



**Mountain School** is North Cascades Institute's nationally-recognized residential education program offered at the Environmental Learning Center in cooperation with North Cascades National Park.

**Connection**  
to nature and  
fellow classmates  
through  
cooperative  
learning



**Inspiration**  
to continue  
learning and  
connecting with  
public lands and  
the natural world



**Knowledge**  
of North Cascades  
ecosystems and  
the scientific  
process



**Application**  
of environmental  
stewardship  
principles in  
students' lives and  
communities



Students spend 3 to 5 days with their classmates, teachers and parent chaperones exploring the North Cascades Ecosystem. Hands-on environmental education experiences in reading, writing, science, math, social studies, art and physical fitness connect students to the natural and cultural history of the mountains. Pre- and post-trip visits with classrooms prepare students and support the application of conservation principles into their daily lives.

## HAPPY 25th BIRTHDAY

From the early days of cooking in our "Big Green" army surplus tent and rigging tarps to stay out of the rain, to eating healthy food in our lakefront dining hall at the Environmental Learning Center, the values and goals of Mountain School remain the same after 25 years: Get children out of the classroom to explore their wild backyard and connect with this special part of the world that we all call home.



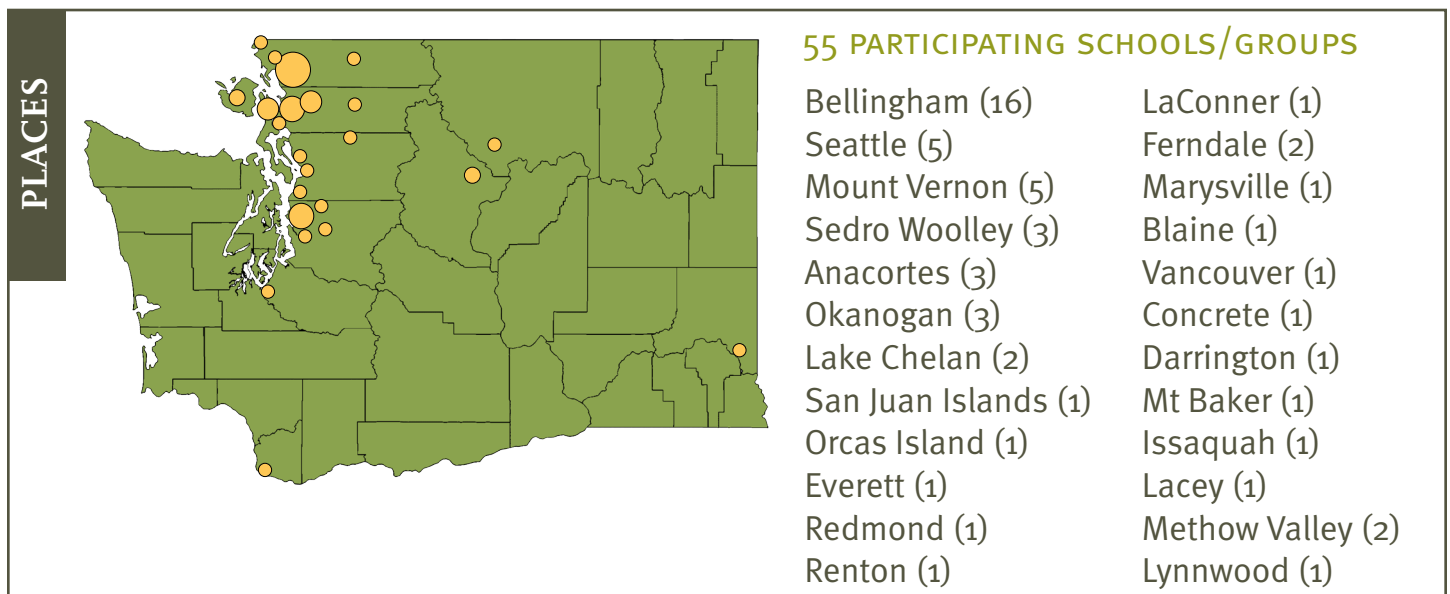
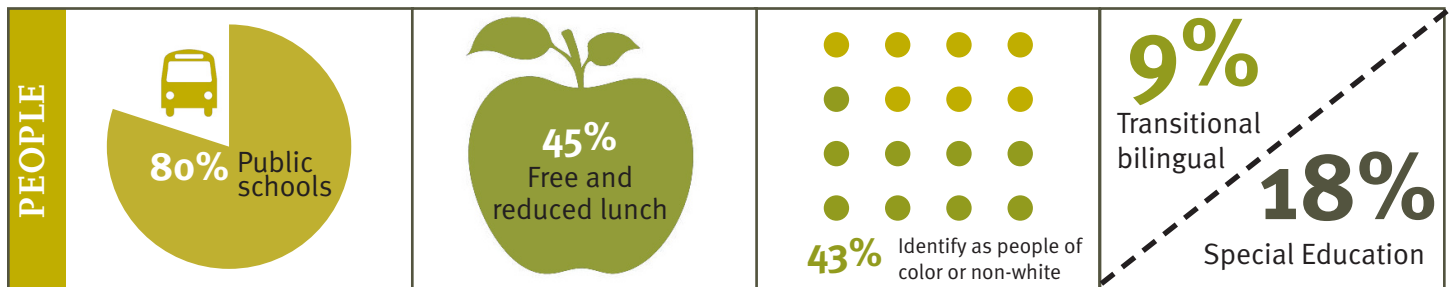
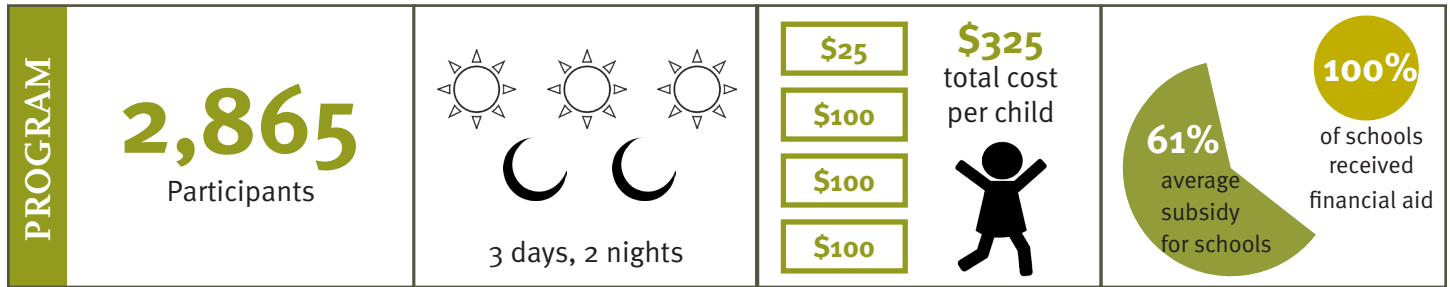
For many kids Mountain School provides a host of "firsts": staying overnight away from home, visiting the national park in their backyard, hiking at night, examining the forest from the ground up, sitting in silence to observe the natural world, and learning their role in the local ecosystem with their classmates.

On the final day of Mountain School, student groups gather to share their "unselfish wishes" for the world as they throw their cedar springs in the campfire. A Darrington student summed it up well: "My unselfish wish is that everyone gets to enjoy Mountain School as much as I did." Thanks to your support, that wish is coming true.



More than 28,000 students have participated since 1990

# AT A GLANCE



<b>PROJECTS</b>	<p>New partnerships with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Skagit Valley and Concrete Schools (and our continued partnership with Bellingham Parks and Recreation) created opportunities for 902 students to engage in 16 hands-on stewardship projects in their home communities. The following public spaces benefited from students' work to remove invasive species, plant native trees and plants, maintain and rehabilitate trails, and maintain community gardens:</p>		
	Carl Cozier Community Forest Squalicum Creek Lowell Park Connelly Creek Nature Area North Ridge Park	Old Village Trail Roosevelt Nature Trail St. Peter's Trail Laurelwood Trail Euclid Park	Cornwall Park Memorial Park Fairhaven Park Concrete Community Garden Bowman Bay at Deception Pass State Park Hansen Creek Northern State Recreation Area

# NEW & NOTABLE

In 2015 we were able to serve all 5th Grade special education students from Bellingham School District at Mountain School. This program was extremely successful – as one teacher shared: “It was SO great to see so many of our students there. As the parent of a child with special needs, I know that while his experience of Mountain School may be different than that of his typically-developing peers, the message that you value all types of participation, and all types of students, is a huge gift. When we returned, Sara (Special Education teacher) shared the “unselfish wish” of one of our typically developing students - that all places were as inclusive as Mountain School. To me, that says more than I could ever explain.”

With 8 new schools attending Mountain School in 2015, the program is operating at full capacity serving nearly 3,000 students each year! To meet the growing demand for outdoor learning experiences the Institute is expanding its school program offerings. At the Mt. Baker Ski Area, SnowSchool students will explore Mt. Baker’s winter mountain environments on snowshoes!

Check it out at: <http://ncascades.org/signup/youth/snowschoo>

## The Seattle Times

Mountain School was featured in *Seattle Times’ Pacific Northwest Magazine* in August:

“The concept behind [Mountain School] sounds simple: In a three-day mountain camp experience, imbue in school children a visceral connection with this special place — the thumping, mountainous heart of Northwest wilderness. Make its magic real to them at a micro level, in the hope that some of them will feel the pull to return as powerfully as a salmon headed home to spawn. Slip into their consciousness rudimentary skills of a naturalist — the ability to observe and make the same personal connections to other wild lands.”

Read the full article at:  
[www.bit.ly/1DucmaG](http://www.bit.ly/1DucmaG)



## FROM STUDENTS



“When I went to Mountain School, something inside me changed. All the time I was there, I felt much better and more healthier inside. That feels great.”

– 5th grade participant



“I remember the water pounding on the rocks, the silent wind brushing against my face, and the mist spraying everywhere. I wish everyone could experience the life in the wild.”

- 5th grade participant

## FROM TEACHERS

“Mountain School helps students see that they are part of a larger community and that their actions can make a difference.”

“Mountain School brings students of all income levels and experiences together where clothes, phones and socioeconomic levels don’t matter.”

“Immersion time in the wild was imperative for altering students’ sense of space and belonging in the web of life.”

“I’ve never cared about nature so much, now I love it!”

- 5th grade participant



# TEACHER SURVEY

In 2015 nearly all teachers observed improvements in students' knowledge, connection, inspiration, attitudes and behavior after Mountain School.



0%

Benchmark (75%)

100%



“Programs like North Cascades Institute’s Mountain School and similar organizations are absolutely vital and we need more of them. It is so important for how the next generation will deal with really, really challenging issues when you think about conservation and climate change.”

- Bill Gaines, USFS Wildlife Biologist

## PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

Mountain School is made possible with the generous support from hundreds of individuals and organizations, including:



Anacortes Noon Kiwanis Foundation, The Burning Foundation, Discuren Charitable Foundation, Janson Foundation, Martin-Fabert Foundation, National Environmental Education Foundation, National Park Foundation, Quest for Truth Foundation, The Satterberg Foundation, The Sharing Foundation, Skagit Community Foundation, Skagit County Budgeting/Finance Department, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Whatcom Community Foundation Fund



More information:  
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A SPECIAL THANKS TO PHOTOGRAPHER RICK ALLEN FOR THE USE OF THESE IMAGES