

Educational Performance Tours

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“We love their organization, as far as I’m concerned, Educational Performance Tours is the only way to see NY...My students loved the experience each time! In 2000, 2005 and again in 2009, our instructors were great and the kids really enjoyed themselves.”

Cindy Kinney, Dance Director

Hemet High School,

Hemet, California



When the 33-member Hemet High School dance team from Southern California spent a week in NYC, where *DS* is headquartered, we decided to tag along to learn their secrets for a snag-free trip.

DS caught up with the members of the squad at Midtown’s New Dance Group Arts Center, where they were beginning a private class, arranged by [Educational Performance Tours \(EPT\)](#), with Kelly McHale, a four-year Radio City Rockette. Clad in matching red HHS tops and black bottoms, the team practiced kicks and tipping (a slinky way of walking on your toes) and learned a routine to *Chicago*’s “All That Jazz,” which prompted several girls to whisper, “We have to remember this!” The thrilled looks on the dancers’ faces are exactly why squad advisor Cindy Kinney plans such team trips every two years.

After class, the group was bussed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where, along with admiring Monet’s *Water Lilies* and Claus de Werve’s *Virgin and Child* sculpture, we chatted with the dancers to see what they were most looking forward to during the trip. For some, it was tangoing on top of the Empire State Building (which they did, to Kinney’s rendition of Archie Bleyer’s “Hernando’s Hideaway”). For others, it was seeing *Wicked* on Broadway that very night.

After chatting with the team, we sat down with Kinney to learn how she managed such a jam-packed and successful trip.

TIP #1: **HIRE A TOUR COMPANY**

Kinney says she couldn’t have planned a large-scale trip without the guidance of [Educational Performance Tours](#),

a company that helps create trips for student groups specializing in the performing arts. Most tour companies can customize an itinerary for large group trips and can schedule every detail, from the hotel and bus service to meals and activities, according to your budget. While Kinney advises others to do what she did, she also warns against picking an organization blindly. Instead, ask each potential company for a list of references, then make sure to call them. “If [the company] isn’t willing to give you a list of people who’ve gone on tours with them, walk away real fast,” she says.

TIP #2: **DO YOUR RESEARCH**

[EPT](#) organized all activities for HHS according to Kinney’s requests. The theater, choir and dance groups (which all traveled together for this trip) separately discussed what they most wanted to see and do; then, the directors narrowed the choices before reporting back to [Educational Performance Tours](#).

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TIP #3: SWAP CELL NUMBERS

It may seem difficult to keep track of so many people in a city as large as NYC, but Hemet's theater, choir and dance directors were proactive and created a list of cell phone number of all students and chaperones attending and passed out copies for everyone to carry. Beforehand, the directors asked the parents to check their cell phone plans to make sure the students wouldn't be charged extra for roaming or out-of-state calls; if they would be, phone numbers were kept only by chaperones to use for emergencies.

TIP #4: DRESS ALIKE

Group members kept track of each other by wearing the same colored clothing. An added bonus: "It makes it nice, because you don't have to bring to many outfits," says junior Ashley Wines. "Otherwise, my suitcase would have been 80 pounds instead of 40."

TIP #5: FUNDRAISE FAR IN ADVANCE

Chances are, your school won't fund group trips, so you'll have to work hard for the money. Consider pairing up

with other arts groups at your school for group discounts on tickets. Kinney held two to three fundraisers a month starting in August 2004 to prepare for their April 2005 trip. The team giftwrapped during the holidays and put on two benefit shows. In October, the dance, choir and theater groups all held a barbecue, at which each club performed a song, dance or skit for guests. The groups charged \$10 per ticket, and all cash from pre-sold tickets by performers went to their corresponding group, while all money taken at the door was divided evenly among the three groups. Students can also consider taking on an afterschool job to meet costs. Senior Richard Cun spent his free moments serving ice cream at Dairy Queen.

TIP #6: GO WITH THE FLOW

A common scenario: You and friends are at the mall. Suzie wants to go shopping, but Mary wants to get a snack. Pretty soon, everyone goes their separate ways. While this isn't a problem in a contained environment, letting the group disperse in a dozen directions can be dangerous in an unfamiliar city. Make sure all travelers understand *before* takeoff that they must "go with

what the group is doing, not what they want to do," says Kinney. If splitting up is unavoidable, keep groups sizable to allow for safety in numbers, and set a specific meeting place and time to reconvene.

TIP #7: BRING THE 'RENTS

You might groan at this idea, but it has great benefits. For your coach, having a few parents come along on the trip means more eyes keeping watch and, for you, more opportunities for the larger group to break off into smaller ones. (Translation: You'll be able to check out that cool store you saw on the way to the museum.) It also allows your parents to experience a place that they may have never been either, *and* have a little fun, too!

Source: Lindsey Lelak, *Dance Spirit Magazine*, "Smooth Sailing" Volume 9, No. 6—July/August 2005

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