

8th Grade Field Trip – GETTYSBURG & WASHINGTON DC

Tuesday, May 5 – Saturday, May 9



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why are we taking our 8th Graders to Gettysburg and Washington DC?

In accordance with our District Strategic Plan (DSP), it is a goal to return to pre-pandemic norms, expanding learning opportunities for students, and fostering off-campus education. While our middle school used to take one off-campus class trip pre-pandemic – the 8th Grade to Chicago – our goal last year was to get a second trip going. Due to the curricular alignment with 8th Grade Social Studies, 8th Grade trips across our country typically head east to Washington DC to learn about our nation’s capital and government.

Why target Tuesday, May 5 through May 9?

The reason we’re targeting these May dates is due to our 8th Graders’ testing schedule – PSAT and M-STEP. With PWHS Commencement the following week, then Memorial Day, and then Exams, this window is the only five-day stretch that doesn’t conflict with a ton of school activities, sports, and family summer plans. Also, we avoid a Mother’s Day conflict.

What is the agenda for the trip? Could you explain the rationale for the transportation plan?

The agenda for the trip is attached (or passed out at the meeting). The agenda fairly aligned with other schools’ 8th Grade trips to Gettysburg and Washington DC. When it comes to logistics, due to the labor shortage and the rising costs of charter busing, our team was nervous about costs. The trip also works much better when there is overnight travel both to and from DC. We were able to get overnight travel on the way there – hence, the Tuesday evening departure – but, due to insurance purposes, we always drive back during the day on Saturday.

Who will chaperone the trip? Are parents allowed to attend as chaperones?

The primary four chaperones attending will be PWMHS staff. While there are many objectives to the trip, the idea is to maintain a 1:4-5 ratio of chaperones to students – with a group lead – so as not to suffocate the idea of team building and class bonding. Therefore, we are opening twelve additional spots up to parents who wish to chaperone. Chaperones must pay their own way – according to the “financial breakdown” attached (or passed out at the meeting). Chaperones get a \$100 discount from the actual cost of an adult. Preferences will be given to parents who have a medical background or who is CPR / First Aid / AED certified... or who didn’t get to be on the trip to Chicago in 6th Grade. If there are more than twelve parents who volunteer, we will conduct a lottery drawing. All chaperones must be fingerprinted for a background check to attend.

Can chaperones drive their own vehicle to and from Washington DC?

No. All chaperones must accompany students at all times to and from Washington DC. We have two 56-passenger bus reserved for the trip.

What will the small groups look like?

The class will be broken up into 17-18 or so small groups of four – each accompanied by a chaperone. These groups will partner as small groups throughout the entire trip – accountable to each other while traveling, eating, and will also be roommates in the hotel rooms. Obviously, the class will move through museums, buildings, and monuments together as a unit, but breaking down into smaller groups (strengthened by the buddy system) with a chaperone overseeing each small group will help logistics and accountability.

Where will the students be traveling to? Where will they stay?

The majority of time will be spent in and around the museum and monument complex throughout the National Mall – as you can see on our trip agenda. As far as hotels go, we will be staying just outside the DC area at the Rockville (MD) Cambria Hotel. The boys and male chaperones will be sleeping on one floor while the girls and the female chaperones will be sleeping on a different floor. There will not just be a curfew, but a ‘lights off’ time as well.

What is the plan for meals and snacks?

As you can see in the trip itinerary and financial breakdown, all meals and snacks are accounted for and factor into the overall trip cost.

What is the cost of the trip for attendees?

Attached (or passed out at the meeting) is a financial breakdown of the class trip to Washington DC for attendees. As part of our *Pirates on the Move* campaign – the official name given to our platform that gets field trips going again – our building budget is subsidizing the trip’s cost to help with affordability.

Do I have to fundraise or can I just cut a check for the cost of the trip?

Both options are available. Fundraising details will be released in October. However, parents are welcome to write a check for the cost of the trip as well.

Can I help sponsor another student?

You can donate to help cover another student’s cost in two ways. First, on our attached (or passed out at the meeting) financial survey, you can identify that you wish to contribute toward the cost of another student in various increments. Second, if you have a business that wishes to sponsor our *Pirates on the Move* group shirts by advertising on the back of the shirt via a company logo, spaces go for \$250. The same shirt will be worn for the various class trips taken this school year.

When are payments due?

Full payments may be made up front at any time. However, half is due Friday, December 12, 2025 and the other half is due Friday, March 20, 2026.

What if my student takes medication? Who will administer?

We will follow the same protocol as we do in our Front Office. On the waiver, there will be a section that allows family to list medical needs, etc. Upon submission of the waiver, there will be an opportunity to submit medical documentation and provide details regarding medication guidelines. Just as we do in our Front Office, we will have a certified and trained chaperone in charge of holding / dispensing medication.

What will the cell phone policy be for the trip? What about headphones, Chromebooks, etc?

For emergency purposes, we will be allowing students to bring their cell phones. Headphones will also be allowed. However, Chromebooks will not be needed. When it comes to cell phone use, there will be designated periods of time where a student may use their cell phone, but we will otherwise follow school rules as far as use goes during educational, group, and entertainment activities. While on the bus, there will be plenty of individual / group activities to keep our students busy!

What if I do not want my student to attend?

Students who do not attend the class trip will still be expected to attend school on May 6, 7, and 8.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to Principal Ryan Portenga – ryan.portenga@pwschools.org / (989) 587-5100 x5103.