



OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTER
BATTLE CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
10160 South M-37 Highway
Dowling, Michigan 49050
269-721-8161

PARENT HANDBOOK- SCHOOL CAMP PROGRAM

Your student / child has an opportunity to participate in the residential school camping program held at the Battle Creek Public Schools Outdoor Education Center. The Battle Creek Public Schools have operated Clear Lake Camp at the Outdoor Education Center continuously since 1947 for the purpose of providing residential School Camp.

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL CAMPING PROGRAM

Outdoor Education is based on the premise that exposing children to the out-of-doors in the school setting develops an initial awareness leading to a reasonable understanding of mankind's ultimate dependence upon our natural environment. The school camping program thus becomes an extension of the classroom where teachers and their students use the out-of-doors as a laboratory in which to study, explore, and live in our natural environment. The experience also offers children the chance to develop skills and interests in outdoor recreation which will carry over into later life. This time of living together in a camp setting offers children the opportunity to live democratically with other children and adults as they study, work, and live together.

It is all too common today that children spend very little time outdoors. Research shows that spending time in the outdoors enriches children's lives in a myriad of ways; enhancing imagination, cognitive skills, problem solving skills and general well-being. Additionally, having a safe, enjoyable, "away from parent" experience is a natural and healthy part of growing up

LOCATION & DIRECTIONS:

The Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center, Clear Lake Camp is located in Barry County on Clear Lake at 10160 South M-37 Highway, 13 miles north of Battle Creek and 1.5 miles south of Dowling.

If using Google maps or a GPS, we recommend finding "Dowling, Michigan" rather than attempting to use the camp address. We are located 1.5 miles south of Dowling, which has a Marathon gas station and a General Store. Camp is on the west side of the road with a large brown and white sign across from farm fields. We are north of the intersection of Pifer / Lacey Road and M-37. Michigan 37 is also called Bedford Rd.

CLEAR LAKE CAMP FACILITIES:

Camp lodge: The main lodge contains a dining hall, classrooms, recreation room, souvenir store, health office, and restrooms

Dormitories: Boys and Girls are housed in two separate dormitory buildings. Each dormitory has heat and electricity. Bathrooms have toilet stalls, sinks, and individual showers. Student rooms sleep 20 to 26 students in bunk beds, with shelves for personal items. Each dorm holds 66 students.

Grounds: Approximately 150 acres of mixed forest, fields, pond, and activity areas. Our main lodge is on the shore of Clear Lake.

SUPERVISION:

Children are supervised 24 hours a day. In addition to the classroom teacher, there is a permanent camp staff of Director, Assistant Director/Daytime Health Officer, Program Coordinator, Night Health Officer, Instructors, maintenance staff, and kitchen staff. Each classroom of students is assigned one or two Instructors. The boys' dormitory and girls' dormitory are each supervised by two Instructors. The exterior dormitory doors are alarmed and instructors make at least three camper counts during the evening. All staff members are hired with school and state safety clearance protocols.

HEALTH SERVICE

Two trained Health Officers cover all health needs 24 hours a day during the camp program. The Day Health Officer schedules medication, checks on health and diet problems, and provides first aid and care for students who become ill. During the evening and nighttime hours the Night Health Officer is on duty to provide health care and distribute medications. Please call ahead to advise us of special health situations. Camp provides basic first aid supplies but does not stock any medication. We can only give medication that is brought by the student, in the original container, and has a completed medication permission form. Medication is collected upon arrival at camp.

REQUIREMENTS:

Parents must complete and sign the **Registration and Health Information Form**. If you are sending any medication, a **Medication Permission Form** is required. The medication permission form requires **both** a parent's and a doctor's signature. This is for any and all medications whether it is prescription, over the counter or supplements. Refer to the Medication Information Form about details when sending medication to camp. Medication Permission Forms may be faxed from the doctor's office.

If a group will be doing any challenge activities (Canoeing, Archery, Team Building Activities, The Wall, The Beam, Climbing Tower, or High Ropes Course), a **Challenge Activities Release and Assumption of Risk form** is required. Most schools elect at

least one activity for which this form is required. Please check with your school for their specific activity selections.

Forms can be downloaded from our website <http://clearlakecamp.org> under the Forms and Info section.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT:

A **What-to-Pack** list is available on our website. Please *help* your child pack for camp so they know what they have in their luggage and how it all fits. Label everything. Pack for the weather possibilities of the season. We go outside in all weather! Clothes will get dirty. Pack clothes to keep your child warm, dry and comfortable. Clothing must be school appropriate. Pay attention to the DO NOT BRING section of items, including cell phones and other electronic devices which are not allowed at camp.

STORE:

We have a small store for students to buy souvenirs. Items are priced from \$ 0.50 for a pencil to \$10.00 for a t-shirt and \$25.00 for a sweatshirt. Ten to fifteen dollars is the average amount of money spent at the store. Shopping at the camp store is optional.

MAIL:

Every student enjoys getting mail! Remember to write early, even the week before camp starts, to ensure your student receives his or her mail. Please keep letters positive and do not send food or candy.

Student Name, School Name
Outdoor Education Center
10160 S. M-37 Hwy
Dowling, MI 49050

We also encourage students to write home while they are away. Providing your child with stamped and addressed envelopes or address labels will assist in the letter writing process. Stamps may also be purchased at the camp store.

VISITATION:

Parents are welcome to visit the Outdoor Education Center. However, it does interfere with the camp routine and may cause homesickness problems for all the children. If a child is anxious and would like to see camp and meet staff ahead of time with their parents, we encourage pre-camp visits. Please call camp to arrange a time to visit.

HOMESICKNESS:

We have a lot of experience with homesickness and feel that we are very successful in helping students have an enjoyable experience. If parents feel that there may be a potential problem with homesickness, they can indicate this on their child's registration form. Knowing this ahead of time may help us take preventive measures before this becomes serious for a child. Note that we generally do not put campers and parents on the phone together except in extreme cases. We will call parents in the event of prolonged homesickness, yet we have found that once a student and parent speak on the phone the homesickness generally gets worse. At the end of this handbook is a page titled "**Are You Homesick**" with helpful information. Parents are also encouraged to discuss potential homesickness and strategies with their child's teacher before the camp trip.

FOOD ALLERGIES:

Food allergies have become a major concern for many parents. There is a place on the Registration and Health Information Form to indicate any food or other allergies. It is important to complete this portion of the form in detail and to indicate the severity of the allergy. Our kitchen does all they can to avoid using common allergens such as nuts, peanuts, and seafood. They also can often accommodate other allergies, yet in some cases families may elect to provide a student their own food for all or part of the camp stay. Parents should contact us directly well in advance of the camp trip so we can discuss proper care procedures and potential accommodations. The camp phone number is 269-721-8161.

SPECIAL NEEDS:

We try to accommodate all children's needs and pride ourselves on being very flexible. However, we do have limitations. Please call camp to discuss any concerns or possible accommodations and we will try to work out a plan

TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE:

7:00 AM Campers wake up
7:40 AM Dormitory clean-up; Table setting
8:00 AM Breakfast
9:00 AM Morning activity period
12:00 PM Lunch
1:00 PM Afternoon activity period
4:00 PM Rest time in dorm
5:30 PM Dinner
6:30 PM Evening activity period
8:20 PM Evening Snack
8:30 PM Dorm Time; Showers; Get ready for bed
9:30 PM Lights out and story

BEHAVIOR POLICY:

The OEC is committed to providing a safe, needs-satisfying, growth oriented experience for every student. Students are introduced to the “Five Finger Full Value Contract” as a guideline for responsible behavior.

- Safety
- Commitment
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fun!

We also use a progression of verbal and written warnings. The following shows the progression of action taken by the OEC in cooperation with school teachers to correct unacceptable behavior.

1. Verbal Warning
2. Level 1 written warning – Behavior and consequence such as short time out or change of seating etc. will be documented
3. Level 2 written warning - Behavior and consequences are documented and student will be responsible for completing a time-out plan.
4. Level 3 written warning - Behavior and consequence are documented. Level 3 plan is completed and a call is made home and to school principal.
5. Level 4 written warning – Dismissal from camp

Terms for Immediate Dismissal:

1. Setting a fire or initiating a false fire alarm
2. Possessing weapons or illegal substances
3. Physical violence towards another person
4. Verbal abuse of another person
5. Blatant vandalism
6. Intentionally entering the dormitory or bathroom of the opposite gender.

STUDENTS LEAVING CAMP EARLY

Students leaving during camp must be signed out by a parent, guardian, or other designated contact person. This person must be listed on the student’s Registration and Health Information form and may be asked to show photo I.D. Schools may be billed a pro-rated price for any student sent home due to medical illness. Schools are billed the full amount for any student sent home due to homesickness, behavior, or family choice.

ARE YOU HOMESICK?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, almost everyone experiences homesickness in their lifetime. A report written by Christopher Thurber, PhD, and Edward Walton, MD, suggests ways to prevent homesickness and ways to cope with it. Following are some suggestions for campers and parents:

Parents: Ways to Prevent Homesickness

- Discuss the upcoming separation with your child.
 - If they say they may feel home sick, tell kids that it is normal and discuss coping strategies listed below.
- Send kids on a practice trip, such as a few days at a friend's or relative's house.
- Have kids practice writing letters before leaving.
 - Give kids pre stamped, pre addressed envelopes and paper to pack.
- Encourage kids to make friends and seek support from trusted adults while they're gone.
- Be enthusiastic and optimistic about your child's camping experience.
 - Nix negativity. Don't say things like, "I hope you'll be okay."
 - Don't say, "I don't know what I will do without you!" Instead have confidence they will have a wonderful experience to share when they come home.
 - Send letters that are upbeat and positive – ask what they are doing, who they bunk with, hope you are having fun, etc.
- Involve kids in decisions about camp, ie. what to pack, who to bunk with, etc.
- Don't make deals: encourage them to try their best.
 - No promises of daily phone calls- they will only miss you more.
 - No promises of picking them up anytime –It gives an excuse not to try.
- Don't use the experience as a drug holiday for kids on medications.
- If kids have special needs, call us to make arrangements and inform them of the plan.

Campers: Ways to Cope With Homesickness

- Do something fun. Talk or play a game with a friend and stay involved in activities.
- Do something to feel closer to home. Write a letter home. Draw pictures or keep a journal about the fun things at camp.
- Find someone to talk to; camp staff, teacher or friend.
- Think about getting through short periods of time – like the next activity – not days of time.
- Don't dwell on thoughts of home. Stay in the present; try to have fun with what you are doing.
- Think about what a loved one would say to you to make you feel better.

Encourage your child; tell them that they can handle it.

If a child can cope with homesickness, it can empower them to handle other difficult situations in their lives.