

An In Tune Special Report

Music Education Travel '24

By Andrew Surmani and Daniel Gregerman

On stage Jose Antonio Diaz (drums),
Founder & Artistic Director, Diaz Music
Institute, Houston, Texas



MAKING PLANS

One of Benjamin Franklin's greatest quotes from 1790 was, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." It still holds true to this day and especially in the world of student travel, where in the post-COVID world, the conditions for travel have changed dramatically.

As a director creating a trip, you will of course need a plan, and will be presenting that plan to many stakeholders. Depending on its scope and duration, those stakeholders can include students, parents, administrators, board members, fundraising companies, etc., each with a different perspective. A solid plan that anticipates those views and includes concurrent contingencies will allow you to present it, and if needed defend it, as well as answer questions with the utmost confidence. As your proposal is formulated and your fundraising strategy is outlined, it is important to think of every question that could be asked from any stakeholder. Answering these in advance will make for better responses and a smoother approval process overall.

Start with the "why." Explain the reasons you are planning on conducting your proposed trip, what the educational benefits will be to the students, how it will showcase your school and district, and how it will be funded. It's a big endeavor to plan a trip, and all the stakeholders in the process will want to know "why" and how it will benefit all parties, and how you will mitigate the challenges involved in travel.

"Since my first trip out-of-state thanks to a robust public school music program, I realized that travel can provide the best learning opportunities. Forty years later, and after visiting, traveling, touring, and performing and living in countries all over the world I still believe that travel (and music) provides the best learning opportunities. My life has been enriched through music and travel. The American and international music students I interact with are incredibly knowledgeable, empathetic, and sensitive to global issues thanks to their travel experiences influencing how they positively see the world today," says Scott Rumery, Instrumental Music Director, Humphreys High School, Pyeongtaek, South Korea

Brian Clissold, Director for Animado Events says, "Travel teaches students that the world is bigger than their devices. It introduces them to people and places that are different, yet very much



Scott Rumery, Instrumental Music Director, Humphreys High School, Pyeongtaek, South Korea



the same. (It) pushes young people to adapt to new situations and encourages learning. Education becomes hands-on and not just something in a book. Connecting a performance arts curriculum to real-world experiences is the goal for which arts educators strive. These performance travel adventures are the foundation for life-changing experiences!” Animado offers authentic and inspiring performance opportunities at prestigious venues in countless destinations.

Once you have developed and expressed why you are planning a trip and outlined the supporting rationale, the next step is to develop a detailed budget with the two main sections being the income, where the funds will come from, and the expenses: the costs for the trip. Your budget will need to balance so that all expenses will be covered. Start first with any funding the school or district can offer, then consider the fundraising you might be able to do to pay for the trip, and/or look to the various donors, sponsors and grants you can apply for or appeal to. As with all budgets, these are estimates

at best, so build into your budget contingency amounts on both the income and expense side. What if you don’t raise as much from the fundraising that you had budgeted for? What if certain costs are more than planned for?

In addition, you’ll have to determine how many chaperones need to be on the trip and if their trip is free or paid for at a reduced fee with parents or college age chaperones having to fund the difference (as well what that amount will be). There should also be a plan to support students who cannot afford to pay for their share of the cost. Most importantly, be clear on what the school’s insurance policy covers for your trip, and what it doesn’t. In some cases the personal instruments of students may not be covered, so it is recommended that students and their parents obtain instrument travel insurance. All kinds of things can happen to instruments on a trip, and you need to be prepared to answer the “what if” questions. Trip cancellation insurance is also available for individuals, and it’s important to be able to direct those need-

ing insurance to reputable agents or carriers.

Likewise, in a post-COVID world, anticipating health and safety issues is at the top of the list. You will need to be prepared for any situation where someone can get hurt or become ill and prepare for how you will handle it. What if someone catches a cold, the flu, or COVID? What will be the plan for treating them? What if someone needs to go to the emergency room or hospital, especially in a foreign country? There should be an action plan in place for each of these possibilities including things like, in the event someone needs to go to a hospital, which chaperones will stay behind at the hotel, etc. All students need to check with their parents to see what their health insurance covers while on a trip and determine the process to deal with a medical emergency out of the local area or country. In addition if you can travel with a chaperone who has a medical background, it can be very beneficial for all involved.

“I thought I knew how to plan a detailed trip until I met with a professional tour company. With the various protocols and cost factors, there is so much going on with student travel today. The plan the professional tour company put together for my group was exceptionally well organized, thorough, and cost effective. I learned so much in

working with them about all the details of planning for a trip in the post-COVID world,” offers Jose Antonio Diaz, Founder & Artistic Director for Diaz Music Institute in Houston, TX.”

Without a doubt, the professionals will surface issues, as well as provide solutions, for conditions that may not even cross your mind. For example, Keith Snode, CEO for Kaleidoscope Adventures explains that *his* company’s biggest operational challenge continues to be securing motorcoaches for groups. “There is a staggering shortage of qualified drivers. As a result, fewer motorcoaches are available to book - particularly during the busy spring travel season. Student tour operators must help manage client expectations and underscore the necessity of booking early. Teachers and group leaders should be prepared to book at least one full year in advance for the best chance of securing transportation,” says Snode. “Booking a student trip early not only helps lockdown those motorcoaches, but often also means better rates and selection, admission to popular attractions and activities, and access to the most sought-after performance venues.

Another major issue that you need to plan for is what will happen if students participate in behavior or activi-



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ties that are against school policy? Your school and district should have written policies for these circumstances, and all students and their parents should sign a “travel rules” document and agree to the consequences outlined if they use poor judgment and partake in any of those activities on the trip. Before the trip begins, it is recommended to have a meeting with all stakeholders and discuss the expectation and outcomes of all rules and policies. Also, for both the health and safety emergencies, as well as the inappropriate behaviors, create a “communication plan” on what, how and when information will be communicated back to the other stakeholders on and not included on the trip.

One other circumstance related to travel is that checking bags these days has a big cost and bags can also get lost easily. Students should know what those costs are if they are checking bags and may want to consider inserting Air Tags in their checked baggage, in the event their luggage is lost. It is also possible to obtain preloaded visa cards to give to each traveler for use at the counter for their baggage fees. You can’t always rely on the airlines to know where your bag is. According to the Federal Aviation Administra-

tion (FAA), having an Air Tag in your luggage is allowed. With carry-on bags, make sure all students are clear on the regulations and size and weight limits related to this in advance, so they do not show up at the airport with a bag too large or too heavy to carry on board. That of course includes their instruments! And speaking of instruments, and other equipment, it’s a good idea to research music stores and gear rental business close to your destination(s). Know their hours and what they carry. To paraphrase an old saying, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of performance! **T**

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