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# How Can Teachers and Students Prepare for Effective Field Trips to Historic Sites and Museums?

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by William Mark Finchum entitled "How Can Teachers and Students Prepare for Effective Field Trips to Historic Sites and Museums?." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Teacher Education.

Thomas R. Turner, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Deborah A. Wooten, Dorothy A. Hendricks, Gerald F. Schroedl

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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How Can Teachers and Students Prepare  
for Effective Visits to Historic Sites and Museums?

A Dissertation Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

William Mark Finchum  
December 2013

## Dedication

This research is dedicated to the students and teachers of Jefferson County, Tennessee, who understand the importance of learning, regardless of the setting; the professors under whom I have learned a great deal and for whom I have tremendous respect; my sister Patricia F. Whaley who has been a wealth of encouragement in this and all my other endeavors; and especially to my wife Sherry Sorrells Finchum. Without her love, patience, and support, this work might never have been possible.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the eighth grade teachers and students of Jefferson County, Tennessee, for their willingness to provide their insights into the value of field trips. A special thanks goes also to Dr. Charles Edmonds, Director of Schools, and the principals of the four middle schools who were very accommodating and supportive. I would also like to acknowledge the support and guidance of the committee who contributed to this work: Dr. Gerald Schroedl, Department of Anthropology, Dr. Dorothy Hendricks, and Dr. Deborah Wooten, Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education; and especially the many hours of work, tidbits of sage advice, and patience that Dr. Thomas N. Turner provided as the chair of the committee.

## Abstract

Well planned and well organized field trips can be valuable learning experiences for middle school students, resulting in gains in both academic content knowledge and personal growth. Students rank field trips among their favorite activities during their school year and often look back favorably on those experiences as adults. While an emphasis on standardized testing has fueled a decline in the number of field trips taken by many schools, when the trips are coordinated with curriculum standards, administrative approval is more likely, student learning is improved, and test scores do not necessarily suffer.

Jefferson County eighth grade teachers and students were surveyed and interviewed to determine their opinions of what factors are necessary for field trips to be effective, that is to provide opportunities for academic and personal growth. Along with a review of the literature, the research showed that these teachers and students see significant preparation as key to an effective field trip; while on a field trip, teachers should engage the students academically; and sufficient follow-up is necessary to help the students retain the knowledge gained on the trip.

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## Chapter One: Purpose and Need for the Study

### **Introduction**

Well-planned and well-organized field trips can be very valuable learning experiences for all students. The trip can be as simple as identifying species of trees while taking a walk in the woods surrounding the school, or as complicated as a trip overseas. Sometimes students who are reluctant to work in a classroom setting may have more academic success when involved in an effective field trip (Campbell, Campbell, Dickinson, 2004). Students on field trips can learn from the exhibits displayed at a historic site or museum, from the knowledgeable staff on hand, and from the activities the site may provide for them (Oberchain, 2003).

Although field trips can be educational, many schools have significantly curtailed, or eliminated such trips altogether. Reasons for this may include the cost involved or liability issues. However, with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as “No Child Left Behind,” a decade ago, teachers have been placed under additional pressures to teach the standards and have their instruction judged through high-stakes testing. A poor showing on the tests could result in a teacher losing a job or being transferred to a different position. Administrators, having to face consequences such as a state take-over of the school, have found themselves under pressure too. A review of the literature and conversations with teachers and museum educators puts considerable blame on standardized testing.

The decision to reduce culturally enriching field trips reflects a variety of factors.

Financial pressures force schools to make difficult decisions about how to allocate scarce resources, and field trips are increasingly seen as an unnecessary frill. Greater focus on raising student performance on math and reading standardized tests may also lead schools

to cut field trips. Some schools believe that student time would be better spent in the classroom preparing for the exams (Greene, 2014).

One of the results of the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation has been that many schools have begun emphasizing content areas that are tested, particularly math and language arts, leaving less time for social studies. At grade levels where social studies is tested, the emphasis on scoring well on the tests has been felt, too. What is most likely an unintended consequence is that school administrators have in many cases greatly reduced the number of social studies field trips. In some systems, field trips have been eliminated altogether.

The intention of the NCLB legislation was to raise accountability for how students perform and to put in place a variety of uniform content standards that would have all students across the country studying similar content at similar stages of their educational career. Prior to this legislation, states had a variety of measurements for student achievement (Clark, 2012). There is a great concern that NCLB requirements put a greater emphasis on meeting an arbitrary score rather than on student learning. Teachers often feel pressured to emphasize testing and focus their instruction on subjects that are tested, and not on topics that might be considered important to a well-rounded education. For many teachers, this means “going against the grain” of their teacher training (Powers, 2010).

To meet these new standards, standardized testing became the order of the day. Critics contended that such testing was detrimental to students because it limited the use of critical thinking skills, as well as the students’ exposure to non-tested material. One unintended consequence has been a dramatic decline in the number of field trips for millions of students across the country. In addition, a poor economy where parents may be out of work and the

budget problems of many school systems have negatively impacted field trips as well (Clark, 2012).

In his 2008 webpage article entitled, “Research Roundup: Field Trips Down, Ignorance Holding Steady, Museum Visits Booming,” Philip M. Katz, the assistant director of research for the American Association of Museums, wrote that, “NCLB also has affected the amount of time spent outside of the classroom. The number of school field trips has declined as art, history and science are squeezed out of the K-12 curriculum in favor of math and reading.”

According to Katz, “There are no hard statistics on the decline of field trips to museums, but the anecdotal evidence is compelling – and the cause is clear, at least to many observers.” The author tells of a museum educator in Chicago who lamented that teachers would love to bring students to see the museum’s exhibits, but because the school has to show an improvement in test scores, more time has to be devoted to drill and practice in the classroom. Teachers fear that taking a day to visit a museum would be detrimental to the test results (2008).

One alternative for schools is the virtual field trip, where students “travel” not by school bus, but by the click of a mouse. Many teachers and parents may appreciate the low cost and convenience, but it is not the same as the real thing. Students do not get the same impact as the hands-on opportunities that can be provided at a museum or historic site. A student can more effectively be immersed in a topic outside the classroom (Clark, 2012).

Although available records of the number of field trips are, at best, incomplete, education specialists report a decline in the past decade. Tim Sullivan, founder of the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), says,

I definitely think there were kids who received many first or only (experiences) through field trips. The first or only time seeing a symphony. The first or only time seeing live

theater. Many kids will still experience those things without field trips, but a significant chunk – those without the means or the support or interest at home – may miss out on those elements for life (Clark, 2012).

With many families concerned about the economy, a child's only chance to actually visit a museum or historic site is through a school field trip. The discounted price for group admission is many times a key factor in whether a student is able to join a trip. While a family might be financially unable to visit a museum or historic site *as a family*, they often can at least afford to send the child. The larger the family, the more difficult the financial circumstances may be.

The results of the research project at Crystal Bridges Museum of Art in Arkansas showed that students who come from a disadvantaged background are greatly impacted by enrichment field trips that they might otherwise not experience. Gains two and three times larger were reported in critical-thinking skills, historical empathy, tolerance, and the likelihood of becoming art consumers for minority students, as well as those from rural schools and those from high-poverty schools (Greene, Kisida, Bowen, 2014).

Since “No Child Left Behind” legislation, enacted in 2002, many teachers expected some of their typical teaching strategies might be left by the wayside. However, they may not have foreseen the dramatic plummet in the number of school field trips (Popescu, 2008). Significant drops in attendance have taken place at the Chicago Children's Museum, Mystic Seaport on the Connecticut coast, Boston's New England Aquarium, and the Johnson Manned Spaceflight Center in Houston (Popescu, 2008). Supporting the argument of high stakes testing is in part to blame; one elementary teacher in Texas said, “Curriculums are so much tighter than they used to be” (Popescu, 2008).

The downward trend in field trips in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has so negatively impacted the number of site visitors, that some museums are emphasizing how they can help teachers meet the required curriculum standards. The Chicago Children's Museum is sending checklists to teachers to highlight ways in which the museum can support the teaching of Illinois standards (Popescu, 2008). At the Frank H. McClung Museum on the University of Tennessee campus in Knoxville, TN, Curator of Education Debbie Woodiel emphasized that many museums have always tried to incorporate curriculum standards into the exhibits and programs offered. An emphasis has also been placed on cross-curricular experiences for students, combining, for example, art and social studies. With the move to Common Core standards, a new focus will likely be a connection between social studies and literacy skills (D. Woodiel, personal communication, August 1, 2012).

Because social studies looks at the world and society, a field trip should be considered as a viable tool/resource/supplement for social studies instruction. Outside the classroom is a world of rich learning opportunities that can benefit and challenge students, if a well-planned trip can tap into them. The potential for active learning is unlimited (Maxim, 1999).

Concepts related to geography can be learned simply by examining the changing seasons at the school, walking outside and around campus to take measurements and create a map of the school, or by visiting a battlefield and learning how the topography impacted troop movements. History topics can be taught through activities such as taking a bus tour to historical locations in the community and then working to get a historic marker placed at one of the sites. Economics can be taught through visiting a shipyard, an airport, or an intermodal facility. Most communities will have at least one of these, or similar resources readily available (Roberts,

1996). Museums and historic sites can extend the social studies curriculum by extending the lessons into the real world (Cornett, 1998).

Other factors for a reduction in field trips could include budget restrictions. According to Michael Yell, a middle school teacher in Hudson, Wisconsin who has written on how to engage students in social studies and who holds National Board Certification in Early Adolescent Social Studies – History, said, “In my school field trips are basically covered by a parent club fundraiser each year, so we have not been as affected as perhaps others have been. I think it is certainly a reasonable hypothesis that field trips have been affected by the emphasis on testing.” He added that a drop in the amount of time devoted to social studies in the elementary classroom has probably meant a drop in social studies related field trips (M.Yell, personal correspondence, July 27, 2012).

In connection with the concern some administrators may have regarding safety and proper behavior on a trip, appropriate and in-depth planning can be of great importance, even on a field trip that simply serves as a reward for good grades. Chaperones should be well trained on not only the schedule of activities and the objectives of the trip, but also on how to deal with safety issues that may arise. For example, chaperones should have a student handbook to know exactly what guidelines are to be enforced. Along those lines, a camera to document evidence and a form to fill out for such things as witness statements could prove invaluable (Brunner, Lewis, 2004).

The Jefferson County, Tennessee, Department of Education does not prohibit field trips, but instead leaves the decision to the principal of each school. Jefferson County High School has an informal, unwritten policy of requiring field trips to be related to the content standards of the subject. For example, Dr. Scott Walker, JCHS principal, has approved a school-day trip to

Cirque' de Chine, a presentation of Chinese acrobatics. This trip will be open to all students in the school's Freshman Academy. However, each teacher on the team – math, science, geography, and language arts – will be required to tie in the trip to one or more of the state standards established for his or her content area.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A well-organized and well-planned field trip can be educational, yet still be fun. While many school systems limit the number, or even exclude field trips altogether, when possible, field trips can have a deep and lasting educational value. Life-long memories can be created and a desire for learning can be sparked. Often it is the field trip that a student is likely to remember years later, more so than most activities and lessons completed in the classroom setting.

The significance of an effective field trip was vividly illustrated to me when I was a seventh grade teacher. Our Tennessee History class took our annual field trip to Rocky Mount Museum in Piney Flats, near Johnson City, Tennessee. Part of the visit included hands-on activities for which the students could choose in advance. Having a chaperone with each of the groups at the various stations made it possible for me to visit each location and check on everyone's behavior and progress. One girl, who typically made average grades in her classes, turned around to see me as I walked into the log cabin kitchen. She had flour across her forehead where she had just wiped away the perspiration that had developed due to the hard work and the heat. When she saw that it was me coming in, she smiled and said, "If we did this every day, I'd make straight A's!"

However, it is one of my concerns that field trips in my East Tennessee county may not be effectively planned and executed in a manner that would support students learning in the manner of that young girl. Field trips may too often be regarded as frivolous or as activities that

do not prepare students for standardized, high stakes tests. A related concern is that teachers may not spend enough time and effort in finding ways to connect the field trip with the standards they need to cover. Now that Tennessee history is no longer a stand-alone seventh grade subject, it is still important in Tennessee's fourth grade standards. For example, students at this level are to study the hardships faced by early Tennessee settlers. How better to get that across to students than a visit to Rocky Mount Museum where interpreters in period clothing, speaking in first person, describe and show examples of beds, chairs, toys, games, and food?

I began researching the literature for information about effective field trips or even practical experienced-based suggestions, the conceptions of field trips by teachers and students, and the kinds of experiences these trips should provide. Although numerous articles referred to field trips as viable alternatives to classroom learning, few dealt with practical recommendations on how to plan and conduct effective field trips. Although these articles would be helpful with the basic ideas of planning a field trip, none gave a comprehensive outline of the steps needed to plan an effective field trip, nor developed detailed procedures for follow-up efforts to strengthen the learning gained from the trip. This study may lead to detailed ways in which effective field trips can be planned and conducted in a way that supports curriculum standards and used to enhance and make learning exciting.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine what teachers and students at the eighth grade level in Jefferson County, Tennessee, see as important factors that go into planning and taking effective field trips. A corollary purpose is to develop from these findings a set of characteristics which define effective field trips for students. To that end, the research questions that drove this study were:



- 1) How do eighth grade students in Jefferson County, Tennessee, rate the field trips they have taken in terms of relevance to the subject being taught, and the impact of these field trips on the likelihood of their visiting the sites again on their own or with family members?
- 2) How do eighth grade teachers in Jefferson County, Tennessee, describe and rate the field trips in which they have been involved, in the categories of preparation, follow-up, and links to state standards?
- 3) Based on questionnaires, interviews, and a review of the literature, what are the characteristics that should define an effective field trip?

### **Need for the Study**

I was able to find only limited research literature related to the planning, conducting, and meaningful follow up of successful field trips. Field trips have been variously defined and named in the literature. The term field trip is often used interchangeably with school trip, school excursion, and school tour. The purpose of such trips is usually observation for education or direct experience for learning. Not all field trips are effective. An ineffective field trip may be one that has only entertainment value at best and no impact on learning the content. For the purpose of this study, effective field trips are defined as those that connect to the state curriculum standards, provide an enjoyable experience for all students, and result in a change of student behavior - specifically increasing the likelihood of the student revisiting the site or visiting similar sites at some point in the future. A survey was designed and administered with this definition in mind. Research is particularly lacking related to teacher and student views related to field trips. This study attempts to address this void. It is hoped that the study will also provide

new insights into the characteristics of highly effective field trips as perceived by teachers and students.

I believe that this study meets three needs by: 1) leading to a set of tested, clear, and succinct guidelines that will insure teachers and students of field trips that are consistently more satisfying and effective academically, 2) developing a criterion based set of guidelines for planning and conducting successful field trips will enable educators to see the importance and usefulness of field trips in providing learning experiences that cannot be duplicated in the classroom itself even with advanced communications technology, and 3) helping to point out the need to give all stakeholders a voice in the planning process.

In addition to meeting those needs, this study will benefit the education directors of historic sites and museums in better showcasing their resources in such a way as to facilitate student understanding of state curriculum standards. With research results provided to those sites, education directors can evaluate what various sites are doing that improves their presentations for field trips. The results of the study can also help teachers determine which sites are most likely to meet the needs of their students in and are consistent with the goals of state standards. Teachers will also be able to use the research to determine ways in which they can improve their planning for, and follow up on a field trip so that it is, indeed, a learning experience, and not just a day out of school. This study may add new dimensions to how teachers plan field trips and what types of field trips they conduct.

Finally the results of the study should benefit administrators by making them aware of the opportunities for effective teaching before, during, and after a field trip. Once an administrator is aware of the connection between the trip and the curriculum standards, he or she is more likely to support, and maybe become and advocate of field trips.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

Doing this research project through Jefferson County Schools presented minimal limitations. The support of the Director of Schools, Dr. Charles Edmonds, and the Central Office, as well as lengthy experience in the system and acquaintance with many of the teachers and principals involved made the research possible with no unnecessary roadblocks.

This research was conducted near the end of the 2012-2013 school year, thereby affording students the opportunity to discuss field trips from the beginning of their sixth grade year through the end of their eighth grade year. Participation in the surveys and interviews was completely voluntary on the part of the teachers and the students. The research was conducted only after permission was given by the University of Tennessee, the school system, each middle school principal, all six of the eighth grade social studies teachers, the students, and their parents.

This study is delimited to the areas covered by the questions included on the surveys given to eighth graders at each of the four middle schools in the Jefferson County system – a total of almost 600 students. More than one third of the students submitted their completed surveys. It is delimited to those 600 students and the six eighth grade social studies teachers. Further delimitation would include the questions on the surveys and those that were introduced in the interviews.

## **Participants and Setting**

Although the school system is a rural one with more than half of students on free and reduced lunches, it is doubtful that the low socio-economic status of many of the students being surveyed will impact the results. Schools typically find ways to cover the costs of a field trip for a student whose family does not have the means to do so on its own. The results of the study

should still be applicable to other school systems, even if those systems have varying degrees of affluence.

Physical geography and student demographics will not significantly impact the planning and conducting of an effective field trip to a site that has activities and exhibits which support state standards. The results of this study should be of just as much interest to a teacher, student, and museum educator in an urban area as they would be to someone in a suburban school district. With minimal research, a teacher can find a significant number of historic sites and museums with a radius accessible in a school day timeframe.

The surveys and interviews were conducted at the very end of the 2012-2013 school year. The number of schools, teachers, and students was large enough to provide a sufficient sampling, but not so large as to make the surveys and interviews overly time-consuming for those involved. There are four middle schools in the county system, with a total of approximately 600 eighth graders, which feed into a single comprehensive high school. The students in this survey are among those in the first class (2013-14 school year) of a new ninth grade academy near the main campus of the high school.

### **Assumptions**

This study is predicated on the assumption that the surveys and interviews covered the relevant questions enough to adequately ascertain the information necessary to reach valid conclusions and to make reasonable recommendations.

A second assumption is that the students and teachers understood the survey questions and interview questions to the degree necessary to provide answers that could be used to address the basic questions that drove the study. A closely related assumption is that the students were being forthright in their answers to the survey questions as well as in their interviews.

## Definitions of Terms

It is likely that educators should have no difficulty understanding the terms used in this research. However, so as to provide clarity and avoid misunderstanding, the terms are defined as:

- A) Field trip: any excursion that takes students off-campus for a school-approved educational activity, as well as those trips that might simply be intended as a reward for good grades and/or good behavior;
- B) Historic site or museum: any site, whether operated by a governmental or private entity, that has, at least in part, as its purpose the presentation of information related to any of the social sciences to students and/or the general public. Examples would include state and national parks, historic homes, battlefields, etc.;
- C) High stakes testing: those tests that are required by state or federal legislation and are used in determining student academic growth and teacher effectiveness;
- D) Curriculum standards: the facts and skills a state department of education determines are needed for students to understand at a particular grade level and in a particular discipline. It is these standards on which high stakes testing is based;
- E) Common Core State Standards: as defined by the Tennessee Department of Education, CCSS sets forth, “clear standards for math and English Language Arts that were developed to ensure every student graduates high school prepared for college or the workforce. The standards reflect rigorous learning benchmarks set by countries whose students currently

outperform American students on international assessments,” and emphasize higher order thinking skills such as are necessary for close-reading of nonfiction text; and

E) Place-based learning (PBL)/Place-based education (PBE): connecting the student’s local community to the concepts being taught in class.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A field trip can be a worthwhile educational endeavor, even in these days of a greater emphasis on standards and the ensuing high stakes testing. Field trips, when done well, can be used to support the teaching of state standards just as well as a classroom lesson plan can. A field trip can, in many ways, engage a student in the content, and should be considered when practical. Dr. John Dewey (1938), the well-known educational theorist of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, emphasized the importance of experience in constructing one’s education. According to Dewey, “In what I have said I have taken for granted the soundness of the principle that education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based on experience – which is always the actual life-experience of some individual” (Dewey, p. 89, 1938).

Field trips, even those that are intended as entertainment, provide such “life-experiences” that connect to the various disciplines in the realm of social studies. A visit to a theme park can be an economics lesson in supply and demand when a teacher explains why food is more expensive there than it is at a restaurant. Many education theorists, such as John Dewey in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, emphasize the importance of experience as the source of learning. Students need to value such experiences related to social studies if they are to truly understand social studies.

Place-based learning, often associated with science classes, especially in the field of environmental science, must also be connected to the social studies disciplines as well. Students today are often taken to a computer lab in their schools to research topics that may have global themes, but many times the local connections are overlooked. With the world at our fingertips, the local community right under our noses is left unknown. Place-based learning can help students relate bigger themes to their own circumstances, something which should be a primary goal of social studies education. With the downward trend in field trips to local museums and historic sites, students are missing out on those connections.

In 1994, the National Council for the Social Studies published curriculum standards for grades pre-K through 12 classrooms. These standards, revised in 2010, have been widely used in this country and in others to assist teachers and administrators in aligning curriculum and development. These standards, which are important in the creation of lesson plans, follow ten themes in an effort to categorize knowledge into strands that are threaded throughout the grade levels. For years these standards have guided administrators, curriculum developers and teachers in their efforts to provide a comprehensive social studies education. One of these important themes is that of People, Places, and Environments. According to NCSS, “Students learn where people and places are located and why they are there.” With place-based learning, students in a geography class understand why they are located in their particular place. Is it not essential for them to actually visit some of those places to better understand their own connection to this theme? Rather than simply make maps of landforms and vegetation, students, through well-planned field trips, can come to understand how physical and human characteristics have shaped their lives.

If in a history class, the students can learn about the patterns of human migration and settlement in various parts of the country or the world as a part of the “big picture.” However, for this learning to truly impact a student’s life, it must be made clear how those settlement patterns impacted their local area. For example, an ample and easily accessed water supply is necessary for a community to develop. Students could look at their own communities to find what sources of water may have led to settlement around their own areas.

Another NCSS theme is Civic Ideals and Practices. If a student is to be an informed and active citizen, it is of paramount importance that he or she be able to develop an understanding of civic ideals and how they compare to civic practices. If they understand both, they can begin to learn ways to connect the two. Everyone has a stake in the success of these efforts. Students can take a field trip to an area of their community where inclement weather has caused significant damage. Their study of that location could lead to civic engagement in the form of writing letters to city councilmen, or letters to the editor of the local paper, suggesting ways in which the community can respond to the disaster.

Two of the significant contributors in the field of Place-based or Community-based education are Gregory Smith and David Sobel (2010), who argue that this type of learning is not only relevant and essential for students, but can be engaging and useful for building effective citizens. Although the authors, among many others, do see place-based and community-based education as being readily connected to environmental science, they also contend that it is just as relevant in social studies. Rather than cleaning up a stream, students can spearhead a drive for the placement of a statue depicting an important person or event in the community. With such a project, tremendous opportunities can open up for students to be involved with various community groups, do original research, publicize their efforts, seek community awareness and



support, and in many other ways not just learn about, but also practice effective citizenship. In planning for this type of learning, a teacher can look at what needs to be done in the community (involving the students in that research), and then examining the standards that can be met.

A major component of place- or community-based learning is the insistence that students need to be connected to their world. This learning strategy should not be limited to students who live in rural areas. It is not intended simply as a “get out into nature” activity. Just as much as rural students, those in urban areas need to understand their world, too – its physical, cultural, and social characteristics.

### **Procedure**

Criterion-based surveys were developed based on information gleaned from a review of the literature, informal discussions with colleagues in the field, and personal experience. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Tennessee and approval from the Jefferson County Department of Education and the principals of each of the four middle schools, these surveys were distributed to the six eighth grade social studies teachers in the county. Each teacher was asked follow-up questions based on their responses to the surveys. A similar pattern was used with surveys and interviews of the county’s eighth grade students.

Sample criteria and questions for the teacher survey are shown in the following table.

Table 1 Sample question for each criterion included in the teacher survey		
1	Location	Which historic sites/museums have you visited as a part of a field trip?
2	Preparation	What did you do to prepare your students to benefit from the trip?
3	Effectiveness	Was the site effective in helping students learn about the subject?
4	Standards	Did the site/museum present offerings tied to state standards?
5	Engagement	How well did the site/museum engage your students?
6	Follow-up	In what ways did you follow-up with the students after the trip?
7	Planning	What would you do differently next time?

Once the results were in, a follow-up interview was conducted with each teacher from this group. These interviews focused on detailing their involvement or lack thereof in facilitating educational field trips.

The second step of the research process was to create a student survey document, based on similar criteria as those of the teacher survey. Teachers not involved in the research had an opportunity to offer advice in the development of the instrument.

The creation of the student survey, also criterion-based, began in conjunction with the development of the teacher version. The questions were much the same as those for the teachers, but gave a student viewpoint, something that is not always what a teacher expects it to be. The criterion and some sample questions are shown in the table which follows.

1	Location	Which historic sites/museums have you visited as a part of a field trip? (What grade were you in at the time?)
2	Preparation	What did your teacher do to prepare you for the field trip?
3	Effectiveness	How well did the field trip help you learn about the subject?
4	Engagement	How well did the museum/historic site keep your attention on your trip?
5	Follow-up	What did your teacher do after the trip to reinforce what you learned?
6	Planning	What could be done differently next time? Would you recommend this trip to your friends?

Once the data was collected and studied, interviews with selected students took place. These interviews focused on students who have taken several field trips and those who have experienced only a few. Also some students were chosen because of the quality of field trips they indicated they had taken. The number of interviews was determined by the number of students who fall into those categories and the details of their responses. The timeline is below.

Development of Criterion-Based Survey for teachers	December, 2012
Development of Criterion-Based Survey for students	January, 2013
IRB and Jefferson County Department of Education approval	March, 2013
Administering of teacher survey	April, 2013
Follow-up interviews with teachers	May, 2013
Administering of student survey	May, 2013
Follow-up interviews with students	May, 2013
Examination of the data	June, 2013
Results available	July, 2013

## **Organization of the Study**

1) Conduct a review of the literature to develop a set of criteria for the development of a quality survey instrument.

2) Create a survey for the purpose of learning both the quantity and quality (based on connections to state standards and the perceptions of the teachers and students) of field trips taken by eighth grade teachers in Jefferson County.

3) Create a survey to determine both the quantity and quality (based on engaging the students' interest) of field trips taken by eighth graders in Jefferson County during their time in middle school.

4) Based on student survey results, interview selected students regarding their responses.

5) Based on the teacher survey results, pose follow-up questions to teachers.

6) Develop a list of conclusions based on the results of the teacher and student surveys, as well as the review of the literature.

7) Develop a list of recommendations for teachers who wish to conduct effective field trips, and suggestions for how education directors at historic sites and museums can be of benefit to teachers as they prepare for a field trip.

Chapter Two focuses on the reviews of literature. Subsequent chapters offer the results of both the teacher and student surveys and interviews, along with conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was twofold. The research was expected to indicate what eighth grade teachers and eighth grade students in Jefferson County, Tennessee, consider as important characteristics of effective field trips. That information, along with a review of relevant literature, should be advantageous in the development of a set of guidelines for planning and conducting effective field trips.

To that end, the research questions that drove this study were:

- 1) How do eighth grade students in Jefferson County, Tennessee, rate the field trips they have taken in terms of relevance to the subject being taught, and the impact of these field trips on their likelihood of visiting the sites again on their own or with family members?
- 2) How do eighth grade teachers in Jefferson County, Tennessee, describe and rate the field trips in which they have been involved in the categories of preparation, follow-up, and links to state curriculum standards?
- 3) Based on surveys, interviews, and a review of the literature, what are the characteristics that should define an effective field trip?

In this chapter, the review of the literature looks at: 1) the decline in field trips; 2) the connection between field trips and state curriculum standards; 3) place-based learning; 4) conducting a field trip; 5) following up on a field trip; and 6) the academic and personal development of students. In addition to the literature review, interviews of museum personnel and social studies methods professors were included.

The relative paucity of material available on the topic of field trips soon became obvious. Reviews of journal articles posted on the Wilson Web, newspaper articles online, and

dissertation abstracts provide only scant information. Most of what was found dealt with anecdotes, experiences, and opinions. Very few research studies were available, and those that were, involved small populations.

### **Review of the Literature**

In this review of the literature, I have examined briefly the nature and purposes of field trips; what the literature says about how field trips can be significant opportunities for active learning; the support in the literature of in-depth planning to insure that the field trips relate to social studies standards; and what the literature says about how pre- and post-trip activities can help students consolidate their learning. The majority of articles related anecdotal evidence and teacher experiences and advice. However, a small number referenced research studies to show whether a field trip can be effective in helping students learn academic content and if trips can impact a student's personal growth. An area of research closely related to that of field trips, is the topic of place-based, or community-based, learning. With that in mind, a portion of the review is devoted to that field of research.

**The Decline in Field Trips.** In a preliminary investigation, I interviewed museum personnel at a local historic site and at a local museum, as well as colleagues in the field of social studies education. Among the latter was Gayle Thieman, now an Associate Professor at Portland State University, and a former high school administrator and social studies teacher in several states. She is an advocate of field trips who has organized many herself. When no funding was available for a trip, Thieman creatively solved the problem by collaborating with colleagues to establish learning stations in various classrooms with experts leading activities in each room. Thieman was not familiar with any literature related to field trips being cut due to an emphasis

on standards and testing, but noted that, “some principals might use that as an excuse” (G. Thieman, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

Daniel Qualls, a professor at the University of Maine, works with many pre-service teachers and the schools in which they are practicing. According to Qualls, “In the schools I work with now, they go to local museums (which are usually smaller), businesses/services (like the fire department), or research centers. The trips are used to tie place-based learning to the state curriculum.” He added, “They are definitely tied to the curriculum standards, otherwise the teachers cannot justify taking the students out of class” (D. Qualls, personal communication, October 8, 2012).

Interviews with a random sampling of education coordinators and administrators associated with area museums and historic sites found that field trips have declined in the past decade. One factor they surmise is the emphasis on standards. For example, the Frank H. McClung Museum on the University of Tennessee campus in Knoxville has empirical data to show that the number of students visiting the museum has declined. That decrease is due in part to an increased emphasis on student standardized testing (Woodiel, 2012).

This is not always the only reason, but it is definitely of major importance. In the last 15 years or so, several factors have combined to emphasize attendance in class even if the destination was directly related to the course. For example, one of the earliest of these factors was the shift of high schools to block scheduling; because of the compression of time for a course along with increasing emphasis on measurement of student success in a single test, visits of high school classes to the Museum declined significantly. Anecdotal evidence came from conversations with high school teachers; art and foreign language teachers could always take

trips but not the teachers in the core classes (that is, classes whose student test scores mattered) (Woodiel, 2012).

Echoing a similar sentiment was Sam Maynard, Executive Director of James White's Fort, also in Knoxville, who said that student attendance at the fort has seen a notable decline (S. Maynard, personal communication, July 30, 2012). Robert McGinnis, curator for the fort, said that field trips over the past 10-15 years have definitely declined. In addition to concerns over cost, McGinnis believes that the emphasis on state standards has also contributed to the downward trend, but does not have data to support that contention.

Although the fort still schedules some visits from schools in the surrounding areas, McGinnis said that, "Knox County requires that a field trip meet all the standard subjects taught in the classroom and we have not found a way around that ruling yet." McGinnis added that some of the blame "has to go back to the state regulations and meeting the standards. For the small museums like ours, there should be some shortcut around the state standards" (R. McGinnis, personal communication, July 30, 2012).

McClung Museum belongs to a roundtable of museum educators in the Knoxville area, and all of them have reported decreases in attendance due to an emphasis on testing. Woodiel emphasized that many museum educators have always tried to incorporate curriculum standards into the exhibits and programs offered. An emphasis has also been placed on cross-curricular experiences for students, combining, for example, art and social studies. With the move to Common Core standards, a new focus will likely be a connection between social studies and literacy skills (Woodiel, 2012).

Sue Blanchette, immediate past president of the National Council for the Social Studies, believes that increased high stakes testing, along with budget issues, mean a decline in field trips.



According to Blanchette, “Yes, I think the two major factors to this are the emphasis on high stakes testing and money. In schools where the students are generally successful on high stakes tests, there may be more allowances for field trips, but the state of the school budget these days has put a damper on a lot of extra-curricular events. Districts have eliminated recess; isn’t it logical to think that field trips are gone as well?” (S. Blanchette, personal communication, July 26, 2012)

### **Connection to State Curriculum Standards**

In a qualitative study conducted to examine the effects of high-stakes, standardized tests on teachers' instructional planning at a rural school, the question to be answered was, “How do mandated curricular standards affect teachers' instructional planning and content selection?” The researcher was concerned as to the manner and degree to which a state emphasis on accountability might affect a rural school. Among the findings was that the NCLB law meant that, “local educators can expect continued external governance.” (Thomas, 2005, p.19)

Teacher interviews in the Thomas study uncovered a concern over the likely loss of local topics if scores on standardized tests dropped. It is the researcher’s argument that rural schools are “a foundational part of the communities they serve,” but that high stakes testing makes it hard to present a curriculum that meets the needs of the students. The teachers taking part in this qualitative research, however, did reflect on their test scores and looked for ways to improve their instructional strategies (Thomas, 2005).

Participants reported a tendency to rely on conventional curriculum sources and lists of standards, even the standardized tests themselves, to determine what to include in the curriculum. If it was on a list of standards or on a test, it was important enough to teach. With so many

standards to meet, there was no time for in-depth work on any topic, thereby giving little if any attention to local topics (Thomas, 2005).

From my experience, it is not uncommon for rural schools, like those of Jefferson County, to be the focal point of the community where families gather for sports, holiday programs, graduation, etc., regardless of religious background or political affiliation. These schools are often considered by the community as vital to the perpetuation of that community's history and mores, something difficult to do in an age of standardized testing.

### **Place-based Learning**

A considerable amount of literature over the past decade has indicated the importance of place-based learning, suggesting that it is critical in the development of a well-rounded student. Much of the literature concerns the use of place-based learning in the field of science, although an occasional article encourages teachers to consider its use in the social studies disciplines, and a few indicate how it can be used in cross-discipline lessons. In many cases, an emphasis on connecting to standards is highlighted.

Weise (2012) described how she was able to create an outdoor learning center near her school in Dimondale, Michigan. According to Weise, "There is a movement afoot in the nation – one that goes against the trend of more testing, less recess, and too many standards to fit into the school day. This movement doesn't ignore standards; rather it weaves the standards with the places and meanings that are ever-present outside our classrooms." Although Weise was discussing a science curriculum, she sounds like a social studies teacher when she says, "Place-based education connects students to their communities while they learn the standards in a lasting way." As Weise recommends, rather than saving a rainforest the students will never

experience beyond a photograph, would it be better if they saved a river or a pond close to their school (Weise, 2012)?

Middle school students in Corvallis, Oregon, learned about their local watershed through a place-based learning experience. These students learned about the local geography, along with economic issues related to farms and forests. Students reported a sense of accomplishment in the success of related projects such as planting rare native plants and designing a riparian buffer (Santelmann, Gosnell, Myers, 2011).

This project involved numerous visits to farms and forests in the area so the students could meet, observe, interact with, and learn from landowners and managers. To enhance other skills, such as writing and art, student assignments included theme-based interviews, art projects, and creative writing.

Place-based education not only offers opportunities for engaging activities that help the students learn geography and science, but also helps develop observation and listening skills. As NCSS advocates, these skills will help the students learn to integrate ideas and actions, characteristics of effective citizenship.

If a student is to protect a place, he or she must first appreciate that place. That will happen only when a person has been able to actually experience that place physically. Field trips, both on and off campus, are essential in creating this experience for the students. An understanding of one's environment is essential not only in science, but just as much so in social studies. Place, defined by its human and physical characteristics, is a key theme in geography (Beckrich, 2011).

Place-based learning should incorporate knowledge that is developed through outside experiences along with classroom-based knowledge to ground a student in social studies.

Typically a rural school is located in a place with farmland and forest surrounding it. However, even with the opportunity for place-based learning literally just outside the classroom window, rural schools are shifting their focus to standards-based learning (Shamah, MacTavish, 2009). In rural areas, local schools are often considered a community resource. An exclusion of place-based learning would make it difficult for a community school to be the primary location for socialization for the community's children and to be the origin point for the transmission of community values (Shamah, et al, 2009).

Shamah (2009) wrote that students who live in rural areas often have a strong connection to place. They know where the creeks and streams are for finding crawfish or turtles. They know the mountains by name. The same holds true for the human characteristics of place as well. They know where the pastor lives, or the teacher, or a friend. Tapping into place-based education, and connecting it to the standards, should be an effective strategy. Rural students are typically connected to the community in such a way that place-based education is of great importance, although it may not be realized. Because they already know about the agriculture, mining, logging, or other activities of the area, they can easily use that knowledge as a foundation for looking at "bigger pictures," such as economics, global warming, political organizations, environmental issues, and more (Shamah, et al, 2009).

Even in a kindergarten class, place-based learning and alternative assessment can have a significant impact on the classroom. In Gary, Indiana, a group of kindergarteners learn about their local environment by taking photographs and writing about them. The students take several field trips to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore to learn about their local environment and their connection to it. They are also able to study possible ways they can improve their environment. The photographs are used as a basis for the students to describe, both orally for the

whole class, as well as individually in their journals, how they understand the vocabulary and related science concepts (Quigley, Cook, Escobedo, Buck, 2011).

Understanding these issues can help a student become more geographically literate, ecologically minded, and effective as a citizen. They will be able to discuss the issues and participate as learned members of the community. However, if NCLB means major budget cuts, rural schools may be unable to create, or continue, innovative curriculum plans (Shamah, et al, 2009).

### **Planning a Field Trip**

When planning a field trip, one of the important considerations is whether or not the site is accessible for students with disabilities. A search of the museum or historic site's web page will likely reveal if the building is accessible, but it may not reference the exhibits and activities to be offered to the students. If a child has sensorimotor difficulties, for example, arrangements should be made in advance to help that student have a meaningful experience. That might mean working in advance with a museum representative and preparing a parent chaperone in ways to facilitate the activity (Martin, Seevers, 2003).

For a student to receive maximum benefit from a field trip, a teacher, after outlining some of the basic topics of the school year, should consider asking students for input on which site to visit. Children like to feel that they are actively involved in their education and this is one good way to make that happen.

According to McLoughin (2004), to continue building student ownership of his or her education, the teacher could brainstorm with the class about possible questions to research both in advance of the visit and while at the site. These questions could help the site tailor its programming on the day of the trip, or they could become the basis of a scavenger hunt at the

site. Because the follow-up after the trip is of such importance, the questions could also serve as the basis for how the students present what they have learned (McLoughin, 2004).

To build readiness, a teacher can outline several frameworks from which a student can choose for presenting information learned at the site. One student might do a graphic organizer, while another might create a scrapbook. To reach higher levels of cognitive thinking, students could be asked to write about their expectations – what they expect to see, hear, and learn on the trip. A follow-up assignment could be a second writing project in which the student compares his or her expectations with their actual experiences (McLoughin, 2004).

Students need to have some background knowledge of the site to be visited, along with an understanding of the goals to be accomplished while at the site. Proper field trip behavior should be taught and practiced in advance as well (Woolf, 2012).

Preparation should also include efforts to lessen the students' anxiety before the trip. This could be done by showing them photos of the museum or historic site and some of the exhibits they will see while there.

A good opportunity for collaboration would be to involve the local historical society or county historian. If there is an historic building in town that students could visit, a series of lesson plans could be developed and a number of primary sources could be located so that students could have a field trip that used a local resource for them to learn about history. The lessons could focus on state standards, but use local information to get the point across (Coughlin, 2010).

In all of the planning, it is important that the connection to state curriculum standards be emphasized. Many sites offer curriculum materials that are shared on-site with the students. However, if a teacher can access those materials in advance, they can be of greater benefit.

None of the authors cited indicated that state standards are inappropriate. On the contrary, they believe that state standards should play a role in helping determine age-appropriate lessons. They all support the idea that teaching these standards is not only possible, but advantageous. Place-based learning, beginning with pre-service teachers developing a personal understanding of place as it relates to them, is a preferred theme for developing teacher preparation courses. Incorporating place-based learning with state and national standards can help students gain the knowledge and skills they need to see the connections between the two (Ebersole, Worster, 2007).

### **Conducting a Field Trip**

One factor the teacher should consider when planning a trip is to determine exactly what his or her role will be, and then to communicate that information to the student. Monitoring behavior is important, but a teacher must also spend time teaching as well. It may be of benefit to the teacher to use different techniques than might be common in the classroom. For example, the teacher might want to engage small groups of students at various stations during the trip. In some cases, a class may be better served by a teacher who is more of a facilitator than an instructor (Myers, Jones, 2003).

In an article by Clark (2000), Charles Hou, a teacher in British Columbia, strongly supports field trips for students through word and deed. He takes a group of students on a nine-mile canoe trip down Fraser River to Fort Langley. The students dress as voyageurs and eat period food as well. Hou believes these experiences make the tour of the fort even more meaningful. It is Hou's belief that students don't remember much of what they learn in school, but will remember field trips where all their senses are utilized. Even with the difficulty of planning and facilitating field trips, they can be very rewarding (Clark, 2000).

Although students may eagerly await the day of the trip, and certainly can enjoy a day of learning in a less-structured environment, there are other benefits as well. On many occasions, parents welcome the opportunity to chaperone. However, learning is optimized only when teachers actively integrate the information gained through the field trip with the curriculum. Otherwise, if the field trip is seen as a reward or a needed break, the academic benefits will be minimal. In addition, if lesson plans, primary documents, and activity ideas are provided by the education staff at a museum or historic site, students can gain increased knowledge and be better able to retain that knowledge. To be of greatest benefit, these materials need to be available to the teacher well in advance of the trip (Noel, 2007).

While at the site, students should be given the opportunity to emphasize critical thinking. Rather than have them read a good deal of text, teachers can ask students to compare and contrast various exhibits, or make predictions based on what they have observed. If the size of the museum or site is rather large, a teacher might want to have the students concentrate on certain areas and then encourage them to return with their parents. Another possibility would be to include some time in the schedule for students to roam freely to visit exhibits that are of interest to them (Kisiel, 2006).

### **Follow-up Activities**

A study involving more than 100 fourth grade students in Seattle, Washington, reported by Farmer and Wott (1995), showed that follow-up activities were of great importance to the success of a field trip. All students began with a pretest before visiting a park and an arboretum. The experimental portion of the research involved the follow-up activities. In one of the groups, the follow-up activity related directly to the field trip, while the follow-up activity in the second



group did not. The post-test indicated that both groups had learned from the activity of the field trip, but that the group with related follow-up activities had greater gains (Farmer, et al, 1995).

When planning for a field trip, a teacher should consider follow-up activities that will tie into the activities done in advance in the classroom. For example, if a teacher asks the students to complete a writing assignment about their expectations of the site, the follow-up activity could be a writing assignment comparing those expectations to what was actually experienced on the field trip (Farmer, et al, 1995).

### **Importance of Field Trips**

Field trip experiences can have profound effects on students' attitudes and beliefs, regardless of the destination. Simply touring downtown can help students get a grasp on poverty, homelessness, and mental illnesses. A deeper level of empathy can sometimes be achieved when students encounter situations that are real, not second hand information shared either through a textbook, or even a guest speaker. Such results are the goals of good social studies teachers and are necessary in developing effective citizens (Clark, 2000).

Knowledge gained through a well-planned and interactive field trip can be long-term. One study showed that many of the fourth graders who visited the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on a field trip remembered much of what they had learned as demonstrated through interviews conducted a year later. In addition, the study indicated that many of the students had developed a pro-environmental attitude (Farmer, Knapp, Benton, 2007).

Taylor, Morris, and Cordeau-Young (1997) argue that field trips can be beneficial, even for the very youngest of students. To relate to their curriculum of the community, young students can observe the fire and police departments. They can learn about economics by visiting a bank and about government by going to City Hall. Field trips can also provide fun

opportunities to learn strategies for gathering information, learning to observe, and in making conclusions. In addition, having parents participate can promote parental involvement in the child's education in the classroom as well (Taylor, et al, 1997).

These trips can be beneficial for giving the students an enriching experience on a personal level. As has been pointed out by many authors, it is necessary to plan ahead for educational goals, cost, safety, etc. Field trips can also promote the concepts of social studies, language, and literacy (Taylor, et al, 1997).

The value of a field trip can be seen in its application to a broad range of skills students need to develop. For example, students can be immersed in a sensory experience when they visit a park and hear the birds and see their colors. Touching objects during a hands-on activity engages another of the senses. Students can become much better informed of their own community.

Field trips can be helpful in an effort to encourage the growth of a student's knowledge and historical understanding. For example, visiting a one-room school where a teacher discusses daily routines in a first person format, is a good way to help students gain a fuller, more personal, understanding of history (Clark, 2000). Students can learn about the curriculum of the 1800s and what children's games were like at the time, and maybe even experience a bit of fright when learning about forms of school discipline of the time - something that would have been hard to do with no more than a textbook, or even a computer lab (Clark, 2000).

One study indicated that although site-specific knowledge retention may not be long term, visits to historic sites or museums do result in a heightened interest in the subject and a positive impression of the site with an interest to return at a later date (Knapp, 2000).

The 2011 opening of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Northwest Arkansas provided the basis for a research study of students who visited the museum. Results of the study indicated that students can learn a considerable amount, and retain much of that information, when participating in field trips that have a focus on enrichment. The researchers determined that field trips “contribute to the development of students into civilized young men and women who possess more knowledge about art, have stronger critical-thinking skills, exhibit increased historical empathy, display higher levels of tolerance, and have a greater taste for consuming art and culture.” (Greene, 2014)

With the decades-old emphasis on back-to-the-basics, along with financial pressures, field trips have often been reduced in number, or eliminated altogether. Many educators and authors consider an appropriately designed field trip as a great link between the classroom and the everyday world – a time when various school subjects can be integrated with critical thinking skills (Milson, 1990).

When students go outside the classroom, they are not just learning history, but doing it. Field trips can generate questions and theories among students. They also provide students a chance to improve their listening skills, as well as observational and deductive talents (Bocking, 2004).

When students are able to see a connection between the knowledge they bring to school and what they are studying in the classroom, it should help them to see school as relevant to life. Teachers want their students to have an enrichment experience, one that is hands-on and interactive, and beyond what the classroom can offer. Field trips can be an educational, yet fun, way to engage students and provide life-long memories. Even with the constraints of a short, one-time field trip, many educators still insist on their usefulness (Bhatia, 2009).

According to Pace and Tesi (2004), if students are taken on field trips to historic sites and museums, especially if they have hands-on activities, provide an opportunity to interact with people of other cultures and the chance to learn about various occupations, those experiences can have a life-long impact on them. To be most effective, planning and follow-up activities are crucial. Overnight field trips carry the added bonus of developing camaraderie between students, chaperones, and teachers. Field trips also offer a break from the classroom routine, which can also be beneficial for students and teachers alike. Adults often report that field trip experiences were some of the most educational and memorable aspects of their time in school (Pace, et al, 2004).

Although field trips are more likely to be a part of an elementary teacher's toolkit, and less often something used by a secondary teacher, any age can benefit – even college students. Field work, now often done at a computer rather than actually in the field, may make future geography professors less prepared to teach the following generation. Again, significant planning in advance is required. Students need to know the rules for good behavior as well as for scientific inquiry. They must also know the amount and type of clothing needed for the excursion. These fieldwork trips could, in some cases, include secondary students on a limited basis (Butler, Wilkerson, 2000).

### **Summary**

The literature and experts in the field make a strong case for the importance of carefully planning and executing an effective field trip. Doing so requires a connection to state curriculum standards, preparation of the students for good behavior, as well as academic content, inclusion of interactive activities at the site, and significant follow-up lessons and activities to assist in the retention of the knowledge gained on the field trip.

Chapter Three will explain the methodology of the study, along with a description of the participants in the study. Chapter Four will detail the results of the teacher and student surveys, while Chapter Five will offer conclusions and recommendations.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

This study was designed to determine what eighth grade teachers and students in Jefferson County, Tennessee, consider to be important factors for planning and taking effective field trips. A related purpose was to develop from these findings a set of characteristics which define effective field trips for students. To that end, the research questions were:

- 1) How do eighth grade students in Jefferson County, Tennessee, rate the field trips they have taken in terms of relevance to the subject being taught, and the impact of these field trips on their likelihood of visiting the sites again on their own or with family members?
- 2) How do eighth grade teachers in Jefferson County, Tennessee, describe and rate the field trips in which they have been involved in the categories of preparation, follow-up, and connections to state standards?
- 3) Based on questionnaires, interviews, and a review of the literature, what are the characteristics that should define an effective field trip?

The criteria selected for this study developed from a review of the scant literature available regarding field trips. Sources reviewed included the Wilson Web, dissertation abstracts, the Review of Education Research Journal, and recent issues of the Journal of Theory and Research in Education. Most of the literature was opinion pieces with anecdotes from experience, while very little dealt with actual studies, be they quantitative or qualitative.

The literature review did, however, show that teachers are interested in field trips and see them as valuable, but are often concerned that the time out of class for a field trip could have a negative impact on standardized test scores. For that reason some teachers felt that their administrators would not approve field trips. Other articles discussed the importance of advance preparation for a field trip and suggested ways in which teachers could maximize the learning that takes place on a field trip. Some articles discussed the importance of follow-up activities as well. None of the articles discussed field trips from a student point of view. For this study,

criterion-based surveys were developed based on a review of the literature and the researcher's personal experience and discussions with others in the field. To determine the important characteristics of effective field trips, the survey asked teachers about their preparation, teaching strategies, follow-up activities, and efforts to connect their field trips to state curriculum standards.

The first eleven responses teachers could make on the survey dealt with the degree to which they consider field trips to be important. For example, they were asked whether field trips should be tied to standards and to rank ways in which students benefit from field trips. The second eleven responses concerned what teachers did in preparation for a field trip. They were asked if they visited sites in advance and if they created specific lesson plans to prepare the students for what they would experience at the site. They also were asked about the use of chaperones and preparations for emergencies. Another six responses included questions related to teaching strategies and student activities at the site. Finally, teachers were asked about their follow-up activities.

The student version of the survey asked them to share ways in which their teachers prepared the class for the trip, how they taught lessons at the site, and what follow-up activities were conducted. Some of the student survey questions aimed at determining what the students considered to be the important factors of an educational and enjoyable field trip.

Students were first asked to tell which field trip was their favorite and then to share details about how their teacher prepared them for the trip. Once that information was established, the next eleven questions dealt with the field trip itself, asking the students what they experienced and what they enjoyed about the site. The students were also asked about follow-up

activities, with the final eight responses having to do with how they would rank the importance of field trips as a part of their academic career.

### **Participants in the Study**

The eighth grade social studies teachers and the eighth grade students of Jefferson County, Tennessee, were chosen for this study for a number of reasons. This was partially a convenience sample because the researcher has been employed by the Jefferson County Board of Education for several years. Having taught social studies in the system at the middle school level for 18 years (although now teaching at the ninth grade level), made it possible to obtain approval from the administration without difficulty. It is the researcher's intention that the results of this study will have an influence on the number and quality of future field trips in the system.

The researcher drafted a letter of support that explained the nature and purpose of the study and provided it to the Director of Schools for his signature (Appendix A). Once his signature was given, the researcher made appointments with each of the four middle school principals and delivered the letter personally to each of them for their signatures. That letter with the signatures was a necessary component of the application process for approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Tennessee.

In addition to the letter, the IRB required a consent form be created for the teachers who would be participating in the study, as well as for the students and their parents. Those forms were also created and submitted for IRB approval. In addition, the researcher submitted a certificate to the IRB office that indicated an online test concerning research protocols had been successfully completed. With these items submitted, along with an application form detailing the research project, IRB approval was granted (Appendix B).



At that point, the teachers involved were contacted by the researcher and informed of the study. They were told that approval had been given not only by the Director of Schools, but also by their individual principals, for their participation in the research if they so chose. Each was willing to do so.

In addition to ready access to the schools and students and the researcher's prior acquaintance with some of the eighth grade teachers, another advantage in choosing the Jefferson County system was its socio-economic status. The school system is a rural one with a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunches; however, it is doubtful that these statistics impact the results. It has been the experience of the researcher that schools in this system typically find ways to cover the costs of a field trip for a student whose family does not have the means to do so on its own. It is expected that the results of the study will be applicable to other systems. Physical geography and student demographics should not have a significant impact on the planning and conducting of an effective field trip to a historic site or museum that has activities and exhibits supportive of state curriculum standards. The results of this study should be of just as much interest to a teacher, student, and museum educator in an urban area as they would be to someone in a suburban school district.

The population of Jefferson County was listed as 51,407 in the 2010 United States census, with 98.6% reported as white. The total number of children in school was listed at 11,681. Jefferson County has 12 schools in the system: six that have grades k-5; two that have grades 6-8; two that have grades k-8; one freshman academy; and one high school with 10-12 grades. There are almost 600 students in the eighth grade and six social studies teachers for eighth grade. The two larger middle schools have two teachers, while each of the smaller two middle schools are served by a single eighth grade social studies teacher.

Of Jefferson County's residents who are age 25 and above, a full 20% have an associate's degree or higher. The median household income is \$38,015. Among the families in Jefferson County, 14.3% are living below the poverty level. Jefferson County is in a rural area of central East Tennessee and is near several historic sites and museums, such as James White's Fort in Knoxville, the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge, and Rocky Mount Museum near Johnson City.

After receiving approval from the university and the county's director of schools, the researcher met with each of the eighth grade teachers and obtained their consent forms, answered any questions they had, and allowed them to complete the surveys. Once the surveys were complete, each one was examined for comments that might be either on the low range (1) or high range (5) of the response scale. The constructed response questions also provided opportunities for closer examination of their answers. In addition to looking at individual questions on each teacher's survey, another component was to look for teachers who had answers that fell outside the range that the other teachers were in. Follow-up questions were developed from those survey responses and provided to each of the teachers for more detailed answers.

Each of the teachers was provided with a sufficient number of parent consent and student assent forms for the number of students they had. Each teacher was also given envelopes with tables attached for keeping records of the student and parent forms. A timetable was developed with each teacher for the distribution and collection of the consent forms, followed by a schedule for administering the surveys. Each teacher was provided with surveys for each of their students, along with envelopes for collecting the completed surveys.

The development of the survey instruments took place in the fall of 2012. The surveys were distributed and the interviews conducted in the spring of 2013, once all field trips for the

year had been completed. This made it possible for the students to consider all of the field trips available during their entire time in middle school. The results were tabulated in the summer of 2013.

The tabulation of student surveys garnered information on many of the same questions as were included on the teacher surveys. However, the students were also asked to share their thoughts about the activities available at the various sites, whether the field trips were properly chaperoned, and to gauge how receptive they might be to trips that were educational.

Each student was asked for the destination of his or her favorite field trip. Those destinations were totaled to see which places were the most popular. Then tables were created to show the students' responses regarding the amount of preparation and follow-up their teachers did, what activities were made available at the site, how much use was made of chaperones, and their willingness to visit the site again on their own, etc.

A review of the individual surveys raised questions to be included in follow-up interviews. Particular attention was given to responses that fell outside the norm of the majority of the respondents. The students whose responses were atypical were selected for additional questioning. An appointment was made with each teacher for the researcher to interview those students. A total of 20 students were interviewed in a quiet room at their school with each interview taking approximately 15 minutes. The interviews were recorded on cassette tapes and transcribed by the researcher. Once tables were developed that categorized student rankings of various aspects of field trips, a comparison was made between those results and comments the students made in their interviews.

Chapter Four will present the results of the teacher and student surveys and interviews as they relate to the established criteria for the research. Chapter Five will offer conclusions and recommendations that were gleaned from the data.

### Chapter Four: Results of the Research

This study of Jefferson County, Tennessee, eighth grade teachers and eighth grade students sought to answer such questions as the number of field trips taken, the amount of planning that was involved, the importance (or lack thereof) of field trips in a student's education, the connection (if any) to curriculum standards, the involvement of chaperones, etc. Jefferson County has four middle schools with a total of six eighth grade teachers in four middle schools and nearly 600 students in the eighth grade. The surveys were administered and interviews were conducted at the end of the 2012-2013 school year, after all trips for the year had been taken.

Although the number of teachers involved was small, they do have a wealth of experience upon which to draw. Of the six teachers included in this study, the newest one has been in the current position for five years, in addition to 25 years in another system. The teacher with the longest tenure in the current position has 38 years. The average for the six teachers is just over 18 years in their current positions, although several have taught previously in other systems. As for the students, more than one third completed the surveys.

With the small population size, it is possible for one very high or very low answer ranking to skew the average. Therefore an effort has been made to show not only the average, but the range of scores given in response to various questions on the survey as shown below.

Table 4 Scores and definitions used in rankings on surveys	
Score	Definition
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Each teacher sees field trips as “valuable activities,” with the lowest score being a four out of a possible five. The average of the six teachers was very high (4.7) on the one-five scale. The teachers’ perceptions of principal support for field trips was somewhat lower (3.8) on the scale. Only one teacher chose a two for the principal’s level of support, while the other five chose a three or higher.

In regard to the level of difficulty in arranging the funding for field trips, the average score was almost four (3.7), with the lowest score being a two. In a follow-up interview, one teacher said,

Our area has gone through some financial problems in the past few years. I think it is so costly for parents, especially with multiple children in school, to come up with all the money they need for extracurricular activities. Another reason is that transportation cost is too high. A few years ago the teachers at (our school) raised about \$10,000 for buses to take our 8th grade students to Williamsburg, Monticello, and Yorktown [in Virginia] for 3 days. We worked all year and had numerous fund raisers to make sure all of our students would be able to go. It would be great if we could take county buses on trips out of state and longer than 100 miles. This would greatly lower the cost of field trips.

It should be noted that Jefferson County Board of Education policy requires that, “A fee will be charged to the school for mileage when school system buses are used. Trips exceeding fifty (50) miles one-way must use a private vendor for transportation.” Personal experience makes it clear that the use of private coaches can easily triple the cost of a field trip.

Should a teacher’s emphasis be on standards more than on field trips? No teacher gave this question a ranking of either a one or a five; instead, all the scores were in the middle range. With the lowest score being a single two, and the others being threes and fours, the teachers

surveyed responded with a score (3.2) near the middle. Should field trips be taken only if tied to standards? In answering this question, the average score dropped a full point (2.2). Two of the teachers gave a ranking of one, while two others scored it as a two. Only one teacher gave it a three. In a follow up survey, one teacher indicated that field trips offer benefits for students beyond the classroom and state standards. This teacher put it this way,

I think that students always benefit in some way from travel outside the classroom. As a middle school teacher, we are always with our students. Even at lunch they are closely monitored and they have no ‘free’ time to socialize. I feel that especially in middle school when young adolescents need to form relationships outside of their families, field trips provide the added socialization that our students need and crave. They make memories that last a lifetime. I feel that there is more to education than just what we can give them in books. As for my personal experiences, as the parent of an only child, field trips with peers provided the socialization that we as parents could not provide to our child but thought was vitally important to his growth. I think teaching children how to get along with others is just as important as teaching him the curriculum.

However, one teacher did emphasize the importance of standards more than the others. This teacher said, “If a field trip can be connected to standards, even in a loose way, it would help to reinforce what is being taught in the classroom. I do think that if the trip can be presented to administrators as a supplement to standards being taught, there is a better chance for approval.” Another teacher said that, “If I have any say in the decision making, the majority of the trips would be standards related.” Each of the teachers also felt that the offerings of their favorite sites were in alignment with content standards, as evidenced by a high score (4.7).

These teachers do not see field trips as risky propositions, scoring two out of five. The

highest score, given by two of the respondents, was a three. Two others responded with ones, and the others with twos. As for how time consuming field trips are, the score (2.7) was in the middle range. "All of our field trips," one teacher said, "are taken during the instructional day. Our principal is very supportive."

One very important aspect of field trips, according to those surveyed, is the opportunity for students to have educational experiences that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. To this question, the respondents' average score (4.7) was quite high. Four teachers ranked this aspect of field trips at a five, while the other two cast votes for four. In a follow-up survey, one teacher said,

Also, I know with lots of parents these days, both have to work and it leaves little time to take their children to places even as close as Pigeon Forge [Tennessee] or Cherokee [North Carolina]. They just don't have the time and sometimes the money to do so. I think the school then provides a service for those who would like their child to experience these places but just can't provide it themselves.

Equally important (also 4.7) to teachers is that field trips allow students an opportunity to interact with their classmates and teachers in an environment other than the classroom. Each teacher, in this instance, gave the same score as was given on the previous question. One teacher reported, "I enjoy seeing my students in a different environment and I think they enjoy seeing me in a different role. Although I am the teacher when I am on a field trip, I am not so regimented that I can't have fun and be playful with my students. They see that I am human just as they are and learn to respect me on a different level."

That teachers also see that the opportunity for students to investigate possible careers through field trips to various sites was indicated by a rather high (4.3) score. Another aspect of



field trips is that students can develop their skills of interviewing and note taking. The surveyed teachers ranked this opportunity on a field trip with a four out of five. Each of the teachers ranked each of these questions at a three or higher.

As for the number of field trips taken by these teachers per year, the range is from one to four, with the average being two trips annually. The teacher who takes four field trips per year organizes one for each of the grading periods. One teacher said that, “Field trips have declined over the past few years due to money, budget cuts, more parents unemployed, etc.”

For several years at one school, field trips have been considered valuable, but the emphasis is now on academics in the classroom instead. According to one teacher, who ranked administrative support at a level of five, yet only takes one trip each year,

Administration is supportive of field trips, however, we have chosen to focus on academics in the classroom the last several years. The emphasis on increasing instructional time in the classroom goes back several (school) administrations. In my opinion, this is an effect of increased demands on teachers due to NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and then the RTTT (Race to the Top) federal funding raising the bar yet more.

To determine where to go on field trips, teachers use a variety of sources. The most common approach is to look for a place that relates to the subject being taught. The second most common resources for choosing a site is a review of websites and recommendations from others. One teacher also brainstorms with students, while another takes trips to places the teacher has already visited.

When asked to identify their favorite historic sites or museums which they had visited on a field trip, each teacher had a different response, but their reasons for choosing the particular locations had one theme – a connection to class. One teacher’s favorite was Rocky Mount

Museum near Johnson City, Tennessee, due to the number of hands-on activities the site provides for students who visit. Another preferred two sites in Virginia - Monticello and Colonial Williamsburg, citing the connections between the sites and the teacher's curriculum.

Another teacher's favorite was the Frank H. McClung Museum on the University of Tennessee campus in Knoxville. This teacher cited the museum as a place to "identify and discover ancient civilizations." The McClung Museum, along with the Museum of East Tennessee History, also located in Knoxville, was ranked as important by another teacher due to their exhibits on Native Americans, again a topic included in the middle school social studies curriculum. Table five below shows the teachers' favorite historic sites and museums, along with their reasons for their preferences.

Teacher	Location	Reason for Preference
1	Rocky Mount Museum	Lots of hands-on activities
2	Monticello/Williamsburg	Because I teach most of this in my curriculum
3	McClung Museum	Identify and discover ancient civilizations
4	Museum of Appalachia	Historical
5	Monticello	History Club
6	East Tennessee Historical Museum/McClung Museum	Tennessee Native Americans

Four of the six teachers visited the sites in advance as part of their preparation for the field trip. In only one case was the trip planned to coincide with an event at the location - the annual “Homecoming” day at the Museum of Appalachia, north of Knoxville.

Some of the historic sites and museums provided educational materials to the teachers prior to their trips. Rocky Mount Museum provided historical background of the site and some primary documents for teacher use in advance. McClung Museum provided lesson plans in advance and a scavenger hunt for the students to use while on-site. Monticello offered historical background, lesson plans, and primary documents, while one teacher noted that the East Tennessee History Museum gave teachers historical background, lesson plans, and games or puzzles related to the site. According to one teacher who used primary source artifacts during instruction, “I would say that exposure to primary sources is whole justification on why we take history club trips.”

Of the four teachers who reported that the museum or historic site offered supplemental materials in advance, each said that the materials were aligned to state standards. Table six below details which sites offered materials and an overview what those materials were.

Table 6 Types of supplemental materials provided by the sites	
Rocky Mount Museum	Historical background of the site, primary documents
Monticello and Williamsburg	Historical background of the site, lesson plans for teachers, and scavenger hunt
Frank H. McClung Museum	Lesson plans for teachers, scavenger hunt
Monticello	Historical background of the site, lesson plans for teachers, primary documents
Museum of East Tennessee History/McClung Museum	Historical background of the site, lesson plans for teachers, games or puzzles

In addition to any materials provided by the historic site or museum, each of the teachers prepared materials of their own to use in class. The most popular creation was a PowerPoint presentation, which four teachers accomplished. Two of the teachers did a pre-test, while one did a web quest; another created a scavenger hunt, and still another created a video to highlight the assets of the site.

The teachers used a variety of strategies to prepare their students for the field trips. Five of the six teachers brainstormed with their students to determine possible questions to ask at the site. All of the teachers reviewed rules for proper conduct on a field trip. Five explained the objectives of the trip, while all six teachers covered background material related to the subject. Four of the teachers assigned students a responsibility at the site, such as a scavenger hunt. One reported using a site's virtual tour as preparation for the students.

In a follow-up interview, one of the teachers emphasized the importance of advance preparation by saying, "Depending on the trip, preparing the students can make or break the experience. Our trip to the UT campus required very little prep time; while for our trip to Cumberland Gap, the prep time was paramount. We have always tried to prep our students well. Prepping students, in my opinion, is a good one third of the field trip experience and should never be overlooked."

According to the policy of the Jefferson County Board of Education (2003), careful preparation is necessary for an effective field trip. According to Board policy,

To be educationally beneficial, a field trip requires thoughtful selection, careful advance preparation of the class, and opportunities for students to summarize the experience at the conclusion of the trip. To this end, teachers and principals will be expected to consider following factors in selecting field trips: 1. Value of the activity to the particular student

group or groups; 2. Relationship of the field trip activity to a particular aspect of classroom instruction.

Board policy also states that, “The trip must have a definite purpose and reflect careful planning. Students should be prepared by general class discussion and/or research.” A third teacher echoed the importance of planning, saying, “Organization is key here. A well thought-out trip will be a successful one.” It was added that this planning has led to students learning more on the field trip.

When it comes to the use of chaperones, a distinct difference appeared in how the teachers incorporated chaperones into the field trip. Half of the teachers felt that chaperones should be fully utilized in making the trip educational, as well as in managing student behavior. These three teachers felt that chaperones should provide instruction at the site and help answer student questions while there. However, the other three teachers responded that the role of chaperones was to keep students safe and ensure they are where they need to be. One pointed out that chaperones should enforce site rules and field trip rules.

As for instructions given to chaperones in advance of the trip, most of the teachers provided considerable information to their chaperones. Three teachers provided a list of the trip’s objectives, while five gave their chaperones an overview of the site they were to visit. Five of the six also provided an itinerary. To provide for the safety of the students, all teachers provided their chaperones with a list of names of the students on the trip, while only three provided a list of school rules that would be in force during the trip. Three teachers provided a map of the sites they were to visit, while one teacher shared student medical needs with chaperones and another shared the problems that had been encountered on previous trips.

In a follow-up interview, one teacher said the chaperones should receive training before going on field trips. “I know from experience that some chaperones are more ‘free’ than I am and it created problems,” this teacher pointed out. According to this teacher, chaperone training should consist of the following topics: 1) review and be aware of the county's and school's policies on field trips; 2) review of the teacher's rules; 3) understand acceptable and unacceptable student behavior; 4) be aware of student and adult dress code; 5) keep up with assigned students; and 6) know how to address and correct student behavior.

Another teacher said that it was not hard to get other teachers to serve as chaperones, due in part to the fact that their substitutes were paid from trip funds so that teachers did not have to use a personal leave day. This teacher went on to say, “We are also deliberate in who we choose as to add to the experience. For example, we took our 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher to the Smokies. We knew that on that trip, science would tie into the experience and he would be able to add to the trip. Most definitely, the right chaperones add to the experience.”

When it comes to having parent chaperones on a field trip, one teacher said that having the right parents along can be very helpful and that the staff carefully considers which parents to include. “One of the advantages in teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade is we have the chance to get to see who the parents are, who can be trusted, and who are good with kids because their children have been in our school for two years already. If you have some good parents, it allows you to make smaller groups to tour and see whatever it is you are going to see,” this teacher said.

The policy of the Jefferson County Board of Education (2003) in regard to chaperones requires that field trip sponsors “limit the number of chaperones to those truly necessary,” and to “limit chaperones to those who are faculty, parents, or legal guardians.”

To prepare for possible emergencies, each teacher had a list of emergency contacts for their students. Four of the teachers had a list of cell numbers for all of the chaperones involved and had checkpoints and times arranged for meeting. Five of the teachers had a first aid kit available, while one had a nurse on hand and another had individuals driving cars in case an emergency arose.

School Board policy (2003) requires that,

All accidents that occur on a school-sponsored field trip must be reported by the teacher to the principal immediately upon returning to school. Serious accidents involving personal injury must be reported immediately to the principal and superintendent. An emergency shall be dealt with promptly by the teacher or other members of the school staff by taking appropriate action, including sending the student to the hospital or summoning medical aid or ambulance. In cases where it is necessary to send the student to the hospital, every reasonable effort must be made to notify the parents.

Most of the teachers reported making some alterations in their instructional strategies in regard to the field trip. One teacher listed the use of materials and information that the site provided. Another reported using small group instruction, while another responded by saying the class did a writing assignment after the trip. Still another said that it was easy to connect the visuals of the site with prior classroom instruction.

Each of the teachers felt that, once they were at the site, the students had ample time to explore the site on their own, and that the students had sufficient time to ask questions of the staff of the museum or historic site. In response to each of these questions, the answers averaged high (4.3) out of a possible five. Only one teacher ranked the time students had to explore the site at a three, while all others offered a higher ranking. As for time to ask questions of the staff,

one teacher ranked their opportunity at a two and another at four. The other teachers all scored this question as a five.

One teacher reported the importance of having sufficient time at the site by saying, “That may stir their interest more in a certain topic or area which can be discussed later in class. It might even encourage whole families to visit the site at a later date.”

. They were also complimentary of the sites as being able to engage the students’ attention. The average score on this question (4.5) was quite high. The sites were entertaining enough (4.2) to entice the students into returning with their families.

Once the field trip was complete and the students back in class, each teacher reported following up with class discussion. Five of the teachers also gave their students a written assignment, while two assigned additional readings on the site and two assigned further research. None of the teachers did art, drama, or craft projects, nor did they conduct a debate or give a test.

In summarizing the results from the surveys and follow-up interviews, five themes appear. First, each of the teachers considers field trips valuable experiences that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. These experiences in some cases are academic in nature, while others are social – times for interaction with teachers and fellow students in a less-structured environment. Second, each of the teachers puts considerable amount of preparation into each trip. Supplemental activities and lessons are created, overviews of the site are given, and rules and objectives are explained. A third theme is the effort most of the historic sites and museums put into providing educational materials aligned to state standards that can help teachers prepare in advance. A fourth theme is that of the importance of having well-prepared chaperones, with one teacher emphasizing the need for a formal training program to ensure their effectiveness. Finally, a fifth theme that appears is the lack of lessons that the teachers conduct at the sites. For



the most part, the teachers have prepared the students in advance, but do not actively engage them on-site with any formal teaching strategy. Instead, the students may gain only what the site offers, but not understand it in the context of what has been studied in class.

As was done with the teachers, surveys of Jefferson County, Tennessee, eighth graders were conducted at the end of the 2012-2013 school year after all field trips had been taken for the year. Of the 225 students who completed surveys, 40% reported having taken between 5 and 6 field trips during their middle school (grades 6-8) years. The second highest number of respondents, 25%, reported having taken seven or more field trips. This number was almost identical to the 23% who reported having been on 3-4 field trips. Only 12% reported taking 1-2 trips during the course of their years in middle school, and none reported having been on no field trips at all. The results can be seen in table seven which follows.

Number of field trips while in middle school	Zero	1-2	3-4	5-6	7 or more
Percentage responding	0%	12%	23%	40%	25%

When asked about how their teachers prepared them for the trips, most of the emphasis was placed on being sure the students were well behaved and safe. Of the 225 students, 194 (86%) reported that their teachers reviewed the rules for proper behavior on a field trip, while only 72 (32%) explained the objectives of the trip. The percentages of students reporting any academic preparation were much smaller. Only ten, less than half of one percent said the students had an opportunity to brainstorm for possible questions to ask at the site. Even fewer said they were assigned a learning task while at the site, but 15% were given some history of the site prior to the trip.

These numbers are not surprising, and should not reflect poorly on the teachers involved, because the vast majority of the student respondents reported that their favorite field trips were those that went to places such as Dollywood as a reward for good grades and good behavior. Few of the favorite trips selected by the students were ones to historic sites and museums. By definition, field trips can be for the purpose of learning academic content or for personal growth. The most effective field trips are those that combine these two goals.

“When schools do organize field trips, they are increasingly choosing to take students on trips to reward them for working hard to improve their test scores rather than to provide cultural enrichment. Schools take students to amusement parks, sporting events, and movie theaters instead of to museums and historical sites” (Greene, 2014).

Dollywood, Pigeon Forge, TN, was the favorite of 135 of the students, while King’s Island in Cincinnati, OH, the second most common answer, was the favorite of only 22 students. The third most popular location among the destinations that were not considered particularly educational was Atlanta, GA, where one school visits each year to go to Six Flags and an Atlanta Braves baseball game. Thirteen students listed this trip as their favorite. The two historic sites with the most votes were Biltmore in Asheville, NC, (16) and the Museum of Appalachia near Knoxville, TN, (12). Students often wrote that the extent of preparation involved their teachers telling them to be good and have a good time. One student in a later interview said that, "I just wish teachers maybe they should go before us or do some research before we go so they won't walk around and go 'I don't know what this is' and go ask somebody else."

Other favorite sites, getting votes in the single digits, included Ripley’s Aquarium, Dixie Stampede, Lumberjack Feud, The Titanic museum, Wonderworks, movies, skating and bowling,

Cumberland Gap National Park, Cirque de Chine, Frank H. McClung Museum, a Civil War encampment, and a student council workshop.

Table eight following ranks the relative popularity of the students' favorite trips. While most are reward trips, some are educational. Some trips were planned as a reward for good behavior, but had academic value as well. Trips intended as purely entertainment are labeled with an "E," those that were academic in nature are labeled with an "A," and those that had both qualities are labeled as such. When a trip had both entertainment and academic value, the relative importance of each is shown by which letter precedes the other.

Rank	Destination	Location	Purpose	No. Preferring this Trip
1	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, TN	E	135
2	King's Island	Cincinnati, OH	E	22
3	Biltmore	North Carolina	E/A	16
4	Museum, Baseball	Atlanta, Georgia	E/A	13
5	Museum of Appalachia	Norris, TN	A/E	12
6	Ripley's Aquarium	Gatlinburg, TN	E/A	8
7	Dixie Stampede	Pigeon Forge, TN	E	4
7	Movies	Morristown, TN	E	4
8	Lumberjack Feud	Pigeon Forge, TN	E	3
9	Skating and Bowling	Morristown, TN	E	2
10	Cirque de Chine	Sevierville, TN	E/A	1
10	Civil War Reenactment	Russellville, TN	A	1
10	Titanic Museum	Pigeon Forge, TN	E/A	1
10	McClung Museum	Knoxville, TN	A	1
10	Cumberland Gap NP	Middlesboro, KY	E/A	1
10	Student Council Workshop	Nashville, TN	E	1

In addition to free response questions, a number of the queries posed in the survey asked students to place their answers on a 1-5 scale. If students did not agree with a statement, they were asked to circle the one on the scale provided beneath the question. If they felt very favorable about a particular statement, a five would be the appropriate response. Table nine

below indicates how the answers were scored for the question regarding the value of parent chaperones on field trips. Variations were sometimes necessary due to the specifics of the question involved, as will be seen later.

Score	Definition
One	none
Two	A little
Three	Some
Four	Quite a bit
Five	A lot

Most of the students (139) reported that parent chaperones were involved in these field trips, however they did not feel that the parent chaperones did anything to make the field trip any better. The largest number (44) rated the effect of parent chaperones at one, while 22 scored chaperones with a two, and 41 reported chaperones with a three. Only 12 and 15 scored chaperones with a four and five respectively.

One girl in a later interview made her point clear when she said,

Chaperones are not always the best thing because they are kinda constricting. You can't always be yourself and have as much fun when there's someone watching you at all times. But always have at least one responsible person in the group. Otherwise it just doesn't end well. Fights going on. It's best to watch who likes who and who does not because otherwise things will happen. So it's best to keep friends with friends but always at least one responsible student in there.

She went on to say that when field trips are intended only for fun, the role of the chaperone is diminished, “Most of the ones I’ve gone on lately, we just have to stay in a group of three and we don’t really have chaperones...maybe in sixth grade, but not anymore.”

The students also reported that several teachers went on these field trips as chaperones. In most cases, seven or more teachers were involved, with the highest percentage being on the Dollywood trip, which presumably involved a larger number of students. Many of the other students reported 3-4 teachers or 5-6 teachers travelling as chaperones on the trips to Dollywood or other locations.

Most of these trips were intended as rewards, and therefore in those cases did not focus on educational objectives. It is not surprising that the majority of students reported that their teachers did little instruction at the site. Nearly two thirds of the students scored their teacher with a three (some) or below. Only one third indicated that the teacher did considerable instruction, as is shown by a score of a four or a five (a lot – very much).

The question regarding in what manner the teachers changed their instructional methods while at the site brought contradictory results. The surveys showed 137 students rating their teachers with a three (some) or lower, indicating that little change occurred in how instruction was given in the classroom and the strategies used on the trip. A much smaller number, 80, however, considered the differences in strategies to rank either a four or a five (a lot – very much). Yet when asked to explain the differences, those who chose to respond, said primarily that their teachers did no instruction at the site, but simply told the students to follow the rules and have a good time.

With very few of these trips being academic in nature, the students reported that their teachers did little if any instruction at the site. Specific responses included, “no assignment,”

“they handled problems differently and they handled problems better,” “they let loose a little more,” “they were more laid back – relaxed,” “in the classroom they are more informed about what we learned, but on the field trip they just walked around.” In a few instances, students reported that the teachers were stricter because of being in a public place.

One student, whose favorite trip was to Ripley’s Aquarium, said that making the trip more educational would have been appropriate. In a follow-up interview, she said, “Well, like if it wasn’t a big, big assignment (while at the site), just something to keep us focused. It would’ve been more interesting too because you could’ve learned a lot more. Instead they just told us the rules and behave.”

Other than actually conducting a lesson at the site, one student recommended that teachers be available to answer questions as needed. In a later interview, one student said, “There were a couple of things that I didn’t know what it was and I tried looking for a plaque or something. I didn’t see it so I did not know what it was. And if they had gone around and said this is this, it would’ve helped.”

Students typically enjoyed having some time to explore a site on their own when taking a field trip. More students listed Dollywood as the location of their favorite field trip, and their responses indicated that they were allowed a sufficient amount of time on their own. For this question, a score of one meant “none,” while a five meant “plenty.” All but ten of the 135 respondents gave this question a ranking of either a four or a five.

King’s Island received similar marks. Among the twenty two students who listed the amusement park as their favorite trip, twenty gave a five rating to the amount of time available to spend on their own. Those students who visited King’s Island were members of the school’s Junior Beta Club, which makes annual trips to different locations.

Those who preferred Biltmore and the Museum of Appalachia, two of the trips that focused to some degree on educational objectives, also felt they had sufficient time to explore the sites. Only one student rated the amount of time available as a two. The trip to Biltmore that was taken by one school was open to members of the History Club. To join the club, students must have a minimum grade of 90 in their social studies class.

With most of these sites being geared toward entertainment, and the purpose of many of the trips being a reward for good grades and good behavior, few places offered any type of on-site educational instruction. For this question, a score of one meant, “no lessons.” A score of five meant “great lessons.” Of those going to Dollywood, 97 of the 135, ranked Dollywood’s on-site lessons at a one. Ripley’s Aquarium fared a bit better with an average of two. No one ranked the aquarium higher than a three. The rankings for the Museum of Appalachia were somewhat better, with an average score of three given by the eight students who considered the museum their favorite field trip destination. The nine students who preferred Biltmore also ranked their on-site efforts at a three.

Sometimes a field trip itinerary can be very detailed, leaving not only little time for a student to explore, but also little time for a student to ask questions of the staff at a site. As with the previous question, a ranking of one meant “none,” and a five ranking meant “plenty.” At Dollywood, the results were quite varied. Thirty eight students ranked the amount of time they had to ask questions at a one; while almost as many (37) students were at the other end of the spectrum, scoring Dollywood at a five. With twenty students assigning a score of two, as opposed to only a dozen scoring it a four, there is a minimal shift toward not having enough time to talk to the site staff.

As compared to those who preferred Dollywood, the students who preferred Ripley's Aquarium gave it higher marks in regard to the opportunities they had for asking questions. Although the trip was intended more as a reward than as an educational experience, in this case students assigned an above average score (3.9) in regard to the opportunity to ask the staff questions. A similar ranking (3.6) was assigned to the Museum of Appalachia.

What types of activities did the students enjoy while at these sites? The students were asked to rank a number of activities that might have been available at the site. A score of one meant they did not like a particular option at all, while a five score meant they liked it a lot. Students also had the option of "Not Applicable" if a particular activity was not offered at their favorite site. Dollywood ranked highest (4.2) on food tasting. Placing a close second was hands-on activities (3.8). Visual exhibits (3.5) tied with music. Art activities and craft activities (2.8) also tied. The other scores ranged from worksheets (1.2), scavenger hunts (1.9), student role playing (2.3), reenactors (2.4), costumed guides (2.4), to skits (2.7). Clearly the students surveyed indicated a preference for many of the more active possibilities. Any of these options can be used for educational purposes, and in some cases the connection to classwork need not be obvious.

The eight students who preferred the aquarium gave high marks in all but two of the categories. Worksheets were ranked one and music ranked two. However, none of the other categories received a score lower than three, with most being fives. This seems to indicate that Ripley's Aquarium is more geared to educational activities, which appears to resonate with the students, even on a field trip that does not have specific educational objectives.

The Museum of Appalachia scored well in all of the categories but one. Worksheets (1.3) were of the least interest to students. Student role playing and scavenger hunts (2.7) tied.



Hands-on activities scored highest with an average of four. In a later interview, one student said that hands-on activities are important because, “I learn better if I do it hands-on instead of visually.” The other activities at the museum all received a score between three and four.

Biltmore scored well, also. The nine students preferring the historic home in North Carolina, were impressed with its visual exhibits, ranking that category with an almost perfect (4.9) score. Music (4.3), art activities (4.3) and food tasting (4.2) were also popular activities at Biltmore. Student role playing scored the lowest with only two students marking this category and each giving it a one.

In a follow-up interview, one student who went to Biltmore said, “I think one thing that would have been really fun there would have been a scavenger hunt because it is so big and you’d have to look around in each room to see something.” The same student added that other activities would have also been enjoyable. “Activities where you could actually see what it was like and skits where you could see how things were back then and how everything would be,” he said.

One student who visited a museum said in a later interview that they had a scavenger hunt that her teacher had created. She said, “Yes, we had to go through with a piece of paper, through the museum with our guide.” They also did some hands-on art activities by making a model of some of the things they saw in the museum.

Student role playing would be a popular activity among some students. One student, in a follow-up interview, said, “I would have done that.” Although some might be too embarrassed to be in front of their classmates, this student went on to say, “Most people would do it because they think its fun.”

As one might imagine, individual students often presented various opinions on what activities at a site might be enjoyable. In a later interview, one student said, “If it’s going to be a museum, scavenger hunts would be best. Personally, I’m not really into skits and student role-playing. But I enjoy scavenger hunts, the art activities, I love music and craft activities and the food tasting I’ve never done but I think it would be fun.”

The one student whose favorite field trip was to a Civil War encampment, took that trip in sixth grade, but was at a school in a neighboring county at the time. His history teacher chose some students to participate. In a later interview the student reported about who went, “A select few people who’d done really good in class, kept up their grades, so he [the teacher] chose a handful of people to go.” These selected students were taught about the Civil War and then were on-hand at the campsite to explain what they had learned to elementary students who came to visit.

This format was educational for both the sixth grade students as well as the elementary children who attended. The student said, “It was a pretty cool experience because I got to learn myself more about the Civil War and it was a humongous reenactment. It was a pretty cool experience. That day really made me understand the Civil War and it influenced me to read more about the Civil War. So it was pretty cool.”

One student said that a checklist would have been a helpful learning tool. He said, “I would’ve liked it if they gave us a sheet of paper and told us what to look for and we checked it off and described something about it.” This student went on to say, “I think it would’ve helped because they like to make it a competition and stuff. And if you don’t give them, some people I know who would just look and don’t get anything out of the trip. They won’t listen about the owner and things.”

From the surveys and interviews, it appears that the field trip destinations, even those with a historical focus, rarely have reenactors involved. One student interviewed after a trip to the Museum of Appalachia said that reenactors could be good for certain age levels. She said, “I guess it would depend on their age. Little kids wouldn’t understand but seventh and eighth grade would pretty much think that’s pretty cool.”

For many of these trips, the categories of activities did not apply. For those who went to Atlanta for a baseball game, or to the movies, skating, or bowling, none experienced skits, student role playing, worksheets, etc. The Jefferson County Board of Education policy allows field trips that are educational, whether that be in an academic sense or in personal growth for the students. As written in the policy, “field trips designed to stimulate student interest and inquiry and to provide opportunities for social growth and development are considered appropriate extensions of the classroom” (Jefferson County Board of Education, 2003).

Each of the field trip destinations did a good job in keeping the attention of the students. For this question, a score of one indicated “not at all.” A five ranking meant the site kept the student’s attention “very well.” Dollywood had 98 students give it a score of five, while eighteen ranked the park as a four. Twelve gave it a three, only two students responded with a two, and two others with a one. King’s Island was very popular, scoring a single 3, one 4, and the remaining 19 students recording a five score. Biltmore had a passing grade as five students scored it with a five and two who gave the site a three. The Museum of Appalachia scored an average of 4.2, receiving no score lower than three.

As might be expected when sites do a good job of keeping students’ attention, these students indicated a desire to return to the sites with their families. Ranking this question as a one meant that the student did not wish to return. A five ranking indicated they would “very

much” like to return with their families. Dollywood received a very high score (4.6) in this category. The aquarium did well also, with no one giving it lower than a three. That resulted in a relatively high (3.9) average. The Museum of Appalachia also had a rather good score (3.7), however two students did rank the site with a one.

The most common follow-up activity to any of the field trips was a class discussion, although it did not happen very often. Only 56 students said their teacher did a follow-up class discussion about their trip to Dollywood. Only three said that they were given a written assignment, while only one reported taking a test afterward. One student said they did not really do anything to follow-up because it was a fun trip and that the school never takes educational trips. Similar results were recorded for the other trips that students favored. One of the students who enjoyed a Dollywood trip said that some of the students did a project in science class as a follow-up to the trip. Students had the opportunity to go outside and build miniature roller coasters.

Even for those trips that were educational, class discussion was often the extent to which a follow-up was done. The one student who attended a Civil War reenactment did, however, say that his teacher not only led a discussion, but also gave a written assignment and required a project related to the trip. In a follow-up interview, one student said, regarding class discussions after a trip, “I think that is good enough because personally I wouldn’t want to write a whole essay about a field trip or take a test about it.” Another student said in a later interview that having a written assignment after a field trip would help students remember what they learned while at the site.

When students were asked how these trips could have been more educational, those who went on trips that did have an education focus offered a number of ideas for increasing the

academic impact. The trip to Biltmore could have lasted longer, involved a scavenger hunt, and more hands-on activities. Wonderworks could have been more educational with more time to visit, guides to help explain some of the exhibits, and experiments that the students could do. In a follow-up interview, one student said about Wonderworks, “That was educational. It taught you weird facts about different things.” Another student said about field trips in general, “They teach you a lot about things you didn’t know about.”

One student said, in a later interview, that field trips can be educational and still be popular with students. He said, “I think it all depends on the person. There are some people out there that could care less about it. But I’m a person that likes to learn about history. I’ve always loved history. I think it depends on the person.”

In a follow-up interview, one student said that she had taken more field trips in elementary school than in middle school. She also said that “pretty much all of them” were related to what was being studied in the classroom. When asked why middle school teachers don’t organize very many educational field trips, she said, “They must not think they help that much. That would be my best guess. Really, I’m not sure. It would make a lot more sense for us to have educational trips.”

A visit to Cumberland Gap National Park was educational and the student who considered this his favorite trip said that it connected to topics in the classroom. In a follow-up interview, he said that his teacher explained the history of the site. “Yes, he talked about, a good percentage, about Cumberland Gap. How a lot of pioneers moved west and stuff like that,” the student said.

The Titanic Museum could have provided an opportunity for the students to ask questions at the site. A visit to Ripley’s Aquarium would have benefited from more text with the exhibits

and a scavenger hunt. As for the Museum of Appalachia, students suggested tour guides, more time at the site, and background information on the site. If the teacher had followed up with a quiz, one of the students on the Biltmore trip said that they would have paid attention better. It would also have been helpful to have more time in the mansion, more visual exhibits, and opportunities to ask questions.

Even a field trip with entertainment as its focus, many said could still have had an educational component. However, an educational trip should still be fun, according to one student who said, in a follow-up interview, “You don’t really want to learn about it if you’re bored. You’ll just want to get out and leave and go home.” In regard to Dollywood, students said they could have been told about the history of the park, learned about the eagles in the park’s sanctuary, and had a free-write time back in the classroom to share what they saw on the field trip. One student saw an opportunity to incorporate math and science into a trip by learning how the various rides were built and operated. King’s Island, although again a reward trip destination, could have been educational with a scavenger hunt, lessons on the history of the rides, hands-on activities, and information on the history of the park, several students reported.

One student who reported that a field trip to the movies was his favorite, said that the trip would have been more educational if they had gone to see a different movie, one that was actually educational. In a follow-up interview, the student said that students would have still signed up for the trip. “Probably a lot of people (would sign up), but some would do it just to get out of school and some people would go because they might learn something,” he said.

Regardless of whether a trip was organized for fun or educational experiences, the students were asked what could have made them more enjoyable. For the theme parks, common answers included shorter lines, longer stays, having teachers involved in the rides and games

with the students, more freedom with choosing a group with which to roam the park, more rides, and more food options. Most agreed that the parks were very entertaining without any extra effort being necessary.

Biltmore would have been more enjoyable if the students could have had more interaction with the exhibits and the guides. They also reported that it would have been more enjoyable with less parent supervision. The Museum of Appalachia would have been better if the exhibits could have been aimed more at teenagers. This trip was taken during the “Fall Homecoming” special event which featured Appalachian music, book signings, and craft demonstrations. However, with no signage and no tour guides, the students were often at a loss to understand much about the activities that were taking place. Once again more time would have been preferred, along with a smaller attendance. The aquarium trip could have been better if there were more activities for students. Many students agreed that even the educational trips were rather enjoyable just as they were.

One student said that the teacher in charge bears a certain amount of responsibility to insure that the trip is interesting and fun. In a follow-up interview, this student said, “Yes, I think they should keep it interesting because after a while being there you kind of start just wanting to go home.”

While some students may have the idea that field trips are not fun, one student interviewed said, “I definitely think you should go and experience it before you just turn it down. I had fun at the Griffith Observatory (as a fifth grader being homeschooled in California) and it was really a good day for me when we went. It was really fun to get up and walk around and look at everything, but you really don’t know until you get there.”

The majority of the students feel that field trips provide educational opportunities that cannot be done in the classroom. With scores of one and two being the exception to the rule, the average score (3.9) was fairly high. Another important aspect of field trips is the chance to interact with classmates and teachers in an environment other than the classroom. In response to how much they enjoyed field trips for this reason, most students ranked this aspect of field trips (4.8) even higher.

One student who was interviewed after the surveys were completed thought that field trips could be very educational. He said, "If we are learning about something like Biltmore or whatever and we actually get to go there we will get more out of the lesson and stuff than we will just learning about it. People get tired of just studying in the classroom and hearing the teacher talk all the time." Students would have benefited more from their trip to Biltmore if they had known in advance that it was built by George Vanderbilt more than a century ago and is the largest private home in the United States. Such context would have helped the students connect the trip with their classes.

Field trips are also good for helping students generate ideas about possible careers to consider. An above average score (3.9) indicates that students see the opportunity to explore, or at least be introduced to, career opportunities. A significantly smaller number see field trips as allowing students to develop interviewing, note taking, and other important skills. In this category, the average score was three out of five.

With most of the trips focused on fun, not education, it may be no surprise that the students ranked the connection between the trips and classroom instruction (2.9) lower when asked if field trips help them better understand the material that has been discussed in class. In a later interview, one student said field trips are important for learning. "I feel that it's better than



just sitting in a boring classroom with all kinds of people throwing paper and talking and you're not getting on the lesson. So you can go somewhere and actually have a hands-on experience of what happened during that time," he said.

Also in a follow-up interview, one student said, "Most of my field trips are really educational and I think that's really good especially for people who don't really like classrooms and such. They can be outside and don't like being in a tight space. And I think that's really good for them and we occasionally have a non-educational trip kinda like to skating bowling and stuff. I think that's really awesome."

As a wrap-up question, students were asked to rank field trips as to their value compared to other school experiences they have had. Very few students ranked field trips with a one, although one student who did so, wrote that sports came first. The average score (4.3) came from most of the scores being in the three to five range.

In a follow-up interview, one student summed up his feelings about field trips by saying, "I like them because they can get you out of school and you can go with your friends and learn stuff that you've not learned before."

One student wrote on her survey that she would have liked more field trips while in middle school. In a later interview she said, "I mean I wish we could've done more things the entire time I've been in middle school. I thought that's what middle school was about. Once you get to high school, high school doesn't take many field trips and since I've only been on five or six the entire time I've been in middle school and I've not really enjoyed most of them except maybe the bowling one and King's Island, I just feel like we need to do more. The school used to go to Williamsburg in Virginia and I would've loved to do that."

Table ten which follows illustrates how students rank field trips in several categories. The overall results indicate that students enjoy and can learn from field trips. Response options ranged from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

Table 10 How students rank field trips in terms of educational value and personal growth	
Statement	Average Response
Field trips provide educational opportunities that cannot be done in the classroom.	3.9
I enjoy field trips because I can interact with my classmates and teachers in an environment other than the classroom.	4.8
Going on a field trip can give a student ideas about possible careers to consider.	3.9
Field trips allow students to develop interviewing, note taking, and other important skills.	3.0
Field trips help me understand the material that we have discussed in class.	2.9
Among the experiences I have had in school, field trips are the most valuable.	4.3

Four themes can be found in a review of the survey results. First it is clear that students enjoy field trip opportunities, especially when they are reward trips for good grades and good behavior. They are times to enjoy experiences that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. Along those same lines, most students do not object to trips being educational as long as there is some fun incorporated. Even academic activities at the site and as follow-up in the classroom are acceptable to most students.

Second, most students are interested in active field trips, ones that involve doing something while at the site. Worksheets are not popular, but scavenger hunts would be enjoyable as well as educational. Any kind of hands-on activities, arts or crafts, would be appreciated while at the site.

Third, the students don't believe their teachers put much effort into planning the trips. Most of the students indicated that a review of the rules for proper behavior was the extent of their teachers' preparation. Some went farther to say that they would have actually appreciated more preparation from their teachers than what they received.

Fourth, along those same lines, many students said that their teachers did little, if any instruction at the site. With most of the trips being ones that were intended as fun and not educational, a lack of teaching at the site might be expected. However, several students indicated that they would be open to some instruction, even on trips where having a good time was the primary goal. Instruction would not have to be formal, but could simply be having the teachers accessible for answering questions while at the site.

In addition to student opinions of field trips in the survey results, three other topics emerged: 1) the cost of field trips is not excessive; 2) field trips are experiences not commonly had through means other than school; and 3) field trips do not necessarily have a negative impact on standardized test scores.

First, students believe that the cost of field trips is not a significant deterrent to students who would like to participate. The cost of the trips the students took was typically low enough that few had difficulty paying for it. Fundraisers were rare, but several students indicated that their teachers would help individual students who otherwise could not afford the trip. According to one student in an interview, "Most of the people who stayed behind it was because they can't go because of their behavior. I don't think it was a money problem. It was just about \$10." Another student said he would like to see some fundraisers done anyway because, "Some kids don't have enough money, even if it's just \$10. That gives them an opportunity to do something they deserve."

Another student in an interview agreed that the cost of the field trip likely did not prohibit anyone from participating. “Probably not because our teachers are really encouraging us and if money was a reason then they’d help pay,” he said. This student went on to describe other factors, however, that could limit a student’s chances of going to a museum or historic site when he added, “I think it would cost more if you didn’t go with the school and if your parents did not want to drive or they couldn’t get off work.”

A second topic to emerge from the interviews is that sometimes a field trip is an experience that a student may not have the chance to enjoy otherwise. This is particularly true in cases where the destination, such as King’s Island, is far from home. Biltmore is a two-hour drive for these students, so one said he would not likely have gone with his family. In an interview, he said, “I probably would never have known about it.” A similar comment came from another student who, talking about the Museum of Appalachia, said, “I never really actually knew it was there before the field trip.” Dollywood, being a local theme park, however, would be a place students would go with family or other groups.

A third topic that arose during the interviews was the potential conflict between time spent on field trips and time spent in classroom instruction. Administrators may not be willing to approve field trip requests due to a concern over taking time away from instruction, and thereby undermining the students’ chances of doing well on standardized tests. None of the students felt that field trips had a negative impact on testing. One student pointed out that the timing of the trip was important. Trips early in the year would not impact testing, whereas a trip just before the test could be detrimental. Another added that a field trip, “Might help because it’s more information.”

One student in an interview put it this way, “Well, I like doing hands-on experiences and stuff. But whenever I get back, I’m like, ‘What work did I miss?’ I make sure I get everything in.” As for his friends, he added, “Most of the friends I hang out with are mostly A and B students. I’m an A and B student. I think they study as much as I do there.” Another student said, “It didn’t hurt me. I still studied.” And still another said, “As long as I study.”

The policy manual for the Jefferson County Board of Education makes allowances in the area of students making up work missed while involved in a school function. The policy states that “students participating in approved school-sponsored trips and activities shall be permitted to make up class assignments” (Jefferson County Board of Education, 2003). Teachers should take into consideration the timing of a field trip so as to avoid the days leading up to a standardized test or the final week prior to the end of a grading period when the amount of time available for making up work is limited.

Chapter Five will detail the conclusions and recommendations that were gleaned from this research.

## Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

This study began with a twofold purpose. The research was intended to determine what eighth grade teachers in Jefferson County, Tennessee, consider to be the most important factors that go into planning and conducting effective field trips. A second and related purpose was to develop a set of characteristics that define effective field trips from the point of view of the eighth grade students in Jefferson County, Tennessee.

The three basic research questions below served as the foundation of this research.

- 1) How do eighth grade students in Jefferson County, Tennessee, rate the field trips they have taken in terms of relevance to the subject being taught, and the impact of these field trips on their likelihood of visiting the sites again on their own or with family members?
- 2) How do eighth grade teachers in Jefferson County, Tennessee, describe and rate the field trips in which they have been involved in the categories of preparation, follow-up, and links to state standards?
- 3) Based on questionnaires, interviews, and a review of the literature, what are the characteristics that should define an effective field trip?

Chapter One involved the statement of the problem, the theoretical framework behind the research, the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, definition of terms, and a description of the organization of the study. Chapter Two detailed the literature available on the subject of effective field trips. Chapter Three outlined the methodology used and gave a description of the participants. Chapter Four detailed the results of the surveys and follow-up interviews as that data applied to the research questions. This chapter will outline the conclusions and recommendations that can be drawn from the data in chapter four.

## Conclusions

It can be concluded from this study that the eighth grade students in Jefferson County, Tennessee, believe that: 1) field trips can be educational and helpful in teaching the academic content presented in the classroom; 2) their teachers do not adequately plan these trips to take full advantage of the educational opportunities a field trip might offer; 3) their teachers do not provide sufficient follow-up activities to reinforce the learning that took place on the field trip; 4) field trip destinations must be interactive; and 5) field trips can be cost effective for families.

It can also be seen from this study that the eighth grade teachers in Jefferson County, Tennessee, believe that: 1) field trips are beneficial in providing their students with academic and personal growth opportunities; and 2) field trips should be tied at least loosely to the curriculum standards.

The review of the literature, combined with the results of the teacher and student surveys and interviews, presents four major characteristics of effective field trips: 1) effective field trips can be of considerable value in terms of both academic and personal growth; 2) a teacher's careful and in-depth planning in advance of a field trip can not only provide a more educational excursion, but students will actually appreciate the effort; and 3) if certain precautions are taken, a field trip will not have a detrimental impact on standardized test scores.

**Student conclusions.** 1) Field trips can be educational and helpful in teaching the academic content presented in the classroom. The surveys and interviews with the eighth grade students clearly show that these students have taken a large number of field trips during their years in middle school that were intended as rewards for good behavior and good grades, but relatively few that can be considered to be of an academic nature. Those who did list and discuss educational trips felt that those excursions were helpful in learning class material, but they did

not feel that the teachers did a sufficient job in connecting the trip to their studies. The students indicated that even trips that are not focused on academics can still be educational, and many were open to that possibility, as long as some amount of fun was still included. They also reported that they would likely visit these sites, be they educational or entertaining in nature, with family at a later date. Some students said they were not aware of some of these locations prior to the trips.

2) Their teachers do not adequately plan these trips to take full advantage of the educational opportunities a field trip might offer. The eighth grade teachers said that they put considerable effort into preparing their students for field trips. In some cases they provided an overview of the history of the site. In other cases, they created a PowerPoint presentation or designed a web quest. The students did not indicate that their teachers had done much preparation other than to explain the school rules for good behavior on a field trip. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that most of the teachers discussed trips that had been focused on educational objectives, while the students talked more about reward trips.

3) Their teachers do not provide sufficient follow-up activities to reinforce the learning that took place on the field trip. The students also reported that their teachers did not do much in terms of following up their field trips with meaningful concluding assignments or activities. In most cases the only follow-up activity listed on the survey and discussed in the interviews was some classroom discussion. Again, that may be due to the fact that most of these trips were taken for entertainment rather than educational objectives.

4) Field trip destinations must be interactive. A field trip is also much more effective if the teacher is involved in some type of small group, interactive lessons on site. Also if the site



offers interactive exhibits and hands-on activities, students are more engaged in learning and the trip, therefore, is much more effective.

Going on field trips to historic sites and museums, especially if they provide an opportunity to interact with people of other cultures, can provide students with experiences that can have a lifelong impact. Overnight field trips carry the added bonus of developing camaraderie between students, chaperones, and teachers. Field trips also offer a break from the classroom routine, which can be beneficial for students and teachers alike. Adults often report that field trip experiences were some of the most educational and memorable aspects of their time in school (Pace, 2004).

Most of the favorite trips these students listed were for the purpose of rewards. However, many of them felt that a field trip could be educational and still be fun. One student pointed out that if a trip is boring, the students just look forward to going home. Interactive opportunities lessen the likelihood of students wanting the trip to end early.

Students had the opportunity in both the surveys and the interviews to describe what types of activities they preferred to have while at a field trip site. A worksheet was their least favorite, but anything active drew much higher scores. Students were, in many cases, willing to participate in role playing (although some would be too shy to try it) and thought that visual exhibits were important, but they especially like arts and crafts activities, food tasting, and scavenger hunts. One student said, "It's hands-on. The kids would pay more attention and learn more stuff, I guess." Field trips that include hands-on activities can have a significant impact on a student's education and be an important aspect of what the student remembers of the time spent in school (Pace, et al, 2004).

Although some schools may have replaced actual field trips with virtual ones, research indicates that students do not get the same impact as with the hands-on opportunities that may be found at a museum or historic site. Being immersed in a topic can be effective in helping the students learn (Clark, 2012).

Field trips can be of educational value, especially if they involve hands-on activities. For example, students can be immersed in a sensory experience when they visit an aquarium and have the chance to pet a manta ray. Holding and examining objects, such as the tools and weapons of a Civil War soldier, engages the sense of touch that most classroom lessons do not. In this way, students can become much better informed about their own community and the larger world around them.

5) Field trips can be cost effective for families. One factor that may impact the significance of field trips is the current economy. It may be that a school-sponsored field trip is the student's only chance to visit a museum or historic site. The cost for a group is much less than that of a family visit, making it possible for a parent to send a child, when taking the entire family would be cost prohibitive. The student interviews showed that students were paying only relatively small fees (under \$20) for most trips. Participants also said that few students could not afford these trips and that their teachers were willing to help those who were in need.

**Teacher Conclusions.** 1) Field trips are beneficial in providing their students with academic and personal growth opportunities. The teachers showed an understanding of the academic value of field trips. On a scale of one to five, the teachers in the survey gave a very high score (4.7) to field trips as educational opportunities that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. The teachers ranking (4.3) was almost as high when asked if field trips could help students explore possible careers. Teachers also felt (4.0) that the students could learn skills such as interviewing and note

taking on a field trip. There are students who, at least part of the time, may be reluctant to do academic work in a classroom setting. Some of these students may benefit academically when involved in an effective field trip (Campbell, et al, 2004).

Teachers also saw the benefit of having field trips as a means of promoting personal growth among their students. They pointed out that students need to interact with them and with their classmates in a setting beyond the classroom. The teachers ranked that aspect (4.7) just as high as their score for academic significance. One teacher talked about the importance of students seeing the teacher in a different role, less regimented, and more playful and fun around the students. One teacher commented on the importance for adolescents of forming relationships outside their families. With students being very closely monitored on the school campus, a field trip can offer these bonding experiences that cannot be fully realized during a regular academic day. One student in a later interview seemed to agree with that teacher by saying, “I think it always makes it better if you can hang out with your friends and have fun. We go to Dollywood sometimes and we will just wander around with our friends. They make us have a group of three or more and they don’t give us a chaperone. If we can have more time with our friends at places like that, it would be more fun.”

In the review of literature, one author quoted Tim Sullivan, the founder of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), who argued that in many cases students have experiences on field trips that they would not have otherwise. Students whose families do not have the financial means, or maybe the interest, will miss out on these important “elements of life” (Clark, 2012).

Taking a field trip may also enlighten students and offer an opportunity to develop a deeper level of empathy than they might achieve simply from a classroom discussion, textbook

reading, or guest speaker. Real firsthand experiences can foster a student's personal growth, a key component in the development of effective citizens (Clark, 2000).

2) Field trips should be tied at least loosely to the curriculum standards. The teachers in general do not make a strong effort to include curriculum standards in their preparation and site selection. One teacher did say that a connection could help in procuring administrative approval for a trip, and another said that it was a good idea to connect to standards in at least a minimal way. Many historic sites and museums are able to help teachers in this area by providing in advance lesson plans and other supplemental materials that align with state standards.

The teachers who were surveyed felt that a connection to curriculum standards was good, but not necessarily the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of a field trip. When asked if the focus should be on academics rather than field trips, the teacher score (3.2) included only scores in the middle of the range of options. That score dropped a full point (2.2) on a follow up question which asked if a trip should be taken only if tied to standards. These results clearly indicate that teachers see value in field trips regardless of a connection to standards. However, one teacher pointed out that a connection to standards would be valuable in seeking approval from the school administration. The research suggests that the eighth grade teachers of Jefferson County may be in the minority. Many teachers fear that taking time out of class to visit a museum would hurt their test results (Katz, 2008). There are school systems which will not approve trips which are not related to the standards (Qualls, 2012).

Curator of Education Debbie Woodiel at the Frank H. McClung Museum on the University of Tennessee campus in Knoxville pointed out the importance of incorporating curriculum standards into the exhibits and programs the museum offers. The museum has begun

emphasizing cross-curricular experiences for students, something that will be necessary as the Common Core standards are adopted (Woodiel, 2012).

**Other Conclusions.** 1) Effective field trips can be of considerable value in terms of both academic and personal growth. An effective field trip, if it is one with educational objectives, is one that is at least somewhat tied to curriculum standards and can therefore help students relate to material presented in class and help them prepare for standardized testing. Even a field trip that is designed specifically as a reward for good grades and behavior can be at least somewhat effective in an educational manner if academic considerations are included. The students indicated that they would be open to such a combination.

2) A teacher's careful and in-depth planning in advance of a field trip can not only provide a more educational excursion, but students will actually appreciate the effort. Most students are open to educational field trips, as long as some fun is included. If a teacher plans properly in advance, even a reward trip can have an educational component. For example, most of the students listed the Dollywood theme park as their favorite field trip destination, but offered a long list of ways that the trip could have been educational as well as entertaining. Their suggestions included having the teacher relate the history of the park to the history of the state, prepare lesson plans related to the eagles in the park's sanctuary, plan tasks for the students to accomplish at the park, and follow up with a class activity to help students remember what they learned. Scheduling the trip during a special event could have provided an educational boost. One group visited the park during its Festival of Nations and reported learning a lot.

Ripley's Aquarium is seen as an educational destination, although the primary purpose of the trips the students discussed in these interviews and surveys was simply as a reward for good grades and behavior. However, students also said that a scavenger hunt for certain types of

aquatic life would have been fun. It would have also been helpful if the teachers had planned brief lessons for the site. Whether the purpose of the trip is education or fun, teachers can plan activities for each destination, not just historic sites but theme parks as well.

The Museum of Appalachia was also an educational destination, but again, the primary purpose of the trip was to reward students. However, students reported that they would have liked for the teacher to prepare the class in advance by sharing more about the history of the site and giving information about the events going on during their visit. One student thought a follow-up project would have also been helpful. Some of the students felt that most of the planning their teacher did was just to share the school rules for good behavior.

Each of the teachers in the survey and later interviews emphasized the importance of careful planning in preparation for a field trip. A variety of strategies was used, including PowerPoints, brainstorming, and the use of a virtual tour in the computer lab in advance of the trip. Jefferson County School Board policy requires that appropriate planning be an integral part of any field trip. One teacher referred to preparation as a “make or break” proposition in determining the success of a field trip.

With the number of field trips on the decline, some museums and historic sites try to encourage schools to bring their students by providing help for teachers in preparing their classes in advance. Most of the teachers who were surveyed indicated that their favorite historical sites and museums provided background information in advance that could be included in preparation.

Planning for a trip could begin with allowing the students to have input about which site to visit, thus giving them some ownership in their education. A continuation of that ownership could be to brainstorm with the students about research questions to answer before, during, and after the trip. Such questions can help the teacher tailor the visit to the site (McLoughin, 2004).

Advance planning should also include offering students options in how they may choose to present what they learned on the trip, whether that be a graphic organizer or possibly a scrapbook (McLoughin, 2004). The teachers included in the survey rarely did anything more than a brief class discussion once the trip ended.

Great care, however, must be put into preparation for the trip. The same types of basic teaching strategies that are often incorporated into classroom instruction are required for a field trip. Failure to do so can quickly cause a field trip to turn into a disaster. First, a student needs to have some background knowledge of the site to be visited, along with an understanding of the goals to be accomplished while at the site. Proper field trip behavior should be taught and practiced in advance as well (Woolf, 2012).

The literature suggests that administrative concern over proper student behavior on a field trip, along with the need to keep the students safe, requires effective use of chaperones. However, the teachers surveyed only use chaperones in a limited capacity, primarily to keep order and to ensure that students meet at appointed times. Appropriate and in-depth planning for a field trip should include proper training of the chaperones. Not only should chaperones be informed of the rules and have a schedule of activities, but they should also know the objectives of the trips (Brunner and Lewis, 2004). It should also be noted that proper behavior at the historic site or museum is indeed important and should be taught and practiced in advance (Woolf, 2012). The teachers interviewed are aware of the importance of their students' safety on the field trip. However, they are not as prepared for possible emergencies as they could be. For example, some of the teachers reported having a first aid kit available, but none reported taking a camera to record any incidents. The most effective field trips, however, will be those that go

beyond simply having the chaperone for “crowd control,” but will include chaperones involved in educational efforts at the site.

3) If certain precautions are taken, a field trip will not have a detrimental impact on standardized test scores. The number of field trips has apparently declined, although there is an emphasis by many historical sites and museums to tie their offerings to the curriculum standards, which should help teachers prepare for standardized testing. Some museum and historic sites have only anecdotal data, but others have empirical data to show the decline, and attribute it, in part, to the emphasis on standardized testing (Woodiel, 2012).

An important factor in whether the trip has a negative impact on state standardized test scores is the timing of the trip. If the trip is scheduled far enough in advance of the testing dates, there is little, if any impact, according to some of the students interviewed. One student said that he would get his work done regardless of a trip. He added that some students weren't going to prepare well for the testing anyway, and so a trip really wouldn't affect them either. Another student pointed out that if the trip is educational it could actually benefit students when test time arrives.

Jefferson County eighth grade teachers are not alone in wanting their students to have enrichment experiences, ones that are hands-on and interactive. The research indicates that most teachers agree and want their students to have exposure to learning opportunities that are beyond the classroom. If field trips are educational, yet still fun, students can be engaged and can build memories that will last a lifetime (Bhatia, 2009).

It can be seen from the review of the literature, along with the teacher and student surveys and interviews, that effective field trips include, but are not limited to:

- 1) choosing a site that connects to the state standards;



- 2) explaining the purpose of the trip;
- 3) having teachers visit the site in advance;
- 4) allowing students to participate in the planning by developing questions and activities;
- 5) making sure the funds are available for students to take the field trip;
- 6) being prepared for emergencies;
- 7) including fun hands-on activities into the educational aspects of the trip;
- 8) interacting between teachers and students on site; and
- 9) following up the trip with educational activities in the classroom that will help the students remember what they learned on the field trip.

### **Recommendations**

These surveys, interviews and review of the literature regarding field trips lead to several recommendations on how teachers can plan and lead effective field trips.

1) Teachers must understand that adequate preparation is a definite requirement. This planning should include much more than just a review of the rules for proper behavior on the trip. It should also involve a connection to curriculum standards, even if the trip does not have an educational objective as its primary goal. This advance work should also include the students by giving them an opportunity to help create the objectives of the field trip and to help design the field trip in a manner that can help achieve those objectives.

A significant component of the advance preparation is that of emphasizing what type of behavior is appropriate at the particular site. Some principals are cautious about approving field trips due to a concern over student behavior and also over student safety. Preparation should include efforts to keep students safe, which means preparing the chaperones for possible emergencies and having emergency contacts and a first aid kit readily available. It is of utmost

importance that teachers understand the legal issues related to field trips, such as insuring the safety of the students and the teacher's level of liability due to negligence.

2) While at the site, teachers need to be actively involved in the educational components of the field trip. That would include, but not be limited to, brief lessons featuring some type of student interaction, being available to answer questions at various locations around the site, and giving the students an assignment to do on their own while there. Toward this end, adequately-prepared chaperones can be included in these tasks.

3) Field trips that are effective have an element of fun involved. It is important that the majority of students participate in the field trips. To promote student involvement, teachers need to make sure there is "something for everyone" on the trip. Educational activities are important, and may be the primary goal of the field trip, but some amount of fun activities must be included to help encourage students to sign up.

3) A field trip that is fully effective is one that is followed by activities in the classroom beyond just a discussion. Students are much more likely to learn from their field trip experience if they are doing classroom assignments afterwards that could include creating a diorama based on the site or making a scrapbook of photographs taken at the site. With states enacting the Common Core standards, a writing assignment could also be very valuable.

4) A list of historic sites in the area should be created. Jefferson County, Tennessee, is situated in an area of the state that has easy access to a large number of historic sites, from museums and historic homes, to a popular national park. A team of social studies teachers could create a list of historic sites and include ideas for activities, lesson plans, teaching strategies, and assessments that could be appropriate for each location. Another important component could be a listing of the various curriculum standards that can be covered at each site. This document

would be especially helpful, too, if the teachers could offer insight on trips they have taken to the various sites.

5) A training manual and a training program for effective field trips should be created.

This research has shown that even experienced teachers have room for improvement in the field trips they organize. It would be a benefit to teachers if they had not just a narrative on effective field trips, but a manual with forms to fill in. For example, the manual could include a document for recording information about accidents or other incidents that occurred on a trip. Finally the manual and workshop would help teachers develop ways to effectively include chaperones in making the field trip more educational. Once the document is created and field tested, a panel of teachers with considerable field trip experience could lead a professional development workshop to share ideas on developing and executing effective field trips.

6) All field trip destinations should develop educational materials that are linked to standards. While some sites, such as theme parks, are more focused on entertainment than education, there is still room for learning. The students in the surveys indicated that they were open to learning while having fun. One of the teachers spoke about the importance of connecting a trip to curriculum standards in order to receive administrative approval for the trip. With those things in mind, officials at theme parks and other entertainment destinations would be wise to encourage teachers to bring students by providing them with materials to use in class.

7) This study should be replicated in other systems. Jefferson County, Tennessee, eighth graders are very clear on their opinions of field trips. However, Jefferson County is a small, rural system. Looking at the results of similar studies using different demographics would be helpful in making further conclusions and recommendations.

8) Additional studies should be done regarding the fears of principals and teachers regarding field trips. If field trips are in decline, as this study indicates, what fears are holding teachers and principals back? Is it a concern over safety? Is it the impact on curriculum standards and the impact of testing? Whatever is the basis for the reluctance, research could indicate how to move forward.

9) Further research should be done on what students gain from field trips. Much of what has been reported in the literature, along with what students and teachers have said, indicates that students grow academically and personally from field trips. However, almost all of that material is anecdotal. A rigorous study, whether qualitative or quantitative, would be beneficial in determining the significance of field trips.

Students enjoy field trips a great deal, ranking them as one of the most valuable experiences that they have had while in school. They understand the opportunities for learning content material and they appreciate the time for personal growth. Field trips create lifelong memories for students and may help them become more actively involved in the education of their own children later in life.

Therefore, teachers should plan effectively, be involved at the site, follow up in the classroom, and not underestimate the importance and effectiveness of field trips.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

**JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS**

*"Challenging Individuals to Achieve Excellence"*

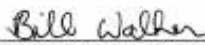
March 28, 2013

Brenda Lawson  
Compliance Officer and IRB Administrator  
Office of Research and Engagement  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

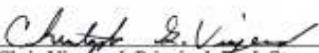
Dear Brenda,

We, the undersigned, agree to support the dissertation research project entitled, "How Can Teachers and Students Prepare for Effective Visits to Historic Sites and Museums?" as submitted by Mark Finchum for IRB approval.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Charles Edmonds, Director of Schools

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Walker, Principal, White Pine School

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michelle Walker, Principal, Maury Middle School

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Vineyard, Principal, Rush Strong School

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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## Appendix B

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE   
KNOXVILLE  
Office of Research & Engagement  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

1534 White Ave.  
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529  
865-274-7697  
fax 865-974-7400

April 8, 2013

IRB#: 9104 B

Title: How Can Teachers and Students Prepare for Effective Visits to Historic Sites and Museums?

William M. Finchum  
Theory & Practice in Teacher Education  
1291 Ashwood Drive  
Jefferson City, TN 37760

Thomas Turner  
Theory & Practice in Teacher Education  
A222 Bailey Education Complex  
Campus - 3442

Your project listed above has been reviewed and granted IRB approval under expedited review.

This approval is good for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. If signed consent forms are being obtained from subjects, they must be stored for at least three years following completion of the project.
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,



Brenda Lawson  
Compliance

Enclosure

---

**Big Orange. Big Ideas.**

Appendix C

**How Can Teachers and Students Prepare for Effective Visits to Historic Sites and Museums?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 School \_\_\_\_\_ Years in Present Position \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please circle 1 if you strongly disagree with the statement. Circle 5 if you strongly agree.)*

- 1) What factors determine the number of field trips you take?
- I see the field trips as valuable activities. 1   2   3   4   5
  - My principal is very supportive of field trips. 1   2   3   4   5
  - The financing of field trips can be easily arranged. 1   2   3   4   5
  - The emphasis should be on standards, not field trips. 1   2   3   4   5
  - Field trips are valuable, but involve too much risk. 1   2   3   4   5
  - Field trips are valuable, but are very time consuming. 1   2   3   4   5
  - Field trips should be taken only if tied to standards. 1   2   3   4   5

*(Please circle 1 if you strongly disagree with the statement. Circle 5 if you strongly agree.)*

- 2) How valuable do you consider field trips to be?
- Field trips provide educational opportunities that cannot be duplicated in the classroom.  
1   2   3   4   5
  - Field trips benefit students by allowing them to interact with their classmates and teachers in an environment other than the classroom.  
1   2   3   4   5
  - Field trips help students investigate possible careers by exploring various sites.  
1   2   3   4   5
  - Field trips allow students to develop interviewing, note taking, and other important skills.

- 3) How many field trips do you take each year? Circle the best answer:
- None**
**One**
**Two**
**Three or more**

- 4) How do you determine where to go? *(Please circle any that apply.)*
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Brainstorm with students<br>Go to places I have visited<br>Reviewed websites | Look for a place that relates to the subject<br>Recommendations from others<br>Other _____ |
|--|--|

- 5) Identify your favorite historic site or museum which you have visited on a field trip and your reasons for choosing that location.

**Site:**

**Reason:**

- 6) Did you visit the historic site/museum in advance?                      **Yes**                      **No**
- 7) If so, was it as a visitor, or as preparation for a field trip?                      **Visitor**                      **Preparation**
- 8) Did you schedule the trip based on a special event at the site?                      **Yes**                      **No**
- 9) Did the site provide educational materials in advance?                      **Yes**                      **No**
- 10) If so, did the materials refer to specific state standards?                      **Yes**                      **No**                      **N/A**
- 11) What types of materials were made available to you? *(Circle all that apply)*

**Historical background of the site**                      **Lesson plans for teachers**

**Games or puzzles**

**Supplemental materials on disc**

**Primary documents**

**Scavenger hunt**

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

- 12) What materials did you create for use either before or during the field trip? *(Circle all that apply)*

**Scavenger hunt**

**Pre-test**

**PowerPoint**

**Puzzle**

**Game**

**Web Quest**

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

- 13) What did you do to prepare your students for the field trip? *(Circle all that apply)*

**Brainstormed to determine possible questions to ask at the site**

**Reviewed rules for proper conduct on a field trip**

**Explained the objectives of the trip**

**Covered background material related to the subject**

**Assigned students a responsibility at the site, such as a scavenger hunt, etc.**

- 14) What do you see as the purpose of chaperones? *(Circle all that apply)*

**Keep students safe**

**Provide instruction at the site**

**Enforce trip rules**

**Answer student questions at the site**

**Enforce site rules**

**Ensure students are where they should be**

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

- 15) What instructions did you give the chaperones regarding their roles and the objectives of the trip? *(Circle all that apply)*

**A list of the trip's objectives**

**A list of student names**

**Overview of the site**

**Shared problems from previous trips**

**Itinerary of the trip**

**School rules that applied to trip**

**Map of the site**

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

- 16) What arrangements were made for possible emergencies? *(Circle all that apply)*

**Cell numbers of all chaperones**

**Emergency contacts for students**

**Form for description of emergency**

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

**Checkpoints and times for meeting**

**Camera for documenting emergency**

**First Aid kit**

- 17) Did you alter your typical instructional strategies while on the field trip to fit the circumstances of the trip and the site? Please explain.

- 18) Students were allowed sufficient time to explore the site on their own.

**1 2 3 4 5**

- 19) Students had sufficient time to ask the site staff questions of their own?

**1 2 3 4 5**

- 20) The site's offerings aligned with content standards.

**1 2 3 4 5**

- 21) The site's offerings engaged the students' attention.

**1 2 3 4 5**

- 22) The students are likely to desire a return visit with their families.

**1 2 3 4 5**

- 23) What did you do to follow up on the field trip? *(Circle all that apply)*

**class discussion**

**art project**

**readings**

**other** \_\_\_\_\_

**written assignment**

**craft project**

**drama project**

**pencil and paper test**

**debate**

**additional research**

- 24) What would you do differently next time?

## Appendix D

**How Would You Describe Your Field Trip Experiences at Historic Sites and Museums?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) How many field trips have you taken since you have been in middle school?  
**None            1-2            3-4            5-6            7 or more**
- 2) Give the name and location of your favorite and tell which grade you were in at the time.  
\_\_\_\_\_

*(Please think about that favorite field trip and answer each of the questions below.)*

- 3) In what ways did your teacher prepare you for the trip?
- (Circle all that apply.)*

**Brainstormed to determine possible questions to ask at the site**  
**Reviewed rules for proper conduct on a field trip**  
**Explained the objectives of the trip**  
**Told you about the history related to the site**  
**Assigned students a learning task at the site, such as a scavenger hunt, etc.**  
**Other, please explain** \_\_\_\_\_

- 4) Were parent chaperones involved?            **Yes            No**
- 5) If so, how much better was the field trip because of the parents? (**1 = none; 5 = a lot**)  
**1   2   3   4   5**
- 6) In addition to your social studies teacher, how many other teachers went on the trip?  
**None            1-2            3-4            5-6            7 or more**
- 7) How much instruction did your teachers provide at the site?  
**1   2   3   4   5**
- 8) How different was your teachers' strategy than what was typically done in class?  
**1   2   3   4   5**
- 9) If there were differences, please explain what they were.
- 10) How much time did you have to explore the site on your own? (**1 = none; 5 = plenty**)  
**1   2   3   4   5**
- 11) The staff at the site conducted interesting lessons. (**1 = no lessons; 5 = great lessons**)  
**1   2   3   4   5**
- 12) I had enough time to ask the site staff questions of my own. (**1 = none; 5 = plenty**)  
**1   2   3   4   5**





## Appendix E

### **How Can Teachers and Students Prepare for More Effective Field Trips to Historic Sites and Museums?**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As an eighth grade social studies teacher in Jefferson County, you are invited to participate in a research study to determine ways in which teachers and students can prepare for effective field trips to historic sites and museums. The primary objectives of the study include determining ways in which teachers prepare and conduct field trips, as well as how students view their favorite field trips.

#### **INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY**

The research will begin with a questionnaire for participating teachers, giving them an opportunity to reflect on their field trip experiences as teachers. Completing the survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes. Once the teacher surveys are compiled and analyzed, some of the teachers may be asked to participate in a recorded interview. If necessary, the interview time will take no more than 45 minutes. Once the research project is complete, the surveys will be shredded and the tapes will be erased. Teachers will not be identified in the final results.

Each teacher will also be asked to distribute and collect parental consent forms and student assent forms prior to the questionnaires and possible student interviews. Each teacher will then be asked to allocate no more than 30 minutes of class time for the completion of the student surveys, under the teacher's leadership. The researcher will collect the surveys for analysis. Once the analysis is complete, selected students may be asked to participate in a recorded interview, which will be conducted by the researcher. These interviews will take no more than 30 minutes each. Every effort will be made to minimize classroom disruption.

#### **RISKS**

There is no known risk to teachers or students who participate in this research.

#### **BENEFITS**

There may be no direct benefit to the participants in this study, however, the body of knowledge this research may generate may be of benefit to teachers and students in preparing for more effective field trips in the future.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information collected in this study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will only be available to the researcher. Participants in the study will not be identified in the final report.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's initials

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Mark Finchum, at Jefferson County High School, (865) 397-3182 or via cell phone at 9865)607-9427. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

---

**CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Mark Finchum and I teach world geography at Jefferson County High School. Having completed all the classwork involved in a doctoral program for teacher education at the University of Tennessee, I am now in the process of conducting research for a dissertation regarding how teachers and students can have effective field trips to historic sites and museums. Each 8<sup>th</sup> grader in Jefferson County will be asked to complete a survey describing his or her favorite field trip experience. This research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university, as well as Dr. Charles Edmonds, Director of Schools for Jefferson County. Once the research is complete, none of the students will be identified in any way in the final report.

Please sign in the appropriate space below to indicate that your child has permission to participate in the survey. However, if you would prefer that your student not participate, please indicate in the designated space below. In addition to your option not to participate, students may opt out of any particular question if they so choose.

Please return this form with your child's name, along with your signature, to his or her history teacher.

Thank you for your consideration.



Mark Finchum

My child, \_\_\_\_\_, has my permission to participate in the above research study.

Name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would prefer that my child, \_\_\_\_\_, not participate in the above research study.

Name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

**Assent Form**

Hello, my name is Mark Finchum, and I am a social studies teacher at Jefferson County High School. I am studying how teachers and students prepare for field trips and how those field trips could be educational and fun too.

Your parents and your teacher have given me permission to have you fill out a survey about your experiences on field trips. All you have to do is write your answers to the questions on the survey. That shouldn't take more than 15-20 minutes. If you find a question on the survey that you do not wish to answer for any reason, you may skip that question and go on to the next one.

I may ask some students to answer a few more questions on a tape recorder later on. If I do, that won't take more than 30 minutes at the most. Your name will not be included in the research report, so no one will know what you write or say. When the research is complete, the surveys will be shredded and the tapes will be erased.

If you are willing to complete the survey, and maybe be interviewed later, please sign your name below. Your help is really appreciated. I really appreciate your help!

---

(student name)

---

(student signature)

---

(date)

### Vita

William Mark Finchum was born near Dandridge, TN, to Grayson and Anna Rhea Finchum. He had two older siblings Robert Grayson, Jr., and Patricia Ann Whaley. He attended Swannsylvania Elementary School and then Maury High School in Dandridge. Upon graduation, he attended Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, TN, for two years prior to transferring to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he completed a Bachelors of Science degree in Communications in 1980. He received his Masters of Science degree in Curriculum and Instruction in 1989. Mark is continuing his education with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in teacher education.