**Washington, DC Parent Meeting Notes**

**Monday, October 12 6:00pm**

**Cost of the trip ($350)**

Cost covers hotel, buses, entrance into all venues that charge a fee, and all meals except for lunch on the first day (students bring a sack lunch). Students can bring additional money for souvenirs, extra food, etc.

**Payments**

A deposit of $50 is due no later than November 4. This is also required for chaperones. After the initial deposit, the balance of $300 is due by April 1. The payment schedule included in the parent letter that went home in mid - September is just a *suggested* schedule. Payments of any amount will be accepted at any time up until the final due date of April 1.

**Chaperones**

Wake County policy requires that the chaperone to student ratio be NO MORE than 8:1, but we’d like to keep our groups smaller than that. The more chaperones we have, the smaller our groups can be!

Chaperones are two to a room, or a chaperone may room with three students. You may also request a single room or a room with just you and your child for an additional charge.

All volunteers must register and be approved by WCPSS **before** they can help out in any capacity.

The volunteer registration system is currently open every day from 8-4.  After October 30, the system will only be open on Mondays. If you plan to chaperone, please stop by the school’s front office and register before the end of December.

**Buses**

We will take charter buses to Washington and they will be separated (girls and boys). Parents will ride the same bus as their child and there will be 1 or 2 staff members on each bus.

**Roommates**

Students will choose their roommates later this spring. Most rooms will have 2 queens; some may have a king and a pullout in their room. We will have a “doors closed” time, but students may set their own bedtime. Students will sign up with 3 other people (4 students total per room). Parent chaperones may also room with their child and up to 2 other students if they wish.

**Food**

Students are allowed to bring snacks. Most meals will be a food court scenario, and each student will be issued a voucher or cash that can be used at any one of a variety of different restaurants. Students wanting additional food may purchase it on their own. There may be one box lunch that will be arranged for us by Holbrook Field Trip company. In that case, we will ask students and chaperones about any special dietary needs as we get closer to the trip, and that information will be given to Holbrook.

**What to bring (Electronics too)**

A suggested packing list will be given to students closer to our departure date, but they always want to know if they can bring their electronics. We tell students that they may bring whatever electronics they would like, however they are completely responsible for any items they bring on the trip.

We encourage students to bring their cell phones so they can be easily reached if they are separated from the group.

**Hotel Procedures**

There will be separate hotels for girls and boys. Hotels we’ve stayed in for previous trips have typically been similar to Holiday Inn and Hampton Inn hotels.

Students will be “taped in” by a staff member each night. A security guard will patrol the hallways at night and staff will be on call for issues or emergencies.

Students are encouraged to arrange for wake up calls, or they can use their own alarms. Teachers will knock on doors to student rooms and remove tape when it is time to go to breakfast.

**Walking**

We will do a lot of walking while on this trip, and students are encouraged to wear comfortable shoes. This includes walking the many memorials and monuments of DC, as well as the Smithsonian Museums.

**Departure from MPMS and Arrival back at MPMS**

Students should be at school by 5:30 am on Wednesday May 11. Please do not arrive before 5:30 am. Buses will leave MPMS promptly at 6:00 am. On our return trip back to Cary, students will be asked to call parents as we get close and give an estimated time of arrival. We encourage students to carpool Wednesday morning and Friday night.

**Itinerary Notes**

Please check your child’s social studies teacher’s web-site for a copy of a sample itinerary if one did not make it home. Please note that with a group as large as ours, it is necessary for us to have four different itineraries, so that we’re not trying to move together as a group of 500+. All the itineraries will include the same stops; they will just be in different order.

Our stops have included: the Newseum, Holocaust Memorial Museum, Pentagon Memorial, picture stop at White House, Memorials/Monuments on the Mall, Arlington National Cemetery, and the Smithsonian Museums.

**Students needing to take medication**

Over the counter medications (and students authorized to self carry items such as Epi-pens and inhalers) can be carried by the student and self-administered. Please pay close attention to the section on the second page of the permission form regarding your child’s health information.

Staff members carry “red bag” kit – same kit found in classrooms for basic first aid needs.

**Parent Q & A:**

*Do students travel on their own or do we have guides?*

Each bus will have a licensed tour guide to provide commentary throughout the day while we tour the memorials, monuments and Arlington National Cemetery. At the museums, students will travel in small chaperone groups.

*Will students have activities to complete while on the trip?*

We do not provide students with activities, however students will be prepared in their social studies, science, and language arts classes so they know what to expect at each destination.

*What exactly do the chaperones do?*

Chaperones will be responsible for a small group of students to keep an eye on throughout the trip. This is especially necessary in the museums and doing quick headcounts while on the bus. Staff members will handle everything once we arrive at the hotels each night.

*Can chaperones drive their own car?*

We ask that chaperones are on the buses we take to DC. We need the parents on the bus to help the staff member(s) with the students.

*Will the students wear school shirts while on the trip?*

We do not have any type of “uniform,” however students must follow the school dress code while on the trip. Students will receive lanyards with name tags and are expected to wear these during the trip.

*What if it’s raining?*

The itineraries will be rescheduled to the extent possible if there is advance notice of adverse weather, but for the most part- every stop is rain or shine. Weather forecasts will be shared ahead of time with students so they should plan their attire accordingly.

*What percentage of students went on the trip last year?*

About 85% of the 8th graders last year went on the trip. Those who stayed back did so for a variety of reasons; including sports commitments and some just had no desire to go on the trip. If a student would like to go but has trouble paying, the parent should contact Mr. Milner smilner@wcpss.net to inquire about a scholarship.

Students not going on the trip will be counted absent if they are NOT in school on those days. There will be some teachers staying behind who will plan a variety of curriculum related activities for students attending school on those days.

*What if a child gets sick/injured right before the trip and cannot go?*

In extenuating circumstances such as illness or other emergencies, full payment will be refunded (less any non-refundable deposits).

*In which hotels will students stay?*

We will have 4 hotels. In the past these have been from the Holiday Inn or Hampton Inn chains, and in the Dulles area. All doors are interior and there will be a security guard patrolling the halls in addition to students being “taped in.” Finalized hotel information and addresses will be shared closer to leaving for the trip.

*What if I need to pick my child up early from the trip?*

Please contact your child’s social studies teacher with this request. We will work with you to arrange a time and place where your child can meet you. Please know that this arrangement must revolve around the existing itinerary as buses must stay on schedule, and we cannot leave your child unattended to wait for you.