

mcdowell

ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



teacher information.

This guide includes information on cost, schedule, and class offerings including class curriculums and standard correlations.

trip planning.

This guide includes information on how to plan and organize your trip, and tips and tricks for teachers and chaperones on the trip.

participant papers.

The guide includes information on student paperwork, packing lists, parent/chaperone letters, and much more.

2025-2026



Welcome to the McDowell Environmental Center

Welcome to the most incredible field trip experience your students will ever have! At McDowell Environmental Center (MEC), our philosophy is to teach students in the great outdoors and give them an experience impossible to have in an indoor classroom. They will learn by seeing nature up close, wading into a stream to catch invertebrates, touching sandstone canyon walls, identifying trees using a dichotomous key and more.

We offer the best in hands-on environmental science in a 1,140-acre outdoor classroom. We also offer fun, team-building classes that work wonders for the group dynamics of your class and individual challenges that build students' self-confidence. Our instructors have been trained in a child-centered, experiential approach to teaching and are passionate about sharing the natural world with students and adults.

Camp McDowell has served as the summer camp and conference center for the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama for over half a century. The McDowell Environmental Center has been in operation for over 30 years and has hosted more than 180,000 participants. We provide a nonsectarian educational program for all students regardless of race, religion, ability, or gender.

Once you contact us and confirm your trip, we will guide your planning process. **Please read through this packet very thoroughly as the first step in planning your trip.** If you plan to bring multiple grade levels, consult with us about how to provide different classes for each grade level. Each class variance allows students who are returning to receive new information and experiences.

Materials in this packet may be duplicated to ensure that your students, parents and chaperones are well informed. Chaperones are vital to making this trip go smoothly, so we strongly encourage you to select those individuals carefully. Notice the pages to print out and send home to parents and chaperones.

We look forward to creating a unique learning experience for you and your students. If you are new to our program, please feel free to schedule a phone call with us. We can't wait to meet you and your students. We hope this trip will be the most magical and educational trip of their lives!

Please email pc@campmcdowell.org or call 205-387-1806 ext. 108 with any questions you have.

Meredith Donaldson (she/her), Director
Kim Corson (she/her), Assistant Director

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DATES & RATES

We offer trips from late February - May and September - December

[Contact us](#) to book a trip or learn more

DAY TRIP PRICES

2025-2026 School Year

Lunch Provided: **\$48 per person**

Bag lunch or 'pasture party' meal depending on staffing and time

Bring Your Own Lunch: **\$40 per person**

For every ten students who attend, one adult may come for free!

Additional adults may attend for full price

Payment: At the end of your trip, you will receive an invoice with the total amount due for your school. Payment of this invoice is due within ten days of the completion of your trip. Please make checks payable to McDowell Environmental Center.

Scholarships: Contact us to inquire about funding assistance.

New Schools: For new schools, a **non-refundable** deposit is required 2 weeks from the date your reservation is made in order to secure your place on our calendar. The reservation fee is \$200.00 for fewer than 50 students or \$400.00 for 50 students or more. This deposit will be used towards your trip total. **The reservation fee is waived for annually returning schools.**

PROGRAM DETAILS

Students who attend McDowell Environmental Center are able to make connections and observations about the world around them. Our diverse forests, streams, canyons, ponds, waterfalls, fields, hiking trails, and ropes course serve as our classroom, rain or shine. This is an eye-opening experience that will impact students for their entire lives.

Schedule

<u>Example #1</u>	<u>Example #2</u>	<u>Example #3</u>
8:45 Arrival & Welcome	10:00 Arrival & Welcome	8:45 Arrival & Welcome
9-12 Morning class	10:30 Morning class	9-12 Morning class
12 Lunch	12 Lunch	12 Lunch
1-2:30 Afternoon class	1-2:30 Afternoon class	1-4 Afternoon class
2:30 Depart	2:30 Depart	4:00 Depart

Please Note: Student field groups will rotate through all the class selections chosen by the Lead Teacher

Classes

Our Staff

The staff at McDowell Environmental Center come from all across the county and are professional educators. They go through an intensive staff training focusing on a student-centered approach to education. They will plan all classes and lessons and provide any materials needed. Our instructors share their love of nature with students. The ratio of one instructor for every twelve students promises safety as well as a personalized learning experience - with plenty of fun, adventure and increased confidence.

State Standards

Our curriculum is correlated to multi-state Courses of Study standards for Science and Social Studies as well as the Next Generation Science Standards. Please see [our website](#) for detailed information about how our classes correlate to these standards.

Class Locations

Our classes take place outside and on trails, though we do have indoor meeting locations for inclement weather if needed. Classes will start at a central location and most will hit the trails within the first 30 minutes. Check the curriculum guide for hiking distances and activity levels for each of our classes. If you have any questions regarding accessibility or possible accommodations for classes, please contact us.

Health & Safety

Camp Nurse & Medication

We make every reasonable effort to ensure the health and safety of your students while they are here. All staff are CPR/First Aid certified. Camp McDowell has two full time nurses that take great pride in the care of our students and *may* be on-site at the time of your trip. Schools are responsible for handling their own students' medications.

Meals

Depending on the number of overnight students in attendance at the time, we *may* be able to provide lunch for day groups, for an additional cost. If our dining hall is full, or we are unable to provide your group with lunch, your group will need to bring their own lunches. We can provide water coolers and picnic locations for your students' lunch. **All of our kitchens are nut-free*. The following dietary needs can be accommodated with indication on the health form: vegetarian, vegan, no pork/beef, dairy-free, and gluten free (*not celiac-safe).** Additional allergies and dietary restrictions cannot be accommodated. **If you need to pack meals or supplemental foods to ensure a student's safety, please contact pc@campmcdowell.org and we'll get you more information.** **Cross-contamination is possible.*

Accessibility

We can customize our classes to make them fun and accessible for most students with cognitive or physical limitations. Please discuss any special needs with us **ahead of time** so that we can be prepared to meet them.

Emergency Guidelines

Upon your arrival you will be briefed on emergency procedures by the MEC staff. If advanced medical care is required, the patient can be taken to Walker Baptist Medical Center in Jasper, 15 miles away. One chaperone or teacher must drive to Camp McDowell separately so that a vehicle will be at Camp in the event that an emergency should occur. In the event of a severe weather emergency, we will guide everyone to a storm shelter (multiple located around camp).

LEAD TEACHER INFORMATION

The Lead Teacher's Role

Most of the Lead Teacher's responsibilities deal with pre-trip preparations. The enclosed [Trip Planning Form](#) lists your responsibilities and the [Lead Teacher Timeline](#) helps you to sequence them. During the program we encourage you to be a participant, learning along with your students.

Health and Release Form

Lead teachers are responsible for distributing the link for the online Health & Waiver Form and ensuring all are completed. Each school will have a unique link to the Health and Release Form online to fill out. The lead teacher will share the link with participants and parents/guardians of students. **All participants (including all chaperones and teachers) must have a completed Health and Waiver Form to attend.** If you need to use paper copies of the Health and Waiver Form, please email us and we will share them with you. Paper forms must be mailed to Camp McDowell and arrive 14 days prior to your trip.

Teacher and Chaperone Guidelines

There must be at least one adult chaperone in each field group and cabin. MEC recommends a **1 to 10 adult/student ratio including teachers**. We have found that too many chaperones detract from the experience for students.

Planning and Cancellation Policies

Planning Policy: An **accurate** count of participants is due at the time of planning form submission (90 days prior to the scheduled trip date).

Cancellation Policy: If you cancel within 90 days of your visit, the school is responsible for a payment of 10% of the number of participants (student and adult) on the contract. If the planning form was not submitted we will use the number provided on the Reservation Contract. Payment is due within 30 days of cancellation. If you cancel within 30 days of your visit, the school is responsible for a payment of 50% of the number of participants (student and adult) on the contract.

If the planning form was not submitted we will use the number provided on the Reservation Contract. Payment is due within 30 days of cancellation. Schools are able to carry over the amount owed to a rescheduled trip for the same numbers of participants that occurs within 1 year of the original trip date.

Lead Teacher Timeline

As Soon As Possible

- ☐ Email **Reservation Contract** (mail deposit for new schools)
- ☐ New Schools: Arrange a parent and/or student pre-trip meeting at your school
- ☐ Recruit physically-active chaperones, at least one for every cabin and field group
- ☐ Arrange for transportation through your school, or private charter
- ☐ Suggestion: Collect a deposit from students to secure their spot on the trip

3 months before

- ☐ Email the completed and signed 2-page [Trip Planning Form](#)
- ☐ Send out the [Parent and Chaperone Letters](#)
- ☐ Send out the online link to the **Health and Release Form** (link will be emailed to you)

2 months before

- ☐ Confirm your final numbers of participating students and adults & notify MEC of any changes

1 month before

- ☐ Email the [Field Group Lists](#) to us
- ☐ Check that all participants attending have completed the online **Health and Release Form**

2-3 weeks before

- ☐ Check that all participants attending have completed the online **Health and Release Form**
- ☐ *If using paper forms:* Mail the original **Health and Release Form** to us. Please arrange them alphabetically, split by student and adult.

1 week before

- ☐ Contact us to check in about last minute updates, details, and estimated arrival time
- ☐ Make copies of the [Field Group Lists](#) for all of your chaperones and co-teachers

DAY of the TRIP (before leaving the school)

- ☐ Be sure everyone has appropriate clothes for the weather, closed toed shoes, and water bottles
- ☐ Hand out copies of the Field Group Lists to your chaperones and co-teachers

ARRIVAL at CAMP:

- ☐ Meet the MEC staff greeters at the Welcome Center
- ☐ Give any last-minute group changes to the staff greeters
- ☐ Join us for a brief Welcome Meeting and head off to activities
- ☐ Relax and have a great time!

Helpful Hints For Planning Your Trip

- **Have your students wear name tags**
 - They can be as simple as pieces of masking tape with the student's names on them. This allows our staff and your chaperones to call the students by name in class.
- **Divide the students into Field Groups of 10-13**
 - Please [email](#) this list to us 2 weeks before the trip. By dividing them before you come, we can move right into the classes upon arrival. Please assign one or two chaperones to each field group.
- **Plan snacks for your trip**
 - Especially for younger students (1st, 2nd and 3rd grade), it is a good idea to plan for snacks. Possible snack times include: on the bus, immediately after you get here, mid-morning, or right before you leave.
 - ***Please let us know when you plan these, so that we can adjust our schedule accordingly. Also, if students are taking their snacks with them to MEC classes, have them carry their own snacks in a light backpack.***
- **Ensure that all students and adults have filled out the *Health and Waiver Forms***
 - All students and adults attending need to have completed the health and release form online to participate
- **Have students bring a change of shoes and possibly clothes**
 - If your students are taking *Canoeing or Aquatic Adventures* they will get wet and muddy and may need a change of shoes and clothes.
- **Have students bring water bottles**
 - Students need to keep themselves hydrated while outside as their activities are often physical in nature.
- **Have students dress appropriately**
 - Rain gear, warm clothes (if cold) and hats are great!
 - Closed-toed shoes only: no sandals, flip flops, or Crocs.

Student & Chaperone Tips

Preparing Your Students

The more prepared your students are for the trip, the quicker they will acclimate and start enjoying their experience. Essential topics to discuss with your students:

- The schedule, including estimated arrival and departure times, when lunch and snacks will be, etc.
- What classes you have chosen, what to wear to class, level & type of physical activity
- The expectations for students including your school's guidelines, MEC rules (below), expected behavior, and consequences
- Where Camp McDowell is located and the travel time to Camp
- Answering any questions and calming nerves or fears about the trip

Rules for students at McDowell Environmental Center

- Always ask a chaperone if you leave the group. Take a buddy with you. Tell a chaperone
- Please help keep camp free of litter and graffiti
- MEC staff must approve the collection of any plants, animals, and other natural things
- Please don't chew gum at camp. Animals cannot digest gum that they find on the ground
- The challenge course and any construction areas are off limits
- Walk, don't run- there are many roots and rocks to trip over
- Bare feet and sandals are only allowed in the cabins
- "If you can't say something nice...Don't say nothin' at all." –*Thumper from Bambi*
- Do not enter anyone else's cabin
- Playgrounds and the Rec Hall may only be used with adult supervision
- Do not ring the bell in front of the dining hall- It is for emergencies only!

Helpful Hints for Choosing Chaperones

- Please limit chaperones to 1-2 per field group. Too many adults in each group can distract from the experience for students.
- Make sure they will be a positive role model for the group. Our classes are held outdoors rain or shine. If the chaperone is not enthusiastic about being outside, this will lessen the students' experience.
- Chaperones should be in good health. The classes at McDowell Environmental Center are very active. Most of them require some degree of hiking, often up and down steep hills. The distance hiked each day varies from 1/2 mile to 6 miles, depending on the schedule and classes.
- Let chaperones know that the schedule will be very busy and what is expected of them. They will be with the students all day. Sometimes they might be the only chaperone present.
- Make sure they are committed to taking an active role in supervision of the whole group. Taking care of one's own child is different from supervising a group of 12 students.
- Consider asking parents to complete an application if they are interested in being a chaperone. This can help you make a well-informed decision about who to choose, especially if you have many interested adults and need to narrow the number down.

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Outdoor environmental education embraces teachable moments which happen regularly in an outdoor classroom. All instructors are professional educators. Your students will most likely have different instructors for each class. Because of this, students will have varying experiences in classes and may hike on different trails. Instructors will cover the key terms and meet the learning objectives for each class.

Science & Ecology Classes

ANIMALS IN MOTION

Ever wonder what animals do all day while we are tromping through the woods? Well this is your chance to find out! Explore Camp McDowell through a detective lens to look for clues as to what the resident wildlife are up to. Will you spot the clues they leave behind?

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: ~0.75 miles

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Practice their observation skills to interpret animal signs
- Hypothesize interactions between living and non-living things
- Identify all the different types of signs animals can leave behind

AQUATIC ADVENTURES

*In this hands-on, boots-in class participants will spend time catching and observing a variety of aquatic organisms. Together learners will explore how the presence of macro-invertebrates can help us determine the health of water bodies and use their characteristics and adaptations to help identify them. In a three hour class, learners will also use chemical testing to explore how abiotic factors impact water quality. Finally, we'll discuss how changes to their environment could impact their ability to survive. **Students should come prepared to get wet in this class. Students must wear sturdy closed toed shoes such as old shoes/rain boots (no Crocs).***

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: Ranges from vehicle transportation to a 0.5 - 1.5 mile hike

Activity Level: Varies by site selected. Accommodations for all abilities available, but requires notice

Students will:

- Define the term aquatic macroinvertebrate and identify by collecting organisms in the pond
- Observe the structures of macroinvertebrates and predict the functions of their specialized structures
- Hypothesize how environmental changes may impact macroinvertebrates within a body of water
- Understand the impact of abiotic factors on water health through chemical testing (3 hour version)

DOWN TO EARTH

Through observation and exploration of habitats at Camp McDowell, students assess the impact of a reclaimed coal mine on the local ecosystem. Students observe sedimentary rock types associated with coal formation, as well as weathering and erosion processes that result in sedimentation. Students close the class by discussing the need for the responsible use of natural resources.

Time: 3 hours

Distance: 1.5 miles

Activity Level: Moderate hike; includes a ladder and stream crossings that are not universally accessible

Students will:

- Identify that sandstone and coal are sedimentary rocks that tell the geologic history of our area, and observe the modern impact of weathering on those rocks
- Observe and describe the impact of coal mining on the geosphere and biosphere in the region
- Link commonly used materials to finite resources extracted from Earth and discuss the reasons for producing and conserving those resources

FOCUS ON FUNGI

This class will explore the woods of Camp McDowell in search of the mysterious fungi. Students will explore different habitats to understand where fungi are found, their role in our ecosystem, and the different shapes, sizes, and colors that they come in!

Time: 1.5 hours

Distance: 0.5 - 1 miles

Activity Level: Can be modified but contains off trail exploration

Students will:

- Be able to recognize fungus in its many shapes, sizes, and forms
- Identify places where fungus is likely to be found
- See and explain the role fungus plays in relation to all living things, including humans

HOP, SLITHER & SLIDE

This class will highlight the differences between reptiles and amphibians. Students will break down their own misconceptions about herps and learn the characteristics of each group. Then students will get to meet up to two education herps that we have here at Camp McDowell. In the 3 hour version of this class, students will go 'herping' in search of reptiles and amphibians and to learn more about their habitats and ecological impacts.

Time: 1.5 hours or 3 hours

Distance: 1.5 hour class- no hiking / 3 hour version - 0.5 - 1 miles

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Describe the differences between reptiles and amphibians, and relate those differences to animals' respective habitats and needs
- Confront any fears and dispel any misconceptions they may hold about reptiles or amphibians in a welcoming and understanding space
- Meet resident reptiles and learn how to safely and properly interact with them

PEOPLE OF THE EARTH

Students will engage with historical and cultural artifact replicas, hike on one of McDowell's many scenic trails and participate in activities and discussions to learn respect for our world's natural resources and different cultures, through the lens of Alabama's indigenous people.

Time: 3 hours

Distance: 0.75 miles

Activity Level: Low to moderate; can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Investigate replicated artifacts to learn about the indigenous tribes of Alabama through the use of observation and evidence
- Explain how to respectfully learn about other cultures and why learning about other groups of people is important

- Understand what happened to the indigenous tribes living in Northern Alabama and the importance of learning about different cultures, religions, and peoples

ROCK QUERY

Students kinesthetically explore rock types, the rock cycle, and the structure of the Earth. Hiking into a sandstone canyon, they observe how the rock affects the present ecosystem and reveal clues about the past.

Time: 3 hours

Distance: ~ 1.5 miles

Activity Level: Moderate to strenuous hike; includes a ladder/stream crossing that are not universally accessible

Students will:

- Demonstrate the cycle rocks go through and how they provide clues about past ecosystems
- Observe the effects geology has on our present ecosystem
- Create a geologic time scale to express the vastness of geologic time

Nature Exploration Classes

ART IN NATURE

Students will explore nature through the lens of an artist. They will learn about nature artists, develop an innovative approach to creating art, and present and share their creative expression. This class will be a unique experience for students to understand that art surrounds them in all places.

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: Varied, 0.5 - 1 mile

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Create art using natural and/or found elements and materials
- Learn about nature artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, and understand how their art is an expression of themselves as well as how it affects those that observe what they have created
- Students will be able to identify how nature art can be used to bring significance to a place, person or experience

CLEAR CREEK HIKE

*Students hike through the forest on a favorite trail of their instructor's choosing. On the trail, open exploration and inquiry are highly encouraged and students can practice their observation and interpretive skills on plants, animals, insects, and tracks! May include the use of field guides, dichotomous keys, hand lenses, and nature journals. **Learning goals vary based on chosen activities, but are integrated with those from other classes. Each experience is unique and tailored to the interest of the field group.***

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: Varied, ranging from 0.75 - 1.5 miles

Activity Level: Can be modified for universal accessibility with notification

WELCOME TO THE WOODS

Not every person gets outdoor experience from a young age. For some students, this will be their first time out in the woods. This class is a gentle introduction to exploring the outdoors here at McDowell Environmental Center. We will start small and work our way bigger as we practice observational skills, walking on the trails, and experiencing what Camp McDowell has to offer.

Time: 1.5 hours or 3 hours

Distance: less than 0.5 miles

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Grow their comfortability in the natural world
- Know how to prepare for an outdoor adventure
- Practice observation skills while out on the trail

Outdoor Skills Classes

CANOEING

*Our trained educators will guide novice paddlers for this adventure as they navigate the placid canyon stream among 80-foot bluffs and cascading waterfalls. Understanding the equipment, executing basic river paddling strokes, and following safety precautions will be essential as participants paddle both upstream and back down. **Students should be prepared to get wet during this activity. Canoeing is not recommended in cold months. Please select a backup class incase canoeing cannot run due to wind, high water, etc..***

Time: 1.5 hours

Distance: Short walk to the canoe area, but includes very steep staircase

Activity Level: Moderate; cannot be modified for alternate abilities

Students will:

- Practice communicating and working together with other participants to achieve a shared goal
- Demonstrate personal responsibility by making sound decisions and safe choices
- Execute basic paddling strokes to navigate through both slow and fast-moving river waters

MEET A MAP

Never ask “where is that?” again at Camp McDowell because you will learn how to navigate our campus using teamwork and maps! Students will practice their visual spatial skills by creating and using a variety of maps to navigate both indoor and outdoor courses, scavenger hunt style to solve a mystery word.

Time: 1.5 hours

Distance: Minimal walking required

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Familiarize themselves with using and interpreting the pieces of a map
- Understand how to read and orient a map using the features of a map such as scale, legends, landmarks, etc
- Navigate using a map and gather spatial information about the distribution of resources in an area

NAVIGATION

Students will gain experience with a compass and learn how compasses work through demonstrations and kinesthetic activities using a compass. Students will then apply their skills by completing an outdoor compass course scavenger hunt style to solve a mystery word.

Time: 1.5 hours

Distance: Minimal walking required

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Be able to use a compass to determine cardinal directions, read bearings and apply them properly

- Navigate an outdoor course using a compass
- Use a map and a compass to discern bearings properly

STEWARDS OF THE FOREST

*What does it mean to be a steward of the land? How can we take care of the land both here at camp and back home? WHY should we take care of the land? This class is a service based class that aims to answer those questions through a hands-on, service project at McDowell Environmental Center. From pulling invasive plant species to clearing trails, there are always ways we are working to care for our land here at Camp McDowell and we are ready for your help! **Projects vary seasonally and by need, if you have an idea let us know and we will tell you if we think it can work.***

Time: 1.5 hours or 3 hours

Distance: Varied, ranging from 0.75 - 1.5 miles

Activity Level: Moderate: Involves hiking trails, hauling equipment/materials and using tools

Students will:

- Define what it means to be a steward of the land
- List ways in which they can practice stewardship while at camp and back home
- Utilize new skills such as how to maintain trails, identify and remove invasives, and use various tools (varies by season and the needs of MEC at time of trip)

SURVIVAL SKILLS

This class combines learning with play in a way that is fun for all ages. Participants will learn basic skills necessary in a wilderness survival situation through shelter building and fire starting. Students will work together in teams to try to survive.

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: Varied, ranging from 0.75 - 1.5 miles

Activity Level: Moderate: participants will be lifting and moving sticks and logs

Students will:

- Identify the difference between a want and a need
- Prioritize basic survival needs
- Collaborate with a team to build a shelter and fires

Team Building Classes

CLIMBING WALL

*Striving to climb a 40-foot wall with hand and foot holds, students experience rock climbing and feel the exhilaration of attempting a daunting feat. Encouraged by their peers and led by a trained ropes course instructor, students set and achieve personal goals, confront fears, and gain self-confidence in a unique outdoor experience. **We charge an additional \$15.00 equipment fee per field group for this activity***

Time: 1.5 hours

Grade Level: Students must be in 5th grade or older

Activity Level: Strenuous physically and mentally; cannot be modified for universal accessibility

Students will:

- Set, work toward, and achieve personal goals with confidence and support from their peers
- Learn how gaining personal confidence requires taking (perceived) risks when success is not assured, and understand that failure is an important part of growth

TRUST SWING

*Students work together to lift one another with a certified pulley system on a giant swing. Students place trust in their group and control the amount of risk with which they are comfortable by setting personal goals for how high they would like to be lifted. **We charge an additional \$15.00 equipment fee per field group for this activity.***

Time: 1.5 hours

Grade Level: Students must be in 5th grade or older

Activity Level: Strenuous mentally, physically low to moderate; accommodations can be made for some physical limitations as riding the trust swing involves minimal physical exertion

Students will:

- Learn that trust requires teamwork, and setting and achieving personal goals can result in self-confidence gains
- See that the use of simple machines, like compound pulleys, changes the amount of energy required to move an object
- Relate potential and kinetic energy concepts using the Trust Swing as a model

POWER POLE

*Students challenge themselves to climb a 25-foot telephone pole and jump for a bell suspended nearby. This activity provides the most significant mental and emotional challenge for students. The group setting offers emotional support for each participant, who is also supported by a trained ropes course facilitator to ensure physical safety. **We charge an additional \$15.00 equipment fee per field group for this activity.***

Time: 1.5 hours

Grade Level: Students must be in 7th grade or older

Activity Level: Very strenuous mentally, physically low to moderate, must be able to climb a ladder

Students will:

- Set, work toward, and achieve personal goals with confidence and support from their peers
- Learn how gaining personal confidence requires taking (perceived) risks when success is not assured, and understand that failure is an important part of growth
- Trust in themselves, others, and safety systems as components of personal growth

TEAM CHALLENGE

Students will participate in a series of group problem solving activities that encourage cooperation, communication, and trust. Each class is tailored to the needs of the group and is a unique experience. The group is encouraged to review their experiences, link them to relevancy in their daily life, and extend these new ideas as they approach situations at home or in school. MEC facilitators will choose the activities based on the individual group's needs. Because of this, each student group will have a unique experience and different activities.

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: Minimal walking required

Activity Level: Easy to strenuous; can be made universally accessible with notification

Students will:

- Practice active listening and sharing of ideas are important components of success in group work
- Work with others to solve problems highlights the variety of solutions a problem may have
- Problem-solving skills need to be honed with practice, and are valuable in all aspects of life

McDowell Environmental Center Day Trip Planning Form

EMAIL to pc@campmcdowell.org

Please email this contract 3 months prior to your visit

School: _____ Grade(s): _____ Reserved dates: _____

Address: _____ City/State: _____

Lead Teacher: _____ Email: _____

School Phone: (____) _____ Cell Phone: (____) _____

Secondary School Contact: _____ Email: _____

Arrival time: _____ (8:30 or 10am recommended) **Departure time:** _____ (2:30 or 4pm recommended)

☐ Check if you need to leave earlier than 12:45pm

☐ Check if you need a sacked lunch to go

Are you planning to eat lunch with us? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Are you bringing a snack for your students? ☐ YES ☐ NO If so, what time? _____

STUDENTS: # Girls: _____ # Boys: _____ = TOTAL # STUDENTS: _____

ADULTS # Women: _____ # Men: _____ = TOTAL # of ADULTS: _____

Please include all teachers in the adult count - TOTAL # of ALL participants: _____

Fields Groups: _____
(~10 - 12 students per group)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEC: Assist with pre-trip planning; provide complete educational programming; inform participants of their responsibilities, camp rules and emergency procedures; prepare meals and evening snacks; clean and maintain facilities and grounds; and provide a safe and wholesome atmosphere.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAD TEACHER: Make a reservation (new schools- submit deposit) and return contract; arrange transportation; arrange for one physically-able chaperone for each cabin and field group; communicate with students, parents and chaperones about the trip; collect fees & medicines; email field group and cabin lists one month prior to trip; ensure health/waiver form is filled out for all; participate in the program with chaperones and students; and submit final payment.

DAMAGE: MEC reserves the right to send home any child who becomes ill, destroys property, behaves aggressively or takes any other action detrimental to other students or the program. The school will be responsible for providing transportation in such cases, and for any damage to the facilities and equipment. No refunds will be made under these conditions. MEC cannot be held responsible for loss or damage to property brought to the Center. Please encourage students to leave valuables and large amounts of cash at home.

INVOICE: On your last day, we will give you an invoice for the balance of your payment. Payment is due within 10 days after your trip.

I agree to the terms and agree that my group will abide by all McDowell policies.

Signature of Lead Teacher

Date

Please complete the next page

Day Trip Planning Form - Class Selection

Choose 3-6 hours depending on your schedule. [Click here for class descriptions.](#)

OUTDOOR SKILLS	Meet a Map <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours Navigation <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours Stewards of the Forest <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Survival Skills <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Canoeing <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours Please select 1.5 hour backup class for Canoeing if it cannot run due to safety (wind, water levels, cold): Backup class: _____	SCIENCE & ECOLOGY	Animals in Motion <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Aquatic Adventures <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Down to Earth <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Focus on Fungi <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours Hop, Slither, Slide <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours People of the Earth <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Rock Query <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours
	TEAM BUILDING Team Challenge <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Climbing Wall (5th+) <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours Trust Swing (5th+) <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours Power Pole (7th+) <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours		NATURE EXPLORATION Art in Nature <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Clear Creek Hike <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours Welcome to the Woods <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3 hours

Have any of your teachers and chaperones attended MEC before? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Have any of your students attended MEC before? ☐ YES ☐ NO If yes, how many? _____

How would you characterize your school? (Choose all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private | <input type="checkbox"/> Public | <input type="checkbox"/> Montessori |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Affiliation | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-contained classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Block Schedule |

What **experiences** have your students had with the outdoors, environmental education or field trips?

What specific **student needs** should we be aware of for the trip?

Please list any **objectives, themes, goals, vocabulary**, you would like for us to emphasize while you are here:

☐ Bus(es): # of buses expected: _____

☐ Car(s): # of cars expected: _____

FIELD GROUP LISTS

Please confirm the number of field groups your school will be allotted with MEC before creating this list

- Divide your class into field groups of 10 to 13 students and at least 1 adult
- At least one adult must be with a field group at all times
- It is important to group students in socially compatible groups
- If you are bringing multiple grade levels, group by grade
- If teachers are “floating,” and not assigned a group, please still list all teachers’ names on the form

EMAIL to pc@campmcdowell.org

Please email this list 1 month prior to your visit

Please organize cabin lists in the following format (or similar)

Google Sheets work great

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Field Group 1	Field Group 2	Field Group 3	Field Group 4	Teachers Floating
2	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last
3	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last
4	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last
5	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	
6	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	
7	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	
8	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	
9	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	
10	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	
11	First, Last		First, Last		
12					
13	Adults	Adults	Adults	Adults	We recommend 10-12 students and 2 adults per group
14	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	
15	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	First, Last	

[Click here for an example](#) (you can copy and use as your own)

PARENT LETTER



Dear Guardian,

McDowell Environmental Center's philosophy is to teach students in the great outdoors and give them a lifetime of memories and experience. Your child will be learning through hands-on environmental science classes, seeing nature up close in a 1,140-acre outdoor classroom. Our instructors have been trained in a student-centered, experiential approach to teaching and are passionate about sharing the natural world with students and adults. We would like to mention a few important items worth emphasizing about your child's upcoming visit to ensure their safety and comfort while away from home.

Appropriate Clothing: We offer hands-on science and team building classes, so we spend most of our time outdoors, even in the rain and cold. Please help your child be prepared with appropriate clothing and gear, as indicated below. In truly inclement weather, we have ample indoor teaching space.

- Wear: Old clothes and closed toed shoes (*For safety, no sandals, no crocs, or flip flops please*)
- Bring a daypack with:
 - Raincoat or Poncho
 - Water Bottle
 - Lunch & Snack (if suggested by the teacher)
 - Extra set of clothes if taking Aquatic Adventures or Canoeing
 - 1 pair of shoes and socks that can get wet or muddy

Student Health and Waiver Form: All of our staff are first aid and CPR trained, additionally we have a camp nurse who is typically on-site. For your child's well-being, please complete the **online** Health and Waiver Form once you receive the link from your teacher. Paper copies may be available from your teacher if preferred or needed. *Anyone without a completed form may not attend or participate.*

Dietary Needs: If your school has chosen to eat with us at camp, meals are prepared by our talented food service staff. **All of our kitchens are nut-free*. The following dietary needs can be accommodated with indication on the health form: vegetarian, vegan, no pork/beef, dairy-free, and gluten free (*not celiac-safe).** Additional allergies and dietary restrictions cannot be accommodated.

→ If you need to pack meals or supplemental foods to ensure your student's safety, please contact pc@campmcdowell.org and we'll get you more information. **Cross-contamination is possible*

Your child's school teacher will send home all the information. The teachers from your school will select chaperones for the trip. If you have any questions regarding our program, staff, or facilities, please feel free to call us or [visit our website](#).

Meredith Donaldson (she/her), Director
Kim Corson (she/her), Assistant Director

pc@campmcdowell.org
205.387.1806 ext. 108

CHAPERONE LETTER



Dear Chaperone,

Thank you for agreeing to accompany students on their exciting trip to McDowell. As a chaperone, you will play an important role in creating a fun, safe and non-competitive learning environment. We would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about your role as a chaperone.

The lead teacher from your school will assign you a field group of 10-12 students to supervise. You will be with the students the entire time during your stay. You are directly responsible for the safety and supervision of your field group. **All Chaperones must fill out the Health and Waiver form online as provided by the lead teacher from your school.**

During classes, the McDowell Instructor will be directly responsible for the group, but they will rely on you for support and attentiveness. Please actively participate in all classes and activities that you attend. Look forward to active classes which may include hiking or wading in a stream. We appreciate your enthusiasm during these classes, as it can be a great motivator for the students!

Here are some general policies for adults:

- Smoking or vaping is not allowed indoors or in front of students. Alcohol is not allowed.
- Try not to use your cell phone around the children.
- Corporal or harsh verbal punishment is not allowed. If you experience difficulty managing the student's behavior, speak to their teacher for help. In cases of extreme student misconduct, such as fighting, the school's lead teacher may decide to send a child home.
- When you come to McDowell, it is most likely that you will share our campus with other schools. We believe positive interactions among all participants create potential new friendships. Please be a model of respect to the other schools, both children and adults.
- Chaperones are responsible for supervising the students during classes, breaks, and meals.

Your school may eat a picnic-style lunch as a group. Work with your lead teacher to help ensure the safety of all students during lunch and do not allow students to leave the immediate area without permission.

In some of the classes, you and the children will get wet and muddy so wear OLD clothes and shoes. A raincoat is essential, because classes are held rain or shine. Our classes are hands-on, so be sure to bring a daypack with a water bottle. **Wear comfortable, closed toed, hiking shoes.**

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter and for agreeing to be a chaperone. Please feel free to call us if you have any questions. We look forward to meeting you!

Meredith Donaldson (she/her), Director
Kim Corson (she/her), Assistant Director

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