

KIDS for the BAY

Environmental education through action

Newsletter

Spring 2007

www.kidsforthebay.org

A Project of Earth Island Institute

No Child Left INSIDE

Are our children suffering from Nature Deficit Disorder? This is a condition defined by Richard Louv in his recent best selling book *Last Child In The Woods*. Louv has identified something that many parents



and educators have been feeling, but couldn't quite name; the increasing alienation between children and nature.

A sedentary lifestyle, too much time indoors and a lack of connection with nature have been linked with obesity, attention deficit disorder and depression. Being in nature provides the opportunity for exploration and wonder, for creative play and for physical exercise, that is so necessary for healthy child development.

A study completed by the California Department of Education in 2005 found that students who participated in environmental education programs in the outdoors raised their science test scores by 27%. However, fewer than 15% of California students are currently participating in outdoor education programs.

KIDS for the BAY staff and teachers participating in our programs certainly agree that students are more engaged in learning when they are outside in nature. This is when children become alive and are excited to learn. Students are fascinated to find a crab hiding under a rock, figure out why it is sheltering there and discover the adaptations that enable the crab to survive in an intertidal habitat.



Children feel empowered when they survey their local creek, decide if it is healthy or unhealthy and make an action plan with their classmates to restore it.

This type of real life learning turns students on to science. It also provides them with the opportunity to make a significant difference to their environment.

This school year, KIDS for the BAY will take more than 4,000 school children into the outdoors for a hands-on learning experience and a real-life connection with nature. We are proud to be a part of the national No Child Left INSIDE movement! ♦



Is It A Creek?

Four years ago, when KIDS for the BAY Program Director Kristina Cervantes Yoshida first went to Rodeo Hills School to teach about the local Rodeo Creek, the students thought she was talking about, "the ditch we walk by on our way to school"! It did not take long for the students and teachers at Rodeo Hills to become completely inspired by their local creek once Kristina actually took them there and helped them to discover its amazing ecosystem.



Rodeo Hills students test the water quality of Rodeo Creek.

Egrets, turtles, fish, frogs and a wide variety of aquatic invertebrates make Rodeo Creek their home. There are also native plants and a beautiful, little waterfall to investigate. Through KIDS for the BAY's Watershed Action Program, the students have become



Students survey their creek to determine if it is healthy.

very engaged in learning about the creek habitat and what they can do to help to protect and restore it.

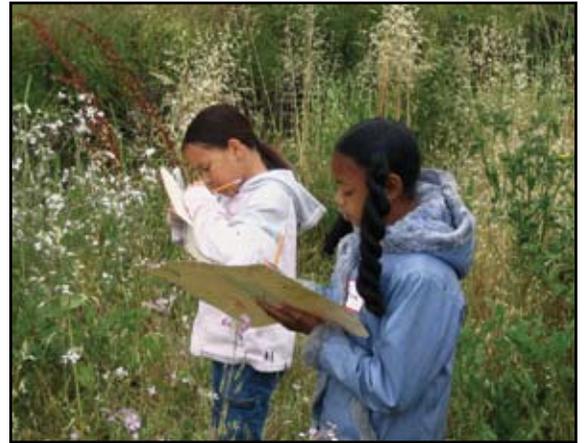
It is the teachers at Rodeo Hills, however, who have made Rodeo Creek a central theme in their curriculum and have really caught our attention at KIDS for the BAY. The goal of our programs is that teachers continue to teach them year after year to each new class of students. The teachers at

Rodeo Hills have been doing above and beyond what is expected.

As a result of their training with KIDS for the BAY, the teachers – Ms. Kroll, Ms. McGill and Ms. Walker – take their students to study the creek every spring. During their weekly trips to the creek, the students investigate plants and animals, learn about urban runoff pollution, organize creek clean up projects

and perform water quality testing. In the past few years, Ms. Kroll's students have worked with KIDS for the BAY to perform pH, salinity, dissolved oxygen and turbidity tests for Rodeo Creek. Each time, the students were happy to report their creek was healthy.

Veteran fourth grade teacher Stephanie Kroll has now been teaching the Watershed Action Program for four years. Each year Ms. Kroll reports new and exciting successes with her students. Last year her class helped place mulch around newly planted native trees along Rodeo Creek. This



Students study flowering creek-side plants.

year her students are raising native Pacific Chorus Frogs in their classroom, and releasing them when they turn into adults. After her first year teaching the program on her own, Ms. Kroll reported, "The program has been extremely successful. My students loved the hands on lessons that reflected on their habitat. They could connect what they were learning directly with the environment. The impact on my students has been enormous."



Ms. Walker and Ms. McGill have also excelled with the KIDS for the BAY program. The teachers look forward to the spring when they get to dedicate their learning time to Rodeo Creek and the surrounding environment.

We are very impressed with the creativity of the Rodeo Hills fourth grade team of teachers and with their commitment to teaching a high quality environmental science curriculum to their students every year. ♦

Expanded Educators Training Program and Summer Institute For Teachers

KIDS for the BAY is now offering an expanded Educators Training Program, developed by Education Director Shefali Shah. This unique program offers teachers and educators multiple professional development opportunities in Environmental Education. Our trainings focus on curriculum content and teaching strategies while modeling best current practices for teaching the latest State Science Standards. We provide training at schools, educational conferences, environmental events and fairs. We also facilitate workshops for environmental education organizations that need support with staff development, curriculum implementation, and strategies for working with diverse communities.

Our Educators Training Program also offers one-on-one support for teachers in environmental content, thematic integration, applying critical thinking questioning strategies, developing community-based student-led action projects, as well as lesson modeling in teachers' classrooms.

Our expanded program is a direct result of the needs we see in the field of environmental education. Children are most excited about learning when their teachers are passionate and

genuinely engaged in the content they are teaching. We are committed to providing professional development opportunities for teachers that develop the tools and vision to inspire future generations of young environmental leaders. Organizations that are already taking advantage of this service include:

- **Park Day School in Oakland:** Park Day has recently been Green Certified and they are working with KIDS for the BAY to develop their environmental literacy programs school-wide.
- **Vallemar School in Pacifica:** KIDS for the BAY is providing professional development to enable every teacher in kindergarten through sixth grade to teach our School Wide Creek Education and Action Curriculum.
- **German American International School in Menlo Park:** the goal of this school is to partner with KIDS for the BAY to develop a school wide service-learning curriculum with an environmental focus.

In 2006 KIDS for the BAY presented a hands-on environmental education workshop at the California Association

for Bilingual Education (CABE) Conference in San Jose. The workshop focused on instructional strategies and activities to teach watershed awareness and environmental health and justice issues to all types of learners. Genevieve Arredondo, a Bilingual Education Specialist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, attended the workshop and said:

"I will take the activities I learned at this workshop back and share them with my teaching staff. We interact with and teach a very diverse student population with varying language abilities, and the tips you gave me today will make me a better educator. This was the best workshop I attended at CABE!"

This summer, KIDS for the BAY will launch its new week long Summer Institute for Educators. This is an exciting opportunity for Bay Area educators to learn new ways to develop environmental literacy in their educational settings. The Institute will engage educators in hands-on activities, both in the classroom and in the outdoors. It will also involve critical discussions about how to inspire student-led action for community change. ♦



KIDS for the BAY students investigate worm compost.



KIDS for the BAY Education Director Sheela Shankar teaches students about bay ecology.

THANK YOU to all the organizations and individuals
who supported KIDS for the BAY during 2006!

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