California State Parks' School Group Program Evaluation 2003

2003 marks the sixth year California State Parks has undertaken a statewide survey of teachers bringing school groups to our parks—known as the School Group Program Evaluation (SGPE). For background on the SGPE, see the report titled "Making the Grade: An Analysis of California State Parks' School Group Program Evaluation 1998-2002" (to access this report on-line, log onto the state parks Web site at www.parks.ca.gov, click on the Adventures in Learning link, then on the For Schools link).

This year's SGPE survey form included the same educational questions asked each previous year. On the back of the form, however, it was decided to have the questions focus on two specific issues about which California State Parks was interested in getting teacher feedback—reservations and pre-trip information. (See Attachment A for a copy of the survey form.) California State Parks received 371 completed survey forms, representing a modest 22% return rate that is slightly higher than the average return rate of past survey years.

Results

This year's survey results for the five educational questions asked on the survey form are in line with past years. Chart 1 shows the "grade point average" (GPA) of all five educational questions for each year the survey has been conducted.

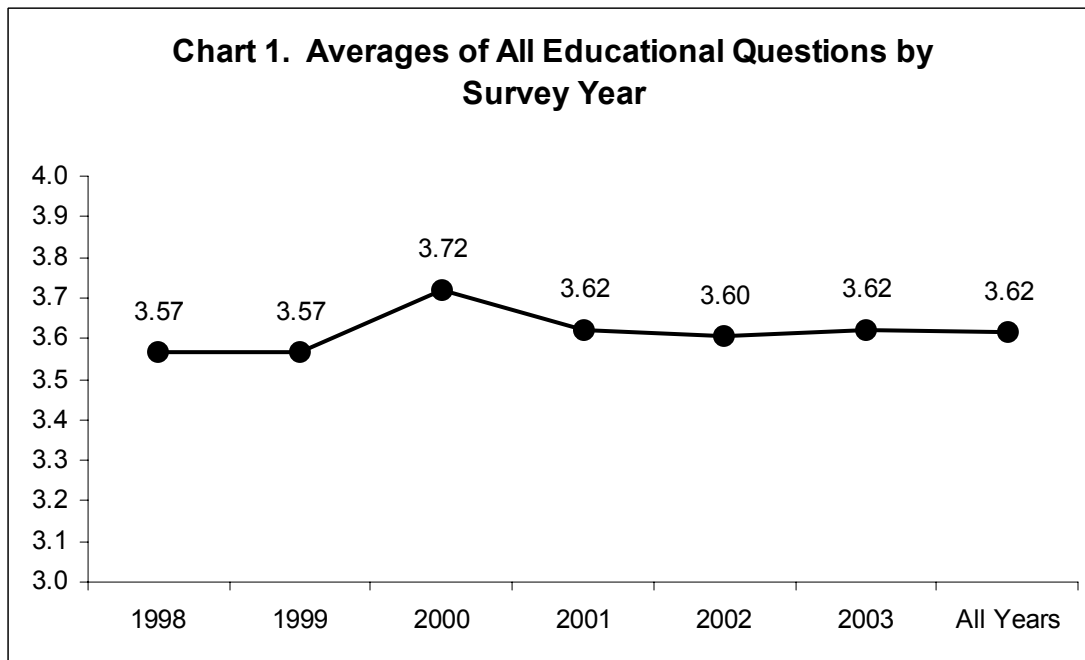Chart 1. Averages of All Educational Questions by Survey Year

Chart 2 breaks down this data for the 2003 survey year, showing the GPA given for each question by the teachers who responded to the survey. As in past years, California State Parks programs scored highest on the question related to educational content and lowest on the question asking if current educational pedagogy was used in
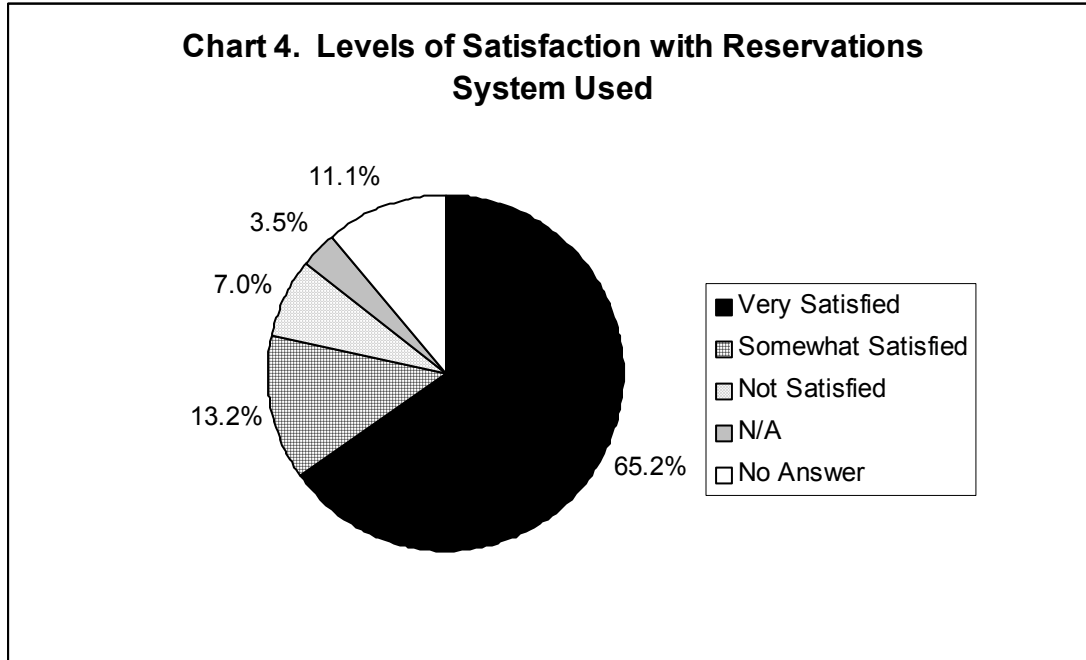
the programs. (See Attachment B for charts that show the GPAs over time for each individual educational question.)
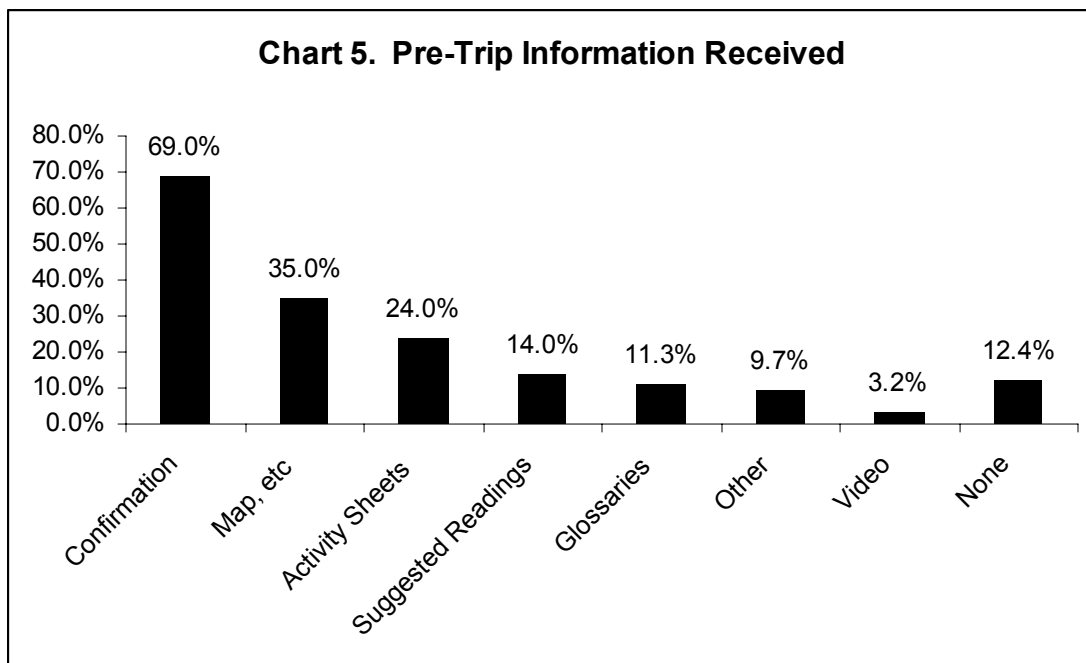
Chart 2. Educational Questions - 2003
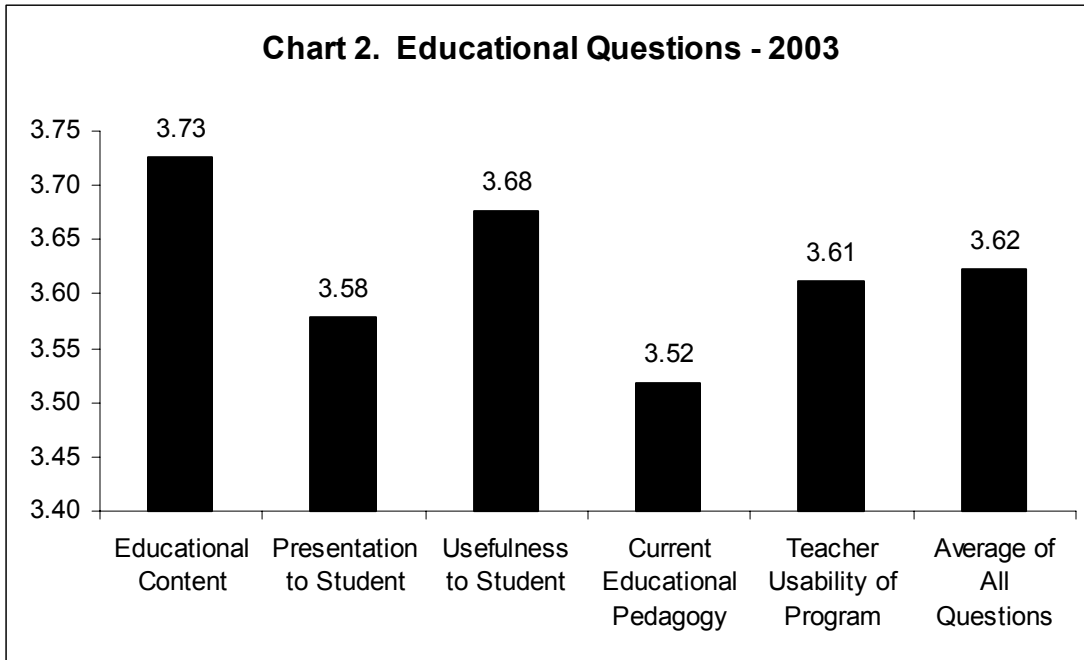
In relation to survey questions about reservations, and as might be expected, a vast majority of respondents, 89.5%, indicated they had made a reservation prior to coming to the park, with 2.2% indicating they did not make a reservation and 8.4% of respondents giving no answer. Chart 3 shows the methods used by respondents in making their reservations. Contacting the parks directly was the reservation method used by most survey respondents, 48.8%, with ReserveAmerica coming in second at 32.3%.

Chart 3. Reservation Methods Used by Survey Respondents
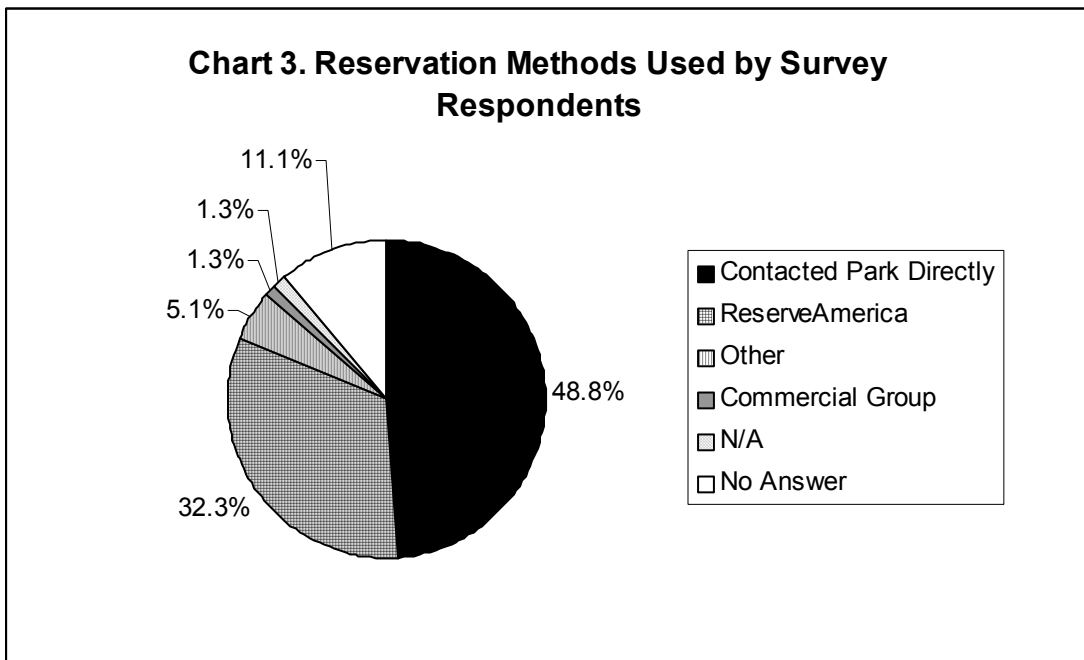
Most survey respondents, 65.2%, indicated they were "very satisfied" with the reservation system they used, with another 13.2% marking that they were "somewhat satisfied." Only 7% of respondents replied that they were not satisfied with the reservation system used. Chart 4 shows these results.

Chart 4. Levels of Satisfaction with Reservations System Used

- Very Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Not Satisfied
- N/A
- No Answer

11.1%
3.5%
7.0%
13.2%
65.2%

Survey respondents provided valuable information about pre-trip information they received as well as the types of information they'd be interested in receiving in the future. As can be seen in Chart 5, most respondents, 65%, received a reservation confirmation prior to their trip, with the next highest type of information received being a map or directions.

Chart 5. Pre-Trip Information Received

Category	Percentage
Confirmation	69.0%
Map, etc	35.0%
Activity Sheets	24.0%
Suggested Readings	14.0%
Glossaries	11.3%
Other	9.7%
Video	3.2%
None	12.4%

The survey also asked respondents to indicate the types of information they felt would be the most useful to them, and this data is interesting to analyze in relation to Chart 5. Respondents selected maps/directions/parking information as the category of information they would find most useful, followed closely by reservation confirmations. Of lesser value, and all relatively close in terms of the responses we received, were suggested reading/discussion topics, pre- and post-trip activity sheets, videos, and glossaries/definition lists. A few survey respondents chose to fill in the "other" category in answer to this question. The types of items written in for this option included historical background material (usually in relation to buildings and sites), behavioral expectations, information on food services, and tour cost information. When asked if they would utilize the Internet to obtain pre-trip information, 71.9% of respondents answered yes, with only 9.7% answering no.

In reviewing survey results to determine the grade levels coming to our parks and the types of programs they are attending, this year's results are generally in line with those from last year. Fourth graders made up 44.3% of the school groups represented by the surveys returned—3rd through 5th graders made up 74.7%. Primary grades (K-6) represented 91.1% of surveys, with only 8.9% of school groups being from the secondary level (7-12). Results from the surveys were also tallied in relation to the types of programs the teachers filling out the surveys indicated they had attended (cultural, natural, or both). Because this item was a write-in answer, results may not accurately reflect the actual nature of the programs due to the fact that they reflect only what the teachers filling out the surveys wrote in as the name of the program they attended. Given these constraints, and as was shown in last year's results, the surveys indicate a much higher attendance at cultural history programs. Seventy-eight percent of respondents indicated they were attending some type of cultural history program, versus 19.1% for natural history programs and 2.9% indicating the program they attended included aspects of both.

Recommendations

Based on survey results received this year, the recommendations made in last year's report would still be in order. One of these recommendations suggested state parks should provide more training and periodic information, by email and through publications, on current pedagogical trends in education (like building critical thinking skills, group learning, and interactive techniques). Secondly, improving the pre-trip information we offer to teachers would provide them with a valuable resource. In considering this year's survey results, a focus on ensuring all school groups receive reservation confirmations and maps/directions/parking information would surely make the logistics of bringing classes to our parks simpler for teachers and chaperones. Providing additional information in the form of suggested reading/discussion topics, pre- and post-trip activity sheets, videos, and glossaries/definition lists would also be of value to school groups

In relation to the survey itself, it is recommended that no statewide survey be conducted in 2004 due to budget and staffing constraints. However, individual districts and park

units are encouraged to conduct their own surveys (please contact the Interpretation and Education Division if you have any questions about this). In future years, it is recommended that the questions on the second page of the statewide survey continue to be changed to focus on specific topics of interest to the department.

So, once again, a hearty congratulations goes out to all our staff and volunteers who work so hard to serve our school groups throughout the state. The written comments we receive from teachers continue to be extremely positive and grateful. Our efforts are being noticed and are greatly appreciated by the educators who bring school groups to our parks.

2003 School Group Program Evaluation

Date(s) of Visit:_____   Name of Park Program:_____

Teacher:_____   Grade(s)(circle): K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Primary Subject for the trip:_____   Number of students:_____

School:_____   Phone #:_____

School Address:_____City:_____Zip:_____

Email Address:_____

For each section, please circle an appropriate letter grade,
A, B, C, D, or F, like a report card

Educational Content of Program   **Grade: A B C D F**
Issues to consider: Did the program present unifying theme(s) and big ideas rather than just facts? Were ideas presented logically and connected to curriculum? Was the program connected to the students' lives and society?

Presentation to the Student   **Grade: A B C D F**
Issues to consider: Were the roles of environmental ethics or responsible citizenship explored? Did the program promote respect and caring for society or the environment, without being dogmatic? Were personal and societal values and conflicting points of view explored in a context that students could understand?

Usefulness to Students   **Grade: A B C D F**
Issues to consider: Were instructional materials easy for students to use and understand? Was the program accessible for all students regardless of special needs such as those with limited English proficiency or learning disabilities? Was the layout of instructional materials for students interesting and appealing?

Using Current Educational Pedagogy   **Grade: A B C D F**
Issues to consider: Did the program have the students engaged in active learning? Did the program base the students' learning on their constructing knowledge through research, discussion, and application of their findings? Were the instructional materials and presentations sensitive to social, economic, and cultural diversity? Were group or cooperative learning strategies used?

Teacher Usability of Materials and Presentations   **Grade: A B C D F**
Issues to consider: Were the learning objectives or outcomes clear and appropriate? How well did the materials integrate with educational content standards? Were the background materials and/or additional resources useful to you?

Reservations

1. **Did you make a reservation? (check one)** ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2. **How did you make your reservation? (check one)**

   ☐ **ReserveAmerica** ☐ **Commercial tour group** ☐ **Contacted park directly**

   ☐ **Other:** _____ ☐ **N/A**

3. **How satisfied are you with the service you received when making your reservation? (check one)**

   ☐ **Very satisfied** ☐ **Somewhat satisfied** ☐ **Not satisfied** ☐ **N/A**

   Comments on reservations? _____

   _____

   _____

Pre-Trip Information

1. **What information did you receive from California State Parks prior to your trip? (check all that apply)**

   ☐ **Reservation confirmation** ☐ **Map/directions/parking information**
   ☐ **Pre- and post-trip activity sheets** ☐ **Suggested readings/discussion topics**
   ☐ **Glossaries/definitions lists** ☐ **Video**
   ☐ **Other:** _____ ☐ **None**

2. **What types of information would be most useful to you? (indicate by numbering the items below, with 1 being the item of greatest usefulness and 7 being the least)**

   ___**Reservation confirmation** ___**Map/directions/parking information**
   ___**Pre- and post-trip activity sheets** ___**Suggested reading/discussion topics**
   ___**Glossaries/definitions lists** ___**Video**
   ___**Other:** _____

3. **Would you utilize the internet to obtain such information?** ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

   Comments on pre-trip information? _____

   _____

   _____

Additional comments? _____
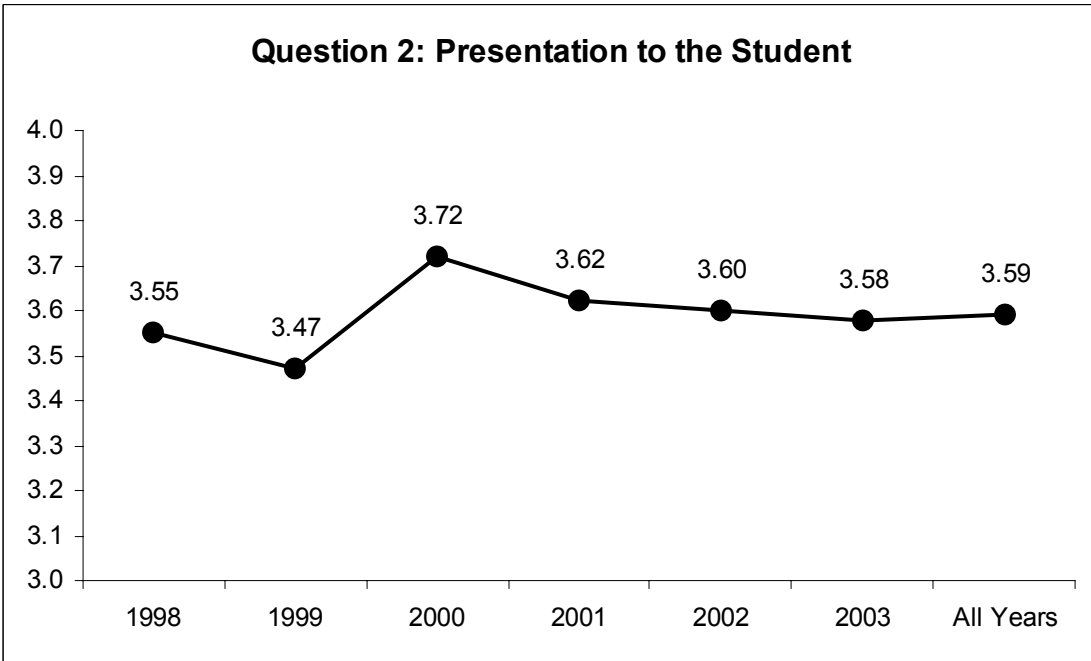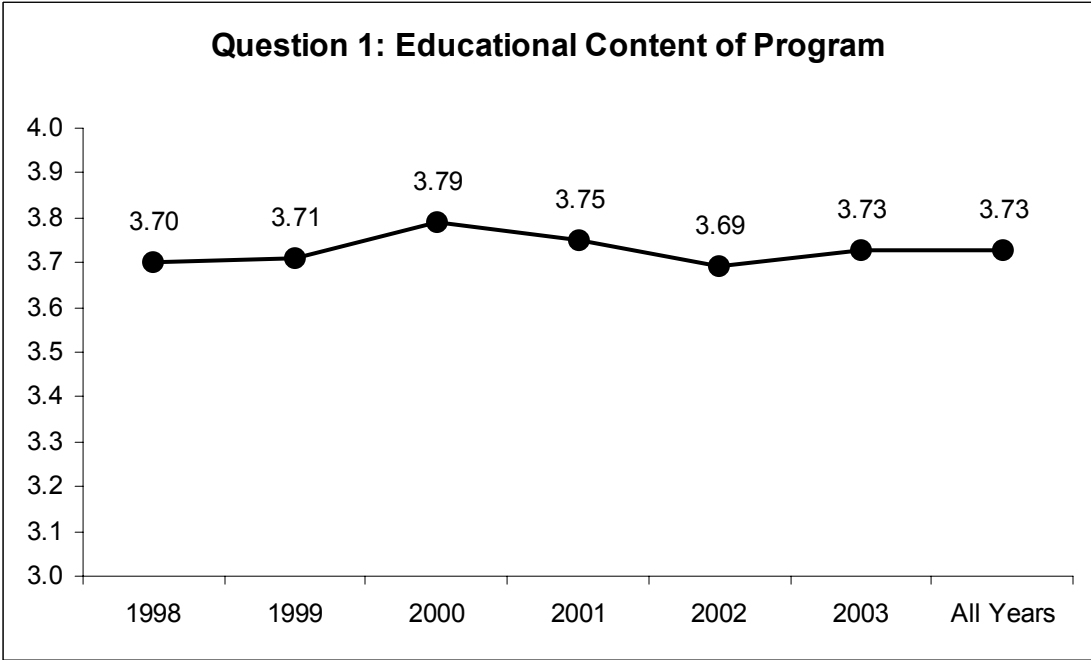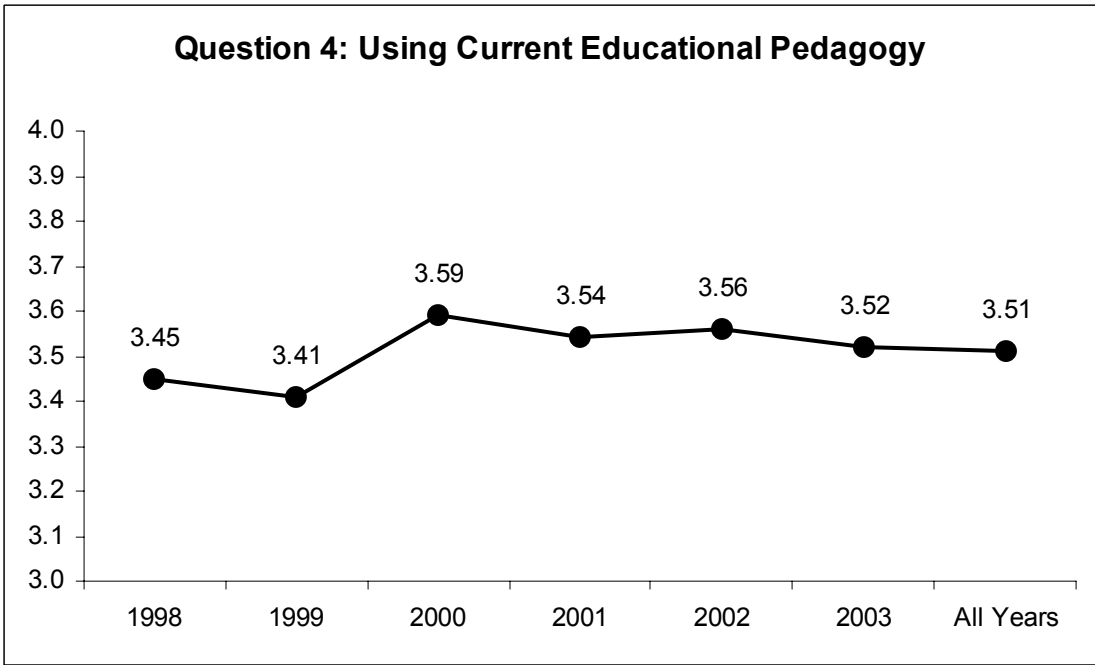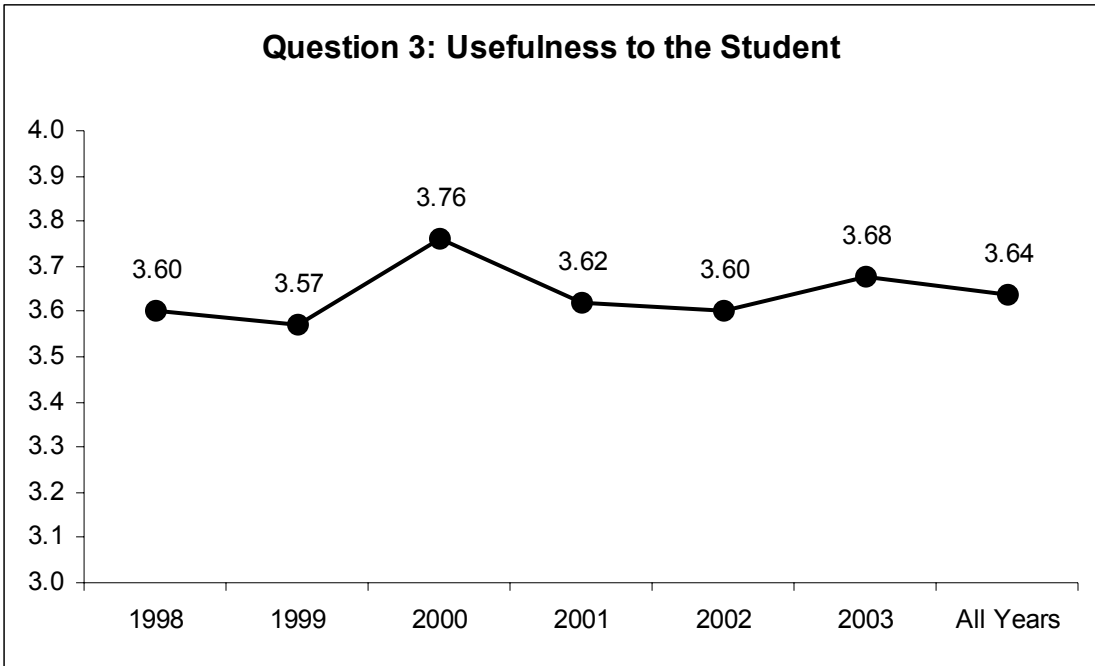
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THANK YOU! We appreciate you taking the time to give us feedback on your experience.
Please return this form to:
California State Parks, Interpretation and Education Division
PO Box 942896, Sacramento CA 94296-0001

Question 1: Educational Content of Program

Year	GPA
1998	3.70
1999	3.71
2000	3.79
2001	3.75
2002	3.69
2003	3.73
All Years	3.73

Question 2: Presentation to the Student

Year	GPA
1998	3.55
1999	3.47
2000	3.72
2001	3.62
2002	3.60
2003	3.58
All Years	3.59

Question 3: Usefulness to the Student

Year	Value
1998	3.60
1999	3.57
2000	3.76
2001	3.62
2002	3.60
2003	3.68
All Years	3.64

Question 4: Using Current Educational Pedagogy

Year	Value
1998	3.45
1999	3.41
2000	3.59
2001	3.54
2002	3.56
2003	3.52
All Years	3.51

Question 5: Teacher Usability of Materials and Presentations