

Thinking of Being a Chaperone?

Things to Consider Before Making the Commitment

On behalf of the trip planners and Mr. E, thank you for your interest in helping to chaperone an Eckstein Band trip. Eckstein Bands would not be able to travel to and compete in such exciting events without your generous willingness to help through a gift of your time, energy and patience, as well as your financial support. Considering that this is a significant commitment, and based on the feedback of many past trip planners and chaperones, we put together this document so that you have a clear picture of what chaperoning on an Eckstein Band trip means before you make that commitment. We hope that by doing so we reduce the chance that you'll end up being disappointed with your chaperone experience. While some of these guidelines may seem ridiculous, past experience, as well as liability considerations with the Seattle School District, require these rules and responsibilities. *Please also remember that if you do decide that chaperoning is not for you, all of the competitions and festivals that Eckstein Band participates in are public events. Some are free, and some require tickets, but parents and friends are always welcome.*

While individual trips publish specific tasks for chaperones, the list below includes responsibilities that are applicable in general to all Eckstein Band trips.

Transportation:

- On buses and flights, take attendance of chaperones and students (again and again- attendance is taken every time the students board a bus)
- Actively encourage good and safe behavior and reasonable sound volume levels
- Encourage kids to pick up after themselves and comply with bus/airplane rules

Hotels:

- You will be assigned to a specific groups of students – usually 2-3 rooms – these students will know you are their chaperone
- Chaperone room doors will be marked so kids know where to go if they need help or have a question
- Remind kids to walk, not run through the halls, not slam doors, not jump on beds etc. (the same things you would expect from your own kids in a hotel)
- Take attendance in each room at “lights out” each night
- Monitor the halls for 30 minutes following “lights out” each night
- Ensure that there is no room switching and that all students are in their assigned rooms
- Encourage use of the stairs and observe capacity limits on elevators. Elevators have been broken on more than one band trip (not necessarily by Eckstein students)
- Be available during the night if kids need help for any reason
- Check rooms for forgotten items and/or trash prior to checkout

During Performances:

- Encourage polite audience behavior
- No headphones, food or drink (depending on the venue, performance – Mr. E's call)

Other Items:

- Keep kids busy enough to stay out of trouble and moving in the direction of the next activity
- Distribute and manage airplane tickets/bus passes/festival passes/room keys and snack
- Be prepared in case of an emergency (medical emergency, lost child, rule violation etc.)
- Other responsibilities as assigned
- Help students with anything they need and communicate any issues to Mr. E

Chaperone “Fine Print”:

- Because many events are held in locations with limited hotel space, all chaperones are required to room with another chaperone. While in past years it was possible to accommodate special requests for individual rooms, most events have become so popular, and the Eckstein Bands so large, that it is no longer feasible to offer this benefit. Please consider whether you are comfortable sharing a hotel room with another parent before agreeing to chaperone.
- All parent chaperones are required to undergo a criminal background check with the Washington State Patrol as required by the Seattle School District. This is something the trip coordinators manage in conjunction with the office staff and it is no cost to you.
- No drinking of alcoholic beverages at any time. As a chaperone on an Eckstein Band trip, you are “on duty” 24x7 and as such must be 100% able and available to assist with any type of situation or emergency that might arise. (*Chaperones are required to abide by the same policies as Seattle School District employees including no alcohol, drugs or firearms while on a school sponsored trip*).
- You may have to miss seeing a band performance due to your chaperone responsibilities. For example, in past years kids have gotten sick and this required chaperones to stay behind with the child.
- Always use the buddy system. It is an unfortunate reality, but in order to protect yourself and our kids, one chaperone should never be alone with one child. Always have another chaperone with you. Unfortunately, this also means that we cannot allow a parent chaperone to room with their own child while on an Eckstein Band trip. (*Note: As a result of this, some parents have chosen to make separate accommodation arrangements for themselves and their child on past trips. Please understand that the trip coordinators are volunteer parents with lots to do – they cannot assist you with individual accommodations.*)
- In the event that we have more chaperone volunteers than space available, we will first ask if there are any volunteers who are willing to not attend. Following that, we will use a random drawing to choose chaperones. In this case, chaperone deposits will be refunded.

Being a chaperone can be a fun and rewarding experience. But please remember, your first responsibility is helping take care of our kids so please bear this in mind when deciding whether or not to volunteer your time on an Eckstein Band Trip. Being a chaperone also requires you to manage groups of loud children and assist with keeping their behavior safe, respectful and responsible. If you don't enjoy large groups of high-energy kids, this might not be the job for you.