

**San Diego Unified Port District- Environmental Services**  
**CVESD Coastal Education Program Located at the Chula Vista Nature Center**  
**Progress Report: June 2011**  
**Sent to: Eileen Maher [emaher@portofsandiego.org] on June 9, 2011**

**Work Completed to Date:**

From April- June 2011 there were twenty four classes that had their transportation funded by the Environmental Services Port Grant. Please see photos. All of the classes had students that were in Kinder- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. May is the month when older students participate in the California State Testing so it is a good time for younger kids that are not involved in the testing to visit the Nature Center. Three classes of kindergartners visited the Nature Center for the "Crawling Crabs" Program. They were introduced to the center by Carlos, the resident coyote puppet and Crabby Gaby, the resident stuffed crab, helped them to feel comfortable about getting close to live crabs. They all had the opportunity to learn about the parts of the crab, their life cycle and they got to touch Yellow Shore Crabs. Fourteen classes of 1<sup>st</sup> graders participated in the "Arthropods All Around" Program. These classes became imaginary insects and learned about the life cycle of a bug. They also used bug boxes to investigate and then release some of the local arthropods. They got to touch a crayfish and look at insects with microscopes as well. The remaining seven classes of either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> graders learned about the adaptations of birds and other animals during the "Footprints on the Marsh" class. They learned about the local birds, hiked on the trails with binoculars, tallied the various birds they found and investigated the birds' habitat. While down at the beach they noticed various kinds of trash along the shore and discussed where it came from and what they could do to protect the animals that lived there. All the classes were able to have a traditional tour of the center as well where they get to touch the stingrays, see the shorebirds and have their breath taken away as they see the Bald Eagle.

Last year was the first year that the Coastal Education Program received funding from the Port's Environmental Services Grant. It is a three year grant that has actually been extended for a fourth year in order to be able to use all the allotted funding. During the 2009-2010 school year about ~4,800 students from 211 classes, in 34 different schools participated in the Coastal Education Program. A goal for this year was to ensure that the ten schools that did not bring at least one class to the Nature Center last year bring one this year. During the 2010-2011 school year there were over 5,000 students from 219 classes in 33 different schools that visited the Nature Center. (Please see enclosed data) Four of the ten schools that previously did not bring a class did bring at least one this year, some brought multiple classes! Another one of these schools was awarded free funding for their students but canceled at the last minute and was not able to reschedule. Their transportation money was given to the next teacher on the waiting list. Therefore there are still 5 CVESD schools out of 44 schools that have not participated in the Coastal Education Program in the past 2 years. In the 2011-2012 school year, these 5 schools: CVLCC, Finney, Montgomery, Otay and Silverwing will be given first priority to the Port funding to ensure that at least one class participates in the Coastal Education Program. Also schools that participated during the 2009-2010 school year but not in the 2010-2011 school year will also be given higher priority than those that came this past year.

Throughout this past school year there were some changes, switches and cancelations that had to be dealt with in order to be able to provide the funding to as many students as possible. (Please see enclosed data) One teacher came to the Fall Open House and did not win the free transportation for her classes but she set up a field trip for her grade level anyways. She then came to the Winter Open House and did win the free transportation through the lottery. Since her trip wasn't scheduled until January she used the money that I had allotted for the Winter/Spring Session but came during the Fall Session. During the Fall Session, a teacher from Heritage had won the raffle for free transportation for six third grade classes but had to postpone her dates until the Winter/Spring session. She then ended up canceling the entire two days of trips at the last minute but the money was able to be used by six 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes from Wolf Canyon. Both of these changes caused the original tally of classes and students for the Fall Session to be incorrect. The correct Fall Session (July- January) numbers are 34.5 classes and ~800 students. During the Winter/Spring Session a teacher from Vista Square won the free transportation for his three sixth grade classes but then later found that he could use funding from the Sweetwater Authority grant to fund those three classes. The grant covered the same amount of money that he was going to receive from the Port funding except for \$35. The \$35 was offered to him for

being flexible and allowing another teacher to use his funding. One other change occurred during the Winter/Spring Session; a teacher from Veterans was able to have parents drive their students to the Nature Center instead of taking a bus, so her funding was given to the a teacher from Marshall so they could bring their entire first grade team instead of just half of them. The total data for number of classes and students during the Winter/Spring session was 40.5 classes and ~885 students.

### **How effective the project is at benefiting the Bay:**

Twenty seven of the last twenty eight days of the school year were booked with classes at the Nature Center. From when the Fall Session began on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010 through the end of the Spring Session on June 2<sup>nd</sup> this year there were only twelve days without a class. Most of those days were during Parent-Teacher conferences and other days were when teachers had to cancel or postpone a trip at the last minute. This program is growing in popularity and thanks to the ability to offer free transportation to many classes; it continues to be accessible to all students of all income levels.

Each teacher that received funding for transportation had to provide a pretest and a post test from each of their students. The ~540 students that attended the Nature Center with the Port Grant's funding from Jan- June 2010 showed an average 23.5% INCREASE in their test scores after their study trip. The data for the 2010-2011 school year has been compiled and the students showed an average 20% INCREASE in their test scores after their study trip. (Please see attached data) There were varying results between classes; some classes showed only a 2% increase while others showed a 48% increase between their pre and post test results. Ultimately the data is collected by the individual teachers so there is a certain amount of error inherent in the data collection, but overall the students did show a very significant increase between their pre and post test scores. After another year of test results, it has been found that the tests themselves could be improved even further as well as the system for collecting the data. Next year the tests will be updated again and the data collection system will be improved to make the process even more effective.

Not only do the students do a pre and post test, the teachers are asked to complete an evaluation form of the program. (Please see attached data) A rating system from 1-5 was used to rate some key aspects of the program with 4 being "good" and 5 being "excellent". Overall the program was given an average 4.83 when asked if it met their expectations, a 4.78 was the average rating for the programs relevance to standards and the program's content was given an average of 4.86. There was also a short answer part of the evaluation form. One of the questions asked if they would recommend the program to another teacher and every single teacher that completed the form wrote in "yes" and some added, "absolutely", "definitely", "already have", "highly" and "of course!" When teachers were asked if they thought their students became more knowledgeable about the standards after their visit, one teacher responded, "Definitely! They wrote a 3-paragraph description of their day. It was a highly motivating topic resulting in the best descriptive writing this year." In the "Other thoughts" question teachers wrote the following two comments: "I'm bummed I only started to go now when I've been in the district for 10 years." "The transportation grant was the reason we were able to go this year- thanks! We hope to be able to go again next year!" This last comment really shows how vital the funding from the Port is to these students. There are many classes that would not have been able to have this experience without the Port's support.

Another requirement for receiving the free transportation funding is to provide the class's demographics. This is a way to keep track of the exact population that the Coastal Education Program is serving. The entire CVESD's population is 68 percent Hispanic, 13 percent White, 11 percent Filipino, 04 percent African-American, 03 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 01 percent Other. The population of students that the Coastal Education Program served this past school year was 65% Hispanic, 21% White, 5% African American, 5% Asian, 16% Filipino, 2% Native American and 8% other. The District's population has 35% English Language Learners (ELL) and the population of students that came to the Nature Center's program were 45% ELL. The Coastal Education Program's population this past school year also was 50% socioeconomically disadvantaged or was on free or reduced lunch plans. The Port's funding has truly made these programs accessible to all students in the district! (Please see attached data)

When students come to a study trip they are given a free pass that allows them and one adult to come back to the Nature Center on another day for free. The Nature Center keeps track of these passes and how many people return. From March- May 2011 152 free passes (2 people per pass) have been collected from my program. An additional seven adults and six children paid to accompany their family members that got in for free. Therefore a total of 317 people have returned to the Nature Center as a direct result of attending one of the Coastal Education Programs during March- May. Not only were the students inspired enough to bring their family back, the family then was able to have the opportunity to become inspired by the exhibits and programs during their visit. Overall the entire local family gains a greater respect for their local environment and the flora and fauna living in it. The data for June- August will be reported in the September progress report.

All 5<sup>th</sup> grade students took the CST's the first two weeks of May but the results are not yet posted. It is the hope that the students improved their science test scores by 5-10% over their results from last year. The results will be released in September and written up in the September 2011 progress report. The CVESD students increased their overall score on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Science CST from 359.9 to 369.2 between the 2009 and 2010 CST's. The percentage of students performing at the Advanced Level increased from 18% to 26%, 8% points! The percentage of students performing at the Proficient Level stayed the same at 36% even though 8% of the students moved up to the higher level. The percentage of students performing at the Basic Level decreased from 30% to 22%. Therefore 8% of students moved up an entire performance level. It was the hope that the CVESD students would improve 5-10% over a three-year period and in just one year they increased 8%! This is a result of not only the students visiting the Coastal Education Program but of the all the hard work that the teachers and district has done to make Science education more of a priority for students. Many of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers that brought their students out to the Nature Center did report a significant increase in their student's science results even if they didn't do any other extra preparation for the science test. It is the hope that the results from the tests this year show a significant increase once again.

Every day the voices of students can be heard exclaiming, "This is the best field trip ever!" The other day, "This is way better than recess! ", was heard. We believe the students feel this way because when they step foot off the bus they become completely surrounded by the fascinating animals and plants that live in the San Diego Bay and in the upland areas. They get to have a very personal experience with many of these animals and gain a respect for them that they never had before. They have so much fun learning that they don't even realize that they are in "class". It is exciting to be a part of this program and watch the impact that the experience has on the students. Many of them go away with a new appreciation and respect for the living world around them and when they go home they change their behaviors to be more environmentally conscious!

The Nature Center staff has been working tirelessly to market the Nature Center and its programs to the local and county wide populations. Their efforts have really started to pay off and the Center is now busier than ever. Multiple grants have been awarded to start the creation of a multipurpose outdoor classroom area that is vital to our growing activities. The Center currently has a new seasonal exhibit called, "Art Aquatic" and people are raving about the beauty of the fish and glasswork together. It is exciting to watch this treasure grow and give more of our local population the opportunity to learn how to be better stewards of our San Diego Bay.

## **Costs Incurred to Date:**

During the Fall Session thirty-four and a half classes came on seven shuttles that cost \$225 each (\$1,575) and thirteen full day trips that cost \$155 (\$2,015). The total amount spent on Fall Session trips was \$3,590. This amount was included on the invoice sent to the Port in March. During the Winter/Spring Session forty and a half classes came on eleven shuttles that cost \$225 each (\$2,475) and eight full day trips at \$155 each (\$1,240) totaling \$3,715. An extra \$150 was used to offset other acquired funding sources and an extra bus for a wheelchair as explained above. The total cost for the 2010-2011 school year was \$7,455 (\$3,590 + \$3,865). There was \$295 left over from the budgeted \$7,750 this year that will be added to the budgeted \$7,750 for next year. (Please see attached data)

It has been approved to send a second invoice this year in June so that the fiscal year for the school district can be closed out. The previous invoice in March 2011 included classes from March 2010- February 2011. The Port will be invoiced in June 2011 for classes that attended with Port funding from March 2011- June 2011. The total for classes that attended from March 2011- June 2011 is \$3,070. Next year the Port will only be invoiced once in June 2012 for the total amount of funding used from August 2011- June 2012.

The grant given by the Port to cover the transportation costs of the CVESD programs has made it possible for many underprivileged students to get out of the classroom and immerse themselves in the sights, sounds, smells and feel of the natural world around them. It is exciting to watch students' eyes light up as they take their first step off the bus and come face to face with a baby sea turtle! Thank you so much!

**Photos:  
Kindergarten: Crawling Crabs**



**First Grade  
Arthropods All Around**



# First & Second Grade Footprints on the Marsh

