

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

Mission Statement

The Mission of McDowell Environmental Center is to connect people to the environment, teach respect for the Earth and its beings, and to promote a commitment to lifelong learning.

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Welcome to 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 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

DATES & RATES

We offer trips Monday-Friday from late February - May and September - December
[Contact us](#) to book a trip or learn more

TRIP PRICES

2025-2026 School Year

Overnight Trips

3-day, 2-night trip: \$170 per person

7 meals, 4 snacks, 2 nights lodging, 12 class hours, 2 night programs

2-day, 1-night trip: \$135 per person

4 meals, 2 snacks, 1 night lodging, 6 class hours, 1 night program

Day Trips

Bring Your Own Lunch: \$40 per person

Lunch Provided: \$48 per person

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

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.

Capacity: For overnight groups, we can accommodate up to 150 students per session. If your group exceeds this, we can divide them into multiple sessions. We may book other groups during your stay if space is available.

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

For 2-day/1-night trips, disregard "Day Two"

<u>DAY ONE</u>		<u>DAY TWO</u>		<u>DAY THREE</u>	
10-11	Arrive, move into cabins	8-9	Breakfast	7:15-8	<i>Clean up, pack up, & move out of cabins</i>
11-12	Welcome Meeting (Mon)	9-12	Morning Class	8-9	Breakfast
12-1	Lunch	12-1	Lunch	9-12	Morning Class
12:45	Welcome Meeting (Wed)	1-4	Afternoon Class	12-1	Lunch
1-4	Afternoon class	4-6	Canteen & Recreation	1:00	Depart
4-6	Canteen & Recreation	6-7	Supper		
6-7	Supper	7:15-9	Night Program & Snack		
7:15-9	Night Program & Snack				

Please Note: Student field groups will rotate through all the class selections chosen by the Lead Teacher. Everyone, including adults, will have canteen and will be able to choose a drink and snack. It is the responsibility of the chaperones to supervise the students during canteen *and* recreation times. Staff will be available in two spots for emergencies during recreation time.

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.

Accommodations

Lodging for Students & Chaperones

Our cabins consist of 14 dormitory buildings that can accommodate 12-18 people in one open room, depending on which cabins we have reserved for each school. All cabins are rustic, but have heating and cooling units as well as individual shower and toilet stalls in the bathrooms with hot water. Participants need to bring towels, pillows, and bedding (sleeping bag or sheets/blankets). See the [Packing List](#) for more info.

Lodging for Teachers

Separate lodging for teachers is available if enough parents are brought as chaperones for the cabins. Teachers may stay in the Directors Cabin or Little Lambeth depending on booking and availability. Bedding (sheets, pillow/case, and light quilt) is provided however we recommend you bring a warm blanket and all towels as those are not provided.

Meals

Three meals a day are prepared by our talented food service staff and served family style in Eppes Dining Hall. Our food receives the highest reviews! **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*

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 and First Aid certified. Camp McDowell has a full time nurses that take great pride in the care of our students. They are available to administer medication and respond to any health issues that may arise. Medication may only be administered to a student by the Nurse, the student's legal parent or guardian, or authorized school personnel. We will gather this medical information, as well as all allergy and dietary information, on the online Health/Waiver Form ahead of the trip. Students bringing medications will also need to complete the [Medication Packing List](#).

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). In the event of an overnight weather event, cabin bathrooms double as storm shelters.

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 meal times, class times, lights out, rec time, canteen, night program
- 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
- What to expect in the cabins including how many beds, bathrooms, and chaperones will be in their cabin
- 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 cabin and 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 and all night. 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.

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. If your forms do not arrive seven days before your visit, you will be responsible for handing ALL medications on the first day until the RN, kitchen, and education staff can be updated on health concerns.

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.

Teacher Credit

We are a PowerSchool/AMSTI affiliate and are TEAMS approved. Teachers are given a certificate, reflecting the time spent in classes at MEC, which most school systems accept for PD credit. For 3 day/2 night trips, teachers earn 15 hours of AMSTI-approved TEAMS credits.



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 3-page [Trip Planning Form](#)
- ☐ Send out the [Parent and Chaperone Information](#)
- ☐ Send out the online link to the **Health and Release Form** (link will be emailed to you)
- ☐ Suggestion: Collect second payment from students and chaperones

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](#) and [Cabin Group Lists](#) to us
- ☐ Check that all participants attending have completed the online **Health and Release Form**
- ☐ Host a meeting with your chaperones to prepare them for the trip expectations
- ☐ Suggestion: Collect the remainder of student payment

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 Cabin and Field Group Lists for all of your chaperones and co-teachers

DAY of the trip (before leaving the school)

- ☐ Collect all medicines and be sure they are in original containers w/ [Medication Packing Sheet](#)
- ☐ Pack luggage - separated by cabins in cars or buses
- ☐ Be sure everyone has bedding, appropriate clothes for the weather, and water bottles
- ☐ Hand out copies of the Cabin and 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
- ☐ Turn in all medicines and final paperwork, including inhalers & epi-pens to the Nurse
- ☐ Get settled into your cabin, then join us for the Welcome Meeting and Lunch
- ☐ Relax and have a great time!

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.

DAYTIME CLASS OPTIONS ***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

TRAIL OF DISCOVERY

*Students have an immersive, full day experience in nature. Aspects of MEC courses on forest ecology, geology, and local history as well as those selected by the teacher, are highlighted on a full day hike. Students practice Leave No Trace, enjoy a picnic lunch, and, because of the full day nature of the course, have opportunities to engage more fully with chosen concepts. **A sack lunch will be provided. All participants need to bring a backpack, 2 water bottles, and comfortable hiking shoes.***

Time: 6 hours - full day (morning and afternoon class block, with lunch on trail)

Distance: 3+ miles

Activity Level: Moderate to strenuous hike; including a ladder/stream crossing, rocky terrain, etc.

Students will:

- Recognize the behaviors necessary for thriving long-term in an outdoor situation
- Discuss how humans can protect the environment around them
- *Additional learning goals are dependent on the content choices of the teacher and other courses taken during the students' trip*

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. *We can only accommodate 8 field groups per 3-day trip on the Trust Swing****

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

NIGHT PROGRAM OPTIONS

Indoor Classes

BEHIND THE SCENES: ANIMAL CARE

Have you ever wondered what it takes to care for the animals here at the McDowell Environmental Center? In this hour and 15 minute presentation, students will get a glimpse into the work that goes into caring for our amazing avian educators and our herptiles from the comfort of their seats! Maybe a future animal caretaker is in our audience today! This program also includes seeing at least one of these amazing avian educators up close.

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Students will:

- Identify and name the three anatomical characteristics that make raptors, raptors.
- List what goes into daily animal care of McDowell Environmental Centers education animals
- Understand the value of live animal education and how our animals play a role in teaching stewardship

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Students will discover the fascinating traits of Alabama's local raptors. This program will provide an overview of the 8 raptor families in Alabama, with a deeper dive into a few of those families, and learn why they need our help and what we can do! Students will internalize their learning through observation, discussion, and live animal encounters with at least one education raptor.

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Students will:

- Raptors have specialized behaviors and body structures to survive
- Raptors fill an important role in the ecosystem
- Raptors of the Southeast need our protection

GAME NIGHT

Students will play together in a series of games in order to laugh, relax, and get to know some of their classmates better after a long day.

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Students will:

- Advance their teamwork skills
- Explore their creativity
- Have fun!

INVENTION EXPO

In this indoor activity, students will work together in small groups to find creative solutions to various problems and build imaginative inventions in a series of activities given by our instructors. Students must utilize their ingenuity and teamwork skills as they showcase the qualities that make them great inventors.

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Students will:

- Work in small groups cooperatively, sharing ideas and designs in pursuit of a common goal
- Engineer and test a solution to a problem offered by MEC staff with minimal resources and maximum creativity

- Find inspiration from natural objects, unfamiliar words, sketches, and in other surprising places, and use that to consider the design of current or future technologies

McDOWELL WOODS

Students participate in a town hall-style role play to determine how best to use land acquired by Camp McDowell. Students take on different stakeholder roles, such as Camp McDowell employees, coal miners, restaurateurs, scientists, and farmers, to come to a consensus on how best to use the land. Each stakeholder group will present their ideas for land use to the group, support their ideas with evidence, and will listen to other stakeholder groups with thoughtful respect to come to a solution that works best for everyone.

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Students will:

- Understand that making decisions about land use can be challenging
- The importance of weighing all the evidence in making a decision
- Listen and consider others viewpoints, even when in opposition, and be able to work together

PELLET DETECTIVES

*Students will learn about the unique adaptations that make owls such impressive hunters and their role in our native ecosystem. Utilizing various tools, students will then work together to dissect owl pellets and identify what is found inside. Let's find out whooo ate what! **We charge an additional \$10 per student for this activity.***

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Students will:

- Learn about the unique adaptations that owls use to hunt
- Understand native owls' role in our food web
- Dissect owl pellets to identify its prey

Outdoor Classes

NIGHT SKY NAVIGATORS

*Students will explore the forest of Camp McDowell at night while learning about our history as a species with the night sky. Students will also discuss ways different cultures have used our stars and planets in our sky for navigation and storytelling. **We recommend that this class not be taken in early September or May as sunset time does not correspond well with our evening class time.***

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Distance: Varied, 0.5 - 1 miles, can be adjusted for each group

Activity Level: Low to moderate hike, on mostly flat terrain

Students will:

- Understand how humans' relationships to the night sky has changed over time
- Understand how different cultures relate to the night sky
- Understand how light pollution works

NIGHT HIKE

*Students explore the forest of Camp McDowell at night, using all of their senses to enhance the experience and compare it to their hikes during the day. As they explore their senses, they discuss adaptations unique to nocturnal animals that help them be successful in their environment. **We recommend that this class not be taken in early September or May as sunset time does not correspond well with our evening class time.***

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Distance: Varied, 0.5 - 1 miles, can be adjusted for each group

Activity Level: Low to moderate hike, on mostly flat terrain

Students will:

- Compare and contrast the animal adaptations needed for nocturnal success
- Discuss how sensory awareness plays a role in experiencing natural environments and compare their adaptations to those of the nocturnal animals they hear and see

SCOPE OUT THE SKY

*Journey through the cosmos with a mix of immersive and hands-on astronomy experiences. Inside our inflatable planetarium, students will explore constellations and celestial stories through a guided presentation. Outside, we will use a telescope to observe the night sky firsthand, identifying seasonal stars, planets, and other astronomical wonders. Students will deepen their understanding of celestial motion, scale, and cultural interpretations of the night sky. ***Group size limit of 30 students or less****

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Distance: N/A

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Take a closer look at the night sky through McDowell's high resolution telescope
- Learn to tell the difference between stars and planets in the night sky
- Learn about the role of the night sky in human cultures

SONGS, SPARKS AND STORIES

Students experience an exciting evening of songs, skits, stories and games with our instructors. Connections to cultural entertainment before television and electricity are highlighted, as well as a sense of community and cultural preservation. The class takes place around a campfire and is ideal for all sized groups.

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Distance: 1/8 mile walk to fire location over a somewhat rocky path

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Socially connected through experiences shared and activity objectives accomplished
- Historically connected to their cultural past by participating in activities that have entertained humans globally for centuries

McDowell Environmental Center Overnight Trip Planning Form

EMAIL to pc@campmcdowell.org

*Please email this form **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: _____ (10:00am recommended) **Departure time:** _____ (12:45pm recommended)

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

☐ Check if you need a sacked lunch to go

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

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

TOTAL: # Females: _____ # Males: _____
(beds needed) (beds needed)

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

Girls Cabins: _____ # Boys Cabins: _____ # Field Groups: _____
(~12-18 beds per cabin) (~12-18 beds per cabin) (~10-13 students per group)

Do you need separate lodging for teachers not needed in the cabins? If so, how many? _____

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 two pages

Overnight Trip Planning Form - Class Selection

Daytime Classes - **Select 12 hours total**

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		NATURE EXPLORATION
	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 <input type="checkbox"/> Trail of Discovery (all day hike - 6 hours) - 6th+		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

Night Program Selection

INDOOR	Behind the Scenes: Animal Care Birds of a Feather Game Night Invention Expo McDowell Woods Pellet Detectives* *additional fee	OUTDOOR	Night Sky Navigators Night Hike Scope out the Sky Songs, Sparks Stories
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Please list your **top 4** night program choices below:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

Final selections are made based on available spaces, weather conditions, and staff/animal availability

Overnight Trip Planning Form - Group Information

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"/> Open classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Students move from class to class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public | <input type="checkbox"/> Montessori | <input type="checkbox"/> Block Schedule |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Affiliation | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-contained classroom | |

Please include a description of the dynamics of your group:

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

What specific **student needs** should we be aware of? (i.e. social/emotional/behavioral concerns, severe allergic reactions, physical limitations, learning needs, etc.)

Please list any **objectives, goals, vocabulary, teaching philosophies or local environmental issues** that you would like for us to emphasize while you are here:

How will your group be arriving at MEC?

☐ Bus(es): # of buses expected: _____ ☐ Car(s): # of cars expected: _____

*We recommend you pack vehicles by cabin. Put a sign in the windshield of each car with the name of a cabin.
When you arrive, we will direct the cars to their cabins to drop off luggage.*

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

CABIN GROUP LISTS

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

- Cabin reservations are “first come, first serve,” when we receive the Trip Planning Form
- Depending on which cabins your school is assigned, cabins hold 10-16 students and 1-2 adults
- At least one adult must be assigned to each cabin
- It is important to group students in socially compatible cabin groups
- If you are bringing multiple grade levels, we suggest grouping cabins by grade
- Separate, additional cabins may be requested for teachers who are not needed in cabins

EMAIL to pc@campmcdowell.org

Please email this list 1 month prior to your visit.

Please organize 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, as indicated on the "Bring-Along List." In truly inclement weather, we have ample indoor teaching space.

Health and Waiver Form: We have a full time onsite RN here to help keep your child safe and healthy. For your child's well-being, please complete the online Health and Waiver Form once you receive the link from your teacher. *Anyone without a completed form may not attend our program or participate.*

Dietary Needs: Three meals a day are prepared by our talented food service staff and served family style in Eppes Dining Hall. Our food receives the highest reviews! **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*

Medications: All medicines must be in their original containers. Please remember that you must provide any over-the-counter medicines you anticipate your child may need. Please **ONLY** send the amount needed for the trip.

→ *If your child requires an Epi-pen or other injection, please contact the Nurse at 205-387-1806 ext. 125 or rn@campmcdowell.org.*

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

PACKING LIST

Please carefully look over the following checklist and check each item as it is packed. Here are some helpful hints for packing:

- Limit packing to one suitcase or duffel bag and a rolled up sleeping bag
- You will carry your belongings from the bus to your cabin
- Put your name on everything
- Bring OLD clothes and shoes as you may get wet and muddy
- Pack a raincoat or poncho (and warm clothes if applicable) as our classes are held outdoors rain or shine

Required

- ☐ 2 Water Bottles
- ☐ Raincoat or Poncho
- ☐ 4 pairs of socks
- ☐ 2 pairs of closed-toes shoes (**no Crocs!**)
- ☐ 3 pairs of underwear
- ☐ 3 shirts
- ☐ 2 pairs of long pants
- ☐ 3 pairs of shorts
- ☐ Sweatshirt or Fleece
- ☐ Pajamas
- ☐ Towel & wash cloth
- ☐ Soap, toothbrush, & other toiletries
- ☐ Sleeping bag and Pillow
 - ☐ Or sheets & blankets - single bed
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Small backpack

Optional Additions

- ☐ Hat & sunglasses
- ☐ Flashlight & extra batteries
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Souvenir money - we only accept **cash**
- ☐ Sandals for shower
- ☐ Journal and pen/pencil
- ☐ Bug repellent (non-Deet only)
- ☐ Chapstick

Do NOT Bring:

- X Crocs or flip flops for outdoor use
- X Cell phones
- X Smart devices (watch, iPad, etc)
- X Handheld video games
- X Hair dryers, straighteners, or curling irons
- X Illegal substances
- X Weapons, knives
- X Gum, food, candy, or beverages
- X Nail polish
- X Sharpies, crayons, or markers

Cold Weather Additions

Wool and synthetic clothing work best!

- ☐ Warm hat/beanie
- ☐ Warm gloves
- ☐ 2 pairs of thick socks
- ☐ Long underwear/thick tights
- ☐ Long-sleeve shirt or sweatshirt
- ☐ Heavy and warm jacket
- ☐ Winter or warm boots

Medication/Medicine

- ☐ All medications must be turned into the Nurse (in original container) in a ziplock bag with the [*medication packing sheet*](#) (see below)

Medicine Reminder

Please print and send to parents

- Medicines at McDowell Environmental Center are subject to the same rules as medicines brought to school for administration by the school nurse.
 - Scheduled medicine times are: Before Breakfast, After Breakfast, After Lunch, Canteen, After Dinner and Evening Snack.
 - Prescription medicines **MUST** be in their original containers and have a label containing:
 - o Student Name
 - o Name of Prescription Drug
 - o Strength of Prescription Drug
 - o Administration directions (“give as directed” is **NOT** acceptable)
 - o Parents must indicate what time medication is to be taken
 - Please remember that parents **must provide any over-the-counter medicines** they anticipate their child may need.
- *If your child requires an Epi-pen or other injection, please contact the Nurse at 205-387-1806 ext. 125 or rn@campmcdowell.org*

Jamie Camp, R.N., Camp McDowell Nurse

Medication Packing Sheet

Please print and pack with medication

Please place this sheet in a ziplock bag with your child’s medicine. All information must be completed by a parent or legal guardian. Please fill out the information for prescription and over the counter medicines.

Student’s Name: _____ School: _____

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS: Circle the time(s) to administer the medicine to the child, choose from following:

B*= Before Breakfast, **B**= After Breakfast, **L**= After Lunch, **C**=Canteen (4PM), **D**= After Dinner, **HS**= At Bedtime

**If a time is not selected, medicines will be given after breakfast.*

Medication:	Dosage:	Reason:	Time Given: B* B L C D HS
Medication:	Dosage:	Reason:	Time Given: B* B L C D HS
Medication:	Dosage:	Reason:	Time Given: B* B L C D HS

OVER THE COUNTER (OTC) MEDICATIONS: All OTC Medications **MUST** be provided by parents/legal guardians of the student. Circle “As Needed Only”, if medication is not taken daily.

Medication:	Dosage:	Reason:	Time Given: B* B L C D HS <div style="text-align: right;">As Needed Only</div>
Medication:	Dosage:	Reason:	Time Given: B* B L C D HS <div style="text-align: right;">As Needed Only</div>
Medication:	Dosage:	Reason:	Time Given: B* B L C D HS <div style="text-align: right;">As Needed Only</div>

CHAPERONE INFORMATION

What is McDowell Environmental Center (MEC)?

Our non-profit, educational organization provides outdoor learning experiences for school groups in the forests, canyons and streams of beautiful Camp McDowell. Camp McDowell, an Episcopal summer camp since 1947, has hosted hundreds of thousands of children over the years. The environmental program is completely nonsectarian and is offered to all students regardless of race, religion, ability, or gender.

It is the philosophy of the MEC that experiencing nature first-hand can lead to a lifelong awareness and respect for the natural world. At McDowell Environmental Center, our professional instructors share a love of nature with students in outdoor classrooms. 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. By working together in field groups, cabin groups and in the dining hall, students also learn about living in a community.

Cabins

- Each cabin is a sturdy, clean, and well-maintained cement-block cabin with 12-18 single beds. The cabins hold about 10-16 students and 1-2 adults, and have split units for heat and AC. Each cabin has a bathroom with 2 sinks, 2 toilets, and 2 individual showers.
- Establish guidelines for the students about what you expect of them: shower times, lights out time, no raiding, respecting other students' belongings, keeping their area clean, etc.
- We ask that you do not bring any food to the cabins which might attract critters.
- Remind students to pack up their belongings, sweep out the cabin and move their luggage to the appropriate pick-up area in the morning before breakfast on the final day.
- Talk with the students to build rapport. Ask them about what they have been doing, and show an interest in them. If you build a strong rapport, they will be more likely to listen to you.

Food & Meals

- Meal times are also educational opportunities at McDowell. We teach the importance of lowering our food waste in a non-competitive manner.
- Our dining hall serves nutritious, kid-friendly meals, which we eat family-style. At the table, encourage good table manners.
- Let the students help with the work at the table- it encourages responsibility! Be a role model during announcements by listening and encouraging students to be quiet and listen as well.

Safety and Medications

- The safety of the students is paramount at McDowell. A registered nurse lives on-site and our Health Hut is equipped to handle first aid and other routine health care needs. All of our instructors are certified in First Aid and CPR.
- In the event of an emergency, the school and McDowell personnel will make the decision to transport a student to the hospital in Jasper, 15 miles away.
- All medications will be kept and dispensed by the nurse unless your school has made other arrangements. If a child who experiences severe allergic reactions or asthma is placed in your field group or cabin, you may be expected to carry that child's inhaler or epi-pen.
- Be aware of the students in your cabin or field group who take routine medications, and discreetly remind them to visit the nurse with a buddy.
- We monitor the weather closely, and during severe weather, we have an emergency plan that includes tornado shelters.

Classes

- The teacher from your school has chosen the classes your students will be taking, based on their goals for the visit. Actively participate in the classes. Your enthusiasm can often motivate students!
- Be sure that students always have their water bottles during class and activity time.
- Everyone must wear sturdy, closed toed shoes outside of the cabin, no crocs.
- MEC Instructors supervise during classes. Chaperones are responsible for supervision of students at all other times, including assisting with supervision at Recreation time.
- If a student is being particularly disruptive, we ask that you stand near the student and help them refocus.
- Please contribute any particular information that pertains to your home community. You are a valuable resource!

Canteen & Recreation

- Keep tabs on your field group during canteen (snack) time. Unless they have special permission, students are not allowed to go back to their cabins during canteen. No one is to stay in the cabin at Recreation (recess) time unless decided by your lead teacher.
- Chaperones are responsible for students during Recreation time. There will be a McDowell Instructor present in two places for emergencies, however Chaperones are responsible for supervision of students.

Example Schedule

For 2-day/1-night trips, disregard "Day Two"

<u>DAY ONE</u>		<u>DAY TWO</u>		<u>DAY THREE</u>	
10-11	Arrive, move into cabins	8-9	Breakfast	7:15-8	<i>Clean up, pack up, & move out of cabins</i>
11-12	Welcome Meeting (Mon)	9-12	Morning Class	8-9	Breakfast
12-1	Lunch	12-1	Lunch	9-12	Morning Class
12:45	Welcome Meeting (Wed)	1-4	Afternoon Class	12-1	Lunch
1-4	Afternoon class	4-6	Canteen & Recreation	1:00	Depart
4-6	Canteen & Recreation	6-7	Supper		
6-7	Supper	7:15-9	Night Program & Snack		
7:15-9	Night Program & Snack				

Please Note: Student field groups will rotate through all the class selections chosen by the Lead Teacher. Everyone, including adults, will have canteen and will be able to choose a drink and snack. It is the responsibility of the chaperones to supervise the students during canteen *and* recreation times. Staff will be available in two spots for emergencies during recreation time.



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. You make this trip possible, and for that we are grateful. We would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about your role as a chaperone. Please read the *Chaperone Information* sheet accompanying this letter for details concerning the trip to the McDowell Environmental Center.

The lead teacher from your school will assign you to a cabin of 10-12 students to supervise at night and a field group of 10-12 students to supervise during the day. 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 and cabin group.

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, wading in a stream or exploring the night time forest without a flashlight. We appreciate your enthusiasm during these classes, as it can be a great motivator for the students!

Here are some general policies for adults:

- Chaperones may keep personal medicines and/or their *own* child's medicines with them, but medications must be on your person at all times-or locked in your vehicle. No medicines may be left unsupervised in the cabin.
- 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 students. When children call home, they often experience homesickness afterwards.
- 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 Recreation (Rec) Time, during meals and in cabins each day.

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

205.387.1806 ext. 108
pc@campmcdowell.org