

# 2019 Summer Learning Program Final Report



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# 2019 Summer Learning Program

## Overview

The 2019 Summer Learning Program was successful once again as the program reached underserved and low-income students across the state through creative and engaging programming. New community groups and partners came on board this year as some park districts reached out to different audiences.

The Summer Learning Program served over 2,775 students through 58 programs at 10 state parks during the 2019 summer season. Park staff, volunteers and partners are to be commended for their hard work in providing high-quality, educational, and engaging programming to low-income students. For many of these students it was their first time visiting a state park or being out in nature. With the expansion of school site outreach visits and the use of distance learning technology, park staff are able to help students overcome the fear factor of being out in nature and get more out of their in-park experience by preparing them beforehand.

## STATISTICAL SUMMARY (TOTAL NUMBER)

<b>Participants served</b>	<b>2778</b>
<b>Total Programs</b>	<b>58</b>
• <i>Day trips</i>	25
• <i>Camping trips</i>	13
• <i>In-school outreaches</i>	20

The program data breakdown page is attached at the back of this report.

## PROGRAM SITES

### **NORTHERN BUTTES DISTRICT**

- Shasta State Historic Park – Jonathan Sutliff, State Park Interpreter I
- William B. Ide Adobe State Historic Park – Jennifer Pooley, State Park Interpreter I
- Lake Oroville State Recreation Area – Ranger Todd Jones
- Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park – Raeann Bossarte, State Park Interpreter I

### **BAY AREA DISTRICT**

- Mount Tamalpais State Park – Rosanna Petralia, State Park Interpreter I

### **CENTRAL VALLEY DISTRICT**

- Caswell Memorial State Park – Amber Stegner, Regional Interpretive Specialist

### **GREAT BASIN DISTRICT**

- Fort Tejon State Historic Park – Michael Deagon, State Park Interpreter I

### **ORANGE COAST DISTRICT**

- San Clemente State Beach – Blythe Wilson, Regional Interpretive Specialist
- Bolsa Chica State Beach – Blythe Wilson, Regional Interpretive Specialist
- Doheny State Beach – Blythe Wilson, Regional Interpretive Specialist

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

### **NORTHERN BUTTES**

- Glenn County Office of Education
- Orland Unified School District (*New group*)
- Shasta County YMCA (Power Scholars Academy)
- Tehama County Office of Education (TCOE) - Safe Education and Recreation for Rural Families (SERRF)

### **BAY AREA DISTRICT**

- East Bay Asian Youth Center
- South San Francisco YMCA (Hillcrest)
- Marin City Schools/Bayside MLK Academy (Marin City Community Service) (*New group*)

### **CENTRAL VALLEY DISTRICT**

- Ripon Unified School District

### **GREAT BASIN DISTRICT**

- Reach 4 Greatness (*New group*)
- Police Activity League Supporters (PALS)-Santa Barbara Police Department
- PALS-Los Angeles Police Department, Devonshire
- Boy Scouts Pack 675, Irvine (*New group*)

### **ORANGE COAST DISTRICT**

- Los Angeles Better Educated Students of Tomorrow (LA'S BEST)
- Think Together
- Great Opportunities (*New group*)
- Boys & Girls Club of South Coast Area (*New group*)

## PARTNERS

### **NORTHERN BUTTES DISTRICT**

- Forebay Aquatic Center
- Gateway Science Museum
- California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (*New partner*)
- Ide Adobe Interpretive Association

### **BAY AREA DISTRICT**

- One Tam
- Golden Gate National Park Conservancy
- Friends of Mt. Tam
- California State Parks Foundation

### **ORANGE COAST DISTRICT**

- Amigos de Bolsa Chica
- Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association (*New partner*)
- San Onofre Parks Foundation

# Individual Programs

## NORTHERN BUTTES DISTRICT

### Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park

Total Programs: 1

Total Participants: 80

- 1 Day Trip

Participants: 80

This year was different for Bidwell Mansion SHP; only one school participated in a Summer Learning Program this summer. It was a young group sponsored through Glenn County Office of Education. Eighty K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students from Willow Elementary School visited the park, accompanied by eight parent chaperones.

The group enjoyed a “small fry tour” inside the Mansion, in which they looked around each room and asked questions about what they saw. This method helps focus the program on what is of interest to the children. This allows for spinoff discussions and opportunities to share more information about the Bidwell family. Asking questions also satisfies the children’s natural curiosity.

Outdoors, the children participated in a discussion of animal tracks and scats, followed up with an artwork activity using paint and replicas of tracks. They loved it and this activity gave them something to take home.

The students also spent some time in the Gateway Science Museum adjacent to the park as part of the field trip experience.

There were no transportation costs for the program; the children were bused over using district funds. There were no supplies purchased for the program this year.

#### **What worked well**

We have learned that less intensive activity works best for the energy level of the younger students, once they get to the Mansion. The younger children are usually worn out from their morning activities by the time they come to the Mansion; this year’s relaxed art activity worked out very well for their reduced energy level. This year the weather was mild, so staying outside worked out well.

#### **What could use improvement**

This year the schools did not contact the park to schedule programs as they have done in the past. Park staff will be reaching out to previous contacts next spring and we hope to have more groups scheduled in 2020.

### Lake Oroville State Recreation Area

Total Programs: 2

Total Participants: 160

- 2 Day Trips

Participants: 160

The 2019 Summer Learning Program at North Forebay in the park hosted two groups of students ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. One group came from Orland School District, the other from Glenn County Office of Education.

Each program lasted three hours and ended with a picnic lunch and swim time.

The programs consisted of the students rotating through three stations, spending equal time at each station.

- Lifeguard station: Rangers and lifeguards demonstrated equipment (including personal water craft, recreational off-highway vehicle, and law enforcement motorcycle), how each is used and explained situations when each is used. Other topics included general water safety, demonstration of a water rescue, and the importance of lifeguards.
- Interpretive station: Students participated in an obstacle course as a team-building outdoor activity teaching about rattlesnakes in their habitat, and how to avoid them.
- Water activities (kayak, paddleboat, swim): Aquatic Center staff ran this station, teaching students how to properly use equipment and safely recreate on water.

The North Forebay Aquatic Center staff generously helped the program again. This year, Division of Boating and Waterways provided youth lifejackets for students to use during the programs. These lifejackets were donated to the Aquatic Center in exchange for staff time provided during the programs.

### **What worked well**

The stations ran well this year and complimented each other with their content. The students were engaged in the program and it had a positive impact on them.

Staff and volunteers were on time and knew their stations well. All assignments, expectations, and responsibilities were clearly communicated prior to the programs. Volunteers gave positive feedback about how well organized the program was this year.

### **What could be improved**

Start purchasing earlier in the spring to avoid purchasing deadline issues.

Change the order of the stations for next year's program to improve success. Rethink the placement of the interpretation station, so it is more centrally located. This will help with the transition from one station to another.

The walkie-talkies used this summer did not work well at the Forebay. Next year consider bringing extra hand-held radios from the office to use during the program.

Consider how to better accommodate large groups like we had attending this year. Possibly have a fourth station to rotate through so each group can be smaller. This would be especially helpful for the water activities station, as they have limited equipment.

Age range in each group was larger than anticipated. Consider the age ranges when planning the station content.

Since the students really enjoyed swimming and participating in the water activities, we might build in more time at the end of the program for swim time. It might be best to take the actual water activity out of the rotation and replace it with something else, leaving the water time to the end. This would also help with the problem of getting wet in one station and having to walk in wet clothes to the next.



## SHASTA STATE HISTORIC PARK

Total Programs: 2

Total Participants: 160

- 1 Day Trip Participants: 80
- 1 In-School Outreach program Participants: 80

The park worked with YMCA Power Scholars Academy again this summer. Due to scheduling issues with the YMCA, only one group was able to make the field trip to the park.

Park staff did a site visit at the Rother School and provided a program to 80 students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The park interpreters presented on the park and the history of Shasta. The site visit also included playing pioneer games and hands-on instruction on gold panning.

The following day the group of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students from the school came to the park for their field trip. Upon arriving at the park, the student group was separated into three smaller groups. These smaller groups then rotated through three stations in the park:

- Courthouse Museum Tour-learn its history, view courtroom, jail, weapon collection, art exhibit, and images of the past.
- Litsch General Store tour-learn about historic stores and the products they sold as compared to today, and see historic items used in everyday life in the 1850s.
- Gold Panning Experience

They spent about 40 minutes in each station before rotating to the next one.

After rotating through all three stations, the group ate lunch in the picnic area below the Courthouse Museum. After lunch, they headed up to Whiskeytown National Recreation Area for a talk from Whiskeytown staff about the area's cultural and natural history. This was followed by a swim at the Brandy Creek beach.

The YMCA Power Scholars Academy is expanding next year due to demand. This could mean adding more sessions next summer.

### **What worked well:**

The teachers and school staff had the students well prepared for the site visit and field trip.

### **What could be improved:**

Due to the lack of lifeguards at Whiskeytown, that element of the program may need to be eliminated in the future. The YMCA has a hard time finding enough lifeguards for the field trip(s).

### **Sustainability component:**

- The park has QR codes posted all over the park that links to a 360° tour of the park and a YouTube page.
- The YMCA can use the third and fourth grade teacher's guide, which includes maps of the park, local history, and Gold Rush activities.

## WILLIAM B. IDE ADOBE STATE HISTORIC PARK

Total Programs: 7

Total Participants: 442

- 7 Day trips

Participants: 442

This year's program used the Time Warp approach again since it worked so well last year. This approach helps students learn about history and how it relates to their lives today. The Tehama County of Education (TCOE) SERRF program wanted the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) concepts incorporated into the educational elements of the program; the Time Warp approach does that very well.

Because many of the students coming this year were repeats from last year, we revamped the program to have fresh original content. Each program lasted two and a half hours; most groups followed the program with a picnic in the park.

This year's program included:

- Adobe Brick Making (math and engineering) – mixing straw and clay in the clay pit and filling brick molds to set, playing an Adobe Jeopardy game
- Bear Flag Revolt Station (art) – learning about the Bear Flag Revolt and painting their own bear flags on repurposed white pillowcases
- Chivaree (technology and art) – mix of dancing, games, and learning; changes in the music “industry” and technology over time; versions of historic songs and remakes done more recently and the dances that go with each version.

*About the adobe mud pit...“I got in and didn't want to get out”. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student*

The strong staff and docent crew once more made the program a success.

This year saw a significant increase in the number of students participating, from 271 in 2018 to 442 in 2019. All of this year's participants came through the SERRF program in Tehama County. The county hired a staff person specifically to attend all field trips coordinated through the SERRF program and help with overall group supervision. Having this staff person from the county helped create good communication with the chaperones of the visiting groups.

### What worked well

The program as a whole went over well and we felt it was beneficial to the visiting students. The structural layout of the park worked very well this year.

Making the adobe bricks was a good prelude to the Adobe Jeopardy game. This game introduced basic math and some history.

This was the first time the Bear Flag Revolt was used in a presentation for students. It was a big success and the students enjoyed making the flags for themselves.

*About the Bear Flag Revolt...“I never know where our California Flag came from and I've looked at it my entire life!” (adult chaperone)*



Student-painted flags drying.

### **What could be improved**

Due to the early deadlines required for Fi\$Cal, purchasing supplies and securing transportation contracts was problematic. The transportation funding, which is a key element to make these field trips possible, could not be secured through the state. Fortunately, the Ide Adobe Interpretive Association stepped in and provided much-needed funding for transportation. Some staff donated supplies as CalCards were suspended. If funding for the programs was secured earlier in the year development and coordination could begin earlier-including purchasing and establishing transportation contracts.

We had more Spanish-only speakers in our groups. Identifying key words for our staff to use might be helpful. We might consider incorporating Mexican heritage content to make better a connection with the Hispanic population.

School site visits might be helpful to better orient students who have never been to the park, give them an idea of what to expect during their field trip.

The reestablished brick pit created a healthy habitat for frogs and lizards that enjoyed the cool, damp mud between the program dates. A net might need to be installed between future programs. On the other hand, this might be an opportunity to teach about local reptiles and amphibians.

Dust made the dancing uncomfortable. Shade is a limiting factor for outdoor activities in hot weather. The adobe may be considered for some activities next year.

A larger number of younger children participated this year. Significant program adaptations should be integrated for the K-2 groups.



“William B. Ide” recounting the Bear Flag Revolt.

## BAY AREA DISTRICT

### MOUNT TAMALPAIS STATE PARK

Total Programs: 16

Total Participants: 411

- 6 In-school Outreach programs                      Participants: 166
- 3 Day trips    Participants: 93
- 7 Camping trips    Participants: 151

The SLP in the Bay Area District once again hosted students at scenic Mount Tamalpais State Park. With state park funds and generous support from California State Parks Foundation, One Tam/Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and Friends of Mt. Tam, park staff were able to offer outdoor camping and day trip experiences to hundreds of students from around the bay area.

This year’s programs played host to groups familiar to the program—East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC) and South San Francisco YMCA, in addition to a new group—Marin City Schools/MLK Academy from Marin City Community Service. Most of the students are from low-income families in urban neighborhoods.

#### Overview

This year park staff implemented a new component in their Summer Learning Program: school leader training. Program staff developed this element to ensure that school leaders were adequately prepared for their trip.

#### Leader training goals:

- To ensure that partner groups understood educational goals of SLP, staff shared activities planned with school leaders so they can better promote student learning.
- Give school leaders training in environmental ethics and park culture. Many of the school leaders were no more familiar with the outdoors than their students. This training included guidance on being more environmentally friendly during trips in order to create a greater mindfulness in the teachers toward environmental ethics.
- Provide training manual tailored to school leaders to lay out roles and responsibilities, important information, relevant forms and other information to help them provide active support for students and parks staff during trips.

This training included a guest lecture by “Heirs to Our Ocean” as an example of youth awareness in action.



Nature walk.

#### Student programs

The interpretive focus for the summer programs was on how humans impact the redwoods and the watershed in the ecological environments. Some new activities were developed; others were revamped from last year’s program. Staff used various teaching methods and activities to help students learn and understand the complexities of the ecosystems in the park. They also included the impact of human

activities on the environment and watershed. The students learned to use deductive reasoning and observation skills to develop a greater understanding of the world around them in the park.

Outreach programs – This summer also saw an increase in the number of school outreach programs, designed to help students prepare for their trip to the park. Park staff presented students with the natural and cultural settings of the park, these concepts would be built upon during their visit to the park. The outreach programs introduced the park, being in natural outdoor settings, and the importance of maintaining a healthy watershed. Park staff also gave a review of essential items to bring on the day or camping trip.

#### Park programs:

Day trips—focused on hands-on activities and observations on the watershed and natural ecosystems. Animal adaptations and salmon migration were also covered. The students also made a water cycle bracelet and a coloring craft they could then take home. The students visited the East Peak Visitor Center and participated in an “animal forensics” activity. They also visited the Gravity Car Barn/Museum where the water cycle and local animals were discussed through activities.

Camping trips—one and two night programs, all done at the Alice Eastwood Group Campground. The overall theme for the activities included in these camping programs was “Our health and survival at home depends on how well we take care of our natural resources.” We focused the program content on similarities between the needs of humans and nature for survival.

Activities included a sensory activity to tune-in to new surroundings, nature walk, creek habitat survey, observation activity, and a reflection activity.



Exploring Redwood Creek with park staff.

#### What worked well

- Limiting number of students per group.
- Revolving all program content around central and related topics: watershed and coast redwood ecology.
- Station rotations for day-trip activities: guided walk and 4 stationary activities.
- Limit bus size to 28 feet due to the narrow winding road to campground.
- Step by step method for tent set-up, including setting up personal items in the tents.
- Self-guided activities provided school leaders with educational materials to cover on their own.
- Watershed/Redwood Ecology set of activities was a successful lesson module. We intentionally designed them to accommodate various learning styles. Educational content is improving with increased relevancy around the main topics.
- Alice Eastwood Group Campground works well, plenty of shade and close to easy trails. Also well situated for discussing the central topics of the program.

### **What needs improvement**

- Prioritize guest experiences-encourage 2-night trips vs 1-night; less students per trip to ensure quality interpretive activities (invite school leaders to have no more than 35 students per trip); acquire string bags for students to carry their activity materials and water bottles to be laundered and reused in subsequent years; develop a form to record attendance, stats, quotes.
- To further improve the school leaders involvement in the students learning, provide more mandatory training. Consider a two-day training rather than one-day to give school leaders better context for the trips and dig deeper into the interpretive activities, the importance of parks, and our rules and regulations.
- Integrate social, temporal, spatial relevance in interpretive programs-more storytelling, audience centered experiences; integrate technology in creative ways (virtual pre-field trip with students and school leaders could be very helpful), improve connectivity in the park.
- Continued issue of staff shortages somewhat due to the low wages and high cost of living in the area limiting the number of park aides available to hire. Park aides are beneficial to help the SLP program but supervisors often need them to be focused on revenue generating visitor services.
- Hire a Park Interpretive Specialist early enough to be able to train them so they can comfortably help lead interpretive activities.
- Adequacy and effectiveness of available funds, increased need for early training of school leaders, and continued need for trailer repairs. Consider trailer maintenance as a line item in the budget for future years.
- Find alternative funding for transportation for July programs.

### **Sustainability component**

School leaders attending the training received handouts and resources to aid them for their trips to the park (what to bring for both students and leaders, comprehensive activity manual, park rules and the “7 Principles of Leave No Trace”).

### **Emerging challenges**

The 2019 Summer Learning Program provided great insights on some broad emerging issues that contribute to the sustainability of program and need to be addressed in the future. More specifically, we need to consider:

1. Staff shortage and increased need to effectively use their time;
2. Adequacy and effectiveness of available funds;
3. Increased need for the early training of school leaders;
4. Continued need for trailer repairs.

### **Next steps**

Some of the immediate next steps to improve the program in 2020 include the following:

1. Look for alternative funding for transportation in the month of July;
2. Revise the SLP manual and create two manuals, one for school leaders and one for park staff;
3. Outline suggested training itinerary for school leaders.

## CENTRAL VALLEY DISTRICT

### CASWELL MEMORIAL STATE PARK

Total Programs: 5

Participants: 652

- 3 In-school Outreach programs Participants: 328
- 2 Day trips Participants: 324

To help prepare students for their field trip to Caswell Memorial Park, park staff did school visits to three classes of students in grades K-12. The classroom sessions introduced the students to the natural and cultural history of the park and its different ecosystems. This helped to prepare students for what they would see and experience when they came to the park.

A school principal came out to see the program and loved seeing the students interacting in nature.

The school district participated in two park visits with large groups of students. We divided the students into three groups that rotated through the stations, spending about 50 minutes in each station.

Station activities included:

- Stream exploration-studied invertebrates in the stream and the web of life. Also did some general stream exploration: studying currents, stone weathering, stream channels, bank erosion and how these all tie together and how each impacts the environment. While at the stream we also talked about the water cycle and swimming safety.
- Living in the water-discussed various insects that have intimate relationship with fresh water: water striders, mayflies, dragonflies, and damselflies. Explained the relationship each has with water environment and its place and importance in the food chain.
- Nature walk-Grow their observation skills as they look at a natural object and notice details, wonder about the item and articulate what it reminds them of. This method is meant to increase their curiosity as they implement it more often.

This station also instructed about endangered species and identified plants and animals found in the park:

- Elderberry
- Valley oak
- California wild grape
- Elderberry beetle (endangered)
- Riparian brush rabbit (endangered)
- Riparian woodrat

We played various games to help students think about the riparian habitat along the river. We also played other active games that taught them more about the natural environment.

If time permitted, park staff had other simple nature games available to play with the students.

#### **What worked well**

The in-class programs prior to the students coming to the park helped reduce the fear-factor of the unknown outdoors.

### **What could be improved**

Next year we will need to develop a new program since many of the students attending will be the same as this year.

### **Sustainability component**

Working with the school district to provide learning opportunities throughout the year at the park and through PORTS.

The park staff helped make the program work with their knowledge and specialties. If we did the programs with less staff, it would really be different. The program's education components are driven by park staff expertise.

After the principal's visit, park staff was invited to do an enrichment workshop with teachers. We are now helping them create a self-guided kit for further exploration of the park. Although the park is only three miles from the school, most children and their parents had never visited it.



## GREAT BASIN DISTRICT

### FORT TEJON STATE HISTORIC PARK

Total Programs: 4

Total Participants: 63

- 4 Day Trips

Participants: 63

Programs at Fort Tejon were held in July and August this year. As with last summer's programs, the SLPs were based in the Student Environmental Studies Program (ESP) done at the park during the regular school year. Each SLP at Fort Tejon was six hours long. Staff endeavored to immerse the students in the story of Fort Tejon; its role in history before the Civil War and during the California Gold Rush era. The students engaged in hands-on experience of life on the California frontier through the eyes of a soldier stationed at a western U.S. Army outpost in 1856.

The programs were done with park staff and dedicated volunteers: Notably-Clyde "Blacksmith Bill" Landis, "Private" Jennifer Waters, "Laundress" Stephanie Heart and "Cook" Joanna. Without these volunteers, we would not have been able to present these programs. There was no outside partner supporting the summer programs.

Park staff offered the SLP to 45 groups; four of those groups took up the offer to attend. The groups attending were community groups from as far away as Irvine. Since some groups came from quite a distance their departure time was maintained fairly strictly. Staff learned to be adaptable in the program timing for each group hosted. Providing the promised content was challenging at times due to unique delays encountered by each group. Park staff were able to make the necessary revisions to the programs as circumstances necessitated them.

Activities for the program include:

- 1850's blacksmithing demonstration
- Period cooking – cornbread and butter churning
- Frontier laundry
- Candle making

The program time concluded with a cannon drill demonstration.

#### **What worked well**

Having seasoned staff and volunteers for the stations. Their familiarity with their stations allowed for flexibility and quick adaptability to the needs of each group.

Having adult chaperones help with "keeping an eye on" the students and helping direct them as needed. These chaperones trailing each "squad" through the program were able to give feedback about the program.



Learning about blacksmithing.

### What could be improved

Work on scheduling the summer programming with groups earlier in the spring when such groups are planning their summer activities. This is challenging for park staff since spring is a very busy time for them, being the time of the normal Student Living History Programs at the park. Extra personnel is needed to assist with contacting and scheduling summer program groups in a timely manner.

Bus companies were slow in responding as park staff tried to arrange for bus transportation to the park. The time involved in setting up contracts, especially with having to work in Fi\$Ca!, was problematic. Bussing arrangements need to be made well in advance of the park visits.

Purchasing for the programs needs to be done as early as possible. Currently many resources used are those that had been purchased for ELHPs. Wear and tear on costume closet items is harder to compensate for with SLP funds.

The need to purchase the necessary supply of ice for the programs due to the summer heat is also a problem.

Feedback comments from RAPPORT evaluation forms completed by group leaders:

*"Thank you to all the staff. We had an amazing time. All the children were engaged and excited! The program was very organized and understandable! Thank you again. We appreciate all your hard work. - LAPD Devonshire PALS"*

*"I liked how everything we did had a reason it was done that way. Also it was nice having kids participate in the blacksmith activity." - anon. parent*

*"This is an experience that the kids will remember for the rest of their lives. It is set up wonderfully with hands on interaction and knowledgeable staff. Great experience all around. THANK YOU." - anon. parent*



Students watching cannon drill.



Group picture by the cannon.

## ORANGE COAST DISTRICT

### BOLSA CHICA STATE BEACH, SAN CLEMENTE STATE BEACH, AND DOHENY STATE BEACH

Total Programs: 21

Total Participants: 829

- 5 Day Trips Participants: 205
- 6 Camping trips Participants: 229
- 10 In-School Outreach programs Participants: 376

Orange Coast District had another active Summer Learning Program in 2019. They collaborated with two of the same groups as in past years (LA's BEST and Think Together) and added a couple of new community groups— Boys and Girls Clubs of the South Coast Area and Great Opportunities (group working with at-risk youth to introduce them to recreation activities and environmental practices in the aquatic environment).

The programs were supported in part by:

- San Onofre Parks Foundation—donated firewood, paid for some miscellaneous camping supplies and program materials
- Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association—donated flashlights and firewood
- Amigos de Bolsa Chica—donated time and their citizen science program (FLOW program)

Unfortunately, due to staffing issues, the PORTS program was unable to participate this summer.

#### **Camping trips at San Clemente State Beach**

Five groups of fourth through eighth graders had camping experiences at San Clemente. Many of the students had never camped or been to the beach before. State Park staff guided activities: hikes, visitor center exploration, scavenger hunts, water safety talks, and a Q&A with a K9 officer.

#### **Camping trip at Doheny State Beach**

The group from Great Opportunities had to reschedule from their original July program date to a weekend in late October. Students did nature exploration, Junior Ranger activities, some beach time, and a tide pool walk.

#### **What worked well**

Hiring a dedicated seasonal park aide to help with the SLP. The park aide helped with securing camping supplies and facilitating interpretive activities.

Having many returning chaperones who understood park rules and the goals of the program.

#### **What could be improved**

More lead time to secure transportation 285 contracts. Payment to vendors has been difficult with our Fi\$cal system.

## **Day trips to Bolsa Chica State Beach**

Most of the five groups from LA's BEST that came were third through sixth graders; one school brought some students in first and second grades.

The overall theme this year was to understand that everyone experiences the beach in unique ways but all visitors need to respect the beach they experience. Each group received an orientation to the beach and a short walking tour. We then gave them choices of the beach activities available so they could pick what most interested them: bird watching, seashell hunting, sand soccer, making and flying kites, scientific experiments, etc. Finally, we then asked them to tell us ways they can show respect to the beach—most students chose to pick up a piece of trash as their sign of respect.

### **What works well**

Having some group activities but also allowing each student to tailor their field trip to their desires worked out very well. Student behavior was better when we gave them time to adjust to their new surroundings, to look around and ask questions about the beach.

### **What could be improved**

Adding some sort of water component would improve the program, not necessarily that they swim in the surf, possibly some other kind of water play with small portable pools or in the showers along the multi-use trail. The students could hear and see the water but could not get in it, a very disappointing aspect of the trip—to be at the beach and not be allowed to get in the water.

## **Outreach to LA's BEST schools**

For these programs, we utilized Junior Ranger Adventure Guides and taxidermy animals. We had the children do the Junior Ranger outdoor scavenger hunts in the schoolyard if it was not too hot. If there was a heat advisory, we discussed native animals with skull replicas and taxidermy specimens inside.

### **What worked well**

Getting the students outside and exploring nature using the Junior Ranger materials. The kids were excited to be able to take them home to share with their parents.

Having a park aide to assist with the programs.



Taxidermy animals at outreach program.



Junior Ranger scavenger hunt in schoolyard.

### What could be improved

Collaborate with LA staff to participate in this effort in order to reach more schools. The drive from Orange County can be long with traffic, we may consider staying overnight and dedicating another week to this part of the program.

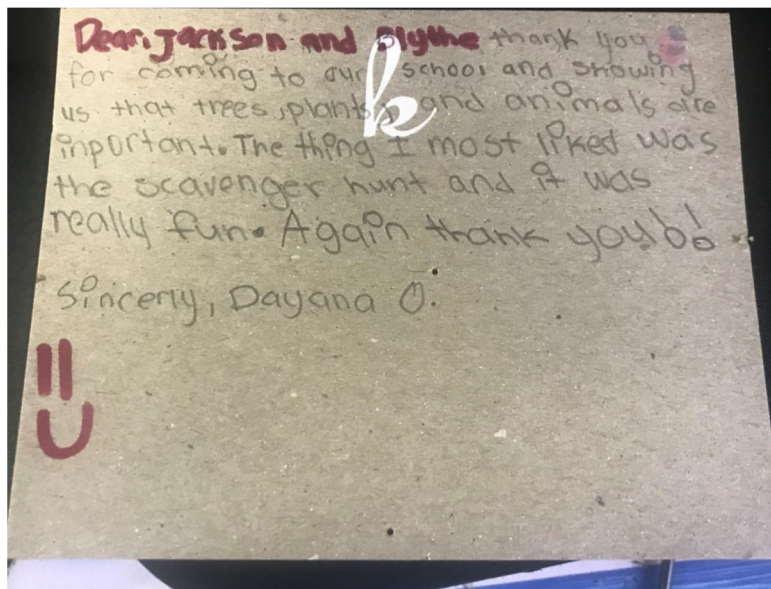
Begin hiring process for the summer programs staff earlier as more time is needed to advertise, hire and train a new employee. A bilingual park aide would be an excellent asset and could open the opportunity to create some amazing bilingual programs.

### Quotes and stories:

*"Wonderful experience as always! Our students appreciate the opportunity!"*  
**Jeanette Trinidad, Think Together Camping Leader, Azusa Unified School District**

*"It was the best time of my life."*  
**Think Together Student Camper**

*"On behalf of the kids we serve at LA's Best, I'd like to thank you for providing all of them with enriching opportunities relating to appreciation for the outdoors. Our partnership with the CA State Parks has continued due to your dedication. "*  
**Stela Oliveira, Director of Education, LA's Best**



## **CONCLUSION AND STATEWIDE GOALS FOR THE 2020 SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM**

Park staff have done an incredible job of providing high-quality educational summer programming to low-income students despite challenges with receiving budget allocations late in the fiscal year, purchasing, and transportation contracts. The Interpretation and Education Division, who provides statewide oversight of the Summer Learning Program, recognizes these challenges and has identified some statewide program coordination goals for the 2020 SLP in order to better support park district efforts.

The goals include:

- Finalize SLP program budgets with participating state parks in January to allow adequate time for purchasing of materials, contracts, and outreach to participating organizations.
- Assist park districts with transportation contracts.
- Work with districts on outreach to potential participating organizations/educational institutions.
- Support Inland Empire District and San Diego Coast District in restarting their SLPs.
- Support Central Valley District in adding an overnight camping program to their SLP offering.

For the 2020 summer season, SLP is excited to reengage with previously participating state parks and expand to some new audiences. The focus for 2020 will also be improved fiscal and programmatic coordination between statewide and park coordinators.