating often.

Longer trips to new places may be planned for the purpose of seeing and doing educational things. This doesn’t mean that parents need to prepare lectures on geology or botany for the next trip. However, studying a guidebook, chamber of commerce publications, or the history of the area can make any trip more advantageous for parents and children alike. On long drives, drawing attention to the dashboard of the car can teach a child about distance and time. The fuel consumption gauge can even help with fractions.

The dividends of a well-prepared family field trip benefit the whole family. When children begin to see and

understand the things around them on such a trip, they’re less likely to be restless during what they consider to be merely an adult activity. Yet the lasting value is

that children become more observant and able to relate different events, names and places to each trip. They

When both school and home emphasize learning, a child’s interest is heightened.

begin to notice and ask questions about things that an adult may well take for granted.

The school is devoted to this kind of learning and works best when it is able to explain and extend those experiences the child has already had with his or her family. Most of us are aware of this process when it comes to language and speech patterns. We should be aware that it also hold true for observations that the child makes outside the home.

The richer we make these activities, the more we call our children's attention to the fascinating learning experiences in the world around us. Then our children will not only succeed in putting all the pieces together, they will also be inquisitive learners throughout their lives. And no one can be considered truly educated until reaching that stage.

