

2006 Fort McHenry Educational Programs

In 2006 the education programs at Fort McHenry reached over 1,000 students from Baltimore City Public Schools. Two main programs were offered, the Fort McHenry Experience and Young Defenders. The Fort McHenry Experience was developed by the education committee of the Friend's Board and Young Defenders which is a program developed by the Baltimore City Heritage Area and supported by the Friends of Fort McHenry.

Young Defenders

In 2006, more than 900 Baltimore City School students had the unique opportunity to experience Fort McHenry as its history came alive for the "Young Defenders" program. As part of the Star Spangled Banner weekend, more than 100 living history characters formed an encampment at the Fort. These actors and educators did hands-on presentations about life at the Fort in 1814, the defense of Baltimore, the experience of African American soldiers in the War of 1812 and the writing of our national anthem. They even get to meet the mayor of Baltimore and hear about how the legacy of Fort McHenry shaped our modern city and inspires us today.

The Friends of Fort McHenry expenses for Young Defenders Program:

Buses	\$6,630
Teacher Workshop Lunches	\$450
Total	\$7,080





Fort McHenry Experience

In 2006 over 150 students from Baltimore City were given a chance to explore history first hand. The fort hosted six different classes comprised of students from the inner city schools Francis Scott Key, Westport Academy and Thurgood Marshall. These programs integrated hands on learning with living history to give students a unique perspective of what life would have been like during the war of 1812 and in particular the siege of Baltimore.

The students' experience with Fort McHenry started in their classroom. Each teacher was provided with supplemental material to help prepare the students for the day at the fort. In-class preparation is a vital component of the Fort McHenry Experience. We have found that students who have been familiarized with the historical context, geographical parameters and long term impact of the events that took place in Baltimore are more interested and take more away from the voyage on the harbor and the exploration of the fort than those with less preparation. Although different classes were able to allocate different amounts of time within their course curriculum, background material was provided that spanned a wide range of grade levels and subject areas. In addition to supplemental material, outreach visits with either Friends or Park Service staff were also scheduled.

The students then spent half of their day at Fort McHenry where they participated in the Flag Program, learned about African Americans at Fort McHenry and met Mary Pickersgill. They spent the other half of their day out on the Mildred Bell, a Chesapeake Bay Buy Boat built in the 1940's that was provided by the LCF shipboard program. They sailed to where Francis Scott Key wrote the poem that would later become known as the Star Spangled Banner and our national anthem. While onboard the students were engaged in a variety of hands on learning stations that combined navigation, shipboard life, the growth of the Port of Baltimore and the 1814 Battle of Baltimore. As they approached the famous spot, the students were greeted by Francis Scott Key who detailed for them him versions of the events that happened on that fateful evening. Peter Niessing, a living history actor from the Flag House portrayed Francis Scott Key.

The third component of the project was an in class project where students use creativity and their new knowledge of historical events to design and create a project which links to other academic areas. These projects included a board game, a diorama, picture, poems and an original skit.

Our goal for 2007 is to host the Fort McHenry experience for two days in the spring and then three days in the fall. Support for the 2006 program came from Balterm, NPS Civic Engagement Grant and C. Steinweg.

FRIENDS OF FORT MCHENRY

FORT MCHENRY EXPERIENCE BUDGET

Expenses

Program supplies/ Food	\$400
Boat Trip	\$950
Living History Interpreters	\$250
Bus Transportation	\$450
Educators	\$650
Total Expenses	\$2,700

Balterm has generously committed to provide \$4,000 towards the operation of these programs in 2007. C. Steinweg Company has generously committed to cover bus transportation expenses. The Friends of Fort McHenry are seeking matching funding with the goal of serving five Baltimore City schools this year.



Fort McHenry Experience Program Overview



With support from port related businesses and the National Park Service, the Friends of Fort McHenry have created an experiential education program that immerses students from selected Baltimore City schools in the history of Fort McHenry.

This program not only inspires a sense of pride in their community among the students, but also connects to their classroom curriculum in several disciplines.

The Friends of Fort McHenry is the recognized friends group of Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. It is part of the organization's mission to support educational initiatives which focus on this national treasure. Led by Morgan "Trip" Bailey of BalTerm, the Friends became aware that many students in the neighborhoods surrounding the fort have only limited knowledge of the important history found in their own backyard. The goal of this program is to deepen the understanding and appreciation of events that shaped our nation through experiences and activities in a variety of academic areas. For example, some students from Francis Scott Key Middle School connected their Fort McHenry experience to their curriculum as a technology magnet school by creating a virtual tour of the Fort.

Board members of the Friends worked with the education department of Living Classrooms Foundation, the Baltimore Heritage Area and the Park Service to develop a curriculum and activities for the program. The program is based in experiential learning and has three major components. The first component, classroom preparation, uses lessons and activities to familiarize students with the context of the War of 1812 and how events in Baltimore shaped the course of our nation's history.

The second component features activities at the Fort and on board the ships of Living Classrooms educational fleet. Half of the day is spent on one of the vessels and the other half is spent at the Fort.

On the ships, students visit the spot in the harbor where Francis Scott Key witnessed the British bombardment of Fort McHenry and was moved to write the poem that became our National Anthem. They also participate in small group learning stations focusing on shipboard life, navigation, the Battle of Baltimore and the development of the port. The ship program features first person living history from Francis Scott Key.

At the Fort, learning stations include African-Americans in the War of 1812, Life at Fort McHenry, a flag program and a living history presentation by Mary Pickersgill who sewed the huge flag which flew over the Fort in 1814.

The third component is a class project where students use creativity and their new knowledge of historical events to design and create a project which links to other academic areas. Examples of projects include an original poem about Fort McHenry, an exhibit which can be displayed at the Fort or a web based project.

