

Section 3.

General Considerations for Off-site Activities

Introduction

There are a wide variety of considerations related to planning and providing off-site activities. The purpose of this section is to provide information related to common considerations for all or most off-site programs. Teachers/leaders and principals are encouraged to read this section at least annually to become and remain familiar with the content.

Rationale for Off-Site Activities

Learning requires personal, purposeful involvement with the content in the BC Curriculum. Knowledge must be constructed within a climate of inquiry and, for real learning to occur, some of that work may ideally be done in contact with the subject of study. Well-planned and conducted off-site activities contribute to numerous objectives. They:

- provide concrete, meaningful experiences and problem-solving opportunities;
- stimulate interest and discussion;
- provide ideas, proof, data and conceptual illustrations and generalizations;
- place academic material in a relevant setting;
- offer opportunities for integrating school disciplines;
- provide opportunities for demonstrating responsible citizenship;
- develop positive attitudes in students;
- develop social interaction skills in group situations;
- promote new understandings between teachers and students as individuals;
- introduce positive role models in the community to students;
- foster positive relationships between the school and community;
- promote awareness and understanding of cultural values and traditions;
- foster social perspective-taking and empathy;
- increase awareness, understanding and advocacy for the environment;
- facilitate application of previously learned skills and acquisition of new ones;
- provide physical activity and experiential-based learning;
- improve health and fitness, and foster commitment to an active, healthy lifestyle;
- develop impulse control and mature risk-taking behavior in different contexts;
- connect students with their authentic selves and the potential for personal growth;
- provide a supportive community for youth rites of passage (e.g., camping overnight);
- develop self-confidence and self-determination;

- challenge the spirit of initiative, creativity and improvisation;
- encourage students to achieve their individual potential while managing their limitations;
- help create a culture of mutual care, safety and security;
- promote regard for learning as enjoyable, continuous and lifelong;
- inspire a sense of wonder; and
- provide opportunities for fun, re-creation and energizing.

To achieve these objectives, each off-site activity must be age/grade-appropriate and planned out in relation to the BC Curriculum, the needs and readiness of the students, and relevant health and safety factors. Where these elements merge, powerful educational opportunities occur.

Staff, Service Providers and Volunteers

Staff are people who are paid by the board (full time, part time, seasonal, casual) to undertake assigned tasks. Staff may be engaged as teachers, leaders, coaches, or fill other such roles. Wherever possible and feasible, it is desirable to have curricular and extracurricular activities supervised by certified teachers.

Service providers are contracted public or private entities who serve the board or school (e.g., charter bus company, municipality providing a school block booking for a local pool or rink, adventure pursuit guide).

Volunteers are individuals who undertake to perform certain tasks at no cost to the board, school or students (beyond reimbursement for expenses incurred in performing the volunteer service). Volunteers provide an extremely valuable resource to schools and students. Some, if not many off-site activities would not be possible but for the time and energy of generous and caring volunteers.

Screening of Contract Staff and Volunteers

As a condition of using contractors and/or volunteers in school programs, the board retains the option of performing background, reference and security checks of these individuals, prior to appointing them. The board may also require service providers to demonstrate adequate screening of staff and/or volunteers who will work with students.

The types and levels of screening undertaken on service providers and/or volunteers will vary depending on the nature of the volunteer involvement and board policy.

- In general, local activities/events involving service providers or volunteer leaders/supervisors, interacting with students engaged as a single group at a single place and time, do not require any specific screening (e.g., trip to the museum, downhill ski day at ski area in town). Application of screening mechanisms to every service provider or volunteer supporting any activity or event is prohibitively time-consuming and expensive and, based on statistical probabilities of incidents, highly unnecessary.

- A service provider or volunteer who meets with a group of students daily or weekly over several weeks to months (e.g., a sports team coach, club program leader) should reasonably expect to undergo some screening. This may include a written application, an interview, reference checks and/or possibly producing some supporting documentation (e.g., showing a first aid certification card one claimed to have).
- In addition, a service provider or volunteer will likely also be subjected to a formal criminal records check, if, in the course of performing the volunteer service:
 - the person will be reasonably likely have unsupervised one-to-one access to any individual student (i.e., without other staff, volunteers and/or students present),
 - the program includes overnight living situations and/or significant travel away from home, and/or
 - some or all of the service is performed in the student’s or volunteer’s home.

If the context of an off-site experience suggests some screening will need to be done or results of one reviewed and interpreted, please go to *Service Provider and Volunteer Screening in Section IV Special Considerations*.

Protection of Staff and Volunteers from Wrongful Charges

Individuals who work with students in a work or volunteer capacity are usually open, caring people. However, they need to exercise good judgement and act to minimize the potential for allegations of criminal action and/or other impropriety to be made.

Ten things to do to minimize this potential include:

1. Keep an open-door policy; keep the program room/area open as much as practicable.
2. Visit other teachers/leaders’ activity areas and have them visit one’s own occasionally.
3. Monitor behaviour (own, staff, volunteers and students).
4. Identify high-risk students and govern them accordingly (e.g., avoid one-on-one time).
5. Physical contact should only occur in public. Tell a minor one’s intention before touching him or her. Avoid physical contact with a student in any isolated or confined environment (e.g., a washroom, locker room, car, camping tent).
6. Visit students publicly (i.e., other adults or groups of students present).
7. Avoid driving students in one’s personal vehicle. If necessary to do so, sit them in the back if and as possible.
8. Consider the use and supervision of bathrooms, showers, and change rooms, e.g., the age of independent use; staff/volunteers shower separately from students.
9. Avoid making or accepting invitations to be Facebook “friends” with students or their parents/guardians. Minimize interaction with students on any other web-based social media that may involve or evolve into the sharing of personal information, photos, etc. Social media can be used to great advantage in communicating with classes/groups (e.g., sending mass text/email reminders about due dates, pending exams, a club meeting time, etc., but should be restricted to school business (curricular, co-curricular or extracurricular) vs. social-based relationships.
10. Extended travel situations present unique concerns; ensure sufficient adult supervision.

See *Section IV: Special Considerations* for additional guidelines regarding what to do in the event a claim of impropriety is made.

Orientation of Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers have a right to be informed/oriented regarding their role(s), rights and responsibilities related to the off-site activity, including as relevant:

- **job description;**
- pertinent board **policies;**
- relevant **procedures** (e.g., forms, communications);
- practice **guidelines** (general and activity-specific guidelines);
- **lines and limits of authority;**
- **behavioral expectations** of students, staff and volunteers;
- **emergency procedures;**
- **confidentiality** of any student personal and health information shared;
- **protection of staff/volunteers** (e.g., liability insurance coverage, accident insurance protection for staff/volunteers in the event they are injured);
- process related to **supervision and evaluation** of the staff/volunteers;
- **responsibility to ask questions** if feeling inadequately informed or prepared; and
- **other relevant information** needed to fulfill the staff/volunteer obligation.

Supervision of staff and/or volunteers may or may not involve the physical presence of the principal or a teacher at the activity time and place. Considerations will include the capacity of the group in relation to the demands of the activity and environment.

With the exception of policies, insurance coverage, forms and other organization-specific protocols, most of the above can be secured from this document and shared.

Teacher/Leader Readiness

There is no specific universal training or certification required in BC, beyond holding a teaching certificate to teach in BC schools. However, students and their parents/guardians have a right to expect teachers/leaders who are qualified in the subject (content) and instructional pedagogy (methods and techniques). To lead off-site activities, teachers or other designated leaders need a variety of capacities to provide a safe, enjoyable experience.

The Lead Teacher or appropriate designate will be expected to have the following to a level equal to or higher than is required for the planned activity/event:

- adequate **health and fitness** to effectively manage the activity;
- sufficient **maturity** to limit involvement well within one's own areas of capability;
- sufficient current **knowledge and skills** in the activities being offered;
- **role modeling** appropriate to the activities, organization and students;
- effective **teachers/leadership skills and attitudes**, including:
 - **personal** (e.g., ethics, personal strengths and weaknesses),

- **interpersonal** (e.g., communications, group problem solving), and
- **program** (e.g., organization, instruction, facilitation) elements;
- sufficient judgment, experience and confidence to use appropriate **teaching/leadership styles** (e.g., direct, coach, support, delegate) and **decision making styles** (autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire);
- ability to help students **manage physiological and psychological stress**;
- ability to **support students' health and safety**; and
- confidence and competence to **conduct debriefings or evaluation of activities**.

The capable, experienced teacher/leader can act or react promptly to provide for the safety of the group within the context of the activity.

The teacher/leader taking students on an extended wilderness adventure or international travel excursion will need much more substantial capacities in many of the above than the one leading a field trip to the local art gallery. Some limitations may be overcome by securing qualified volunteers or service providers.

Relevant awareness, understanding and skill may be developed through a combination of many avenues, as available and appropriate, including:

- local clubs and organizations;
- municipal programs and courses;
- academic courses;
- non-academic courses;
- certification programs;
- national/provincial sports governing bodies;
- workshops and conference sessions;
- sport or recreational experiences;
- videos;
- books and manuals;
- magazines and journals;
- websites/CD-ROMs/DVDs/podcasts;
- mentors and friends;
- networks; and
- other appropriate sources.

Ultimately, leadership behaviour is a key determinant of the success and safety of a group.

Facilities and Locations

Facilities and locations include indoor and outdoor sites and areas used. Examples may include a multi-purpose room in a community hall, schoolground, museum, historic site, park, trail, etc. General considerations for all facilities, sites and areas include:

- Conduct a **pre-activity check** of the facilities or activity area/route, personally (ideally) and/or through gathering information from reliable sources (e.g., facility/area managers, other teachers/leaders who have used the site, websites, guidebooks, maps).
- Identify and **remove or notify students of hazards**.
- Students should be encouraged to **report hazards** they notice to teachers/leaders.

- In regularly used meeting places, check for the **location of emergency equipment** (e.g., fire extinguishers, phone).
- Ensure group size is within **occupancy limits**.
- **Establish boundaries** for the activity **and a muster point** if people get separated.
- **Instruct the students** regarding regularly used facility or site-specific emergency procedures (e.g., fire) and verify that they understand (e.g., do a drill, quiz them).
- The group must be **respectful of public and private property**.
- **Avoid using solid trees, fences or other solid fixed objects as turning points or finish points/lines** in racing activities. A ribbon line, pylons or other markers can be used.
- Make every reasonable effort to **ensure an accessible environment** for all students. Contact the Facility Manager and/or Principal for assistance if a student's needs cannot be readily accommodated. See **Equity and Inclusion** in **Section 4 Special Considerations**.
- When renting or otherwise using non-owned facilities, the school may be required to complete a contract, provide a certificate of insurance, and/or sign a waiver, release and/or indemnification form. **Follow established procedures, if and as appropriate, to secure and provide the appropriate documentation to facility providers**. Avoid signing contracts, waivers etc. unless authorized by the board. If unsure, consult with the Principal or designate.

Equipment

Equipment includes any tool, device or machine used by teachers/leaders and/or students. This includes common sports, games and recreation equipment (e.g., balls, pylons, skis), arts and crafts tools (scissors, glue guns, staplers), playground equipment, tools (hammers, saws, power tools), and machinery (computers, photocopiers, audio-visual equipment).

- The teacher/leader or Principal's designate should **regularly inspect** (ideally before and after usage) **school-supplied equipment** to ensure good working order.
- If and as appropriate (e.g., for things like major power tools, climbing ropes), school-owned equipment **inspections should be documented** (e.g., equipment purchase, inspection and maintenance log).
- **Equipment that is no longer functional or safe must not be used** (e.g., frayed electrical cord, splintered paddle). It should be marked so others will not use it.
- The **area around the equipment should be checked** for hazards that would interfere with safe use of the equipment (e.g., equipment/furniture stored around room).
- **Read/be informed of directions/warnings** related to using unfamiliar equipment.
- Provide students with **clear, verbal, age-appropriate instructions** regarding how to use the equipment, and/or post written instructions where applicable.
- Provide **appropriate supervision** to support safe use of equipment.
- If at any time a student is using equipment in an unsafe manner, the **behavior must be corrected** or the activity stopped.
- Students should be encouraged to **report equipment related hazards** to teachers/leaders.
- Students should **wear properly fitted and adjusted safety gear**, as appropriate.

- Where a school provides **whistles** (for emergency communication) and the whistles are shared from program to program, they should be properly **disinfected** between users (e.g., with a mild bleach solution - 1/2 capful of bleach to two liters of water or other appropriate disinfectant), and then rinsed.
- Equipment used should be **appropriate to the size and strength of the students**.
- Students and their parents/guardians need to be instructed regarding any particular **clothing or equipment to bring** for the activity.
- If bringing their own equipment for an activity (e.g., bikes, helmets), students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) should be informed that they are **responsible for checking the items** and ensuring they are in good working order and suitable for personal use.
- Inform students regarding personal **items they are not to bring** to the program/activity (e.g., cell phones (may just require they be turned off and not used during the program), personal audio equipment, pets).
- A **first aid kit** must be accessible. See **First Aid** in this section.

See **Protective Equipment and Helmets** in **Section 4 Special Considerations** if relevant.

Orientations, Briefings and Instruction

Leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve an objective. Teachers/leaders are the agents of change, by virtue of the example they set as well as the values and objectives they encourage. Demonstrating a **Safety First! attitude** in their day-to-day routine is the most important means of teaching safety and self-reliance to students. In addition to leading by example, teachers/leaders must orient, brief and instruct those involved so they understand their roles, rights and responsibilities.

Orientations

An **orientation** is a meeting with teachers/leaders, students and/or parents/guardians, usually held at the beginning of a program season. It typically includes:

- **Description of the program** and/or anticipated activities, locations, times;
- Explanation of the **roles, rights and responsibilities** of key actors (teachers/leaders, volunteers, parents/guardians, students, service providers);
- Outline of **inherent risks, safety plan and emergency plan**;
- **Other relevant information** (e.g., clothing, equipment); and
- An opportunity to entertain **questions**.

See **Orientation of Staff and Volunteers** in this section for more information.

Briefings

A **briefing** is an oral session, generally short and focused, which provides teachers/leaders, volunteer chaperones and/or students with information regarding a particular pending activity or outing. It is generally given prior to the event (e.g., at a meeting the week before; key points reviewed at start of activity/event and reinforced at appropriate times).

Ten steps for an Effective Efficient Briefing

1. Get the **group's attention**, trying to ensure everyone can see and hear.
2. State the **purpose** and give a general overview of the activity/outing.
3. Identify **risks** and give warnings/cautions and provide rationale.
4. Identify **procedures, rules and consequences** and rationale.
5. Reveal **timing and conditions** under which the activity will be performed.
6. Identify/demonstrate **key equipment** needed for the activity.
7. Outline **skills and conditioning** requirements or to be developed, if/as relevant.
8. Explain/review relevant **communications and emergency procedures**.
9. Provide a clear and concise **summary** of key information.
10. Allow time for **questions** to help ensure understanding.

Ultimately, teachers/leadership behaviour is a key determinant of the success and safety of a group.

Instructing Physical Activities

In addition to the above, the content and process of instruction of physical activities should include but not be limited to, the following:

- **Include appropriate warm ups and cool downs** for sessions involving vigorous physical activity;
- **Instruct skills in sequential order** (easier to harder), and allow time for students to practise each progression to an appropriate level of mastery before going on;
- **Consider age group characteristics** in supporting safety related to activities, supervision arrangements, instructional progressions, equipment and environments. For example, in comparison to older youth and adults, younger children generally:
 - **are weaker at judging sound, distance, speed and their own skills and strength** (e.g., bear in mind when judging traffic on roads);
 - **have a higher centre of gravity and slower neuromuscular responses** (e.g., they fall easier, but are not as good at protecting themselves from injury when they do) (e.g., consider this when on bikes, skates);
 - have a higher surface area to body mass ratio, so **get hotter faster and colder faster** (consider this when weather is in higher or lower ranges);
 - produce more heat during physical activity and have lower sweating capacity so have **less ability to dissipate heat encountered or produced**;
 - **mature physically at different rates**, so substantial height and weight differences among children of the same age can increase the risk of injury when they play sports together;
 - **are easily distracted**, e.g., by moving objects, noise and water;
 - live in the present moment, and **are unlikely to remember a lot of steps or rules**; and
 - **have less knowledge, experience and judgement** to draw upon in recognizing, managing and appreciating potential consequences of real risks.

For information re: developmental characteristics of older children and adolescents, and implications for instructing, leading, or coaching them, see *Canadian Sport for Life Long-term Athlete Development for Physical, Mental and Cognitive, and Emotional Development Characteristics* available at www.ltad.ca

This does not mean that the teacher or leader should not take children across roads, biking or skating, outside when it's hot or cold out, or into situations with any real risk. However, **start conservatively** if the context is new or different.

Instructing Outdoor Activities

- Before taking students outdoors, especially if a significant distance from an accessible indoor facility, consider **environmental factors** such as:
 - the temperature,
 - wind and wind chill factors,
 - sun exposure,
 - exposure to biting/stinging insects, and
 - other environmental hazards (e.g., precipitation).
- Most boards curtail outdoor activities at a pre-determined temperature, including wind-chill (e.g., -25°Celsius). This temperature cutoff may vary somewhat for younger versus older students, level of student preparation, exposure of the site and perhaps regionally.
- If the activity will be **strenuous**, also consider:
 - previous training and conditioning,
 - duration of vigorous activity,
 - capacity to remain warm after such activity, and
 - proper hydration and nutrition, if relevant.
- Establish a signal to bring the group together.
- If instructing outdoors, try to **position the students** so the sun is not in their eyes as they receive instruction. If windy, have the wind carry the leader's voice toward the students.
- Take advantage of **teachable moments**; providing focused information, cautions and direction when the object of the instruction (e.g., a particular hazard) is present.
- Encourage parents/guardians/students to **protect the student from sun** by minimizing exposure, especially mid-day. "Slip, Slap, Slop, Wrap" may be a helpful mnemonic for younger students:
 - **SLIP** on clothing to cover exposed sun,
 - **SLAP** on a wide-brimmed hat,
 - **SLOP** on a broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 30 or more, reapplying as necessary, and
 - **WRAP** on sunglasses with high UVA and UVB protection.
- Teachers/leaders and volunteers (except a child's own parent/guardian) should generally **not apply sunscreen to the bodies of students**. An exception may involve helping young students by applying sunscreen to their faces, necks.

- Take the opportunity to focus students on what makes an activity or outing safe (e.g., “Did we have a safe day today?” If yes, “What made it safe?” If not, “What should we do differently next time?”)
- When unsafe practices or behaviour emerge, call a STOP. Halting and resetting, as a group or person by person, can help focus and increase commitment to continuing in a safe manner.

See **Instruction** in **Section 4: Special Considerations** for additional guidelines related to instruction of sports and physical activities, etc.

Clothing

Students need to be instructed regarding appropriate clothing and footwear for physical activities, outdoor pursuits or off-site activities.

- **Consider clothing** in relation to the activity, environment, weather and other factors.
- Consider appropriate **footwear** (e.g., shoes, closed-toe shoes, socks, bare feet).
- Parents/guardians and students should be **informed, well in advance**, regarding expectations for the clothing and footwear to be worn or carried (e.g., rain gear).
- For outdoor activities, students should be instructed to bring appropriate **layers and changes** of clothing, depending on the weather, activity and duration.
- **Ill-fitting clothing, scarves, drawstrings, and jewelry** can inhibit movement and cause injury during some activities. Students and parents/guardians need to be aware of the rules and consequences (e.g., injury of self or others, removal from participation).
- **Jewelry** that presents a safety concern should be removed (or taped in place if this can be done with minimal risk of tape falling off; e.g., due to sweat).
- Parents/guardians and students should be made aware of any safety precautions regarding **eyeglasses**, where relevant, including an eyeglass strap and/or shatterproof glass or, if vision is adequate, temporary removal of glasses.

See **Clothing** in **Section 5: Special Considerations** for guidelines re: cultural dress.

Water and Food

- As appropriate and relevant, **encourage students to bring sufficient water/drinks** to remain hydrated and/or notify them where drinking water is available on-site.
- On warm days and/or when very active, **encourage students to drink often**.
- Discourage students from sharing water bottles and bites of each other’s food.
- As appropriate and relevant, **encourage students to bring healthy meals and snacks**;
- **Encourage hand washing/cleaning before eating**;
- In most school programs, the students bring their own snacks (e.g., granola bar for intermission break during a play) and/or meals (e.g., lunches for a hiking day trip). If food/meals are to be provided by the school or service provider, determine in advance who will be paying for these (e.g., included in program/event fee, extra charge to students, school through fund raising, and/or other source(s)). Notify parents/guardians/students of arrangements and costs.

See **Food and Cooking** in **Section 4: Special Considerations** for guidelines regarding food preparation, meal preparation, cookouts, etc.

Supervision

Supervision involves overseeing an activity for direction and/or regulation. Supervision requirements vary with many factors, including teacher/leader and student capacity (grade, knowledge, skills, health and fitness, experience), activity- related risks, environment, etc.

Supervision Ratios

- The Principal or designate and/or the Lead Teacher must ensure a **sufficient number of supervisors** are present to adequately support the students and to manage foreseeable contingencies; e.g., a discipline problem, an injury, an illness. Otherwise, modify or cancel the activity.
- It is almost always **preferable to have at least two supervisors present** (e.g., the group's designated Lead Teacher plus an assistant (teacher or volunteer). Exceptions often arise with older, experienced groups.
- To count in the supervisory ratio, **at least half the supervisors should be adults**, and all should be at least sixteen (16) years of age and at least two years older than the students they are to supervise. Younger teachers/leaders-in-training may help with supervisory tasks, but should not be included in the ratio.
- Supervision of groups should **include gender-relevant supervision** and must include this if one-on-one supervision of any particular child is likely.
- More supervisors does not necessarily mean a safer program. **Each supervisor needs responsibilities** to remain engaged. Determine an appropriate number based on policy and the activity/environment/group context, including handling foreseeable contingencies (e.g., equipment problem, discipline, emergency). THINK.
- Some suggested ratios are presented below as a starting point for on-site and local low-risk contexts.

Regular On-site Ratios

Follow board policy where specific ratios are provided. For regular class, club, or group meetings/programs that occur at a specific ongoing location (remaining within .5 km/3 blocks of the school), and that do not involve higher care activities (e.g., outdoor pursuits, aquatics, use of power tools), environments or students, the suggested minimum ratios are:

Student Grade	Number of Supervisors to Students
K - 3	1:10 /2:20
4 - 7	1:15 /2:30
8 - 12	1: 15 /2:30

Local Outdoor Recreation and/or Off-site Ratios

For local, low-risk outdoor recreation and/or off-site activities within the local municipality (but more than .5 km/3 blocks from site) the suggested minimum ratios are:

Student Grade	Number of Supervisors to Students
K – 3	1:6 / 2:12
4 – 17	1:10 / 2:20
8 – 12	1: 15 / 2:30

Some schools may be bound by policy or other considerations to meet higher ratios.

Where a 2:30 ratio is provided, the intent is to suggest that two supervisors can likely handle a full class of students. It is accepted that, in some cases, this might mean a few more than 30 students; class sizes vary.

For higher care activities not covered in this Level 1 Manual see [Supervision](#) in the Level 2 Manual [Section: 6 General Considerations for Higher Care Activities](#).

Supervisory Roles and Responsibilities

In delegating supervisory roles to staff, volunteers or service providers, the Lead Teacher should, as appropriate to the context, take reasonable steps to ensure that each supervisor:

- knows **which students** he or she is responsible for, and that each student knows which supervisor is responsible for him or her – attend carefully to **transitions between activities** and ensure both supervisors and students are aware of these;
- has a **reasonable knowledge (while addressing privacy issues) of the students** in their care, including any relevant special needs, medical needs or disabilities, particularly if any of the supervision will occur without the Lead Teacher present;
- knows they are **responsible to the Lead Teacher** for the students;
- **understands the objectives, itinerary, activity** (including inherent risks of the activity, environment and group);
- has the **knowledge and skill** to manage readily foreseeable risks;
- has a **means to contact the Lead Teacher** and/or Principal, if needing help or to inform them of problems that they feel ill-equipped to manage;
- can and will **exercise appropriate control** of the students in his or her charge;
- maintains **professional relationships** with students at all times; and
- is aware of and **understands established emergency procedures** for the activity and has access to First Aid.

Supervision Processes

- Regardless of the duration and nature of the activity, group control processes should be established and used, as relevant to the particular location and activity.
- In addition to visually trying to keep track of students, processes may include:

- **Head counts** (e.g., simply counting the students, having students number off) are important, especially during transitions between activities, where large groups are split into smaller working units, when getting on or off transportation, etc.
- **Buddy Systems** enhance supervision effectiveness, student awareness of risks, and sense of responsibility. Implementation involves **pairing** students and having them stay together or check on each other when asked. An alternative involves making **circle buddies** (put students in a circle and each becomes responsible, for checking on the student who was on their left and the one who was on their right). This system prevents two students disappearing together.
- **Nametags or coloured wrist/arm bands or hat-bands** can be used to identify group members in a public setting. Nametags have advantages (e.g., ability to address a child by name) and disadvantages (e.g., security issues can arise if, for example, a stranger reads a tag and approaches a younger student appearing to know him or her). Consider these advantages and disadvantages in relation to the age group and location. For younger students, a tag might only include the school's name and the phone number to call if the child is found.
- **Contingency plans** must be established to ensure ongoing supervision in the event that a supervisor needs to give prolonged attention to one student (e.g., behavior problem, illness, injury). When removing a student out of an activity site, ensure he or she remains supervised.

Levels of Supervision

Three levels exist, based on the age, maturity and experience of the students in the activity, and the types and levels of risks present:

- **Constant visual supervision** means the supervisor is physically present and watching the students, generally in close physical proximity to them. Example: Science teacher remains close to a student launching a model rocket.
- **On-site supervision** entails supervisor presence but not constant, close-proximity viewing of a particular student or activity. Example: teacher can see all students flying kites they've made in a large open park meadow.
- **In-the-area supervision** means that while any supervisor may not be able to see all of the students at one time, the students know where the supervisors are and can contact one if necessary. Example: Students orienteering on a course in a wooded ravine, wearing whistles so they can summon help if needed.

It is physically impossible to watch every student all the time. Use judgement to determine supervision level, and structure the activity environment appropriately.

Attendance

If the program does not occur during school hours it is important that parents/guardians and program teachers/leaders know which students should be there, when, and what will be done if they do not show up.

- If attendance is to be taken, establish a consistent procedure for doing so, including when (early in session period) and how (e.g., sign in/out, roll call, attendance check sheet).
- Have a procedure in place for parents/guardians/students to communicate to the school if the child will not be in attendance a given day.
- Follow established procedure if a child does not arrive in time for an off-site activity (e.g., grace period, ask others if the child has been seen, check the immediate area, call parents/guardians, and for younger students, if not located yet, call emergency contacts if cannot reach parents/guardians and contact the Principal).
- A younger child (K-9) may not be released to anyone other than the authorized parent(s)/guardian(s) or others specifically designated by the parent/guardian. Attendance should be taken and a written record made of any early pick-ups by anyone not expected.
- A process for ensuring ongoing supervision of children should be established for situations where a group is arriving back late from an off-site activity.

See **Supervision** in **Section 4 Special Considerations** for additional guidelines regarding supervision of less common situations, late pick-ups, etc..

See **Supervision of Higher Care Activities** in **Section 6 Considerations for Higher Care Activities** for considerations for adventure activities, remote environments, etc.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Student Rights

Students have the right to:

- be treated with **respect and dignity**;
- be allowed to pursue their educational goals in a **supportive and stimulating environment**;
- appropriately **oriented and trained teachers/leaders** and supervisors;
- due **attention to their health and safety**;
- participate in activities/events whenever they can be **reasonably accommodated**; and
- be **allowed reasonable choices**, including those with some natural consequences.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for demonstrating respect for the safety and well-being of themselves and others, on-site or off, during the program/activity. Each student is responsible to do the following, with the level of responsibility increasing with the age and maturity of the student:

- fulfill **preparatory requirements** to a satisfactory level;
- **dress appropriately** for the activity and environment, including proper footwear;
- attend to personal **hygiene and personal care** (e.g., water, food, rest);
- **comply with the rules and student code of conduct** of the organization;
- **cooperate** with staff, volunteers and service providers;

- **abstain** from smoking, alcohol, drugs, sexual activity or any illegal or immoral activity;
- **respect others** (e.g., use manners, avoid touching/taking other's belongings);
- **respect the environment** (e.g., keep facility/area clean, conserve energy);
- **respect activity etiquette** while participating;
- **understand need to balance** personal freedom and the welfare of the group;
- respect the **individual and property rights** of others; and
- **report personal injury** or illness to a teacher/leader.

Behavioral Expectations and Consequences

Board policies and codes of conduct detailing the behavioral expectations of staff, volunteers and students must be communicated, adhered to and enforced.

All Involved

- Consider ways to **minimize conflict** between the staff/volunteers and students or activities and members of the public not involved in the program or activity.
- Provide appropriate **supervision, modeling, and instruction** to students.
- **Debrief** any incidents with group.
- Attempt to **resolve conflicts** in a reasonable, fair manner; allow cool-down time if needed (for students and/or teachers/leaders).
- If unresolved conflict remains, **report issue to Principal**.
- Board **policy regarding smoking and/or alcohol consumption** by staff, volunteers and students needs to be communicated on programs or trips where this may become an issue; e.g., minors prohibited and staff and volunteers prohibited when supervising or on-call to be supervising students. Some boards allow staff and volunteers when definitely "off-duty" and out of sight of students.

Staff, Volunteers and Service Providers

- **Everyone involved must be treated equitably** within the context of the program/activity regardless of ability, gender, race, place of origin, colour, religion, socio-economic status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or any other factors.
- Teachers/leader must learn to recognize personal anger and frustration. If unable to express feelings calmly and act rationally, get someone to step in until emotions are back under control.
- Avoid socializing with students or their parents/guardians outside of program time, unless these persons are members of the family. Disclose pre-existing relationships to the Principal.
- Teachers/leaders should generally **avoid bringing their own children** to an off-site activity/excursion, unless their child is involved in the program. If a teacher/ leader's child is injured, that person's focus will be on the child rather than the group. Similarly, volunteers (e.g., chaperones for an off-site activity) should be **discouraged from bringing their child's siblings**.

- A **staff, volunteer or student who violates the rules** or otherwise places the group at risk **may be asked to leave** and may be prohibited from participating in the organization’s future programs. A service provider contract may be terminated.

Students

- Only **students who can follow instructions and accept supervision** should be allowed to participate in an off-site activity or other more challenging supervision situation without his or her parent/guardian in attendance.
- Students and parents/guardians must be **advised of rules, regulations and behavioral expectations** for any activity.
- Explain the **reasons for the rules** (parents/guardians and/or students may be involved in the process of defining the rules to enhance commitment).
- **Enforce rules with safety implications** at all times. Address all unsafe behaviours immediately upon becoming aware of them.
- **Discipline measures used must be fair, measured and respectful.** They may include, reminders, warnings, time-outs from an activity (supervised), being sent to the Principal, contacting parents/guardians, suspensions from an activity or program, expulsion from the program, and contacting police authorities if a criminal action is involved.
- **Discipline measures must not include physical or psychological harm.** They must not include any form of public humiliation, touching (e.g., grabbing, pushing), corporal punishment, mechanical restraint, cold-water immersion/showers, or the withholding of food or water. They should not involve physical exercise beyond normal physical conditioning (the objective is for children to like exercise, not view it as punishment).
- Be aware of policies/procedures regarding students **leaving without permission** and share these with students.

Parental Notification and Consent

Risk awareness is a key element in the morality of exposing students to risk. Providing parents/guardians and students with appropriate information regarding risk potential prior to exposure respects their right to make decisions and be responsible for the consequences of these. In addition, parents/guardians provide information that can assist the teacher/leader in making any modifications that may be necessary for the student to participate safely.

Parental Notification

Parents/guardians should be notified, in a form, letter and/or pre-activity orientation or briefing, of, as relevant:

- **school, class or group(s)** involved;
- **location**, including address or nearest locatable centre/site/park;
- **purpose** and objectives of the activity/outing;
- **date(s) and times**;
- **transportation/travel** arrangements, if relevant;

- **supervision** arrangements (e.g., ratio or number of supervisors anticipated);
- key **activity(ies)** involved;
- potential **known risks** of the activities, environment;
- notification specifically of **activities that are of a higher care nature** and/or that involve travel off-site more than .5 km/3 blocks;
- notification of the **existence of a safety plan** to manage identified risks;
- notification of the **existence of an emergency plan** in the event of injury, illness, etc.;
- notification that the school will secure **emergency transport** to medical services if necessary and that the parents/guardians will be responsible for any associated costs;
- student **conduct expectations** and consequences;
- **what to bring** (e.g., types of clothing, footwear, water, food);
- **financial** arrangements if any (i.e., cost to the student, when fee is due);
- school **contact** name and number/email for more information; and
- **other** relevant information.

See **Parental Notification and Consent** in **Section 4: Special Considerations** for additional considerations related to overnights and travel out of the municipality.

Consent Process

- For a class doing only local, low risk activities (e.g., Physical Education) or group (e.g., a sports team), it is generally permissible to send home a single parent/guardian consent form outlining the dates and locations of the activities and to secure **blanket, per-season consent** (e.g., fall, winter, spring, summer). In such cases, parents/guardians only need to be notified of and consent to major changes to the identified itinerary. Where the activities will vary considerably, class to class or week to week, and carry substantially different risk sets, a higher frequency of consent and acknowledgement of risk communication is indicated (e.g., per unit if the same or very similar activity will be taught over several classes or weeks, or per activity if there are substantially different activities or environments with different related risk sets). A balance needs to be sought between chasing reams of forms all year vs. teaching and having confidence that parents/guardians have had the opportunity to make informed choices.
- Only students with **valid parental consent** (e.g., signed form, fax, email if pre-arranged) should be allowed to attend. In exceptional circumstances, if board policy permits, a parent/guardian may be allowed to give verbal, witnessed consent over the phone. Have someone witness reading of the activity information and acknowledgement of risk and consent form to the parent/guardian and listen to the verbal consent given. Then sign the form and put, “for (parent/guardian’s name),” and have the witness sign below.
- Secure informed **consent for use of images and voice** (e.g., pictures, video) of students if such may be taken for organizational purposes.
- The school should have a procedure(s) for securing informed consent from parents/guardians who **do not read the language** in which the form is printed.
- If a question arises regarding who may sign a consent form (e.g., definition of parent/guardian, or independent student) **consult with Principal or designate**.

- **Avoid spontaneous major changes to the itinerary** while in the field without securing parental/ guardian consent, particularly if the new activities are of a higher care nature.

Health and Medical Screening

- Schools gather standard health and medication information as a matter of course at the beginning of each school year, and for most local, low risk outings, this is generally sufficient. **Parents/guardians** should be notified that they **are responsible for providing relevant updates** over the program.
- Student screening needs to include relevant **medical conditions** (e.g., asthma, anaphylaxis, epilepsy) **and physical limitations** that may preclude their participation in some activities, or help teachers/leaders make appropriate activity modifications.
- The Lead Teacher must **review and assess all health and medical issues** prior to the activity **and develop a plan** to manage these, considering available resources.
- All teachers/leaders and students must be made aware of students with **allergies** and appropriate precautions taken to minimize reactions (e.g., nut-free zone programs).
- The **Principal or designate should be consulted** if the Lead Teacher does not believe, for any reason, that a particular individual can participate safely.
- The Lead Teacher or Principal should **work with parents/guardians** to help them make informed choices regarding the appropriateness of particular activities for their children, and/or to work out appropriate modifications.
- The Lead Teacher must keep the health and medical **form copies secure but accessible**. To help ensure confidentiality is respected, after initial review, the forms can be kept in a sealed envelope or locked area and only opened by a teacher/leader if/when needed.
- All staff, volunteers and service providers provided written or oral information about any student’s health or medical conditions, medications, etc. must be made aware that this information is **confidential**.
- Teachers/leaders should **never assume that all relevant health information has been provided** by parents/guardians and/or students; surprises are not uncommon.

See **Section 4: Special Considerations** for additional information related to Health and Medical Screening, Medications, Food and Cooking, Allergies, Asthma, and Diabetes.

Transportation

Many local school off-site experiences involve little or no motorized transportation of students. Parents/guardians drop the students off, the students go off-site by walking or other active transport, and the parents pick them up after the school day. These drivers are responsible for their own vehicles and operation of such. For liability reasons, schools should avoid getting involved in organizing or facilitating car pools.

Where a school does get involved in transporting or facilitating the transport of students, the Lead Teacher should consult Board policy, organization procedures and forms, and the **Transportation** guidelines provided in **Section 4: Special Considerations**.

Communications

Communication is a **crucial risk management tool**. Consider how, what, when and to whom to communicate in the event of a problem or emergency.

Reasons to Communicate

Reasons to communicate with individuals outside the group may include, but not be limited to:

- **Medical situations** and emergencies (injury or illness) and/or **emotional distress**;
- Delayed, cancelled, changed or missed **transportation arrangements**;
- Parent/guardian **failure to pick up student** at end of activity/event;
- **Environmental situations** and emergencies (e.g., severe weather, power failure);
- Major **equipment breakdowns** or other problems;
- **Missing persons** (whether lost or AWOL); and/or
- Intruders (trespassers), theft or other **criminal activity**.

Methods of Communication

- The Lead Teacher must **plan for an appropriate communication method within** the teachers/leadership **team and group** if spread out in subgroups or otherwise separated (e.g., cell phones, Family Radio Service (FRS), walkie-talkies, whistles).
- The Lead Teacher must determine a **reliable form of timely communication with the Principal or designate and emergency services** (e.g., telephone, pay phone, cell phone, satellite phone, radio, vehicle, messengers (runners)).
- **Consider reliability and range** of the telecommunications device (e.g., cell phone rural coverage, use in ravines or other potential dead spots).

When to Communicate and With Whom

- Clarify the priority **order of contacting people** within the organization and out.
- **Determine who calls for help** (e.g., Lead Teacher or designate).
- Generally, the **Lead Teacher or designate contacts emergency services** (e.g., 911 where available, or
 - RCMP or municipal **police** for a lost/missing person or to report any crime in progress or just discovered (e.g., assault, child abuse, use of illegal substances, theft, malicious property damage,
 - **ambulance** service for rural or remote area outings, and/or
 - locations of **nearest medical services** (e.g., hospitals, medical centres).
- The Lead Teacher or designate must be provided an **emergency contact** name and number **from the school** that will be accessible during the off-site activity .
- Clarify the **circumstances under which a student's parent(s)/guardian(s)/emergency contacts** are to be **called and by whom** (e.g., Lead Teacher for minor incidents, Principal or designate for major incidents or issues).

Incident Management

Regardless of planning and preparation, a group may still suffer an incident or emergency

situation. Examples include injury or illness, lost or missing person, behaviour problem, act of violence, public conflict, emotional crisis, property damage, near miss or other serious incident.

- In a regularly used facility, ensure that all staff, volunteers and students **know the evacuation process and the staff know the location of and how to use emergency equipment** (e.g., phones, fire alarms, fire extinguishers, AEDs; excluding any equipment that requires specialized training (e.g., spinal boards, respirators), unless so trained.
- The Lead Teacher or a designate with superior emergency training is responsible for **assuming management of the situation** until emergency services arrives and takes control of the situation.
- Once emergency services arrive, the staff, volunteers and service providers must then **support the emergency agency(ies)** to resolve the situation.
- If transporting someone to medical facilities, ensure they are **attended by an adult supervisor** who brings along the **injured or ill person's health and medical information and** written **consent** for the school to secure emergency medical assistance and advice for the immediate needs of the casualty.
- If an injury incident occurs, the Lead Teacher should act to **minimize potential for its recurrence** (e.g., remove defective equipment, adjust supervision level).
- In the event of a serious injury or incident, **restrict volunteers and students from using their cell phones or other devices** to transmit pictures to family/friends, contact media or otherwise interfere with the board managing the incident and its media relations.
- Secure **witness contact, information, and statements** as appropriate.
- Complete **incident/accident report forms** and follow submission process.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, having an emergency action plan prepared to deal with the situation will save valuable time and energy and contribute to keeping everyone calm. All teachers/leaders should be familiar with the plan. The Emergency Action Plan (EAP) should include:

- definition of the **roles and responsibilities** of key personnel during the emergency (in the field and at the office; in the field, who will do first aid, call for help, manage the group/bystanders);
- **procedures** to follow for foreseeable types of incidents/injuries;
- identification (location and access) of the types of **emergency rescue and first aid equipment and supplies** available to meet the needs of the group;
- **means of securing emergency services** assistance, if needed; decision-making re: transport;
- **emergency services contact numbers** ideally located on or near the phone;
- **information to relay to emergency services** (nature of emergency, location, phone number); and
- **communications** priorities and procedures (see **Communications** above).

An Emergency Response Checklist may help support quick decision making in an emergency. Carry a copy of it in the first aid kit for easy referral. See **Emergency Response Checklist** in **Appendix A**.

Participant Illness

Have a procedure in place for dealing with a student who falls ill during the program. Consider:

- who will care for the student if he or she is unable to participate in planned activities;
- where the student can be taken to rest;
- under what conditions the student's parent/guardian will be contacted; and
- how and where an illness will be documented.

Medical Emergencies

A medical emergency is a situation that, in addition to requiring immediate first aid, warrants contacting emergency medical services, or if faster and safer for the casualty, transport to the nearest appropriate medical facility. The appropriate EAP should be activated if a person:

- is not breathing and non-responsive;
- is bleeding profusely;
- suspected head injury (e.g., concussion, loss of consciousness and/or amnesia);
- suspected neck or spinal injury;
- has a visible major trauma injury (e.g., open wound, fracture) to any part of the body;
- cannot move one or more limbs or has lost feeling in them;
- has suffered a near drowning or liquid suffocation incident; or
- has been seriously burned or electrocuted (e.g., electricity, lightning).

For more detailed information regarding [Emergency Procedures and Communications](#), see the [Adventure Leadership Resource](#) document.

First Aid

Emergency response and first aid training commensurate with the real risk present is essential. The most important criteria to consider are the time and distance from emergency support (e.g., emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to arrive on-site, time to transport to hospital).

Local, Low Risk Activities and Environments

Low-risk on or off-site activities/events occurring less than twenty (20) minutes from emergency medical services arrival at the casualty's side should have **at least one person accessible within five minutes with at least basic emergency first aid** understandings and skills.

- These understandings and skills include basic scene management, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), treatment of choking, control of external bleeding, treatment of shock, and use of universal precautions.
- Skills result from formal training (e.g., Emergency First Aid certification course) or equivalent training and/or preparation (e.g., in-house training).

Moderate Risk and/or Semi-remote Environments

Where the inherent risk of the activity (e.g., involves speed, fire), environment (e.g., heights,

water bodies) and/or students (e.g., known pre-existing medical conditions) is more significant, and/or the location is more than twenty (20) minutes from emergency medical services arrival at casualty's side but less than one hour, **at least one person should be accessible within five minutes with a standard first aid level of training** or equivalent preparation.

- Skills result from formal training (e.g., Standard First Aid certification course) or equivalent training and/or preparation.
- Level A Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is the recommended minimum; Level B if students are under eight (8) years of age, as these courses address child CPR and child obstructed airway management.
- In addition to the understandings and skills listed above for emergency first aid, training and preparation here should include secondary assessments; bone, joint and muscle injuries; head, spinal and pelvic injuries; wound care; thermal injuries (heat/cold); and medical conditions (diabetes, seizures, asthmatic emergencies and allergic reactions).
- See [Sample List of First Aid Courses/Providers for Local Low Risk Activities](#) in [Appendix B](#).
- It is **not essential that a teacher/leader be the primary first aid provider** of the group. Where a teacher/leader does not have the required capacity, trained/certified people may be found from within the school or community (e.g., a student's parent/guardian, search and rescue volunteer), en route (e.g., municipal bus driver) or at a site being visited (e.g., museum staff).
- A fully stocked **first aid kit** must be accessible.

See [Sample First Aid Kit for Local Low Risk Activities](#) in [Appendix C](#).

- The first aid **kit must be restocked** after any use.
- **Follow Universal Precautions** to avoid contact with bodily fluids. See [Appendix D](#) for [Universal Precautions](#).
- **Talk to the student** before, while, and after administering first aid. Explain before touching. Use anatomically correct terms in reference to the body.
- **Notify the Principal or designate and the parent(s)/guardian(s) if first aid is administered** to their child/ward.

For additional information and support, see:

- [First Aid Kits](#) in [Section 4: Special Considerations](#);
- [Handling Disposal of Dangerous Items](#) in [Appendix E](#);
- [First Aid Qualifications for Higher Care Activities](#) in [Section 6: General Considerations for Higher Care Activities](#);
- [Sample List of First Aid Courses for Higher Care Activities](#) in the *Safety First! Level 2 Manual*;
- [Sample First Aid Kit for Higher Care Activities](#) in the *Safety First! Level 2 Manual*; and
- [Casualty Report Form](#) in the *Safety First! Level 2 Manual*.

Early Exit of a Participant

Where warranted, the Lead Teacher may choose to remove one or more individuals from an activity or event. Examples of reasons for early exit include(s):

- **injury or illness** that does not necessitate EMS callout, but that cannot be managed at the activity/event site while providing ongoing program to the rest of the group;
- **behavioural issues** including:
 - a **risk** to the student and/or others (e.g., intentional disregard of safety),
 - **malicious behavior** that harms/intends to harm another, the self or property,
 - **harassment, violence or discrimination** based on personal characteristics;
 - **emotional, physical and/or sexual harassment** of others,
 - **violation of an alcohol, non-prescription drug, sexual or criminal conduct policy,**
 - **emotional/psychological distress**; e.g., adamant he or she wants to go home,
 - **behaviour that reflects poorly on the public reputation** of the board/school, and
 - **any situation that is not manageable** by the teachers/leaders in the field (time, skills).

In the event that a student is to exit early for any of the above reasons:

- In the event of a **minor injury/illness**, the Lead Teacher should contact the parent(s)/guardian(s);
- In the event of a **serious injury/illness**, the Lead Teacher should contact the Principal or designate. This individual will then contact the parent(s)/guardian(s)/emergency contacts to advise them of the situation and ask them to pick up the student, or in consultation with them, make other suitable arrangements for the student's transport (e.g., call an ambulance, at parent'(s)/guardian'(s) expense);
- Where the Principal makes the call, he or she should **communicate the plan to the Lead Teacher**; and
- The Lead Teacher must **manage for the safety of the leadership team, group, and student involved** until the student's transport arrives or after arrangements are made.

Incident Documentation

When an unanticipated occurrence transpires, an appropriate incident report form or other documentation should be completed and submitted to Principal or designate in a timely manner. If uncertain, consult with Principal.

Reportable incidents could involve one or more of the following:

- **personal injury requiring first aid treatment** (for every injury that has reasonable potential to impact participation in one or more activities for three hours or more);
- **medically treated injuries or illnesses** (e.g., by paramedics, hospital, medical centre);
- **death** of a staff member, volunteer or student;
- **serious illness** limiting participation, especially if widespread in group;
- suspected **child abuse**, neglect or abandonment;
- any **behaviour that leads to an early exit** of a student (see above);
- **missing or stranded** group member(s);
- **major equipment problems** that affect group safety;
- significant **property damage**;
- dangerous **animal encounters** (e.g., dog attack);

- **evacuations;**
- **public conflict;**
- any incident that attracts or is **likely to attract media attention;**
- **near misses** (see below); and/or
- **any other unusual or unexpected occurrence** that significantly disrupts the program and/or has potential for long-term complications, legal and/or insurance implications

If in doubt, make a report; there is no downside. Good, prompt documentation and reporting can help teachers/leaders, boards, and others prevent recurrence of incidents.

- In the event that an issue or legal action arises from an incident, it is important the relevant documents have been preserved by the board.
- All staff and volunteers need to be aware of board policy regarding which, if any documents to keep after each program/activity/event, where, and for how long.

See **Documentation** in **Section 4: Special Considerations** for a list of the additional types of support documents that should be retained and filed in the event of a reportable incident.

Near Misses

Near misses are situations where events occur that have potential for serious injury or other tragic results, but which result in no major negative consequences. Examples could include a lost but recovered student, a close encounter with an aggressive dog, a camp stove flare-up, etc.

- The teachers/leaders must immediately evaluate the **probability of similar incidents** occurring and adjust the activity accordingly.
- Discuss near miss incidents during **debriefings** (teachers/leadership team as well as student debriefings), so those involved learn from them.
- The Lead Teacher should **notify the Principal** of near misses.