

## **The Benefits of Field Trips**

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Some of the best memories I recall from my school years are of field trips or choir tours. No doubt, there were numerous positive experiences in class, too. Yet the most vivid recollections are those of visiting a new place or learning something new on a field trip. During my eighth grade year, for example, Mrs. Dunhill, my history teacher, and Mrs. Edsell, my home room teacher, took our class to Black Creek Pioneer Village. The vast array of sights and sounds were intriguing to me. The pioneer village was staffed by people dressed as settlers who played their parts as closely to the historical period as possible. They cooked like the settlers. They dressed like the settlers. They spoke like the settlers. They “were” settlers! My mind was spinning with all the information as I imagined how it must have been to live in Canada during the early years of European settlement. My great love of history was nurtured during that trip to Black Creek Pioneer Village. Other trips followed during my high school years. Each of those trips and tours greatly enhanced my learning experience, augmenting the academic instruction in the classroom.

I remember taking a class in college called Arts and Ideas. The focus of the class was on the works of art, music and philosophy of western civilization. My professor, Dr. West, was an amazing instructor with a particular passion for the artistic expressions and works of art from the Medieval and Renaissance periods. It was financially impossible for our class to travel on a field trip to Europe. But Dr. West brought the art, music and philosophy of history to life with his many slide shows, artifacts and personal collections of original reprints of famous works of art.

In my pre-internet/pre-digital college years, the access to quality educational material was greatly limited compared to now. In fact, I marvel that Dr. West was able to give such amazing lectures considering the technological handicaps of the time! Going on a field trip with Dr. West would’ve been a great experience. Yet, as I recall his class, I believe he took us on an in-class field trip at least once a week. His descriptive stories about his travels in Europe visiting museums, cathedrals and castles were captivating. As an accomplished organist he also told grand tales of playing many of the famous organs in some of the grandest edifices throughout Europe. He made the learning experience come alive; he made it real.

My two sons have been fortunate throughout their school years to go on numerous field trips. They come home after each trip brimming with new insights into music, history, math and science. Their field trips do for them what they did for me all those years ago. They open up a whole new realm of adventure in exploration, growth in learning outcomes, and exposure to new ideas and concepts. Field trips are still a great way to encourage excitement for learning.

In my years of teaching, I have been able to take my students on field trips. We’ve observed courtrooms in session. We’ve visited historical sites. We’ve gazed upon monuments honouring bravery. While on a particular excursion to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., one of my students came up to me and said, “Mrs. Solomon, I didn’t realize the Holocaust was such a terrible thing! I can’t believe people were so cruel toward the Jews.” All the reading from the textbook and other historical texts had not made nearly the impact on my student as the pictures, artifacts and first-hand video accounts shown at the museum.

The phrase “seeing is believing” comes to mind as a very accurate statement of the powerful nature of observation in the learning process. At some point each student benefits from the valuable learning tool of observation—watching, looking, seeing how things work, how things happen. As Christian teachers we

have the added blessing of being able to instill in our students the knowledge of a Heavenly Father. Our Father God has given us evidence of his love and watch care. We see God's love in the way he created families to nurture and love. We see God's watch care in the sometimes imperceptible workings of His angels and His Holy Spirit, guiding our hearts and minds and bodies to respond to His love. According to Romans 1:20, "For ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity, have been made intelligible and clearly discernible in and through the things that have been made (His handiworks)...." (*Amplified Bible*).

We learn through experience. When we take our students on field trips, we are helping them to internalize their learning through hands-on knowledge of a subject. There is no doubt that what we teach in the classroom is vital to academic achievement, but there is great value in the additional experiences we can give students through field trips. Opening up new vistas in learning can be achieved by looking for opportunities to show our students new ways of viewing the world around us. Start simple, make it real, and enjoy the resulting quest for knowledge that ensues!

Connie Solomon lives in Oshawa, Ontario with her husband and two sons, and teaches Social Science and English at Kingsway College. She still enjoys field trips as much as ever!