



# Student & Youth Travel Digest

## A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE STUDENT TRAVEL MARKET



Teach&Travel  
The Official Publication of SYTA



### PART 1: SOCIAL IMPACT OF STUDENT TRAVEL ON STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

# RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

For young people, travel is an education in itself. It helps them build self-esteem, independence, tolerance and cultural understanding, while breaking down barriers detrimental to a child's personal, educational and social development. Patterns and habits embraced when traveling at an early age are known to influence future decisions.

The benefits of travel go beyond education. Increasingly, governments and businesses are recognizing the positive effects of youth travel as a powerful ingredient that promotes economic development, job fulfillment and cultural understanding. A great deal of the knowledge around the impact of travel, however, has been recognized as anecdotal.

The fundamental ingredient — hard data — was either missing, or partial and incomplete in nature. The underdocumented nature of the sector created a need for quantifiable data and meticulous research; research that would not only measure the volume of the student and youth travel market, but also its contemporary features and future potential.

The Student & Youth Travel Association's passion, far-reaching vision and mission to increase access to travel for the student and youth market prompted the investment in this major research initiative. Thus in 2012, SYTA began collecting data for its Student & Youth Travel Digest.

To secure a global scope and adhere to the highest research standards, SYTA and its publication, Teach & Travel Magazine, partnered with StudentMarketing, an independent market specialist in international student travel and a UNWTO Affiliate Member, with individual membership in ESOMAR World Research.

As a landmark research project in global student group travel, Student & Youth Travel Digest encompasses and maps three types of mobility: domestic student travel (within the U.S.), outbound travel from the U.S. and inbound travel to the U.S.

The focus was placed on educational group travel. Sport travel and religious travel, other significant and impactful types of student group trips, were not excluded from the responses, but since they were not the primary focus, they were not fully measured and analyzed.

## Part 1:

### Social Impact of Student Travel on Students and Teachers

This is the first report in a series of studies that provide detailed information about student group travel and the imprint it leaves on young people aged 10-18, their teachers and the school community in general.

This report provides SYTA members and anyone with a genuine interest in student travel — teachers, group leaders, tour operators, suppliers and student organizations — with comprehensive insight into how exactly travel transforms a young person's life.

For the first time, quantitative data gathered from a representative sample of U.S. teachers allows for a reliable measurement of the social impact of domestic and international trips. This report elaborates on how a travel experience triggers a process of **accelerated personal development**, contributes to **better academic performance** and **improves social interaction** between young people.

### Among the key findings are:

Student travel fulfills the role of providing practical learning about other cultures — the majority of teachers organize student trips because they want their students to become more culturally aware.

Student travel is not only comparable to standard teaching methods, as a matter of fact, it is reported to be **significantly more effective than computer-based learning and classroom instruction alone**.

At SYTA, we deeply believe in the irreplaceable and ever-growing importance of student travel to society and are thrilled to be sharing the following benchmark with you.

*Carylann Assante*

Carylann Assante, CAE  
Executive Director, SYTA

*Kasie J. Smith*

Kasie Smith  
Publisher, Teach & Travel Magazine

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study draws from a global survey conducted from August 2013 to November 2015.

The Student & Youth Travel Digest Social Impact of Student Travel on Students and Teachers report contains empirical evidence and data from 1,432 U.S. teachers representing over 43,000 U.S. students; thus achieving some of the most extensive insights into student group travel of young people aged 10-18.

The design of the survey instrument included an initial assessment (via secondary research), feedback from major industry stakeholders (comment period) and market testing, prior to staged distribution to prospective respondents.

Due care and attention were paid to secure a representative sample of respondents and include teachers from various backgrounds. The sample closely mirrored the actual geographical representation of U.S. and also included insights from those not involved in organizing student travel. In addition, the research sample mirrors actual private and public school enrollment numbers.

Input from teachers led to comprehensive insights and unique breakdowns, such as by individual U.S. regions (as defined by U.S. Census Bureau), school location (urban and rural), school type (public and private) and grades (5-8 and 9-12).

For research purposes, the process further involved standardization — the development of a universally applicable

definition of a student group trip:

**“A journey undertaken by a group of at least two unrelated people, usually classmates or peers, traveling out of their local area or day-to-day environment on the same dates and following the same itinerary. Such groups are often led and pre-organized by a teacher or group leader, largely to enrich their in-class or training experience (school trips), by experiencing/performing in/visiting a new environment with new experience/observation/relaxation. Extracurricular groups fall under this definition, too. Examples: school trips, marching bands, orchestras, drama clubs, choirs, church groups, sports teams, fraternities and special needs groups.”**

The research was conducted in compliance with the ICC/ESOMAR Code and ESOMAR World Research Guidelines.

SYTA and StudentMarketing would like to acknowledge all survey participants who, through their time and information, contributed to this research.

In addition to direct outreach by SYTA and StudentMarketing, these organizations helped redistribute the survey: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), Association For Middle Level Education (AMLE), MCH Strategic Data, MTD Research, National Association For Music Education (NAfME) and Teach & Travel Magazine.

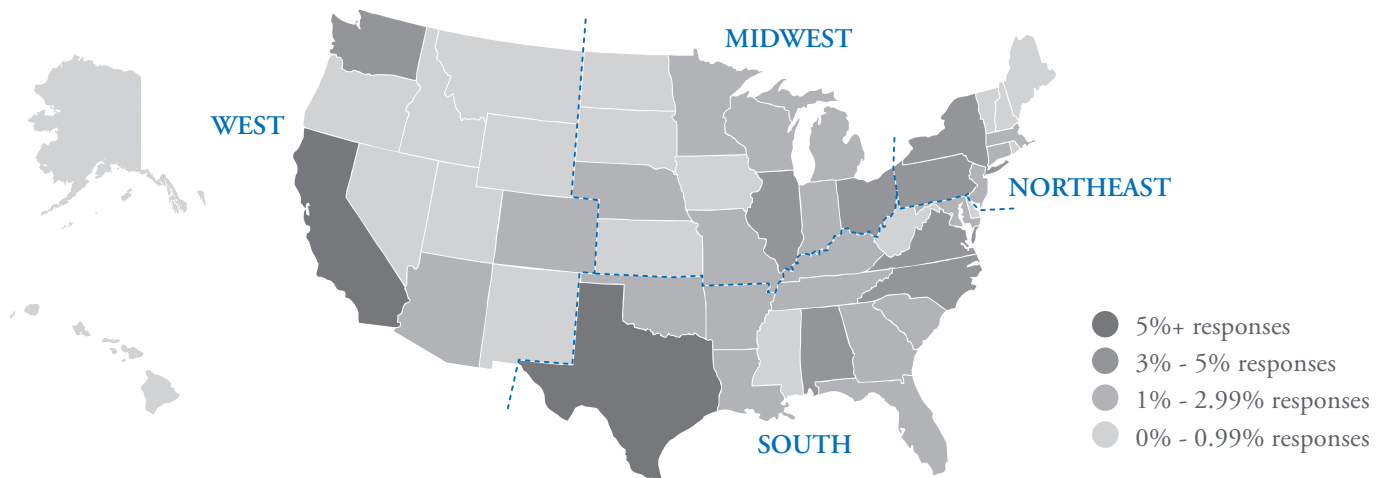
# RESPONDENT PROFILE



This study draws on the information provided by U.S. teachers. Educators were selected for this research due to their firsthand knowledge and direct involvement in the teaching process, as well as student travel organization.

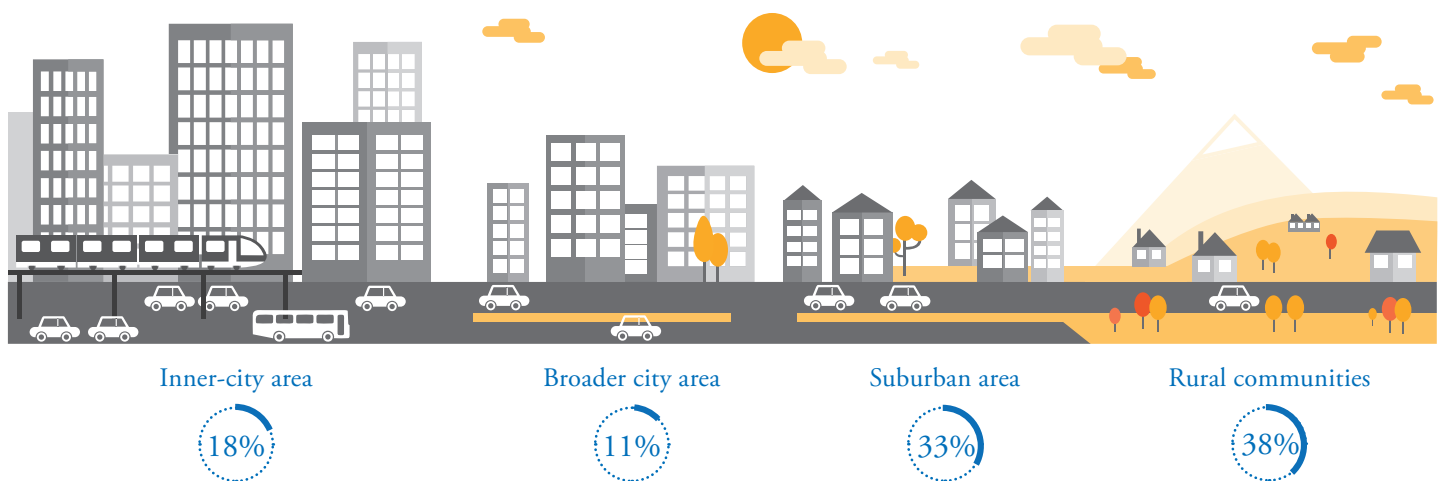
In comparison to student tour operators, teachers are able to monitor behavioral changes of students before and after a student trip, thanks to their regular interaction with students. As a result of students participating in a number of school tours, teachers are well-positioned to observe a transformation in them over the years.

## » RESPONDENTS BY STATE



**TOP 15 RESPONDENT STATES:** Texas (8.3%), California (7.3%), Illinois (4.4%), New York (4.1%), North Carolina (4.1%), Ohio (4.0%), Pennsylvania (3.9%), Virginia (3.6%), Washington (3.5%), Alabama (3.3%), Florida (2.9%), Wisconsin (2.7%), Georgia (2.7%), Michigan (2.5%), Indiana (2.5%).

## » RESPONDENTS BY SCHOOL LOCATION



# RESPONDENT PROFILE

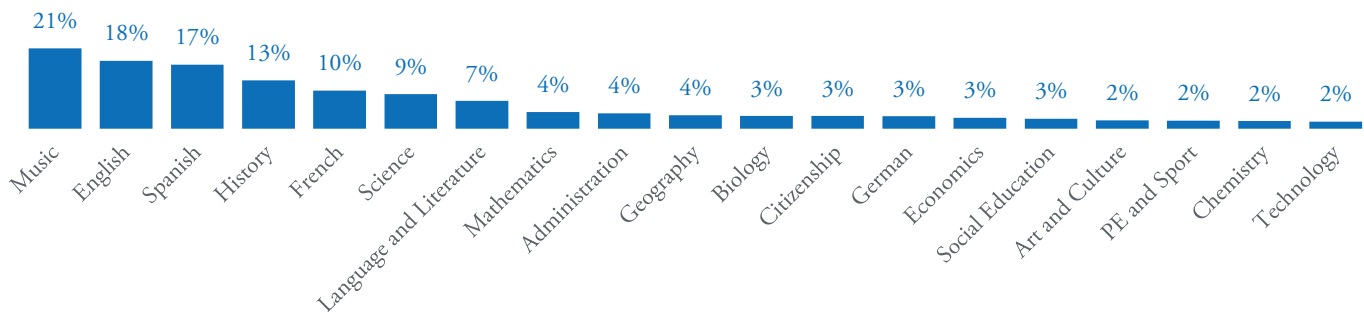
## » RESPONDENTS BY SCHOOL TYPE



The ratio of public and private schools represented in this research closely mirrors the actual enrollment patterns in the U.S. primary and secondary schools. The National Center for Education Statistics reported a total number of 49.8 million students enrolled in public schools, and 5.3 million enrolled in private institutions in 2011–2012 (preK through grade 12; latest data available).

On average, a school is attended by 1,422 students, with 147 students taught by an educator.

## » RESPONDENTS WHO ORGANIZE OR ACCOMPANY A TRIP BY SUBJECT THEY TEACH



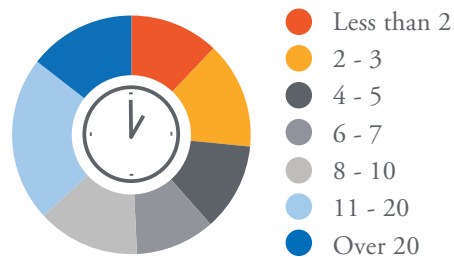
Amongst the responding teachers were mostly educators in high schools (54%) and middle schools (35%), followed by college

preparatories (7%), indicating that the majority of respondents have contact with grade 9-12 students.

## » RESPONDENTS BY EXPERIENCE



## » YEARS OF ORGANIZING STUDENT TRAVEL



If a teacher organizes a trip, he or she is also likely to accompany such trip. Within the research sample, 59% of teachers have both organized and accompanied at least one student group trip.

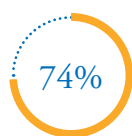
Teachers are experienced when it comes to organizing student travel, with 51% of them coordinating school trips for over eight years.



# WHY TEACHERS ORGANIZE STUDENT TRAVEL



of educators consider it a priority to increase **cultural awareness** of students.



of teachers believe travel has a very positive impact on students' **personal development**.



of teachers believe travel has a very positive impact on students' **education and career**.

**The range of reasons teachers organize student trips mostly relate to students' well-being and personal development.**

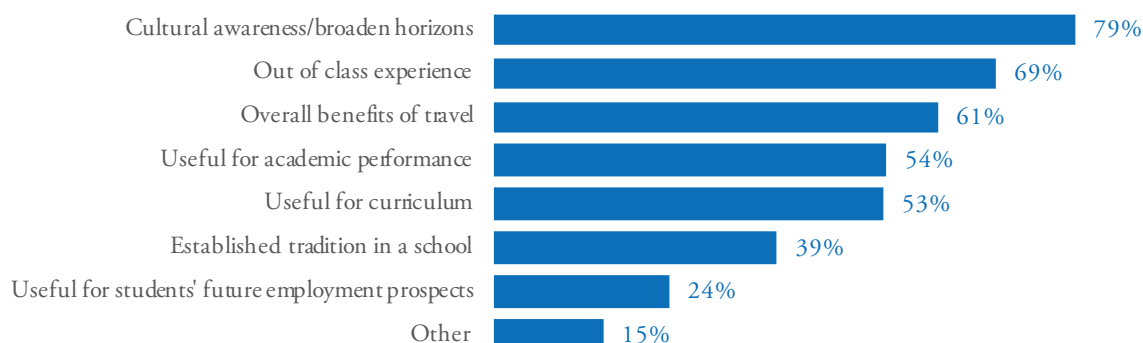
Teachers perceive travel as a remarkable opportunity for young people to get in touch with different cultures and communities outside of their usual environment, which is essential in today's interconnected world.

Student trips are also appreciated for adding a practical

dimension to teaching, which is often difficult to achieve in a classroom environment. Teachers praise benefits connected to improving students' academic performance and complementing the existing curriculum (54% and 53% respectively). The latter is especially true for public school teachers.

Among 'other' reasons for organizing student trips, teachers list the positive effect on group morale and group bonding.

## » REASONS WHY TEACHERS ORGANIZE STUDENT TRAVEL

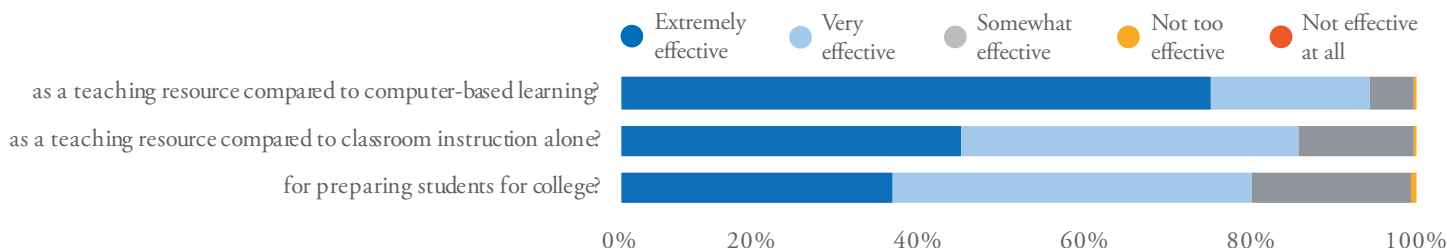


*\*Multiple Choice Question*

The research shows that travel is not only a standard teaching resource, but is also significantly more effective than traditional forms of education.

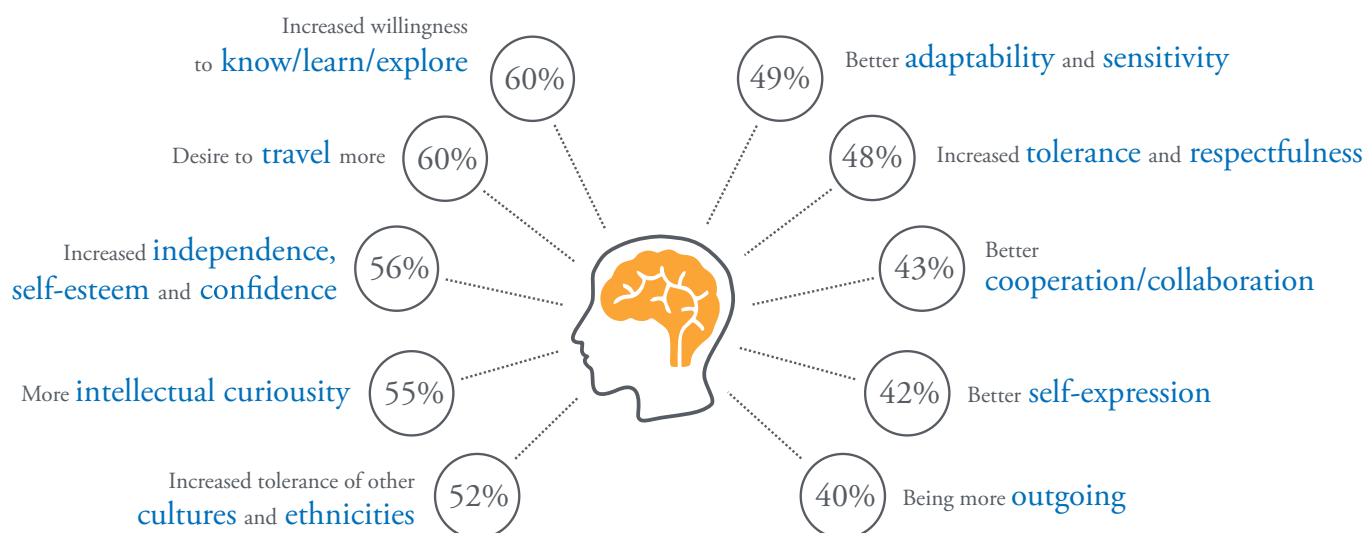
When asked about the relation to pursuing further studies, 37% of respondents claimed that travel is extremely effective in preparing students for college.

## » HOW EFFECTIVE IS TRAVEL...



# HOW TRAVEL IMPACTS STUDENTS

## » SOCIAL IMPACT OF STUDENT TRAVEL – TOP 10 EFFECTS



*\*Multiple Choice Question*

## » TRAVEL PROMPTS TRANSFORMATION IN STUDENTS

Respondents of all types confirm that students who travel are more motivated to seek further education, progress in their social competences and improvement of a wide array of abilities.

**Most importantly, teachers state that student travel prompts a transformation, through which students grow their ambitions to know, learn and explore.**



**a trip, students wish to travel more, which naturally starts a cycle of learning opportunities as a part of their future tours.**

Finally, familiarization with new cultures increases young peoples' tolerance and respectfulness. When experienced at an early age, this has the potential to positively influence them throughout their life.

The important and beneficial effect on students is also

In addition to improved intellectual motivation and curiosity, teachers highlight increased individual self-esteem, better self-expression, teamwork skills and adaptability. **After participating in**

recognized by teachers who do not organize school trips. They indicated travel primarily deepens students' desire to travel more, and boosts their motivation for further education and knowledge.

**68%** "The trip I received has changed my life forever."

Proportion of students experiencing such impact, as reported by teachers.

**76%** "Nothing compares to practical experience; it enhances the in-class experience."

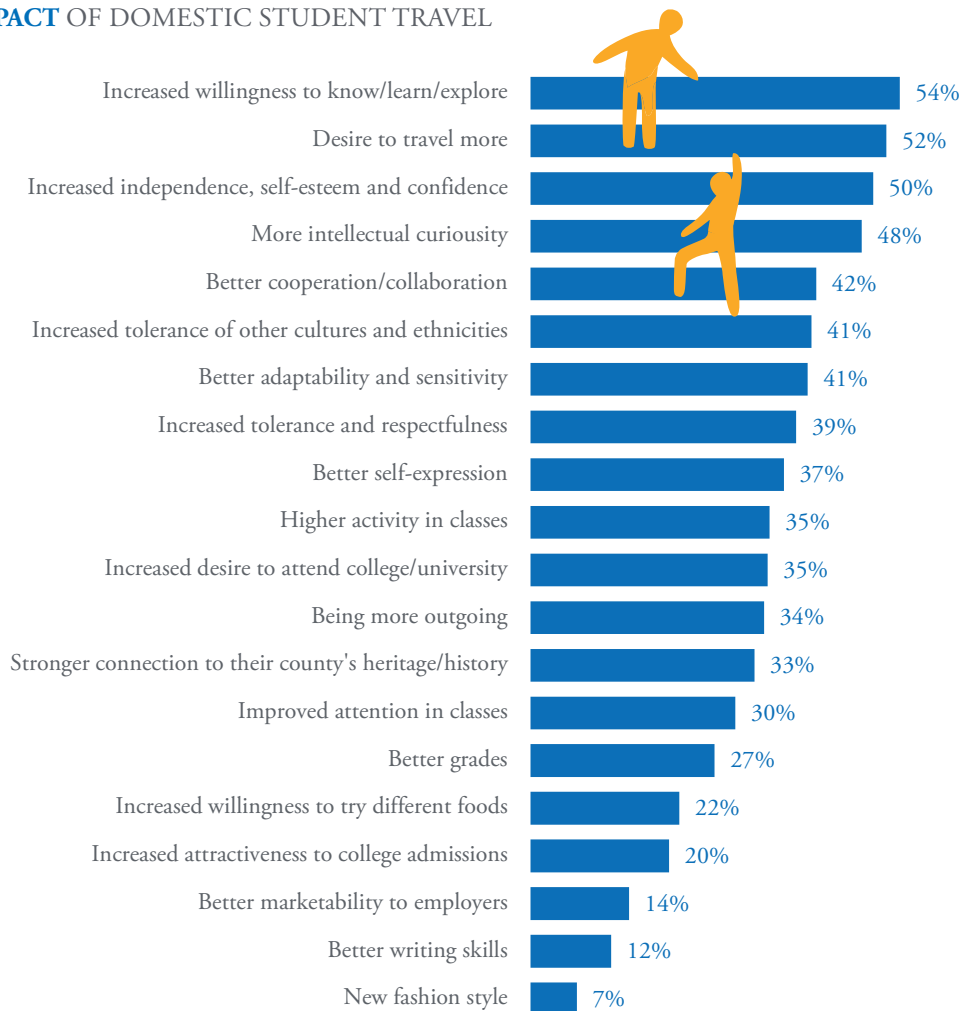
Proportion of students holding such view, as reported by teachers.

# SOCIAL IMPACT OF DOMESTIC TRIPS

30% of all domestic trips occur within the same state. The research revealed that shorter trip durations and short travel distances do not reduce the impact of travel experience on students. Furthermore, compared to international trips, domestic student travel is more

accessible (financially, less planning required, et cetera). Given the overall number of participants, its reach of impact is far greater. **Educators agree that travel is contagious, and 52% noticed an increased desire for more travel experiences in the future.**

## » SOCIAL IMPACT OF DOMESTIC STUDENT TRAVEL



*\*Multiple Choice Question*

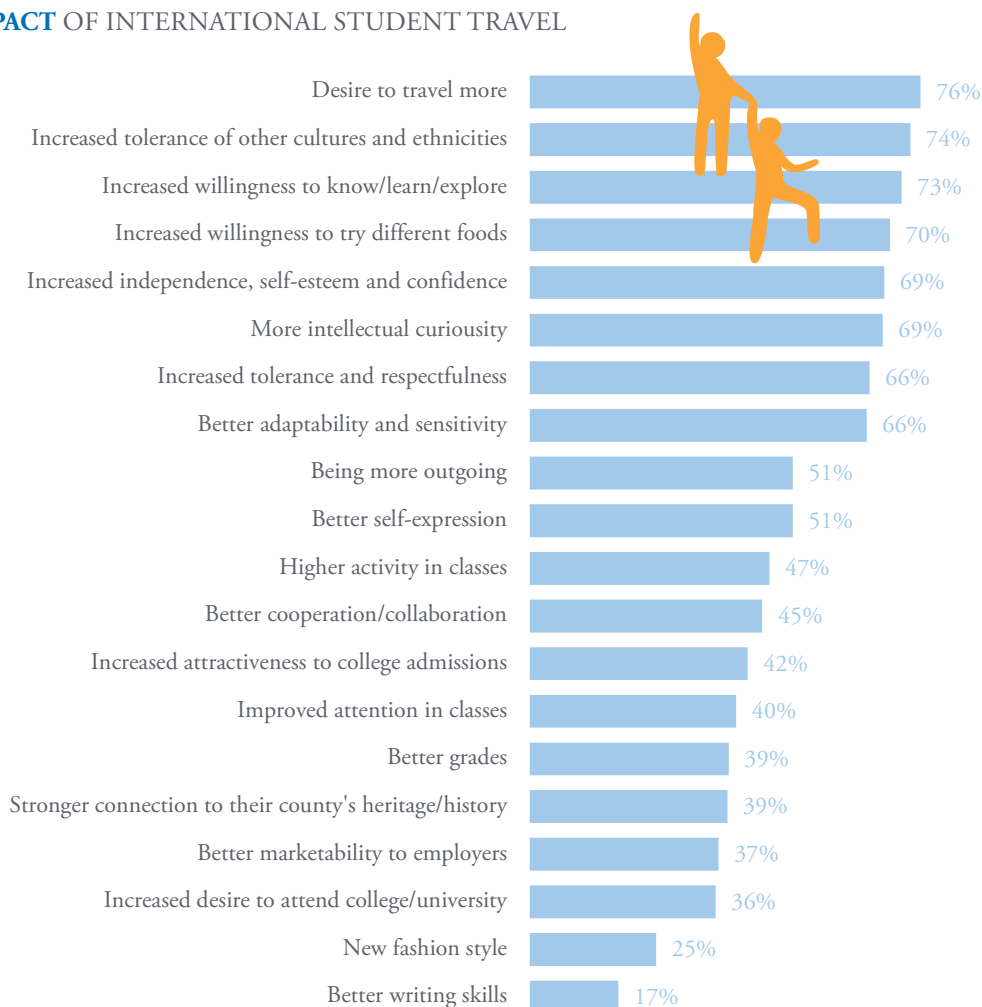


# SOCIAL IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

Outbound travel exposes students to a brand-new environment and culturally different climate. Distinct learning opportunities arise through experiencing new situations, emotions and lifestyles.

International trips generally last longer than domestic trips, and provide richer and more complex programs that feature a higher number of attractions and activities. As a result, the social impact of international travel is praised more by teachers.

## » SOCIAL IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRAVEL



*\*Multiple Choice Question*

## » INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL INCREASES CULTURAL TOLERANCE

When compared to the effects of domestic trips, international group travel tends to enhance personal development, most notably in the area of **tolerance of other cultures and ethnicities** (74%), and experiences such as the **desire to try new foods** (70%). Participating in international trips also leads to making students more **attractive to college admissions** and more **marketable to employers**.

Areas where domestic and international trips were reported to have similar effect on students included **increased desire to attend college/university** (35% vs. 36%) and **better cooperation/collaboration** (42% vs. 45%).

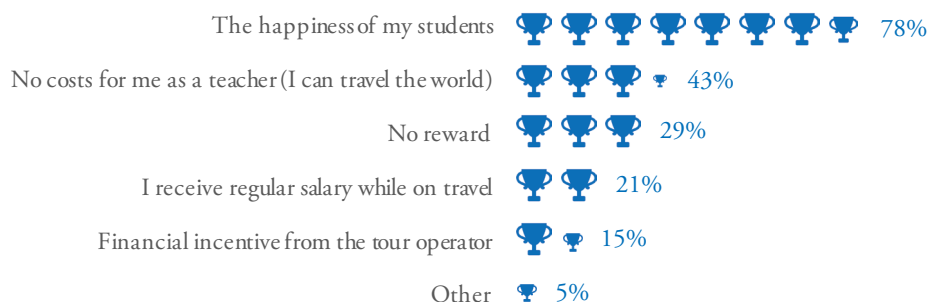
Private school teachers observe a stronger impact of international trips than their public school counterparts.

# IMPACT ON TEACHERS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Students are not the only ones benefitting from school trips. For as many as 78% of teachers, satisfaction comes in the form of their students' happiness. The survey shows that 29% receive no financial compensation at all. These factors demonstrate their motivation to

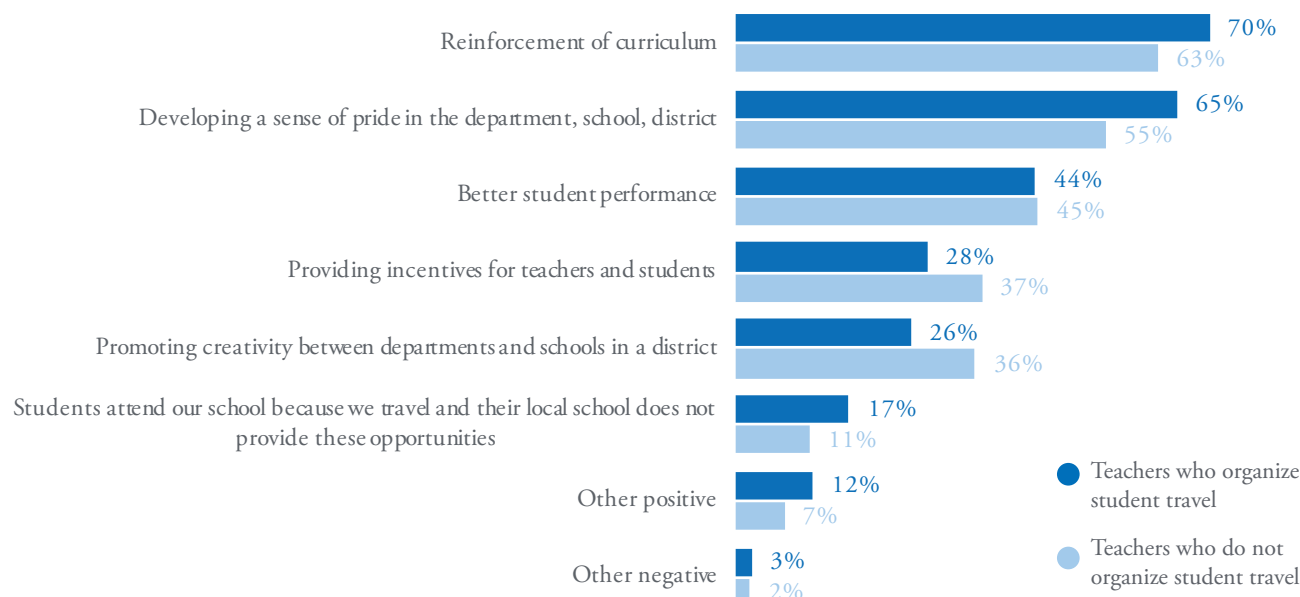
organize school trips is altruistic in nature. Nonetheless, while 43% of teachers welcome the opportunity to travel the world for free (granted as part of their arrangement), 21% are also entitled to regular salary while on travel.

## » REWARD FOR TEACHERS FOR THE EXTRA WORK RELATED TO PLANNING TRIPS



*\*Multiple Choice Question*

## » IMPACT OF STUDENT TRAVEL ON SCHOOLS



*\*Multiple Choice Question*

Of all teachers, regardless of whether they are involved in student travel or not, 80% confirmed that their school supports group trips. Along with reinforcing the curriculum, student trips develop a sense of pride in the school and district.

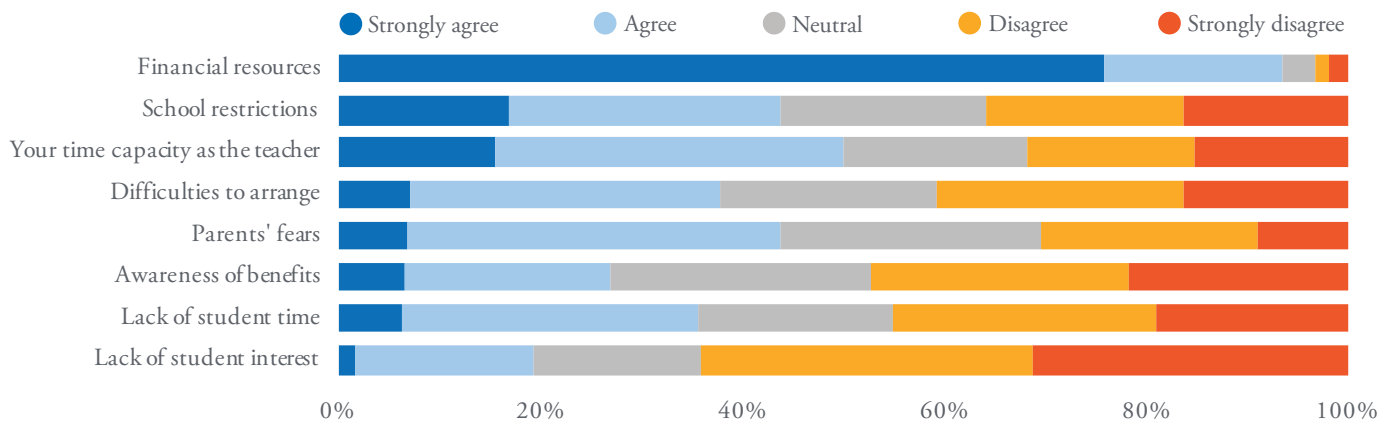
Private institutions recognize travel as a more significant reason why the school attracts prospective students and their parents. Travel opportunities can therefore become an important part of marketing and promotion of an institution.

# CHALLENGES TO STUDENT TRAVEL

Despite the general popularity of school trips, teachers face obstacles when organizing them. Financial resources being the main barrier, low-income families may be disadvantaged from

participating in school trips. It is therefore essential for support mechanisms, such as grants, funding and fundraising, to be in place to support these families.

## » OBSTACLES TO STUDENT TRAVEL AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS WHO ORGANIZE TRIPS



Of teachers, 23% have neither organized nor accompanied a trip before; 21% of them notice a growth in the demand for taking

trips (as opposed to 12% seeing a decline). Despite these facts teachers have relevant reasons for not organizing school trips.

## » BARRIERS TO STUDENT TRAVEL AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS WHO DO NOT ORGANIZE TRIPS



*\*Multiple Choice Question*

Teachers in public schools, predominantly in Midwestern and Southern regions, find that finances are the major challenge, far more than teachers in private schools (87% vs. 64% of teachers). Benchmarked against the overall results, educators in the Western region see risk management as a more significant

barrier (32% of respondents) than teachers in any other U.S. region.

For teachers in the Northeastern region, their ability to organize travel is challenged by administrative rules and limitations (41%).



**Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA)** is the nonprofit, professional trade association that promotes student and youth group travel. It seeks to foster integrity and professionalism among student and youth travel service providers. SYTA members play an important role in facilitating both domestic mobility and international incoming and outgoing mobility, worldwide. As the voice of student and youth travel, SYTA represents U.S., Canadian and international tour operators, group travel leaders, travel agencies, destinations and other student travel suppliers.

[www.syta.org/research](http://www.syta.org/research)



The **SYTA Youth Foundation** is the 501(c)(3) philanthropic sister organization of the Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA), formed in 2000. The purpose of SYF is to create ongoing awareness and assistance programs for the direct benefit of youth. The SYTA Youth Foundation's (SYF) mission is to impact students and youth through travel experiences that change their lives.

[www.sytayouthfoundation.org](http://www.sytayouthfoundation.org)



**Teach & Travel — The Official Publication of SYTA** — is educators' #1 source for everything they need to successfully initiate, organize, and conduct tours for their students. Published five times a year, Teach & Travel provides the most up-to-date information on industry news, travel requirements, fresh destination ideas, and smart planning tips.

[www.teachandtravelmagazine.com](http://www.teachandtravelmagazine.com)



**StudentMarketing** is a youth travel consultancy that specializes in data analysis and business solutions across youth, student and educational travel markets, while the core services include market research, market intelligence and business solutions.

[www.student-market.com](http://www.student-market.com)

## KEY FINDINGS

- Student travel is not only a standard teaching resource, it is also significantly more effective than traditional forms of education. 45% respondents claim it is extremely effective compared to classroom instruction.
- Students who travel have an increased desire to attend college.
- Participating in travel makes students more marketable to employers.
- Educators agree that travel is contagious, and 60% noticed an increased desire for more travel experiences in the future.
- Lack of financial resources is the main challenge to student travel. It is reported by 93% teachers who organize school trips and by 86% teachers who do not organize them.

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