

International Field Trips

Prepared for

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Executive Summary

Regular field trips – international and local – are designed to offer unique learning experiences for students. When examining the worth of field trips in educational practice, especially international field trips, the pros and the cons of such experiences must be considered.

A summary of these found in a literature review are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Research-Based Pros and Cons of International Field Trips

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse content delivery • Diverse learning opportunities (e.g., interactions with different cultures and languages) • Unique skill acquisition (e.g., problem-solving, data analyzation, teamwork) • Shared benefits to parents and the community (e.g., parents and community members are involved in student learning and feel more informed and valued) • Shared benefits to low socio-economic (SES) students (e.g., school-funded trips provide learning opportunities for low SES families and students that might not be possible otherwise) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistical constraints (e.g., paperwork, background checks on volunteers, communication with all stakeholders including volunteers, parents, and people at field trip final destination locations) • Teacher workload (e.g., dedicated time and energy towards organization with all stakeholders (students, other teachers, parents), student discipline with larger groups of students) • Students' absence from school (e.g., students may miss other classes in school if the experience is during school days) • Expense • Potential for poor field trip experiences

Note. Sources: Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sander, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013

One potential alternative to international field trips found in the literature is virtual field trips, which can also offer unique experiences for students. However, as the name indicates, the experience is virtual, using technological devices. The pros and cons of virtual experiences are also weighed (see Table 2).

Table 2

Research-Based Pros and Cons of Virtual Field Trips

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands and enhances curriculum • Empowers students with physical disabilities • Increases participation of low SES students • Less expensive than regular field trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations in technology • Cost (e.g., computers or virtual reality technology equipment) • Lack of full experiences (e.g., students are not physically experiencing) • Communication lag (e.g., it may take time to communicate with workers from the virtual reality company if technical issues arise)

Note. Sources: Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010

It is important to explore further these pros and cons from a local context in addition to a research context. Reaching out to the community through surveys or interviews or investing in virtual field trip technology can further inform decisions surrounding participation in international field trips (Epstein et al., 2002). Therefore, an interview study involving 19 Black Gold Regional School community members was conducted that included parents ($n = 2$), students ($n = 4$), teachers ($n = 8$), and principals ($n = 5$). These stakeholders represented five of the seven Black Gold secondary schools. According to interviewees, Black Gold can help mitigate their international field trip concerns, which primarily included safety, group size, location destination, and cost, with the following suggestions:

- Let each school community decide what international field trips to offer and when to offer such opportunities, giving the principals, teachers, parents, and students more autonomy in the decision-making process.
- Change policies that cause stress and anxiety for adults supervising international field trips, primarily change the ban on international field trips and the past cancelation policy

that gives Black Gold the authority to cancel trips up until the moment groups board the airplane.

- Provide a “home-based” point person to help with communication issues and potential safety concerns, like a leader at the district level or in the school community (e.g., principal, office administrator, teacher) that could be a liaison between travel companies, schools, parents, and supervising teachers. With a specific person to contact who is knowledgeable about the details of the trip and who is easy to contact, adults supervising trips would feel more comfortable and supported.
- Create a policy for fundraising for those who cannot afford international field trips, which would help schools make international field trips equally available to all students.
- Recognize the educational value of such trips; operate from a proactive mindset instead of a reactionary, fear-based mindset (e.g., geo-political issues around the world, not having enough support or supervisors, safety in numbers).
- Consider that the benefits of international travel strongly outweigh any potential issues that might arise, and reinforce this concept often with parents, students, teachers, and principals using such things as parent information nights, newsletters, and professional development.
- Ensure the traveling teams (i.e., groups of students, teachers, and supervisors) are prepared; provide information sessions with all stakeholders participating in the trip (e.g., parents, teachers, students, administrators); help establish rules, boundaries, and travel plans that are in place for all to use but that are also flexible and unique to each school and each trip.

International Field Trips

More than ever, students are expected to effectively use and apply information learned from educational experiences into an ever-evolving, diverse society and workplace environment (Radke, 2016; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Many teachers choose to utilize field trips (sometimes called instructional trips, school excursions, or school journeys) to help connect information taught in the classroom in different contexts (Krepel & Duvall, 1981). Extending these field trips internationally is a natural next step as students grow in maturity and explore international concepts. Interestingly, research shows that students who participate in international field trips are more likely to form positive attitudes surrounding specific subjects or content taught in school and therefore are more likely to apply acquired knowledge (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014). Researchers Cwikla, Lasalle, and Wilner (2009) stated that students who hold interests in any particular subject are far more likely to acquire jobs in those professions later on in their lives, essentially applying what they had previously learned. Additional research supports students' increased learning (e.g., increased reading, science, math scores as well as attendance rates and grade point averages) and interest for school-based subjects derived from field trip experiences (Dillon et al., 2006; Hudak, 2003; Nadelson & Jordan, 2012).

Virtual field trips can also be considered as a method to connect or enhance information learned in the classroom, as they provide an alternative to more expensive, time-consuming, international field trips (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010). However, it is important to note that increasing students' interest in any particular content area in hopes of students applying this knowledge later or helping them see a bigger, more wholesome picture of society does not simply occur because students participate in international

or virtual field trips. Rather, teachers must intentionally invest time and energy toward organizing and planning field trip experiences as well as in providing opportunities for students to reflect and express what they have learned throughout the experiences (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014). Also, along with the potential benefits of international field trips and virtual field trips (e.g., diverse learning opportunities, enhanced curriculum, and empowerment of students with physical disabilities), there may be a number of potential cons (e.g., time constraints, teacher workload, expenses, and limitations in technology). Therefore, this report will weigh the pros and cons of international and virtual field trips, as associated with students and teachers, in order to examine their value in educational practice. This report will also investigate this issue through a local contextual lens from interviews with 19 Black Gold stakeholders.

International Field Trips: Pros

Field trips may provide students with a variety of benefits including unique learning experiences, personal growth, and increased interest in one or multiple content areas (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sander, 2018; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Students who participate in international field trips may gain additional social, cultural, and linguistic benefits which prepares them for diverse work environments (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sander, 2018; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Yigitcanlar, 2013). International field trips are also impactful because they provide unique student learning opportunities that tend to be more authentic and meaningful when compared to typical classroom instruction that is curriculum-driven and often lecture-based (Radke, 2016). The following sections will explore the pros typically associated with international field trips to understand further their impacts on students and their worth in educational practice.

Diverse content delivery. Traditional, lecture-based instruction may limit student academic growth when compared to experiential, hands-on, unique learning experiences such as field trips (Merisotis & Phipps, 1999; Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005). Students who participate in field trips are presented with information that can be taught in a classroom (e.g., measuring distances between two points, studying interactions between chemical reactions) but these concepts instead are explored in a unique setting which provides students with opportunities to learn more interactively (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Sanders, 2018). Teachers may find that curriculum-based content is enhanced when students are able to better interact with the concepts or content from the curriculum in a more unique, meaningful way (Sanders, 2018). In addition, students who are immersed in unique learning environments can observe and interact with natural phenomena as well as be able to make deeper connections with abstract ideas presented in the classroom (Procter, 2012).

Learning. Students who participate in international field trips are often exposed to new learning experiences that expand their thinking (Kelly, 2017). Because the learning experiences are presented to students in unique ways (i.e., diverse learning settings), students tend to create memories that they consider to be valuable or irreplaceable (Jakubowski, 2003; Rossi, 2011); they hear, smell, see, and touch the world around them on an international field trip where they interact with the people in the community they are visiting. Students who participate in international field trips are given the chance to evoke feelings and emotions while they observe the diverse world around them, which can create diverse perspectives that may be different from their own (Rossi, 2011; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Similarly, students' cultural perspectives may be broadened, allowing students to see themselves as citizens of the world (Gmelch, 1997). Cheiffo and Griffiths (2004), for example, surveyed 1,509 participants who

studied abroad and 827 who did not and found that students who studied abroad gained significantly greater *global awareness* when compared to students who studied only on campus. Other researchers have found that students who travel internationally may be able to bridge formal educational practices with practical, real-world settings that are originally unfamiliar to them (Lee, 2008; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016).

Students who participate in international field trips have the opportunity to reinforce classroom-based learning in different settings (Kelly, 2017). Similarly, experiences originating from field trips may also help students when they return to their classroom setting by providing shared reference points between other students and the teacher (Kelly, 2017). Students' previous learning may also be combined with field trip experiences through consolidation of abstract, concrete, and reflective learning experiences from the classroom and within the field trip experience (Procter, 2012). Relevancy in content learned in the classroom may also be enforced when students utilize that information in a variety of real-world, practical ways (Radke, 2016).

Students who participate in international field trips tend to learn more about themselves as well as their peers, teachers, and others from different cultures (Fuller, Edmondson, France, Higgitt, & Ratinen, 2011; Kelly, 2017; Radke, 2016; Rossi, 2011; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Yigitcanlar, 2013). An important component for personal growth involves being able to recognize and understand differing perspectives (Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, & Mallory, 2003; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). For example, a study conducted by Johnstone (2014) involved six high school students from a magnet school in California who traveled to Thailand. Results showed that students not only developed an evolved understanding of what oppression and privilege are but were also able to compare their understanding of oppression and privilege

as they relate to people around the world (e.g., Thailand). In other words, the students were able to expand their thinking and view things from someone else's perspective.

There is potential to bring students from different backgrounds and ethnicities together when students participate in field trips, thus gaining new, unique perspectives and challenging students' preconceived notions (Kelly, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Rossi, 2011). Not only can students personally grow, but students can grow professionally, thus having an effect on their self-confidence (Mills & Katzman, 2015; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Students' lifelong learning ambitions may also increase when they are able to connect personal and professional growth with learned experiences that originated from field trips (Radke, 2016; Stone & Petrick, 2013).

International field trips may inspire students to have greater interests in learning or be more motivated to continue learning in the future (Csikszentmihalyi & Hermanson, 1995; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Different learning settings associated with field trips, when compared to book or lecture learning settings, can increase student interest in learning (Pham & Owen, 2017). A meta-analysis focused on education and travel, conducted by Stone and Petrick (2013), showed that students often had reported they learned the most when learning occurred by chance, in a novel, unique fashion instead of from a set schedule of events. Additionally, students may also be inspired to want to travel and learn more from diverse countries (Rossi, 2011). Student interest generated from unique learning experiences such as field trips encourages students to actively participate in their own learning (Stone & Petrick, 2013) and share learned knowledge with others (Procter, 2012).

Skill acquisition. Students can acquire skills from international and local field trips that can be used in a variety of real-world contexts (Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sanders, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013). For example, students who travel internationally have opportunities to learn

networking skills (e.g., building personal and professional friendships, enhanced ability to communicate with diverse groups of people) that may be useful later in their careers (Yigitcanlar, 2013). Williams (2005) conducted a comparative study which involved 44 college students who studied abroad in Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, and the United Kingdom, and 48 college students who studied on campus. Each group had a range of majors and were either sophomores or juniors. Results showed that students who studied abroad acquired and continued to develop intercultural communication skills at higher rates when compared to the on-campus group. Also, students who participate in field trips and interact with groups of people to accomplish learning tasks (e.g., building structures, finding unique items on a scavenger hunt list, communicating with diverse groups of people) learn to better recognize and solve problems either individually or in groups of people (Procter, 2012; Sanders, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013). There has been an increase in the demand from organizations for employees to be able to work in teams to get things done (Taninecz, 1997), and research supports the importance of teamwork in schools and the workplace on learning outcomes, accomplishment of work, and perspective-taking (Van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). Field trips provide great opportunities for students to work in teams, either to solve problems or accomplish some bit of work provided from instructors (Sanders, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Other skills students may acquire from field trips include data analysis, literacy skills, and numeracy-based skills (Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016).

Parents, community, and equitable learning. When done right, field trips can provide great opportunities for parental-school involvement and equitable learning opportunities for students whose families might not be able to typically afford expensive trips involving international travel (Kelly, 2017; Radke, 2016). Often, field trips require additional supervision

for larger groups of students; additional supervision requirements provide great opportunities for parents to get involved in their children's schooling (Kelly, 2017). In addition, parents who participate in field trips tend to feel more informed on classroom practices and may feel more valued by the teachers (Kelly, 2017). Students who live in low SES families may benefit from school-funded trips and gain useful benefits and skills that may otherwise be missed due to a lack of family funds (Radke, 2016). Fundraising or outside funds must be utilized to make such trips possible, however.

International Field Trips: Cons

Though international field trips provide benefits to students and parents, the negatives must be considered to fully understand the impacts these trips might have on students and teachers (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sander, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Concerns typically associated with field trips include logistical constraints (e.g., devotion of time and energy for organizational purposes), extra teacher workloads, students missing other classes that might not be associated with the class taking the field trip, student or school-based expenses derived from field trips, poor field trip experiences (i.e., field trip destinations do not represent what was originally intended), and cultural or language barriers (especially for international field trips). The following sections will explore concerns typically associated with field trips.

Logistical constraints. Coordinating events that either include large amounts of people (especially children) or extended stay (e.g., days or months) requires great amounts of time, energy, and resources from an individual or groups of people (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Radke, 2016; Sanders, 2018). Districts, schools, and leaders must consider the amount of effort that is needed to find chaperones, conduct background checks on chaperones, organize

transportation to and from destinations for large groups of people, design the field trip experience, plan for meals, possible health-related issues, and communicate with students, parents, other chaperones, and the people at the final destinations in order to create smooth and meaningful learning experiences for students (Kelly, 2017). Teachers must also consider that students who participate in field trips for individual classes may miss other classes and therefore may miss potentially valuable content (Kelly, 2017). Detailed organization and communication is key; otherwise there is potential for negative field trip experiences (Kelly, 2017; Procter, 2012; Yigitcanlar, 2013).

Teacher workload. International field trip experiences require an increased amount of teacher work and time away from the teachers' own families that may discourage teachers from participating in field trips (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Sanders, 2018). Similar to some of the logistical constraints, the amount of paperwork (e.g., creating and collecting student permission slips, medical information, and emergency procedures for a variety of settings) that is associated with field trips may impede teachers' already valuable time (Kelly, 2017). If trips include larger amounts of students, teachers (and chaperones) may feel uncomfortable organizing and disciplining larger groups of students (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017). These issues can also cause liability concerns, or lead to poorer field trip experiences. Griffin and Symington (1997), for example, found that worksheets were used during international field trips to keep students on-task and out of trouble. Also, for all the students that are not able to attend the field trips (due to cost or lack of permission from parents and guardians), the teachers may be expected to create additional lesson plans that replicate the experiences the students not attending will miss (Kelly, 2017). Compile these workload items together with an already busy teacher, and the teacher may be discouraged from participating in field trips.

Expenses. Field trips, especially international field trips, are wonderful opportunities for students to learn and acquire many useful skills that may be used later in their lives (Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sanders, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013). However, if schools limit funding for field trips, either the students or their parents or guardians must pick up the cost (Kelly, 2017; Radke, 2016; Rossi, 2011; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Since international field trips are typically quite expensive, the reality is that many students will not be able to participate in international field trips due to a lack of funding (Kelly, 2017; Radke, 2016; Rossi, 2011; Yigitcanlar, 2013). A study conducted by Anderson, Kisiel, and Storksdieck (2006) surveyed and interviewed teachers from schools in Los Angeles (US) ($n = 115$), Vancouver (Canada) ($n = 97$), and Freiburg (Germany) ($n = 29$) regarding field trips. Teachers often cited expenses as being a common obstacle when traveling on field trips. Low SES students, then, may be marginalized, since they may inevitably not be able to afford an international field trip (Rossi, 2011). Therefore, schools may consider fundraising for students, families, or groups of families that may not have the funds to participate in international field trips.

Poor field trip experiences. Despite planning, organizing, and preparing for the field trip in advance, trip destinations (especially if they have not been visited by the school before) may not always live up to expectations (Kelly, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Yigitcanlar, 2013). For example, Yigitcanlar (2013) conducted a study measuring the effects of international field trips to Malaysia, Korea, Turkey, and Taiwan on 24 undergraduate students attending Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia. Student interviews and surveys showed time constraints (e.g., students were not able to experience as much as they wanted within the time allotted), physical demand (e.g., students were not ready for the physical strain that would be associated with international travel), and cultural and language barriers (e.g.,

students often were not able to successfully communicate with people in the designated locations) sometimes caused poor field trip experiences (Yigtcanlar, 2013). A study conducted by Griffin and Symington (1997) analyzed 29 teachers' instructional practices while on field trips to Sydney, Australia. Data gathered from 735 students in Grade 5 through Grade 10 within 30 classes found that the teachers tended to use task-oriented assignments to keep students busy while on the field trips and made little effort to connect topics studied in the classroom with the informal learning environment. Similarly, a study conducted by Anderson and Piscitelli (2002) showed that out of 75 parents, half reported negative experiences that were centered around either feeling too rushed during the trip or that events were dull. Also, poor field trip experiences may cause a disconnect with the curriculum, reinforce students' preexisting stereotypes, or even in the worst case, cause student trauma (Procter, 2012).

Virtual Field Trips

Virtual field trips may serve as a useful alternative for students whose teachers or schools are more affected by the difficulties listed above (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010). Exploration of the pros and cons regarding virtual field trips will be examined to discern their validity as an alternative option for regular field trips.

Virtual field trips pros. Similar to participating in regular field trips where students physically move from one location to another, a number of pros are associated with *virtual field trips* and may help address some of the common concerns associated with field trips (e.g., lack of time, expenses, logistical constraints) (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010). Virtual field trips can provide a range of experiences that may not be possible or affordable through regular travel (e.g., visiting other countries of the world, mountains, oceans, unique classrooms, museums) as well as provide experiences that are not

physically possible (e.g., trips to Mars, observe ancient Egypt or even traveling inside of a hurricane) (Nabi, 2012). Teachers who have students participate in virtual field trips are able to extend and enhance preexisting curriculum to better help students learn (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Stainfield et al., 2010). For example, Granshaw (2011) conducted a study that measured the effects of a geology virtual reality tool on geology college students ($n = 45$), teachers ($n = 17$), and experts ($n = 23$). Participants reported that the tool was helpful for orienting them to the sites they would be visiting as well as for overcoming novel situations in the field (e.g., knowing where to travel when at the site).

Virtual field trips help students feel empowered and provides equitable learning opportunities. Students who come from low SES families will not feel marginalized, as students will be able to participate in the virtual field trip because it will be held in school (Barbara & Gail, 2003). Similarly, students with physical disabilities may feel empowered because they will be able to participate in activities that they might not otherwise be able to (e.g., *walk* through a rainforest or *swim* in a lake) (Barbara & Gail, 2003). Lotan, Yalon-Chamovitz, and Weiss (2011) conducted a study measuring the effects of virtual reality experiences on 44 men and women with forms of intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Results from the study showed that IDD participants had a significant ($p < .05$) reduction of their resting heart rate (i.e., the virtual reality experience allowed them to be more physically active) and were more motivated to participate in the study because of the virtual reality experience. Virtual field trips still allow students to experience internationally-based experiences as well as active collaboration with other students (Karkowka, 2012). Teachers will not have to dedicate as much time to organization and communication between participants (both local and distant), and students will not have to miss other classes due to being gone on a field trip (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir,

2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010). Lastly, most virtual field trips will be accessible after initial use. Therefore, students will be able to revisit and review experiences from the virtual field trips (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010).

Virtual field trips cons. Similarly, virtual field trips have a number of cons that should be considered when used as an alternative to regular field trips (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010). One aspect to consider is the technology itself; in other words, though technology has advanced, virtual reality is in its infancy and may devalue experiences due to technical limitations (Stainfield et al., 2010). For example, some virtual reality opportunities are virtual textbooks (i.e., videos) and are not interactive in the sense that participants can use their own movements to generate changes in the program. Granshaw (2011) showed that geology students were less likely to use the virtual reality tool offered to them (even when the tool was setup and ready for use) because of either time constraints or curriculum mismatching.

Virtual field trips may be comparatively cheaper than international field trips; however, resources may still not be inexpensive, which may cause strain on teachers or their schools (Bashir, 2018; Stainfield et al., 2010). For example, the company Samsung offers VR (virtual reality) gear (one headset that holds one cell phone) that is roughly \$100 (U.S. dollars) (<http://www.samsung.com/global/galaxy/gear-vr/>). Also, the company ClassVR offers a set of eight headsets for classrooms for \$2,999 (U.S. dollars) (<http://www.classvr.com/contact/get-a-quote/>). Similarly, if a school does not have adequate resources and technology for every student, the experience as a whole may be diminished. Even if there are adequate resources for all students, and the technology works according to plan (e.g., there are no technical issues, visual and auditory components work properly as designed), virtual field trips cannot replace real-life,

unpredictable, unique experiences that come from participating in real field trips (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010). For example, Spicer and Stratford (2001) conducted a study measuring college students' ($n = 31$) perceptions of a biology virtual reality experience (e.g., tide pool environments). Students agreed that the virtual experience could work for preparing before the physical trip or after the field trip for review but could not replace a real-life experience. After the students had visited physical tide pool sites, they agreed with their original assessment even more so.

Black Gold Stakeholders' Perceptions of International Field Trips

In order to learn specifically about Black Gold stakeholders' perceptions about the potential benefits and concerns associated with international field trips and the possibility of virtual field trips, the researchers interviewed 19 Black Gold stakeholders: 2 parents, 4 students, 8 teachers, and 5 principals, which represented 5 schools out of the 7 Black Gold secondary schools. All seven of the secondary principals were contacted to participate, of these seven, five responded, and to varying degrees provided requested teacher, parent, and student contacts as additional potential participants. We then contacted all individuals provided, some of which still did not participate. The following results must therefore be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size, which was a convenience sample, and it is possible that those who volunteered for the study may have had strong feelings about international field trips, which could have led to their participation in this study.

Each interview was conducted one-on-one and consisted of four to five main questions with follow-up questions if more information was needed. These questions were developed first based on providing the information desired by the district, then revised based on the common themes discovered in the literature, and finally were reviewed and approved one final time by

Black Gold. The phrasing of each question was dependent on the person being interviewed and the individual's role within the school community (e.g., parent, student, teacher, principal). Table 3 below displays an example of how the researchers phrased the same question differently depending on the role of the participant being interviewed.

Table 3

Black Gold Regional Schools International Field Trip Interview Question

Parent Interview	Student Interview	Teacher/Principal Interview
If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you feel comfortable having your student travel internationally with a class? Why or Why not?	If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you be interested in traveling internationally with a class? Why or why not?	If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you encourage students to travel internationally with a class? Why or why not?

Other questions included: *What do you see as the benefits of international field trips? What concerns do you have about international field trips? What steps (if any) could be taken by Black Gold to help you feel the most comfortable leading international field trips? And, Do you think international virtual field trips are a good substitute for in-person field trips? What are the reasons for your answer?* After the interviews were conducted, the researchers transcribed the responses to each question and analyzed them in two different ways: (a) by role (i.e., parent, student, teacher, principal) so that researchers could see how the results varied based on the person's relationship to the school community, and (b) by total (combining all responses together) to see what the results were overall.

Participants' responses to the interview questions were somewhat mixed, but 89% of participants (17 in favor, 2 not in favor) were largely in favor of international field trips. For example, in Question 1, *If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you feel comfortable having your student travel internationally with a class? Why or Why not?* there were only two

participants (one parent and one principal) that were not in favor of international travel. The parent who was not in favor of international field trips stated she felt this way due to differing “concerns around the world,” indicating safety was an issue for her. The principal not in favor of international field trips stated he would be more likely to encourage students to travel internationally if the logistical decisions (e.g., where they could travel, when, fundraising) could be made by individual schools instead of being “mandated” by the district as a whole.

The majority (i.e., 89% or 17 interviewees) responded positively towards participation and encouragement of international field trips. For example, every student ($n = 4$) interviewed was in favor of international field trips, stating they have either traveled in the past with a school to places such as France and Belgium and enjoyed their experience or that they would love to participate, depending on group sizes, the trip destination, and how much the trip would cost. One student stated, “It is a great way to see the world.” Another student stated, “It is a great chance to learn something cool.” Another student said: “it was nice getting out of Canada” because of “new sites and culture” they experienced.

Further, out of the 17 interviewees that responded positively, 12 out of 17 either had roles as a teacher or principal, and all of these interviewees stated either “yes” or “absolutely” towards their encouragement of students participating in international field trips. The overall theme of encouragement towards students traveling internationally are reflected in statements like, “it’s a once in a lifetime chance,” traveling internationally provides “valuable experiences” and “new learning opportunities” for students, and that for some students this “may be their only chance [to travel].”

Likelihood to participate in international field trips. A follow-up question asked interviewees their likelihood of either participating in international field trips or encouraging

their students to travel internationally in a field trip on a scale ranging from 1 to 10, 1 being *definitely would NOT participate or encourage* and 10 being *definitely would participate or encourage* (see Figure 1). Note, there were only two parents and four students within the data set represented in Figure 1. Therefore, the average scores should be interpreted cautiously. Also, one parent responded positively to the question: *If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you feel comfortable having your student travel internationally with a class? Why or Why not*, stating she has no safety concerns regarding international travel and therefore would feel comfortable having her student travel in an international field trip. However, her response was lower on the Likert scale, rating her likelihood of having her student participate in an international field trip within the range of 3 to 4 (therefore she received a 3.5 rating). This parent said she gave a lower rating because her child has already traveled to numerous international countries (e.g., New Zealand, Fiji, Bermuda, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, France, and states in the U.S.). Therefore, she did not feel her child would need to travel with the school, since the student had already had family international travel experiences. The majority of teachers ($n = 8$) either ranked their response at 9 or 10, signifying they definitely would encourage students to participate in international field trips, and four out of five principals ranked their response at 10, signifying they definitely would encourage students to travel on international field trips. Students ranked their responses within the range of 8 to 10.

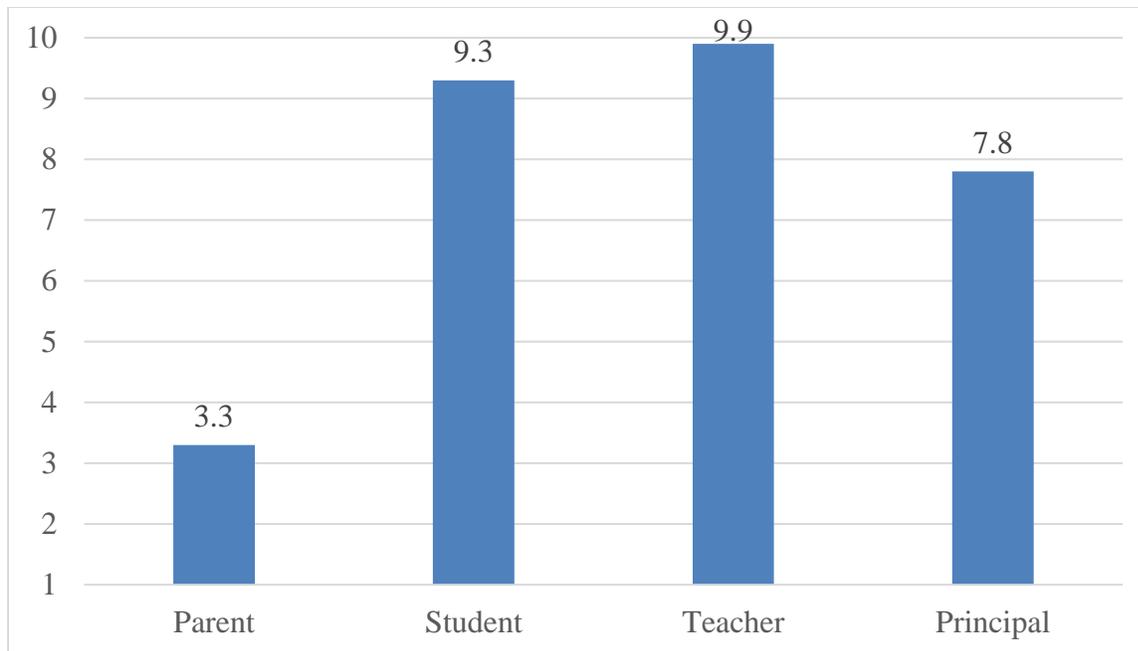


Figure 1. Likelihood to Participate or Encourage International Travel: Average Score by Role

Popular destinations for international field trips. When asked about their preferred destinations for international field trips, countries in Europe (e.g., Germany, Italy, Norway, France, England) and Asia (e.g., Japan and China) as well as the United States were top destination choices for both students, teachers, and principals. One student said she wanted to travel to Germany because “My family has traveled there and are from there.” Other students stated they wanted to travel to places like Japan and China for different cultural experiences or places like France and London to discover more about the history of those places. Teachers and principals mentioned destinations such as Greece, Ecuador, Peru, London, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Rome, Venice, Florence, United Kingdom, Paris, Australia, and New York. One teacher wanted to take a field trip to New York and London for the theater arts, and another teacher preferred to travel to different places in Europe, because it is generally safe there. Asian countries were often mentioned as a place teachers and principals would like to travel because of rich culture, diversity, and for never having traveled there before.

Perceived benefits of international field trips. Parents, students, teachers, and principals mentioned many of the same kinds of benefits, even if the individual was originally opposed to international field trips. Common benefits mentioned by parents, students, teachers, and principals included:

- Seeing the world;
- Learning about new lifestyles and cultures;
- Enhancing previously learned knowledge through in-depth, interactive experiences;
- Gaining a global perspective, opening one's mind, and challenging one's perspectives;
- Cultivating positive relationships between teachers and students, students and students, and students, teachers, and people abroad;
- Providing an experience which encourages self-growth, self-confidence, tolerance, and empathy;
- Instilling a love for learning and travel and preparing students for future travel;
- Providing students who might not have future opportunities to travel the chance to experience such a trip; and
- Exploring other cultures through the new experience of food, music, art, history, and social interactions with diverse groups of people.

Interviewees perceived that traveling to different countries expands on previously learned information, allows for a greater understanding of that information, and encourages more active and motivated learning. For example, one student stated international field trips can “put you in a whole new environment, instead of just flipping through textbooks reading about what happened; you can just see it for yourself.” Also, one principal mentioned that international field trips can “enrich student learning opportunities” and give students “a better appreciation for history.”

Creating new experiences and perspectives as well as challenging students' previously-held perspectives were a couple of the common benefits listed by parents, teachers, and principals. One teacher stated, "it [traveling internationally] gives kids a diverse cultural perspective and provides challenges to get out of their [students'] comfort zones." Another teacher mentioned that traveling internationally offers an "opportunity to learn outside of your space, your country that is... invaluable" and "...opens [students'] eyes to different people, culture, ways that no book or anything online could ever show students." Similarly, one parent said traveling internationally helps expose you to something new saying, "You don't realize what you consider to be normal and how you make that assumption with everyone else until you are face-to-face with someone else's normal," therefore gaining a new perspective. One teacher stated that international travel provides "tremendous life experiences" and great opportunities to learn. What the parents, teachers, principals, and the students hoped to gain from traveling on international field trips reflected the benefits of new experiences or perspectives, as well.

Concerns for international field trips. Overall, the concerns that people expressed did not seem to deter their support for international field trips or outweigh the benefits they believed to be associated with international travel. A total of four people – two students, one teacher, and one principal – expressed no concerns about international field trips. Of the students interviewed, two expressed that they felt safer when traveling in groups and with trips that were well structured and supported by supervisors. One student expressed a concern with safety and the political relationships between countries that might impact the student's experience. However, this concern was not enough to keep him from traveling by himself in the future or with a school group. Teacher and principal concerns primarily centered around the themes of affordability, safety, and supervision. Three teachers and one principal expressed financial concerns. For

example, one teacher stated, “Not all students have the means to travel or the access to funding.” Two teachers and two principals articulated a concern for safety. For example, one teacher said, “We should not let safety concerns keep us from traveling. To do so would be reactionary and a fear-based response. But we should not ignore them either. If there is a travel advisory, we should not travel to those locations.” A principal explained, “Safety is a concern no matter where you go. It is even a concern in our own backyard. Something could happen anywhere.” Similarly, one parent stated, “A terrorist attack is not necessarily something you can predict anywhere in the world... as long as you’ve done your due diligence...if accidents happen, they happen; not going doesn’t change those facts.” Another principal emphasized that “there needs to be policies, safe guards in place so safety and concerns about how to help student medically, for example, if a situation arose, is not as much of an issue.”

In addition, two teachers and one principal expressed concerns about supervision. One teacher’s concerns were about supervising and managing student behavior. One teacher and one principal were more concerned with the size of the group they might be chaperoning. When asked what size of group they would feel comfortable supervising, responses varied. Overall, 7 out of the 13 teachers and principals interviewed said the ideal student-to-teacher ratio would be 10:1. According to one teacher, “Larger groups are easier to deal with, because there is safety in numbers” while another said, “Size doesn’t matter to me as long as the support is in place and enough people there supervising with me.” Yet, another teacher said, “I think the max I could do is 30 students total, even if there are a lot of teachers there to help me.” The majority of teachers and principals felt like size was not an issue as long as there was a sufficient number of teachers traveling with the group.

Virtual field trips. When asked about the possibility of virtual field trips as alternatives, every teacher and principal (13 out of 13) said they are not a good substitute for in-person field trips (note, only teachers and principals were asked this question). Answers ranged from comments like, “They are a terrible idea” to “if there was no other option.”

Interviewee recommendations. According to interviewees (i.e., 2 parents, 4 students, 8 teachers, 5 principals), Black Gold can help mitigate their international field trip concerns (e.g., safety, group sizes, location destination, cost), with the following suggestions:

- Let each school community decide what international field trips to offer and when to offer such opportunities, giving the principals, teachers, parents, and students more autonomy in the decision-making process.
- Change policies that cause stress and anxiety for adults supervising international field trips, primarily the ban on international field trips and the cancelation policy used in the past which gives Black Gold the authority to cancel trips up until the moment groups board the airplane.
- Provide a point person at home to help with communication issues and potential safety concerns, like a leader at the district level or in the school community (e.g., principal, office administrator, teacher) that could be a liaison between travel companies, schools, parents, and supervising teachers. With a specific person to contact at home who is knowledgeable about the details of the trip and is easy to contact, adults supervising trips feel more comfortable and supported.
- Create a policy for fundraising for those who cannot afford international field trips, which would help schools make international field trips equally available to all students.

- Recognize the educational value of such trips; operate from a proactive mindset instead of a reactionary, fear-based mindset (e.g., geo-political issues around the world, not having enough support or supervisors, safety in numbers).
- Realize the benefits of international travel strongly outweigh any potential issues that might arise, and discuss this concept often with parents, students, teachers, and principals using such things as parent information nights, newsletters, and professional development.
- Ensure teams or groups of students, teachers, and supervisors traveling are prepared, by providing information sessions with all stakeholders participating in the trip, such as parents, teachers, students, and administrators. Help establish rules, boundaries, and travel plans that are in place for all to use but that are also flexible and unique to each school and each trip.

Conclusion

Regular and virtual field trips have both pros and cons that must be considered when determining their worth in educational practice. According to various literature, international field trip pros include: diverse content delivery, diverse learning opportunities, unique skill acquisition, and shared benefits such as parent/community involvement, valued input and time, and equal opportunities to parents, community, and low SES students (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sander, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013). According to the interview results from this study of 19 stakeholders (2 parents, 4 students, 8 teachers, and 5 school principals), the benefits of international travel far outweighed the potential concerns. Responses from Black Gold students, teachers, and four of the five principals articulated benefits of international field trips similar to those shown in the literature. They identified such gifts of

invaluable, diverse learning experiences and enhanced and enriched content opportunities.

International field trip cons within the literature include: logistical constraints, teacher workload, students' absence from school, expenses, and the potential for poor field trip experiences (Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sander, 2018; Yigitcanlar, 2013). Some of the responses from Black Gold stakeholders are similar to that of the literature, too. The majority of concerns for international field trips from participants in this study were centered around safety, destination locations, student-teacher ratios and group sizes, and the cost. This leads to the inevitable decision of whether the pros identified in the literature and by the sampled Black Gold students, teachers, parents, and school administrators collectively outweigh the cons (Yigitcanlar, 2013). According to the individuals providing data for this study, the majority (17 out of 19) report the benefits outweigh the potential negatives. Although the literature described virtual field trips as a potential alternative to expand and enhance curriculum, empower students with physical disabilities, and increase access for low SES students (Barbara & Gail, 2003; Bashir, 2018; Karkowka, 2012; Stainfield et al., 2010), the participants in this study did not see virtual field trips as a viable option. There were no interviewees in favor of using virtual field trips as a substitution for real life, international travel, even the one participant who was against international field trips. The data in this report indicates students who participate in international field trips may benefit from learning experiences associated with diverse settings that might not be replicable in traditionally-based classroom settings and virtual field trips and acquire skills that can be utilized in the immediate setting as well as in future contexts (Cheffo & Griffiths, 2004; Kelly, 2017; Pham & Owen, 2017; Procter, 2012; Radke, 2016; Sander, 2018; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Williams, 2005; Yigitcanlar, 2013). When asked if there was anything else the researchers needed to know about international field trips, one teacher wished to emphasize that

the “friendships that are created, the relationships that are formed, and the opportunities given are powerful. You can’t measure the educational and human value of these [international] trips. It is a priceless experience.” One teacher also asked if Black Gold could “bring them back!” While concerns were expressed, 17 of the 19 participants believed that international field trips were valuable and that the benefits far outweighed any reservations they had about international travel.

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Appendix A

Questions for Parents

1. If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you feel comfortable having your student travel internationally with a class?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being definitely would participate and 1 being definitely would NOT participate, how likely are you to have your student participate in an international field trip?
 - c. Has your student participated in an international field trip in the past? Where did your student go and how was the experience?
 - d. Have you personally participated in an international field trip in the past? Where did you go and how did you find the experience?
2. What do you see as the benefits of international field trips?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What would you hope your student would gain from international travel?
3. What concerns do you have about international field trips?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What steps (if any) could be taken by Black Gold to help you feel the most comfortable with your student participating in international field trips?
4. Is there anything else we need to know about the benefits and challenges of international field trips?

Appendix A Continued**Questions for Students**

1. If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you be interested in traveling internationally with a class?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being definitely would participate and 1 being definitely would NOT participate, how likely are you to participate in an international field trip?
 - c. If interested, where would you be interested in traveling? Why? What would be your top three destinations for an international field trip? Why?
 - d. Would you be comfortable traveling to countries where you did not speak the primary language?
 - e. Have you participated in an international field trip in the past? Where did you go and how did you find the experience?
2. What do you see as the benefits of international field trips?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What would you hope to gain from international travel?
3. What concerns do you have about international field trips?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What steps (if any) could be taken by Black Gold to help you feel the most comfortable participating in international field trips?
4. Is there anything else we need to know about the benefits and challenges of international field trips?

Appendix A Continued**Questions for Teachers (principals)**

1. If offered by Black Gold Regional Schools, would you encourage students to travel internationally with a class?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being definitely would encourage and 1 being definitely would NOT encourage, how likely are you to encourage students to participate in an international field trip?
2. Would you be interested in traveling with students internationally as a class (i.e., leading an international field trip)?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being definitely would participate and 1 being definitely would NOT participate, how likely are you to lead students in an international field trip?
 - c. If interested, where would you be interested in traveling? Why? What would be your top three destinations for an international field trip? Why?
 - d. Would you be comfortable traveling to countries where you did not speak the primary language?
 - e. Have you personally participated in an international field trip in the past (either as a student or a teacher)? Where did you go and how did you find the experience?
3. What do you see as the benefits of international field trips?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What would you hope your students would gain from international travel?
4. What concerns do you have about international field trips?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What steps (if any) could be taken by Black Gold to help you feel the most comfortable leading international field trips?
 - i. What size of group would you feel comfortable supervising?
 - c. Do you think international virtual field trips are a good substitute for in-person field trips?
 - i. What are the reasons for your answer?
5. Is there anything else we need to know about participating in international field trips?