

Good Afternoon Trip Participants,

This email is to talk about packing and preparation:

We are only a few weeks away from travel. It is time to think about what you will bring on the trip and how to pack it for travel. This email could contain volumes but I am going to try to keep it in short outline format. We will continue to talk about these same topics in class.

THINGS TO BRING:

1. **My first suggestion** has to do with your phone. While we will help you to keep your electronics charged on the bus on the ride over, there are days when we will be in the park for a bunch of hours. While not required, you might consider a little external battery for your phone. I use the Anker brand from Amazon but there are just as many in every store (Walmart, Target, etc) The higher the number, the more recharges you will get. You can find good ones for about \$20-30.



2. **Luggage** is another big topic (before we talk about “what” to put in the bags. My general rule is that if you bring it, you carry it so pack light. Remember that we are tourists and not fashion templates. Your clothing needs to be functional and comfortable but there is no need to pack the left side of your house.

The important thing about the bag that it will get stored and you will NOT have any access to those items from Tuesday morning at 7:00am until 4:00pm Wednesday evening. We are NOT opening the luggage bays until we check into the hotel. This means that your carry-on bag must contain everything you need from departure through our college visit, an overnight bus ride and a day at the pool as well as any snacks and entertainment.

3. **The big bag...** Usually contains your basic clothing for six days, some additional snacks and hopefully some space for the shopping you will do and the natural growth of clothing. ALERT – you should put every liquid or smelly item in sealed plastic bags. You really do not want to arrive in Florida and have everything you own covered in Cheetos or drenched in your favorite soft drink.

Please remember that there are 50 people on every bus which means lots of bags and the boys are loading the luggage so who knows how they will get those bags in the bay... YIKES!!!

Along those same lines, you may have designer luggage, but so do the other 300 participants. I strongly suggest that you put a label inside and outside your bag and as an added touch, tie a little piece of ribbon or yarn on your bag. It will make it so much easier to see. I can't promise that your bag will be under your bus.

4. **Bring it or buy it...** Remember that the hotel does have a store in the lobby. You may also have a microwave and/or fridge in your room. Bring things that will not spoil and buy everything else there. You will have a free full breakfast every morning and every meal is covered.

5. **Electronics...** Some kids are asking about packing game systems or laptops. You will have free Internet in the room and there is a laptop size safe in every room BUT remember that if it grows legs and walks away, we will never find your valuable device. I also remind you that SLEEP is your friend. You will not enjoy the trip if you are tired.

6. **What kind of clothes...** If you believe the weather guys, it will be warm in the day and cool at night. I always suggest that you dress in layers and prepare for cooler weather. For example, we will be outside at Magic Kingdom at 11pm at night. If they are even reasonably correct, it could be in the mid 60s.

Remember that 60 degrees is different when you are standing still and/or riding a 40 mph roller coaster after getting wet on a previous ride. Most kids will probably spend extra and get a locker for extra clothes or a towel. Bring layers and prepare for cool. Share the cost with a buddy.

Remember that we cannot leave the park and there is no bus to go back to so plan ahead.

7. School Dress Code??? Well, my rule has always been that you need to dress for the activity you are doing. With that being said, remember that safety is one of our ongoing concerns. Choose clothing that is appropriate and responsible. Disney will not allow you to run around in your bikini. These are family parks. We also will require that you change if you wear something that is outside the bounds of good taste.

There are no true water rides in the parks BUT there are certainly rides where you will get wet from splashing water. If mom, dad and grandma would be offended by what you are wearing, chances are that we will also ask you to change. Be classy.

8. Dress up clothes... The only formal dress clothes that you might want would be for the first night when we go to Medieval Times BUT certainly not required. You may want to use your extra time to just rest and relax. Tourist clothes are always fine on this trip. This also includes the night we go to Blue Man, you will come out of the theme park to eat at City Walk and then walk directly to the show.

9. On the bus bag... This is your survival bag and you will need it twice on this trip. On the way over, we will leave school for a several hour trip to our first stop for dinner. When we finish, we will get on the bus with our box dinners and head off into the sunset for the next 17 hours.

We will stop at a college as you wake up Wednesday morning for a brief visit and performance. You will need your organizational shirt. Upon arrival in Orlando, we are going directly to lunch and the pool areas of our hotel for a few hours of relaxation. This means that you will need clothes in a soft bag for all of those events. You will need - Clothes for overnight, clothes for swimming with a cover up and clothes for the next morning. You will need a blanket to keep you warm and maybe a small pillow for sleep. You will need snack foods for the long trip.

(REMEMBER, you will also need this bag for the long trip home.)

10. The food in the bus bag... There are a couple of guidelines here. No nut products of any type. No milk products or ice cream. No liquid ice. No gum (really, the bus company will charge us an additional \$500 for each incident if they observe gum). No large bags of anything. Remember that this is a closed air environment. The windows do not roll down on charter buses. If you drop food on the floor or make a mess, it will smell really bad and we all share the same air. You

will not enjoy the 18-hour return ride in the fog of your spilled food. You will have plastic trash bags at your seat. Use them and get more from the chaperones if you need them. Also, the bag must not block the passageways. People have to be able to move in the bus. No coolers or bags larger than fit under your feet, in your lap or in the small overhead bin. Yes, there is a restroom on the bus.

11. Departure day luggage and medicine... By 7:00am on the Tuesday of departure, every item that is traveling with us, **MUST** be in the performance gym at Brazoswood HS. This includes chaperones and students. Everything must be in place and secured until inspection and departure. I remind you that the drug dogs are coming. The police will inspect every bag. When you arrive that morning, we will have two areas for luggage (On the bus and Under the bus). Choir officers and parents will be there to help you check in. If it is not tagged at 7:00am, it will **NOT** travel with us. No last minute surprise bags. Everything gets checked.

ALL medicine going on this trip has to be checked in at the table in the room. The head chaperone on the bus is responsible for giving those medicines at the proper time. When you arrive for check-in, you must have the medicine in its original bottle. You must only bring enough for the duration of the trip. You must put medicine in a zip lock bag.

In this bag with the medicine, must be a note that tells us: 1. What is this medicine; 2. Who does it belong to; 3. When is it to be given and how much; 3. How can we reach your parents. This small plastic bag will be placed into larger sealed containers that will be kept by the head chaperones on the bus. Any over the counter type medication must also be documented.

There are certain medicines are slight exceptions to this rule. Reproductive medication does not have to be turned in and we do allow inhalers to be kept by the students. It is also possible that a student may need to keep a pill or epi-pen with them. Document anything we need to know and be especially careful that students do not take medications of any type onto the Brazoswood campus.

While we are going to monitor the medications carefully, it is also important for the students to help by reminding us when their medicine is due. We are also traveling with medical kits to cover almost any emergency. Yes, it is much better for them to check in everything and let us reissue it as the need arises.

12. Money... Every meal is fully covered for this entire trip. Every admission is fully covered. We will even give them a \$20 for the meal at City Walk before Blue Man Group. If they need money, it is for shopping. I always suggest that they wait until the last day at any park before making purchases. Shop wisely. There is a small store in the hotel if you want additional junk food.

Lockers are about \$12-\$20 per day. Many times kids will get together to share the cost of a locker. Blue Man will certainly have great items and snacks to purchase. T-Shirts are about \$20 everywhere. Also, many of the kids will buy souvenir cups for about that will allow them to get refills for a reduced cost

Finally, please remind the kids that I am here to help them. If they get in a financial bind or have a need, I will help if they will just communicate. This is our Choir/AFJROTC/Orchestra family and we are here to care for them and support them in every way possible.

13. The hotel... As we get closer, I will send more info about how we check in and deal with the hotel. Today, I want to talk about one aspect... Safety. We have divided the chaperones into teams that will walk the halls every night and day that we are in the hotel. I am always available for the students to contact and they will have contact info for the chaperones on the trip.

The major topic for your discussion is this. Under no circumstances and for no reason short of the building being on fire is the student to ever open the door or break the tape that we use to secure the rooms.

If the tape is broken, every member of that room will be removed from the trip and sent home immediately at your cost. Nobody enters the rooms and nobody leaves the rooms for any reason. There are no late night deliveries and no chaperone is to unseal a room without my direct knowledge.

14. The bus ride to Florida... Once the final bus lists are posted, nobody changes buses or rooms for any reason. Our documentation must remain unaltered for your student's safety. Along those lines, the buses will stop several times during our overnight trip. Absolutely nobody is getting off the bus at a truck stop in the dark of the night. This includes chaperones and students. Plan to remain on the bus for all aspects of this ride. We must maintain bus security at these stops.

If I need to deal with a medical emergency, the chaperones will communicate with me before any action. In addition, as we travel, the chaperones and I expect our students to be the best examples of Brazoswood possible. Improper behavior of any type will not be tolerated. You would hate to become the seat partner of a chaperone for the next 18 hours so keep it classy always.

15. The fanny pack... Your fanny packs will be sorted alpha and grouped by bus. It will contain important items. Each pack will contain: Band-Aides, Plastic bags to keep your stuff dry, Sunscreen, Rain coat, bus list, room list, maps of the parks/hotel, contact lists/numbers and itineraries... Just for starters. I know some of you may not want to wear the pack and that is not required, but all of the info for our trip will be pre-packed in those packs. You will need the info and the raincoat will save you \$20 in the parks. Chaperones will also get additional documentation for your safety.

16. How do we leave... At the beginning of A-lunch, you will go to the cafeteria and eat. We will then meet in the performance gym to distribute materials and sign documents. As soon as the bus arrives, we will begin the loading process. The chaperones who are helping with luggage and the officers who are working with that team will load first so that they are free to help you with your luggage. When we are in place we will release the students to load the bus. Typically, we allow Seniors to go first.

Remember, every bus is full. Neither chaperones nor students can reserve space. Every seat will be full. If you block seats, people do not have a place to sit. The front seat on each side is reserved for the lead chaperones for that bus. They must be here to issue tickets and check students and have a secure area for medications. The second seat on the door side is where the charging packs will be as well as all of the travel materials and electronics.

Remember this rule about our departure... If you are late or wander away, we will leave you at Brazoswood. Your luggage will enjoy Florida and it will be on the bus when we return. We will load and depart on a tight schedule. The wheels will roll as close to 2:00pm as possible. Be on time and very concerned about what is happening around you. We will give you directions that are clear and to the point...

If you are late we will leave you. Be alert and interested in our timeline.

17. Tickets... Each bus has a number and color associated with it. As the students enter and exit the bus, we will check roll as well as issue lanyards for the day. Packed in each color-coded pouch are the materials they will need for that day. This will include tickets, meal vouchers and/or cash cards. We will collect the lanyards at the end of each day so that they can be loaded overnight for the next day's activities. Every ticket is a multi-day pass that is keyed specifically to you. The chaperones must insure that we always account for all items. You will get your tickets for the day as you enter the bus in the morning.

18. Money, Paperwork and Grades... Please be aware that students with unpaid accounts will not travel. Students without fully complete paperwork will not travel. Students who do not meet academic eligibility guidelines will not travel.

ALERT: the grading period ends in 10 class days (March 9th). Ultimate academic failure means no travel and forfeiture of the entire trip cost of \$960.00.

Students whose behavior cause safety issues or interferes with the overall schedule of the trip may not travel and/or are in danger of being removed from the trip at the parent's cost. The safety of 300 travelers is our first concern. Students who do not follow instructions or disrupt the trip with bad behavior or rules violations will be removed as a safety risk to the group.

Please be sure to check your online biography for anything that needs updating. Please check food/fanny selections for accuracy. More info will follow. Here we go!!!

<http://www.bwoodchoir.net/Biography2015.html>

Next Trip Payment – MARCH 7th - \$840.00 (while not required, please consider paying off any remaining balance at this time)

MARCH 7th – Financially current students pick – BUS Choice – All others assigned.

Trip Contact Info for any time day or night:

Bill Few – (979) 299-8904 / billfew@comcast.net

Ruth Ann Few – (979) 299-8906 / rafew@comcast.net