



A Commitment to Experiential Education

MISSION: At Aldo Leopold Charter School, the human and natural environments serve as text and lab for learning through direct experience, inquiry, and stewardship.

VISION: Aldo Leopold Charter School graduates will use the skills, perspectives, and information they gain at school to enhance their own lives and to advance social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

“Learning through direct experience” is essential and central to the curriculum at ALCS in so many ways, and it is part of the unique framework of the holistic education we wish to provide for your child. We work throughout the process of planning and implementing our experiential program to maintain connections to our work within the classroom. Often the class work occurring before and after an experience may come to life in a new setting. Concepts that are more abstract on paper can suddenly make more sense in real world applications. This program allows us to maintain a high level of engagement and enrichment through shared experiences that create a sense of belonging.

Students leave campus nearly every Friday to work, play, discover, & reflect on what they’ve learned in places like the Gila River, Little Cherry Creek, San Vicente Trail, the “Wave Climbing Wall”, Boston Hill, art galleries and local businesses.

In middle school, we call these days **Fabulous Fridays**. As students advance to the high school, these Fridays become **Community Orientation**, a course that allows high school freshmen and students new to Aldo a way to orient (or find) their way in high school as well as in our surrounding community. Following Community Orientation, high school students spend Fridays working and learning in the community through **internships** or on **Youth Conservation Corp** crews.

Beyond Fridays, **middle school students attend two overnight camping trips** - one in the Fall and one in the Spring. **8th grade students prepare for high school by participating in an overnight backpacking trip. In high school, students participate in an annual 4-day backpacking trip along with at least one multi-day, out of town grade-level trip.** Besides integrating curriculum and building a stronger school community, these trips allow students to expand their self confidence and find previously unknown strengths inside themselves.

Current high school grade-Level trips:

Sonoran Sojourn and Aldo Count (9th)

Conflict Awareness (10th)

Junior Science Trip (11th)

NM History and Marine Biology in Mexico (12th)

At Aldo Leopold Charter School, we believe that learning through direct experience is essential to creating a holistic, engaging education. Our experiential education approach connects classroom learning with the real world, fostering a sense of belonging, self-discovery, and community involvement. As part of our commitment to this unique educational framework, we require active participation from students and families.

By signing this agreement, we, the undersigned parents/guardians, acknowledge and commit to the following principles:

1. Commitment to Experiential Learning

We understand that Aldo Leopold Charter School's mission emphasizes learning through direct experience. We agree that our child will actively participate in field experiences, community involvement, and outdoor activities that are central to the curriculum. This includes:

Fabulous Fridays (Middle School): Students will leave campus every Friday for hands-on learning opportunities in natural and community settings.

Community Orientation (High School): Our child will engage in this course which is designed to help them orient themselves in both high school and the broader community.

Community Service & Internships (High School): We understand that high school students will engage in internships or Youth Conservation Corps crews on Fridays.

2. Overnight and Extended Trips

We agree that our child will participate in the following overnight and extended trips, which are integral parts of the curriculum at Aldo Leopold Charter School:

Middle School: Two overnight camping trips each year, one in the Fall and one in the Spring. Eighth-grade students will also participate in a backpacking trip.

High School: Annual 4-day backpacking trip and grade-level trips, such as Sonoran Sojourn (9th), Conflict Awareness (10th), Junior Science Trip (11th), and NM History and Marine Biology in Mexico (12th).

We recognize that these trips provide valuable opportunities for personal growth, community building, and the integration of classroom learning.

3. Support for Experiential Education

We agree to actively support Aldo Leopold Charter School's experiential education model by:

- Encouraging our child's full participation in off-campus and community-based activities.
- Providing necessary equipment and resources for trips and outdoor experiences.
- Ensuring our child's timely arrival and preparedness for all off-campus activities, including overnight trips.

4. Communication and Collaboration

We understand that successful experiential education requires open communication between the school, parents, and students. We agree to:

- Participate in meetings or events that may arise to support the experiential learning program.
- Communicate with teachers and school staff if there are concerns or if our child requires additional support.
- Stay informed about the schedule and requirements for field trips, overnight trips, and other experiential learning activities.

5. Respect for the School's Values

We affirm that we share the school's core values of environmental stewardship, community engagement, and learning through direct experience and inquiry. We agree to:

- Respect and support the school’s approach to learning and its focus on the natural world and community connections.
- Encourage our child to adopt values of responsibility, cooperation, and curiosity during their experiential learning activities.

6. Financial Responsibility

We understand that certain costs may be associated with some of the experiential learning activities, including field trips, overnight camps, and special equipment. We agree to contribute to these costs as we are able. Subsidies are available with qualification for free and reduced lunch.

By signing this agreement, we commit to supporting Aldo Leopold Charter School’s experiential education program and ensuring that our child fully participates in the educational experiences that are integral to their learning.

Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____

Student Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature(s): _____

Date: _____

Thank you for being an essential part of the Aldo Leopold Charter School community. Together, we will provide our students with an education that fosters not only academic success but also personal growth, environmental stewardship, and a deep connection to the world around them.