

Zionsville Community Schools

Board of School Trustees Meeting “Item for Consideration”

Consent Agenda • Date: 9/14/2026

Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trip

Category:

☐ Human Resources, Personnel/Staffing	☐ Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment	☐ Board Policy
☐ Finance, Budgeting, Accounting	☒ Student Services	☐ Other
☐ Facilities, Transportation, Nutrition	☐ Community Relations	

Type of Board of Trustees Consideration Sought:

Action	☒
Discussion	☐
Report	☐

Trip name: Squads Abroad Trip to Guatemala

Group: The traveling group is the ZCHS Squads Abroad Club sponsored by Lindsay Alessandrini. Any student interested in traveling with the club is encouraged to join, but membership is not required for travel. Noblesville High School’s Squads Abroad Club will travel alongside us, with their own chaperone(s). Lindsay Alessandrini has chaperoned three former successful service-learning trips (Guatemala, 2024; Panama, 2025; Belize, 2026). Many of the same students who traveled on previous service-learning trips have expressed interest in traveling to back to Guatemala.

Proposed dates: June 13 – June 21, 2027 (Dates may shift slightly once approved in order to attain the best possible pricing on group travel).

Summary of trip activities:

Our group will be matched with an underserved rural school in the Chimaltenango area of Guatemala (Central America). We will make this trip with Global Brigades, a 501c3 organization, a registered NGO with the US Embassy, and a well-known and trusted NGO organization in Guatemala.

During the service-learning trip, students will:

- Deliver educational workshops in Spanish to elementary aged children on topics such as hand-washing and hygiene, dental hygiene, nutrition, recycling, reforestation, and more.
- Engage in cross-cultural games, conversations, and informal activities outside of the children’s school day.
 - Example activities include dance lessons, cooking lessons, visiting Mayan ruins, learning to make Mayan chocolate, and Kaqchikel and Spanish language lessons.
 - Participate in cultural enrichment activities at Lake Atitlán and the UNESCO Heritage site of Antigua, Guatemala.
- Work in partnership with local staff, teachers, and community members to implement a school infrastructure project.

- Example projects include: building handwashing stations, eco-stoves, school kitchens and cafeterias; building or refurbishing desks, classrooms or playground equipment; painting educational murals
- Because Global Brigades is in constant communication with the Guatemalan communities and strives to prioritize the most critically needed projects in a timely manner, our project will be solidified 30 days before departure.

Proposed Itinerary:

- Day 1 – Travel from Indianapolis to Guatemala City and arrive at our group lodging site
- Day 2 - Community welcome and school impact project training
- Day 3-6 – School impact project, educational workshops, and cultural activities
- Day 7 - Cultural enrichment day: Antigua
- Day 8 – Cultural enrichment day: Lake Atitlán
- Day 9 – Departure from Guatemala City and arrival back in Indianapolis

Preliminary itinerary approval by Matt Walter

Transportation	Our group will fly out of Indianapolis International Airport and will arrive in Guatemala City. Our return trip will be Guatemala City back to Indianapolis. In-country transportation will be provided via private buses with trained professional drivers. Vehicles are inspected daily and are equipped with seat belts and first aid kits.
Lodging	Students will be housed in same-sex rooms, accommodating 4-6 people, with private same-sex bathrooms. Private rooms are provided for chaperones. Chaperones will perform bed checks at “lights out” times announced each night. Students are expected to only be in their own cabins after lights out until we meet for breakfast. Students will have access to additional common rooms, open outdoor spaces, and a swimming pool. All meals will be taken in the dining area. Meals will consist of fresh, regional cuisine prepared by cooks trained in food safety. All students’ dietary restrictions and allergies will be accommodated. Students will have 24/7 access to clean, safe drinking water. The lodging space has a secure entrance with a night-watchperson on call 24/7. Students will have free access to the internet and phone for set periods of time on most evenings.

Parent Permission Obtained	Parent permission will be obtained via the registration and payment process. All parents will be required to complete and sign the ZCS School Board's Off-Campus Programs and Trips Information Form.
Cost to Students/Families	Approximately \$3230. This includes pre-departure training, group airfare, private in-country transportation, room, board, travel medical insurance, emergency evacuation insurance and cultural learning activities. Additional costs not included in this fee will depend on individual student needs. Some/most students can expect to shoulder additional costs for passport fees, tips, spending money for snacks/souvenirs, and money for meals while in the airports. We hope to include fundraisers as approved by ZCHS. Fundraising ideas include a t-shirt sale in the fall/winter, a teacher appreciation gifting opportunity, a Double Good popcorn fundraiser, and an Easter "Egg My Yard" service fundraiser in the spring. We anticipate fundraising \$6000 which will be fairly divided among the traveling students based on their participation in the fundraisers.
About Supervision	This trip will be led by Lindsay Alessandrini, Spanish teacher and World Languages Department Chairperson. Additional faculty chaperones will be solicited depending on the size of the group. We do not anticipate needing the assistance of any non-faculty chaperones. Once in Guatemala, our group will be supported and supervised by a professionally trained in-country team including coordinators, drivers, cooks, security guards, paramedics, translators, and a lodging manager.
Outline COVID Protocols	Students/chaperones will follow CDC guidelines and travel requirements at the time of travel.
Trip Insurance Plan and Refund Procedure (if there is one)	Our trip cost includes travel medical insurance and emergency evacuation insurance. Families will be encouraged to seek out any desired additional coverage.
Group Safety	Please see the detailed information within these documents: • Insurance information (all participants are covered during the duration of the program) • Optional insurance upgrade • Crisis Management Protocol

Objective POSITIVES related to this item or approach:

The positives related to this trip are many. Through this service-learning trip, students will have the opportunity to:

- Securely travel internationally. Some of the group's members have never traveled outside of our state, region or country.
- Speak Spanish with native Spanish speakers. Our students will learn new vocabulary words, work on grammar and sentence-structure, improve pronunciation, and increase their listening comprehension.
- Explore previously unknown cultural traditions. Students on this trip will have one-to-one contact with members of a Mayan community, a community that does not readily advertise their cultural heritage to outsiders. Our students will have a unique opportunity to learn traditional Mayan artistry and culinary techniques from the Mayan people themselves.
- Experience modern Guatemalan pop culture in the form of music, slang, language, clothing, souvenirs, etc.
- Explore teaching and learning in a school with very different approaches and methods. Students will be put in the role of teacher during part of their experience, but will also be learners as they absorb the language, culture, and traditions around them.
- Learn about the issues that challenge the children of Guatemala and devise ways to help educate them on solutions. For example, because of the high level of poverty in the area, many families lack the knowledge and resources to maintain their health. Students will be able to work with local experts to understand this issue and develop educational workshops for school children.
- Experience a wide variety of new foods native to Guatemala and the Mayan people.
- Bond with ZCHS Squads Abroad members. Since club members come from many different grade levels, background experiences, and cultural traditions, they are not necessarily natural friends outside of our club meetings. This trip will help them to build on common experiences in order to expand their friendships.
- Work together to raise funds to cover our group project needs. Fundraising for a common goal will strengthen our club's bonds and students will feel a great sense of satisfaction completing the chosen project with the funds that they themselves raised.
- Learn basic construction skills. Students will be mentored by local professionals during our group project and they will learn new skills that can be used for a lifetime.

Objective NEGATIVES related to this item or approach:

List any possible negatives to this trip (i.e. cost, time out of school, etc.)

- At a cost of around \$3200, some students may struggle to fund their own trip. We will attempt to mitigate this through group fundraising and individual fundraising efforts.
- Students who have never traveled outside of the state, region, or country may feel homesick on a 9-day trip. Luckily, we will be kept very busy throughout the trip and students will be able to contact home via internet/phone access in the evenings.
- Students with picky eating habits may struggle with trying new, authentic Guatemalan and Mayan dishes. The professionally trained cooks are experienced in meeting the nutritional needs of American students and will provide snacks and options for these students.
- Traveling by airplane can be a stressful experience, especially if delays or issues arise. We will remain in contact with our travel directors should any problems occur.

Financial Implications, if any:

There are no direct costs for ZCS.

The student travelers and their families will pay approximately \$3230. This amount includes a budget of \$1000 for our flights, but our travel coordinator will help us find the best travel dates and times to lower this cost if possible. Students can also expect to pay additional fees to obtain a passport, purchase snacks/meals in the airports or for spending money while sightseeing.

Group fundraising opportunities will be available. Additionally, families have the unique opportunity to receive a tax deduction as the required fees are considered donations to the 501c organization.

Opinion/Recommendation: This trip is recommended for approval.