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. Students spend three days with their classmates, teachers and parent chaperones exploring the North Cascades ecosystem. Hands-on experiences in reading, writing, science, math, social studies, art and physical fitness connect students to the natural and cultural history of the mountains.

**NEW & NOTABLE**

- **Record demand and participation.** Demand for Mountain School is at an all-time high and growing! We have filled the program to capacity and are exploring ways to expand.

- **New teacher resources and training.** We are developing resources and curriculum for teachers who bring their classes to Mountain School to use throughout the year and build upon their Mountain School experience.

- **In the press.** Mountain School was mentioned in a *National Geographic* article as a program that succeeds at engaging diverse young people and connecting them to our national parks. To read an excerpt, visit [bit.ly/2kqxtUb](http://bit.ly/2kqxtUb).

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“Deep in the forested embrace of the upper Skagit River Valley, you can find the next two generations of Americans getting to know a national park. I heard hooting like owls and howling like wolves, coming from a circle of fifth graders and their wilderness instructors.”

— Timothy Egan, *National Geographic*
**AT A GLANCE**

**Tuition:** $325 per student (subsidized on sliding scale based on percentage of students enrolled in Free and Reduced School Lunch program)

**Total participants:** 2,891

- **2,407** youth participants
- **484** teacher & parent chaperones
- **43%** Title I low-income schools
- **38%** free & reduced lunch programs
- **$124** average subsidized price/student
- **14%** Special Education students
- **35%** identify as People of Color
- **78%** Public schools

**STEWARDSHIP**

In partnership with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Bellingham Parks & Recreation Department, 722 students contributed 1,431 hours of service work through post-Mountain School stewardship projects. Projects included salmon habitat restoration, removal of non-native plants and planting and mulching around native plants.

These stewardship projects instill a sense of empowerment and show students how to make a positive impact in their communities. Projects are conducted within walking distance of each school to highlight the accessibility of wild places close to students’ homes.

Photos by Institute Staff
OUTCOMES & EVALUATION

We conduct teacher surveys that assess students’ short- and long-term development. Teachers consistently report emotional and physical transformations as a result of student participation.

### TEACHERS REPORT LASTING IMPACTS ON THEIR STUDENTS AND CLASSROOM COMMUNITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93% report that their students have greater enthusiasm for and engagement in learning</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86% report that their students have a greater sense of responsibility for the environment</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86% report greater teamwork and cooperation among students</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93% report that their students demonstrate greater respect for their peers and others</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79% report that their students have a more positive attitude toward school</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TEACHERS REPORT THAT MOUNTAIN SCHOOL HELPS THEM AS TEACHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% report that Mountain School helped them build classroom community</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% report that it equalized learning environments for their students</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% report that it built students’ social skills</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% report that it improved students’ attitudes toward science</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% report that it enhanced science and environmental learning for their students</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most valuable aspect was seeing the kids realize how interconnected all the systems are and the importance of their role in protecting and enhancing our environment.” - Chaperone

My favorite part was the solo hike because it felt so calming and I could feel the breeze and smell the fresh air. It felt like a magical moment.”

I learned the names of trees and plants and hiked all the way up a mountain to see a waterfall.”

My overall favorite thing about Mountain School is that I got to know my friends better.”

The most valuable part was equalizing the status of all students. So many students shine here who really struggle in the classroom setting.” - Teacher
PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH:
EMMA’S STORY

Over 15 years ago, Emma Ewert came to Mountain School as a 5th grader from Lopez Island for three rainy days in the North Cascades. In 2016 she came back, this time as an instructor and graduate student in North Cascades Institute’s Graduate M.Ed. Residency Program.

“Teaching Mountain School was what got me to apply to the North Cascades Institute graduate program in the first place,” she says. “When thinking about the kind of education I wanted to be a part of, I kept remembering how fun Mountain School was for me.”

Memories of Mountain School have informed much of Emma’s teaching and lesson planning. She remembers activities that impacted her as a 5th grader and tries to highlight those for her students. Emma inspired Mountain School students with her story throughout the year.

“Having the awareness of what this program had done for me and could do for my students was a constant reminder of the power this short, three day program has.”

2016 PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

Mountain School is made possible with the generous support from hundreds of individuals and organizations.

Burning Foundation
Darby Foundation
Discuren Charitable Foundation
Enterprise Holdings Foundation
General Mills Foundation
Ginny Darvill
The Glascoe Family

Martin Fabert Foundation
New Belgium Brewing
Puget Sound Energy Foundation
Quest for Truth Foundation
Schiff Foundation
The Sharing Foundation
Skagit Community Foundation

Skagit Valley Food Co-op
Stillaguamish Tribe
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
Whatcom Community Foundation - Bellingham Youth Philanthropy Fund for the Environment

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INSPIRE AND EMPOWER ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP FOR ALL THROUGH EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN NATURE

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