



DEFINING EXCELLENCE

Board Meeting Date: January 12, 2026

Title: Panama 2027 - International Travel Request - Edina Science - Lindsey Smaka

Type: Action

Presenters: Jody De St. Hubert, Director of Teaching and Learning; Jenn Carter, Edina High School Assistant Principal; and Lindsey Smaka, Edina High School Science Teacher

Background: In accordance with Policy 538, the following international student travel experience for up to 32 Edina High School students for one week in August 2027 has received support from the school's administration. Participating students will miss no school days for this travel experience.

This experience is coordinated by Kagumu Adventures, an organization that designs tours in South America with a mission to teach young people about sustainable development, using the power of travel to inspire them to travel, work, and live in a more positively impactful manner.

Summary of the Travel Experience:

Dates: August 2027 (14 days)

Destinations: Panama City, Mata Oscura, Santa Catalina, Coiba National Park, Anton Valley, Emberá Village

Themes: Life Under Water & Environmental Conservation

Sample Itinerary Highlights:

- Mangrove restoration and turtle conservation projects (Mata Oscura)
- Scuba diving in Coiba National Park to study coral reef ecosystems
- Cultural immersion with the Emberá community, exploring indigenous wisdom in sustainability
- Kayaking in mangroves, surfing, and rainforest hikes
- Visits to the Panama Canal, Monkey Island, and Old Town Panama City
- Coffee and chocolate tasting workshops focused on ethical production
- Reflection sessions and post-trip challenges to connect learning to global citizenship

(Full itinerary attached as *Panama 14-Day Itinerary* – Kagumu Adventures.)

Overview of Standards that will be taught on the Travel Experience:

This international experience aligns with Edina science learning outcomes and Minnesota State Standards for Science and Social Studies.

Students will:

- Analyze environmental systems and human-environment interactions.
- Investigate sustainable solutions to global ecological challenges.
- Develop intercultural competence and ethical reasoning.
- Apply inquiry, reflection, and communication skills in cross-cultural contexts.
- Engage in experiential learning aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13, 14, and 15).

Cost:

Approximately \$4500 per student. Includes all international flights, in-country transportation, lodging, activities, meals, and guide services.

Fundraising opportunities will be coordinated, including student-led service events and community sponsorships. A detailed fundraising plan is attached.

Transportation:

Air Travel: Minneapolis-Panama City (Tocumen International Airport) round-trip flight.

In-Country Travel: Private charter bus transportation coordinated by Kagumu Adventures.

Accommodations:

Students will stay in locally owned hotels and hostels (3-star standard) in Panama City, Mata Oscura, Santa Catalina, and Anton Valley. One overnight homestay in Emberá Village provides a cultural immersion experience. Students will be housed in single-gender rooms; teachers and staff will have private rooms with ensuite bathrooms.

Supervision:

Lead Teacher: Lindsey Smaka

Administrator: Jenn Carter

Additional Chaperones: 1-2 more science teachers

On-site Support: Kagumu Adventures bilingual tour leader and local guides.

Recommendation: Review the international travel request.

Desired Outcomes from the Board: Review the international travel request for approval.

Attachment:

1. [Appendix III Board Policy 538 , Extended Field Trip and Travel Application Preliminary Approval](#)
2. [Kagumu Panama Itinerary](#)
3. [Fundraising Plan](#)