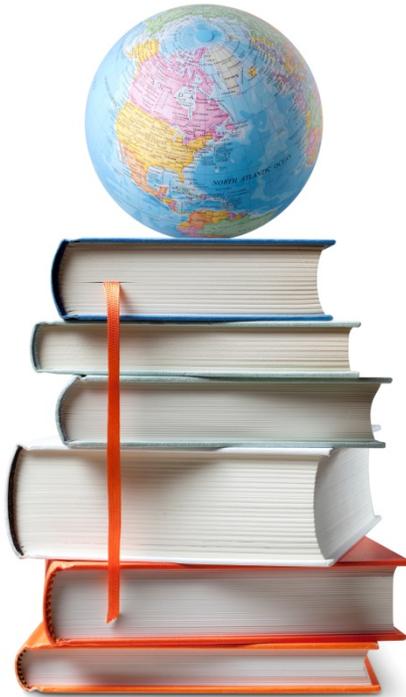




Northern Lights Public Schools

International Study Program
Orientation Handbook



Dear International Student,

Welcome to the Northern Lights Public Schools!

It is our desire that you will have a worthwhile and enjoyable time while you are studying in the Northern Lights Public Schools.

The staff and students with the Northern Lights public Schools would like to extend a warm, friendly Canadian “Welcome!” to you. We are excited about sharing our schools and know that you will have a wonderful time while you are living in Canada.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist you with your new experience in Canada.

We hope that this handbook will answer many of your questions as you begin the rewarding experience of being an international student.

We wish you a great and rewarding experience with the Northern Lights Public Schools.

Best wishes!

Jimmi Lou Irvine

*Associate Superintendent – Teaching & Learning
Northern Lights Public Schools*

Table of Contents

About Northern Lights Public Schools.....	4
International Study Program.....	5
School Registration and Attendance.....	5
Course Information and Selection.....	6
International Student Rules and Expectations.....	11
Day of Arrival.....	12
The Host Family - Their Role, Your Role.....	13
Your New Community.....	15
Health and Medical Care.....	16
Other Important Information.....	17
Departure Day.....	18
Appendix.....	19
Student/Host Family Introduction Sheet.....	20
Parental Permission to Travel Form.....	21

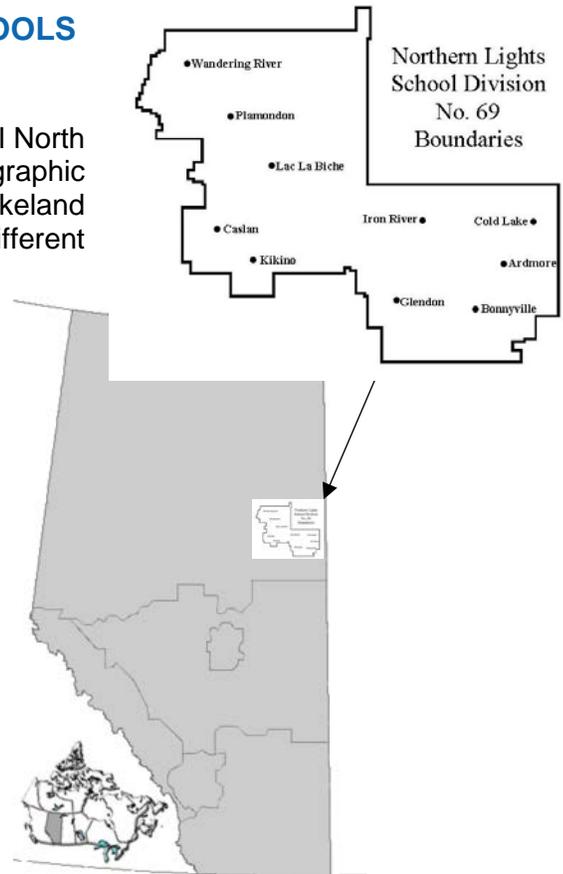
ABOUT THE NORTHERN LIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Northern Lights Public Schools is located in the beautiful North East part of Alberta, Canada. We cover a large geographic area known as the Lakeland tourist zone. In the Lakeland County we have 27 schools situated in 10 different communities: in the City of Cold Lake, the town of Bonnyville, the county of Lac La Biche; the villages of Glendon and Plamondon; the hamlet of Caslan; the Métis Settlement at Kikino, and the rural areas of Ardmore, Iron River, and Wandering River. There are approximately 6100 students that we serve.

Northern Lights Public Schools provides top quality education and our smaller schools give the advantage of a more personalized education and experience where individual accomplishments are recognized and celebrated.

Northern Lights Public Schools follows the Alberta Education curriculum. Our mission statement is *“Working together to help every student learn and excel”*. Our educators and staff are dedicated and work hard to help our students achieve their potential with their educational goals.

Northern Lights Public Schools recognizes the ethnic diversity within the Lakeland District. We offer a wide variety of programs designed to enrich our students. Language instruction is available in English, French, Cree, Russian and Arabic (depending on the school). French Immersion is also offered in some of our schools.



WHY CHOOSE NORTHERN LIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Northern Lights Public Schools welcomes international students to our schools! Besides support for international students we also offer:

- A choice of friendly communities and schools
- Schools where students and staff are entitled to a safe and caring learning environment
- High quality education and extra-curricular programming
- Professional educators and staff that are devoted to helping every student learn and excel
- Affordable tuition and fees

WELCOME

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM

The International Study Program provides excellent programming and support to assist you in receiving a great international experience. Throughout the program we give special attention to details that will make certain you are well cared for.

The support services we provide include:

- Quick processing of student applications
- School mentors who assist and provide support during the program including course placement and course selection
- Assistance with English as a Second Language tutors, if required

Northern Lights Public Schools works hard to make sure that you receive the best quality of care and support. If you have further questions please call the Learning Services office at 1-780-826-3145.



SCHOOL REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE

You will know which school you are attending before you arrive in Canada as your visa will be issued according to the school that has accepted you. You will not be allowed to change schools.

You will need to call the school you will be attending to arrange for a registration appointment. When you arrive at the school the office staff will be able to direct you. All students are given a Student Handbook at the beginning of the school year. Take time to carefully read through it as there is a lot of information that you will need to know such as class times and courses. The Student Handbook will also familiarize you with what is expected of you as a student. In Northern Lights Public Schools regular attendance is expected of all our students.

The school you attend will require copies of the following documents for their file:

- Passport
- Student Authorization
- Airline Ticket
- Medical Insurance
- Return Airline Ticket
- Medical Insurance
- Liability Waiver Form



Please bring these in to be photocopied when you start school.

COURSE INFORMATION AND SELECTION

The high schools in the Northern Lights Public Schools are based on a semester system.

Semester 1 September – January
Semester 2 February – June

In general, successfully finished courses earn five credits. Elective courses are usually three credits. A typical semester has four courses registered.

To earn an Alberta High School Diploma you must receive a minimum of 100 credits. If English is not your first language you must be prepared to study hard to earn a diploma. Some of the material may be difficult for you to understand and you may need to allow extra time to complete the required courses. For more information check out the Alberta Learning website at www.education.alberta.ca

(See chart on next two pages)



ALBERTA HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA: GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (ENGLISH)
The requirements indicated in this chart are the <u>minimum</u> requirements for a student to attain an Alberta High School Diploma. The requirements for entry into post-secondary institutions and workplaces may require additional and/or specific courses.
100 CREDITS including the following:
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS – 30 LEVEL (English Language Arts 30-1 or 30-2)
SOCIAL STUDIES – 30 LEVEL (Social Studies 30-1 or 30-2)
MATHEMATICS – 20 LEVEL (Mathematics 20-1, Mathematics 20-2 or Mathematics 20-3)
SCIENCE – 20 LEVEL ¹ (Science 20, Science 24, Biology 20, Chemistry 20 or Physics 20)
PHYSICAL EDUCATION 10 (3 CREDITS) ²
CAREER AND LIFE MANAGEMENT (3 CREDITS) ³
10 CREDITS IN ANY COMBINATION FROM:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career and Technology Studies (CTS) courses • Fine Arts courses • Second Languages⁴ courses • Physical Education 20 and/or 30 • Knowledge and Employability courses • Registered Apprenticeship Program courses • Locally developed/acquired and authorized courses in CTS, fine arts, second languages or Knowledge and Employability occupational courses⁵
10 CREDITS IN ANY 30-LEVEL COURSE (IN ADDITION TO A 30-LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND A 30-LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES COURSE AS SPECIFIED ABOVE) ⁶
These courses may include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-level locally developed/acquired and authorized courses • Advanced level (3000 series) in Career and Technology Studies courses • 30-level Work Experience courses⁷ • 30-level Knowledge and Employability courses • 30-level Registered Apprenticeship Program courses • 30-level Green Certificate Specialization courses • Special Projects 30

**PROGRAM
ADMINISTRATION AND
DELIVERY****Diploma and Certificate Requirements**

- ❶ The science requirement—Science 20 or 24, Biology 20, Chemistry 20 or Physics 20—may also be met with the 10-credit combination of Science 14 and Science 10.
- ❷ See information on [exemption from the physical education requirement](#).
- ❸ See information on [exemption from the CALM requirement](#).
- ❹ Students may earn any number of credits in the study of second languages, but only a maximum of 25 language credits may be used to meet the 100-credit requirement for the Alberta High School Diploma.
- ❺ Integrated Occupational Program (IOP) occupational courses may be used in place of Knowledge and Employability occupational courses to fulfill this requirement.
- ❻ 30-level English language arts or 30-level social studies courses from a different course sequence may not be used to meet the 30-level course requirement.
- ❼ Students may earn a maximum of 30 credits in Work Experience, but only 15 credits may be used to meet the 100-credit requirement for the Alberta High School Diploma.

Further Notes:

- For 30-level courses that have a diploma examination, the final course mark consists of a blend of the school-awarded mark (70%) and the diploma examination mark (30%).
- For more information, students in Francophone programs should consult the Alberta High School Diploma Requirements (Francophone).
- Mature students should consult the [Mature Students](#) section for applicable requirements.



When registering for courses keep in mind that classes and expectations may be quite different from what you are used to. Carefully select courses and take into consideration any suggestions the school coordinator or the international program office may offer you.



Northern Lights Public Schools does not offer ESL (English as a Second Language). Therefore, International students are required to meet the minimum *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)* requirements. An integrated approach to language learning is offered in the classroom. You will however, need to continue to develop your English language skills by immersing yourself fully in the English speaking environment. By participating in a regular classroom you will be given opportunities to:

- Interact with your English-speaking classmates
- Practice using the English language in both everyday and academic situations
- Develop your confidence as you take part in the same activities as your English-speaking classmates
- Continue to develop specific academic skills in the courses you choose

To help you improve your English skills, we offer a few suggestions:

- Speak, listen to and read English as often as possible
- Interact with English-speaking classmates and other people you meet
- Ask people to repeat what they have said if you do not understand it
- Read magazines, newspapers, and books in English
- Read a book in English that you have already read in your first language
- Listen to the radio and audio books in English
- View television
- Try to guess at meanings of words and then ask someone what it means, if you still do not understand
- Write in a notebook words that are new to you



Choosing the courses that are right for you is important for you to achieve success at school. You may have done well in your courses back home but that may not mean that you will do just as well in Canada. Courses in Alberta tend to emphasize creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving. Memorization of information typically will be inadequate to pass courses. Also, keep in mind that you may have to deal with learning in a second language. This may contribute to taking longer to comprehend and complete assignments. For this reason do not cause yourself more stress by registering for the most difficult courses. We suggest you give yourself until the second semester to get acclimatized to the English language and the culture before you challenge yourself with more difficult courses.

Suggestions for your First Semester

If possible, select only one academic course (math or a lower level English) and choose options/elective courses (physical education, computers, music, etc) to complete your timetable.

If possible, take a spare so that you have extra time at school to work on your assignments.

Do not choose the most difficult courses. Generally these courses are at a higher level and demand a lot of reading. There are usually varying levels at each course and your school mentor or international program office, can help you choose courses designed for your success.

If you did choose a course that you later find too difficult, please talk to your school coordinator. They can either help locate a tutor for you or they may prefer to arrange for you to transfer to a lower level course.

We all make mistakes and Canadian people will be patient with you as you adjust to our culture and the English-speaking language.

Instructional Fees

Northern Lights Public Schools does not cover your instructional fees. You will be required to pay these fees which may vary from school to school, depending on the courses you register for. Some courses require extra supplies. There are also additional fees to cover the costs of material, the yearbook, and lockers. Once you are registered and classes confirmed, then you will receive an invoice for these fees. Payment is expected as soon as possible.

Transportation to School

If you are a student that requires taking a bus to school there is a fee to ride the bus. It is your responsibility to pay for this cost, if it has not been included ahead of time. The average cost for transportation for the year is around \$500.00.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

While you live in Canada, your willingness to make the most of your experience, will determine your level of success. Please read the following expectations and make yourself very familiar with them.

ALL students are required to adhere to the rules that were outlined in this document. During your orientation here your mentor will review those rules to make sure you fully know and understand them. Please take special note of the following:

- You must attend school daily and you must pass your courses.
- You are not allowed to drink alcohol, smoke, or use non-prescriptive drugs. The legal drinking age in Canada is 18. **Participating in any illegal activity will lead to immediate dismissal from the program.**
- You are not allowed to travel alone. Your host family is your guardian while you are living in Canada. They must know at all times where you are. Any travel must be approved in written notice, by your parents.
- You are not allowed to change your host family at will. If you are having any problems please discuss them with your Student Advocacy Counselor.
- You must always respect your host family and their privacy. Talking about your host family in a negative way to friends is rude and considered a social faux pas (unacceptable).

Please keep in mind that these rules are put into place to make sure that everyone in International Study program has a successful and rewarding experience.



THE DAY OF ARRIVAL

To get the best start to the school year we recommend that you arrive to your host community at least one week prior to the beginning of school. This will give you time to adjust to your new surroundings, get over jet lag and arrive in a good frame of mind for your first day at the school.

You will first be arriving at the Edmonton International Airport. Depending where your host community is, you probably have another 2 ½ hours of driving to arrive to your new home. Transportation should be arranged for you ahead of time. Normally it is the responsibility of the host parents to pick up the international student from the airport.

Welcome to Canada!



Passports and Visas

When you arrive, you will be in possession of a valid passport and student authorization card. It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to see that your authorization and passport remain valid during your stay in Canada. The school mentor will require a **copy** of your passport and authorization. If you have questions about the expiry dates, contact the school mentor.

Return Airline Tickets and Medical Insurance

As mentioned earlier your school principal will also need a **copy** of your return airline ticket and your medical insurance. Ensure these go with you on your first day of school. Once you have made copies of the documents you need for school, place **ALL your originals and important paperwork** in a safe and secure place to store them. This will ensure you do not have serious problems when it is time to return home.



THE HOST FAMILY – THEIR ROLE, YOUR ROLE

Caring and supportive host families play a vital role to a successful international program. Living with a host family provides the best opportunity for you to experience the day to day lifestyle of a Canadian, the culture and the English language.

Canadian families range from the traditional nuclear family (father, mother, and child/ren) to no children, to one parent and one child. There are many different types of families.

Canada is a multi-cultural society. This means that there are many ethnic backgrounds.

The Host Family's Role

Host families sometimes receive a monthly stipend for hosting an international student. If you have paid for your host family up front, you do not need to worry about paying the family. For your comfort your host family will provide

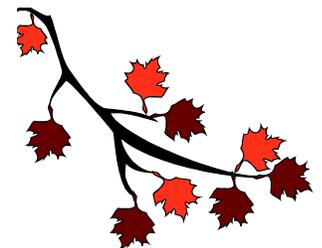
- A private bedroom, with a window
- Bed, bedding and a dresser
- Adequate heat, light and ventilation
- Access to a bathroom and bathing facilities
- Three meals a day
- Access to laundry facilities
- Reasonable transportation needs (this does not include transportation to and from school)

Host families are expected to:

- Provide a safe, caring and supportive environment
- Have the participation of all family members to host you
- Be willing to share their lives with others
- Have a genuine interest in YOU and be willing to open their hearts as well as their homes

All host families are expected to treat you like a member of the family. Expect to be included in family daily activities. Your role as a family member will begin as soon as you arrive. Do not expect to be treated as a guest. From the start you will be expected to share in family chores. Chores may include washing the dishes, sweeping the floors, cleaning the bathroom. Communication with your host family is the key to being a member of the family.

Home Sweet Home



Your Role in the Host Family

Getting settled

It will take a few days to settle into your new life here in Canada. During this time, get to know your host family and talk to them about expectations. Your host family will show you around the house and teach you how things work. Please do not assume that everything in the house is for your use. Some families have rules about television and computer use, some appliances, and the use of certain rooms. If you are not sure what is permitted and what is not, ask. If you are still unsure, ask again. Your host family wants to make you as comfortable as possible and to fit into their family life as soon as possible. Communication is the key.

Sharing Bathrooms

You may be sharing one bathroom with the host family. It is important to check on the shower/bath times and how long you can take in there. Remember to clean up after yourself and leave the room clean for the next person.

Your Personal Space

Your bedroom is considered your personal space. In the first few weeks you may find yourself more tired with adjusting to new people, a different lifestyle, and concentrating on a second language. If during this time you experience the need to be alone, take the time to be by yourself. Make sure you inform the host mother or father of the need for quiet time so they are not worrying that you are unhappy. Make sure you don't spend too much time alone in your room! Communication is the key.

Personal Items

Check with your host family before you use things that do not belong to you. Do not assume that because you are allowed to use certain things at home that it is also fine to use them in your host home. Always ask when in doubt.

Open Communication

In your first few months, in Canada, you may experience feelings of disappointment with your host family. Remember that just because you have always done things a certain way back home does not mean that your host family will do things the same way. Understanding and accepting that both ways may be right is needed to live with possible differences. Talk, talk, and talk. If there is anything you do not understand, ask. Once you understand what is expected of you, there will be less chance of problems arising. Always deal with things when they are small before they turn into BIG problems. Communication is the key.



YOUR NEW COMMUNITY

We highly recommend that you get to know your community and surroundings as soon as possible. The sooner you involve yourself in the community the sooner you will make friends. Check out sports activities or clubs that may interest you. For some it is very difficult to fit in but remember that it takes time. Be patient, work hard and smile! People will approach you if you smile. Go out in your community and embrace your new life.



Banking

You will need to open a bank account when you arrive. If possible, open your account at one of Canada's 5 major chartered banks: Bank of Montreal (BM), Bank of Nova Scotia (BNS), Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), and Toronto Dominion (TD). These banks have branches located in our communities.

For your financial safety, do not share your bank account information or PIN number. To open a bank account, go to the bank of your choice and tell a staff member that you wish to open an account with them. You will be directed to a customer service representative who will explain the various types of accounts and assist you in opening an account. To open a bank account you must have identification papers:

- A passport, plus
- Any other signed document identifying yourself

Types of accounts and charges will vary slightly from bank to bank. Most people get a debit card to do their banking. Debit cards allow you to take money out of your account at any time. Most stores and most banks also use debit cards. You do have to be careful as some places charge a processing fee of up to \$2.00 to use a debit card.

Credit Cards and Debit Cards

Credit cards like VISA and Mastercard and/or Debit cards like Interac or Cirrus provide the easiest way of accessing money or purchasing items when you are traveling. In Canada banks are open Monday – Friday, except holidays. There may be up to a \$5.00 fee for withdrawing cash. Check with your bank and understand the service fees that apply to your account.



HEALTH AND MEDICAL CARE

It is compulsory for all International Students to have medical coverage before you come to Canada. Medical costs are extremely high if you do not have proper medical insurance.

Be sure you know exactly what services your medical insurance covers and also what expenses you may have to pay for yourself. If you are unsure about anything connected with your insurance or medical expenses, check with your host family, medical persons, doctor or the school mentor.



No matter what your medical insurance covers, you will still have to pay for your visits to a dentist or doctor. Check ahead of time and make sure you take enough money to pay for the visit. You will be given a receipt for the amount you paid and that receipt can be sent to your insurance company and they will reimburse. **It is your responsibility to pay for your medical treatments. Do not expect your host family to cover these costs.** Make sure you have your host family write down your insurance policy name, number and phone number, just in case of any accident.

Please make sure that you inform the school mentor of any serious medical conditions that you may develop during your stay in Canada.

Emergencies

The emergency number in Canada is **911**. If you are alone and need immediate attention, dial **911** on your telephone. You will need to be able to give the person who answers the phone:

- You name
- Your address
- That you need an ambulance

Emergency personal and an ambulance will be sent to you.
Examples for calling for an ambulance:

- Choking
- Inability to breath
- Chest pain
- Anything that is life threatening



OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Paying for Expenses

It is your responsibility to provide money to be spent on entertainment. An example of this is if you were to go to the movies and it is not a family event. You will be expected to pay for yourself. If your host family is going out for dinner then you are not expected to pay for yourself, as it is their responsibility to provide you with meals during your stay with them.

As well as entertainment you are responsible for your school supplies, personal expenses, long distance phone calls, and your transportation to and from school.

Student Travel

You are not permitted to travel alone. You are permitted to travel without written permission from your natural parents, if the trip is within Canada **with** your host family or with your school (field trip). Although you do not need written permission for these types of trips, you still need to let everyone know where you are going so that you can be reached at all times. If you wish to travel under any other circumstances, you must get written permission from your natural parents. You are responsible for obtaining this permission. Please refer to the Parental Travel Permission form in the appendix.

Religion

You may be of a different faith than your host family. We do encourage all students to experience as many different things as possible and if your host family would like you to attend their church with them, try it out. If you are not comfortable with it or do not wish to attend, talk to your host family about it.

Long Distance Phone Calls

It is your responsibility to pay for any long distance phone charges that you make. Please discuss this with your host family to set up a system for making long distance phone calls.

Lap Tops and Internet

You will need to discuss the use of Internet with your host family, whether or not you have your own laptop, cell phone or tablet. Do not just expect to have use of the Internet just because you want it. You will need to respect your host family's decision pertaining to Internet usage.

ALL the schools within Northern Lights Public Schools have high speed internet services which you are allowed to use, free of charge, to communicate with your family members.

DEPARTURE DAY



It may seem a long way off now but before you know it, it will be time to head back home. It is quite possible that you will be heading home with more luggage than you brought with you. For that reason you will need to make sure that you do not exceed the maximum weight and pieces of luggage that you can travel with on your international flight. Please check with your airline to determine the number of pieces of luggage and carry-on baggage that you make take with you and the maximum sizes and weights allowed for each.



You can mail or ship home any luggage ahead of time to avoid any problems at the airport, the day of departure. If your luggage is over the allowed weight, size, or amount of luggage, be prepared to pay a larger fee at the airlines counter.

Return transportation to the airport should be arranged with the host family.

We trust that this handbook has given you valuable help and tools to equip you on your Canadian adventures in our schools and communities. As this handbook is only a basic guide please ask for more information if you need it. We understand each student's experiences and needs will be unique to them. We are here for you. ASK. Communication is the key.



APPENDIX

Student/Host Family Introduction Sheet _____ 18
Parental Permission to Travel _____ 19

STUDENT/HOST FAMILY INTRODUCTION SHEET

On your first day complete this form with your host mother/father. These questions are to assist you in learning important things that will help you to fit into the family as soon as possible.

1. Should I call you by your first name or do you have a different preference?

2. What time do you usually have meals? Do we eat meals all together?

3. Are there meals that I am required to prepare myself?

4. If I am hungry, and it is not mealtime, should I ask if I could have something to eat?

5. Should I do my own laundry? If yes, please show me how to use your machines.

6. Is there a bedtime curfew for weeknights?

7. Is there a bedtime curfew for weekend nights?

8. What time in the morning do I need to get up to get ready for school?

9. Are there special religious or family holidays you observe?

10. Will I have access to the Internet? Do you have time restrictions?

PARENTAL PERMISSION TO TRAVEL

Unauthorized travel by the student while in Canada is not permitted.

Any students wanting to travel within Canada must provide to the host school, details and written permission from their natural parent(s).

The International Study Program or the host family cannot supervise personal travel. Any travel that is approved by the student's natural parent(s) is the entire responsibility of the student and the parent(s). Neither Northern Lights Public Schools, nor the host parents can assume any responsibility for the student during personal travel.

Name of Student: _____

Departure Date of Trip: _____

Return Date of Trip: _____

Destination: _____

Emergency Contact Information while on the Trip:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

I give my permission for my child to travel as stated above.

Signature of Parent(s): _____

Printed Name of Parent(s): _____

Date Signed: _____