

August 15,
2023

Greetings, Parents & Student Back-Packers -

We hope you had an exciting, adventurous and/or relaxing summer. Welcome to ALCS and learning outside-the-desk! Our annual backpacking trips are just around the corner. These trips are required parts of the ALCS curriculum. Thanks to the community's hard work, they also consistently rank at the top of students' list when it comes to assessing their experience here. Safety is our first priority, with all participants required to undergo extensive training & preparation. A second school priority is creating the opportunity for students to expand their self-confidence and find previously unknown strengths within themselves. Finally, our third priority -- as articulated in the ALCS Charter -- is tapping into wilderness as an integrating context for (a) building a stronger school community, and (b) learning vital concepts of 'people care, earth care & fair share,' with all of the multi-curricular content made possible by this matrix of plant, animal & human life.

Students need to be at school by **7:30 a.m. on the date of departure**. Both trips will return to campus around 4:00 pm. Call the school before you pick up your child, as (i) the exact arrival times are subject to change, and (ii) students are expected to help unload gear, return gear & clean the bus when we return.

On the Friday morning before departure, all students should bring their backpacks to school filled with everything they are taking on their trip. This is very important for the safety and comfort of your student as well as the other members of their group. **Students will meet with their group leaders the school day before departure to ensure that all gear is ready, bags are packed and missing equipment is accounted for.** These meetings are mandatory. In other words, (a) your student's grade will drop if they do not attend, and (b) they may not be allowed to go on the trip **or** may be shifted to another group for reasons of safety.

Back-Up trip Dates: If we need to postpone a trip for any reason, we have established back-up dates. These are posted alongside the primary trip dates.

Trails: School staff have worked with local wilderness experts to finalize which trails we will use. These routes will be publicized on our website for your viewing. Trail maps will be posted at school so that you can get an in-person look at the trails we'll take. Trail and group assignments will be posted for student viewing.

Food, Money and Packing:

Food: Please provide a sack lunch for your student to eat on the Monday that their trip departs. Lunch will be eaten on the way to the trailhead, before we begin hiking. We will provide the other meals during the trip, as well as trail snacks. Students need to let their advisors know of any food allergies as soon as possible, so we can accommodate accordingly.

Money: Food is purchased with the \$65 trip fee we ask each student to pay (please pay at the office). Please detach the attached slip and return it with your payment to Cathie in the front office. Note that families qualifying for free and reduced-price lunches are eligible to receive subsidies of up to half the cost of school trips. If you don't know if you qualify, please come in and talk with Cathie.

Packing: You are welcome to send additional snacks with your student, but please keep in mind that (a) light packs are much better than heavy ones, so any snacks you send with your student should be compact and lightweight (*eg.* jerky, power bars); (b) the school provides snacks; and (c) all food from student packs must go into the bear bag each night. Your student will be asked to carry some of the group food as well as first aid and cooking equipment that the school will provide. We try to share the weight of these things evenly among all members of the trail team.

Clothing & Equipment

Clothing: To help students prepare, a packing list is enclosed along with a list of equipment retailers in case you do not own all of the suggested items already. "Cotton kills," is a slogan that describes what can happen if jeans & other types of cotton clothing get wet & core body temperatures drop. While overstated & melodramatic, this phrase tells people to bring multiple layers of light-weight non-cotton clothing into the backcountry. ALCS understands that clothing is expensive, so we have non-cotton clothing here at the school to loan out on an 'as-needed' basis much as one can check out a library book. Thrift-stores are also an option.

Equipment: The expense of acquiring backpacks, sleeping bags and tents can be significant, so we have an inventory of backpacks, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and tents that students may borrow. Students must file a request with their advisor to check out school equipment. Students borrowing equipment will pick up the equipment during their pre-trip meeting. They are responsible for what they borrow and must pay for it if they damage or lose it. For this reason, students need to leave collateral for the equipment. A \$50.00 check from you (made out to the school), which we will not cash and will tear up when they return the intact equipment, will work. If they do not bring a check, they will have to leave a cell phone or something else of value.

Parent Meeting: We will hold an optional meeting for any **parents (or others) who have questions** or **comments** about the trips. The date and location of this meeting can be found on the ALCS calendar.

Medical: Please ensure that all medical information is current prior to the trip with a couple days to spare. Each medical form will be reviewed by Mark Gomez, who is a Registered Nurse. Inform the school of any health concerns and food issues regarding your student so that we can make their group leaders aware of those concerns. mgomez@aldocs.org

Other: Prepare your student for the fact that THEY should be prepared for all types of weather & daily challenges. The packing list is crucial for your student's comfort & safety. Regular cardio & core body exercise in the weeks leading up to the trip will help to provide your student with a stronger platform for learning & enjoyment on this trip. So, exercise, hike, bike, swim, dance or run to prepare for the journey.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call us. Please check the website at aldocs.org for updates

Remember that wilderness experience is challenging, fun & exceptional.

All the Best,

Avery Jepson-Browne - Experiential Education Director

Pete Rankin – Social Studies & Risk Management

Hannah Weeks - Director

Aldo Leopold Charter School

School Mission—

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

Packing List for Wilderness Backpacking

Items with an asterisk () beside them are available on loan from the school. "Loaners" require that students offer collateral as a guarantee that items are returned in good condition.*

- Backpack*
- 2-person tent* (larger tents are fun—but they are heavier!)
- Sleeping bag* (should be rated 20 degrees or lower)
- Sleeping pad* (more important than you might think)
- Cap with a brim
- Rain poncho *or* raincoat and pants
- 2 sturdy water bottles or Camelbak-style hydration system plus one bottle
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Sturdy hiking shoes
- Sandals for camp
- 2 pair of socks; cotton is not recommended
- Compact jacket; cotton is not recommended
- Warm cap (even for summer trips); cotton is not recommended
- 1 long-sleeved shirts; cotton is not recommended
- 2 short-sleeved shirts; cotton is not recommended
- 1 pair of pants; long pants that convert into shorts are ideal; cotton is not recommended
- Mess kit (sturdy bowl, cup, spoon, fork)
- Trash bag
- Hand towel and washcloth
- Bandana
- Composition journal with extra pen & pencil
- Pocket knife with a 3-inch (or shorter) blade (optional)
- Lighter (optional)

In addition, students should bring toiletries in a sealable plastic bag: sunscreen, lip balm, biodegradable soap, comb, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, &, if appropriate, feminine hygiene items.

Prescription medications will be packed in by an ALCS staff member. Students who will require prescription medication for the trip should contact Jim McIntosh, RN, at ALCS to briefly review medication administration. Any student who uses an inhaler should bring 2 inhalers on the trip; any student with diabetes medication & supplies should bring a duplicate set of supplies (glucometer, strips, glucagon, &c).

Thanks for being wilderness aware!