**Traveling with Students**

Congratulations! You’re an CTSO Advisor and your students have qualified to attend an overnight conference. Now what? Here are our top 10 helpful hints to make traveling with students a fun experience:

1. Create a contract for parents and students to sign. Within the contract, list behavior expectations, financial obligations, financial payment plans, dress code, and conference schedule. Have a parent meeting prior to the first payment and go over the contract. Have parents AND students sign, stating their understanding of your expectations. They have to understand that first and foremost, you are attending a leadership conference and it is not a vacation.
2. Always plan your trip prior to arriving. “Winging it” only creates more stress for you and your students. Create a detailed itinerary for each day. List all required workshops, competition times, meals, etc. Include in the itinerary dress code expectations for each day’s events. Make reservations for your group in advance. Keep a document with all confirmation numbers in one location. If no confirmation number is provided, print your contract or e-mail for documentation. Call 48-hours in advance of traveling to confirm all reservations. If you are attending any conference, download the schedule-at-a-glance and make reservations for any evenings you have “free time”. This eliminates stress and waiting for food when on site.
3. Create a group message using your school approved communication platform. Require all students to be a part of the group, allowing parents to join if they want. This allows you to send reminders, create schedules, and keep in touch with everyone throughout the trip.
4. Travel with another chapter so you are able to utilize group rates. These rates can be used for airline tickets and extra group activities. Plus, your students are able to make new friends from other schools!
5. Have students wear your chapter t-shirt or a special conference t-shirt for travel day. This helps you spot your students in the airport or in a crowd.
6. Utilize UberEats, Yelp 24, GrubHub, and DoorDash. Many of these apps will allow you to place orders at least 24 hours in advance and you can schedule meals during your busy conference days. These are vital for competition days and conference days with 20 minutes to spare for lunch.
7. Have students and parents utilize Venmo, Cash App, and Zelle. Cash App will send you a personalized debit card that is linked to your Cash App account. Students and/or parents can send money through Cash App to cover the costs of meals or other expenses during the trip and you can use their debit card to pay for the expenses.
8. Have nightly debriefs. This allows students to share their high and low point of the day, laugh at their adventures, and make sure everyone is on the same page for the next day. This also allows you to check in to see if there are any roommate issues, students low on cash, or students missing items they need for the trip. Make the highs and lows pertain to the city you’re in, such as “peaches and pits” while in Atlanta. Having students write “nice notes” to each other is also a great way to end the evening. Hand out the notes at the end of the trip.
9. Scan all permission slips/medical forms and keep a digital copy on your phone. This allows you to have them on you if an emergency arises.
10. Plan for a massage/pedicure when you get home. The trips might be a little stressful, but the memories you make with your students and the impact you make on their lives makes it all worth it!