

2012 NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL >>

PURPOSE >>

Mountain School seeks to connect students to the natural world through safe, positive residential field-based educational experiences. It appeals to schools that want to:

- immerse students in an interdisciplinary study of ecosystems,
- develop student skills of observation and inquiry,
- build cohesion among classmates through cooperative learning,
- instill an appreciation for the value of our public lands, and
- address the causes of Nature Deficit Disorder.

Piloted in 1990, this is the Institute's longest running and most popular program. It is offered using a sliding-scale tuition structure.



FORMAT >>



Mountain School is a nationally recognized environmental education program offered in cooperation with North Cascades National Park. Students come to the Environmental Learning Center with their teachers, classmates and parent chaperones for three to five days to engage in curriculum aligned with Washington State learning standards. Pre- and post-trip visits prepare students for the concepts they will learn and support the application of conservation principles to their daily lives.

Ecosystems Explorations (4-6th grade) investigates the abiotic and biotic components of ecosystems and their interconnections with the human community. Topics include wildlife biodiversity, food webs, glaciers and geology, watersheds, cultural history, and forest ecology. Embedded are sensory awareness activities, team building, personal reflection and educational games.

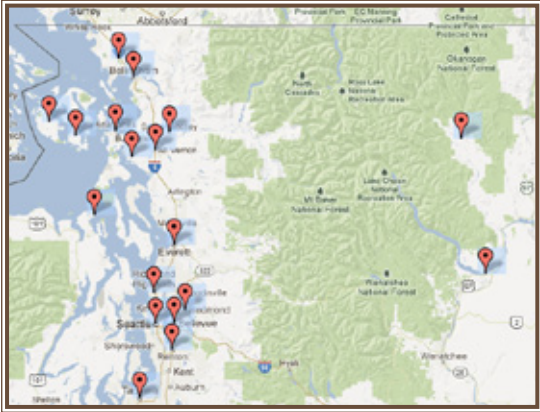
Field Science and Leadership curricula (7th-12th grade) use an inquiry-based approach to introducing background knowledge about the North Cascades ecosystem. Student gain first-hand experience with scientific equipment and field study techniques as they complete a field investigation about forested or aquatic communities.

AT A GLANCE >>

- 48: Number of participating schools
- 2,246 Number of participants
- 9-18: Age range (4th-12th grade)
- 22: Communities benefiting
- \$125-325: Per child cost to participate for 3-days, 2 nights
- 47%: Schools qualifying for reduced tuition



PARTICIPANT COMMUNITIES >>



Bellingham	Everett
Anacortes	Shoreline
Mt. Vernon	Bellevue
Sedro-Woolley	Renton
La Conner	Redmond
San Juan Island	Tacoma
Lopez Island	Vancouver
Ferndale	Winthrop
Port Townsend	Chelan
Seattle	Lakewood
Lynwood	Evergreen, Colorado



ACCOMPLISHMENTS >>

A pilot partnership with Bellingham Parks and Recreation created an opportunity for **740 students** from **14 Bellingham schools** to engage in **hands-on stewardship project within walking distance from their school**. The Mountain School post-visits acquainted students to a new public land resource while completing stewardship projects including invasive species removal, native plant restoration and trail maintenance.



SUMMARY REPORT

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EVALUATION >>

An initial assessment of evaluations shows that 95% of students are more interested in learning about plants and animals, 80% of students are more excited about getting outside, and 95% of students want to bring their families back to North Cascades National Park.

Questionnaires administered during pre- and post-Mountain School visits reveal a positive change in perception among students:



72%

increase in students who reported that they like spending time in nature



96%

increase in students who reported feeling like people and nature are connected



54%

increase in students who reported feeling like they can make a difference in taking care of the environment

Teacher evaluations were also positive:



96%

reported that their students showed an increased respect for the environment and each other



88%

reported that Mountain School increased group cohesion as a class.



100%

of teachers reported that Mountain School improves attitudes toward learning



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FROM THE STUDENTS >>



“Have you ever gotten to hike by yourself in the woods? Well, at Mountain School I did. While hiking, you find clues in the snow to what to do or how to get to your destination. You might have to hug a tree, sniff the dirt, or close your eyes and listen! The feeling of being by yourself in the woods makes you feel connected to nature. Listening to the birds call, the snow falling, or the water rushing made me feel relaxed. All in all, having it just be you and nature is a great feeling.”

- Whitney Sloan, Silver Beach, 5th grade

“I think there are smaller or less obvious ways to leave tracks. Just the way I choose to live my life will affect other people. I believe that every time I take the time to know myself better and reflect on my own experience in the world, I am leaving positive tracks. I might inspire others with the smallest things that I don't even intend to. I have experienced this a lot on this trip already. Sometimes for me it is the smallest actions or words of others that even just make me stop for a moment and think. These small things add up to a legacy. We are all connected, and I think we all have something to give. The most important thing is simply to be aware of how we affect others, and be aware of how we are in the world.”

- Hero, SAMI Student

PARTNERS >>

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More information:
www.ncascades.org/signup/youth/mountain-school
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