

San Diego Unified Port District- Environmental Services
Progress Report: CVESD Coastal Education Programs at the Chula Vista Nature Center
3/18/10

Work Completed to Date:

The Winter/Spring registration period took place from December 2nd-11th, 2009 when teachers signed up for classes from January 1st- June 8th. On December 9th twelve teachers attended an open house to learn more about the program, register their classes and find out more information about the free transportation offer. Fliers and emails for the registration session and for the open house with a Port Logo were distributed to over 1500 teachers in the district. I was able to sign up classes for most of the remaining dates in the school year with the response I received from the fliers and email. On January 13th, eighteen teachers came out to the Nature Center for a meeting to learn about the grant requirements and discuss future ways to cover the transportation costs.

I did have some remaining dates available for study trips after the initial registration session. Therefore on January 12th an email, with the Port Logo, was sent out to all CVESD teachers letting them know that there were still study trip spaces available for their classes and that there was a strong possibility that they could qualify for free transportation. The day that the email went out to the teachers my phone message machine became completely full and the inbox of my email was inundated immediately. Over the next couple of days the overwhelming response of teachers wanting to sign up their classes continued. I was able to fill every single day available, even the last day of school! I still have a waiting list of 35 teachers that want to bring their classes and some want to bring their entire grade level classes. Clearly it was the transportation cost that was the major obstacle for these teachers. When they heard that there was the opportunity to get a free bus, they jumped at the chance to visit the Nature Center.

Since I started using the Port funds from this grant in January, eight classes have attended the Nature Center using the Port's transportation money. Five third grade classes came from Lauderbach Elementary and four first grade classes from Hilltop Elementary. There were a total of about 180 students and about 16 adults that attended with these groups in January and February. All students were given a pretest and a posttest that asked questions about the standards-based lesson they were taught at the Nature Center and about watershed pollution. All the teachers attended a meeting at the Nature Center prior to their study trip where they discussed potential resources of transportation funding in the future. When the students come to the Nature Center they get split into two groups, one group comes with me for a standards-based lesson and the other group goes with a docent who teaches them about our watershed and gives them the opportunity to touch sharks and sting rays. Then the groups switch so all students get to have both experiences. (Please see photos below)

The students from Lauderbach Elementary studied about the adaptations of animals by exploring crustaceans. They learned about their life cycle including molting and they got to

touch a crab and a crayfish. They also went down the trail to the beach and lifted up rocks to learn more about the crab's habitat. While on the beach they noticed a lot of trash and discussed where it came from. They all vowed to make sure they put their trash in the proper receptacles so it would not end up on the beach. (Please see photos below)

The students from Hilltop Elementary learned all about arthropods. They collected insects in bug boxes to observe their characteristics closely with magnifying glasses. They learned about some of their adaptations, such as molting their exoskeletons. They also viewed insects with microscopes so they could see their eyes and other parts in detail. (Please see photos below)

How Effective the Project is at Benefitting the Bay

One of the ways that this project is evaluated is by the number of students that return with their free pass with their families. Prior to this year the Nature Center offered a free pass that allowed on student and one adult to come back for free on another day. Since the Nature Center has become a non-profit instead of a city entity, they decided to only offer a free student with a paying adult. We have seen a major decline in the use of these passes. Previously we would get about 10 a month and in the past 7 months they have had only about 6 passes total return. The same numbers of free passes are being given out as before. I am currently re-doing the free pass so that it is clearer and I hope to be able to offer the free adult and child again. This will give us a better understanding of the desire of the community to return to the Nature center with their family after their child visits.

Costs Incurred to Date

This year I have been fortunate enough to also receive a grant that can cover transportation costs from the California Coastal Commission's Whale Tail Grant. With the money from that grant and from this Port of San Diego grant I have been able to offer free transportation to all classes that have attended and will be attending the Nature Center from January- June this school year! Since the Whale Tail Grant was only for one year and this Port grant is for three years I received permission to use up the Whale Tail Grant money first and then be able to extend the Port Grant for an additional year to use up the rest of the funds allotted to this program. The Whale Tail grant money was able to cover the vast majority of the remaining classes this year, so I used the Port funds for only eight classes so far that attended in January and February. I do have at least thirteen more classes that will be using the Port funds for their transportation the remaining of this year. I know that the transportation funds will be invaluable to the classes in the next four years.

Photos

