Student & Youth Travel Digest
A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE STUDENT TRAVEL MARKET

PART 1: SOCIAL IMPACT OF STUDENT TRAVEL ON STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
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 impact 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, CAE
Executive Director, SYTA

Kaseie Smith
Publisher, Teach & Travel magazine

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 1,452 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 by StudentMarketing, an independent market specialist in international student travel and a UNWTO Affiliate Member, in compliance with the ICC/ESOMAR Code and ESOMAR World Research Guidelines.

SYTA, Teach & Travel magazine 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.
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 engagement in student travel organization.

Unlike student tour operators, teachers are able to monitor behavioral changes of students before and after a student trip, thanks to regular interaction with them. 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.

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%).

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.

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.

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RESPONDENTS BY EXPERIENCE

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 more than eight years.
WHY TEACHERS ORGANIZE STUDENT TRAVEL

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.

HOW TRAVEL IMPACTS STUDENTS

SOCIAL IMPACT OF STUDENT TRAVEL – TOP 10 EFFECTS

- Increased willingness to know/learn/explore
- Desire to travel more
- Increased independence, self-esteem and confidence
- More intellectual curiosity
- Increased tolerance and respectfulness
- Increased sensitivity
- Increased willingness to participate in activities
- Increased will to seek further education
- Increased interest for foreign cultures and ethnicities
- Increased motivation to seek further education

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.

In addition to improved intellectual motivation and curiosity, teachers highlight increased individual self-esteem, better self-expression, teamwork skills and adaptability. After participating in 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 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.”
- 76% “Nothing compares to practical experience; it enhances the in-class experience.”

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

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HOW EFFECTIVE IS TRAVEL...

Extreme effective

Very effective

Somewhat effective

Not too effective

Not effective at all

as a teaching resource compared to computer-based learning!

as a teaching resource compared to classroom instructions!

for preparing students for college!

60%

40%

20%

0%

100%

52%

54%

61%

69%

79%

39%

53%

54%

69%

79%

24%

15%
**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased willingness to know/learn/explore</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to travel more</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased independence, self-esteem and confidence</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More intellectual curiosity</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better cooperation/collaboration</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased tolerance of other cultures and ethnicities</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Better self-expression</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher activity in classes</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased desire to attend college/university</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being more outgoing</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger connection to their country’s heritage/history</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved attention in classes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better grades</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased willingness to try different foods</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased attractiveness to college admissions</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better marketability to employers</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better writing skills</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New fashion style</td>
<td>7%</td>
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**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.

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**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 benefiting 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.

**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.

**REWARD FOR TEACHERS FOR THE EXTRA WORK RELATED TO PLANNING TRIPS**

The happiness of my students

No costs for me as a teacher (I can travel the world)

I receive regular salary while on travel

Financial incentive from the tour operator

Other

78% 43% 21% 15% 5%

**OBSTACLES TO STUDENT TRAVEL AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS WHO ORGANIZE TRIPS**

Financial resources

School restrictions

Your time capacity as the teacher

Difficulties to arrange

Parents’ fears

Awareness of benefits

Lack of student time

Lack of student interest

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

**IMPACT OF STUDENT TRAVEL ON SCHOOLS**

Reinforcement of curriculum

Developing a sense of pride in the department, school, district

Better student performance

Providing incentives for teachers and students

Promoting creativity between departments and schools in a district

Students attend our school because we travel and their local school does not provide these opportunities

Other positive

Other negative

70% 65% 44% 45% 28% 37% 26% 36% 12% 12% 5%

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

Financial resources

Administrative rules or limitations

Risk management

Testing times dictate periods when students can travel

No mechanism to raise funds

Students need to spend more time in the classroom due to test scores

29% 24% 15% 18% 18%

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

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

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

StudentMarketing is an international market research, intelligence and strategic development consultancy that specializes in the global youth, student, and educational travel industry. The company is a UNWTO Affiliate Member with individual membership of ESOMAR, the prestigious world association for market, social, and opinion research.

www.student-market.com

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