

Sweet Adventures: Educational Excursions at Hersheypark

Our team is representing Hersheypark and intends to promote our services to The Philadelphia School District Board (middle and high schools within the Philadelphia Area). Our team consists of Dionna Swinson (Chief Executive Officer), Natalie Painter (Chief Marketing Officer), and Tatum Wallace (Chief Operating Officer). Sweet Adventures is acting as a retreat for students to understand the beauty of learning using in-person engagement. We want schools to know that a typical day of learning does not have to be structured, but rather a creative environment that exists outside of the classroom. Our tactic is hands on learning instead of physical and verbal test taking or essay writing. Our organization wants to focus on the development of the youth community, specifically the Philadelphia School District. These are some examples of schools we are focused on: Lincoln High School, McKinley Middle School, Dunbar Paul L. School, High School for the Creative & Performing Arts, and Overbrook High School. We are reaching out to the board to promote a brighter form of education for youth by providing a mentor program within the retreat as well. This will show students how getting exposure to amusement parks and tourism can get them thinking outside of the box early, as well as interacting with others in a more comfortable setting in order to make connections.

Sweet Adventures chose this target audience because we believe that everyone should have equal access to educational opportunities and adventure. Since there is a gap between the quality of education that children in Philadelphia schools are getting and limited resources that can be distributed, we want to provide them with an experience that hits on both recreational and educational sides of Hersheypark. The School Board are aware of these issues; however, the limited amount in paid property taxes, and large institutions like UPenn owning the most property, and being exempt from property taxes, hinders what can be given to public school at

elementary, middle school and high school levels within Philadelphia. This makes it exceedingly difficult to provide and foster new learning innovations in the classroom, and especially out. We want to create the opportunity for a more luxurious, adventurous, and experiential, learning environment for these communities and their schools, which is why implementing our field trip retreat in this city would be extremely beneficial for both parties involved. Children from ages 12-18 will not only explore many different careers, subjects, etc. but also be able to look at learning in a unique way other than structural academic setting, attending classes.

It is important to note that our company believes in an authoritative learning approach rather than an authoritarian one. This means that we think children should learn by physically doing things themselves while still having a dedicated support system along the way, rather than being fully guided and told what to do. At Sweet Adventures, we have a mentorship program that focuses on providing guidance to the children that come to visit the park. Getting one on one time with this mentor can let children observe, ask questions, and then engage instead of simply listening and retaining information. This program has proven to work and change the perspectives of both teachers and students for over 5 years. Presenting this idea to the Philadelphia School Board will be a fantastic way to get this idea up, off the ground and running because it all starts with those in charge. Once they make these changes for the schools, we could also incorporate this into their curriculum at multiple grade levels to ensure that all students get to take part in the experience. We believe the most valuable part of our field trip package is the accessibility to a trusted, reliable mentor. We believe in creating meaningful relationships and if this field trip package is instilled at multiple grade levels within the district, students will have the time to develop a real, meaningful connection with their mentor being able to return year after year, and this is where we can see true progress be made. Why does Hershey care about education so much? Our founder, Milton Hershey, opened his own school and home for

orphaned boys in 1909. This shows that we were founded on the premise of helping students lead happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

We are offering a couple different packages for student groups to come and visit Hersheypark. Our Almond Joy (\$55.99) includes school bus transportation to and from the park, a one-day wrist band for access to the amusement park and guest speakers, as well as a voucher and T-shirt. Our Kit Kat package (\$75.99) offers all of that but also includes access to the waterpark. Lastly, the Reese's package (\$120.99) includes transportation, 2-day wrist band passes to waterpark and amusement, a catered class picnic, and an overnight stay at the Hershey lodge. Each student must attend a seminar for two sessions per day (3 for Reese's).

Hersheypark has 3.19 million visitors annually, meaning that there is a large pool of individuals that we could get on board. We contribute around \$150k in profit for Hersheypark by working with seven other school districts within PA. These include Allentown School District, Mifflin County, Chesnut Ridge, Central Dauphin, Williamsburg, Hazelton Area, and Shippensburg area. In the short five years that we have been running Sweet Adventures, we are proud to say that all schools that have participated in the retreat have come back again the next year (100% retention rate).

Building relationships with different school districts across Pennsylvania has allowed us to generate more and more connections, and we hope that Philadelphia is next on the list. When comparing Sweet Adventures to any other field trip program in Pennsylvania, ours is special because we are catering to such a unique audience (buyer) which again is the youth within Philadelphia. Dorney Park and Wild Water Kingdom is an example of another amusement park in Pennsylvania, a direct competitor. While Dorney Park is similar in nature to Hershey Park, it is the quality of the experience we have been equipped to provide since 1923 that sets us apart.

We have seventy-six exhilarating rides, compared to Dorney park who rest at sixty-four rides. We are also home to Hershey's Chocolate, which is a strong brand alone, outside of the amusement and hotel space. Not only do we bring the fun and thrill of amusement, but a delicious and candied chocolate wonderland for everyone out there with a sweet tooth! We focus on not only the experience, but the feeling, the taste, the smell, and the scenery, helping you escape everyday life while telling a story. Dorney Park offers similar field trip packages, however none of them include a trusted mentor program, focus on education, or target to help underfunded districts. Highlighting the importance of education while in an environment that includes leisurely and recreational activities could be seen as distracting or contradicting to the purpose for some, however we see it as creating an engaging and social setting for students to learn through observation instead of just typical, structural memorization.

In the five years that Sweet Adventures has successfully been in operation for, we have been able to not only distinguish ourselves through actions but also through rewards. In 2022, our organization was granted the "Golden Educational Excursion Award" by the Harrisburg Visitors Bureau, which stands as a true testament to our values and what we strive to provide year in and year out for the cause we care about. We honestly believe that our children are our future and knowledge is their power. We pride ourselves in being able to promote educational growth while also allowing children to experience learning through adventure via physical interaction and stimulation. Our amusement park and services provide the perfect environment for children to understand the skills they are learning and using in the classroom.

In conclusion, we believe our amusement package(s) offers a tremendous amount of value in the experience of tourism, out of the box learning styles and environments, the progression of student development and character through our mentorship program, and just pure childlike fun. Amongst the other benefits mentioned, we want to provide all the elements

required to make long-lasting memories. If you ask most people their favorite or standout moments of their years in grade school, they will say their school field trips! Ultimately, we want to be a place you think of when you think of your favorite childhood memories. We hope to foster meaningful connections within our mentorship program, and popularize new innovative views and practices on learning, introducing a whole new approach on what makes a “classroom”.