



Wilderness Youth Project

Bridge to Nature

Why?

Time in nature with a mentor makes students smarter, healthier and happier. Going outdoors in nature is one of the best ways to keep kids excited about learning and to build their connection with the natural world, their peers and their own self-confidence. A case in point is the 2005 study by the California Department of Education which found that at-risk children who participated in outdoor education programs raised their science test scores by 27 percent, improved their conflict resolution and problem-solving skills, and experienced better self-esteem and motivation to learn.

Amy Alzina, principal at Adams Elementary School, writes: ***“Wilderness Youth Project has sparked new hope and an excitement for learning in our students. These at-risk students are experiencing “success” for the first time in their lives. Their self-confidence and motivation to learn is more than I could have ever hoped for. This love for learning is what we as educators strive to achieve in all of our children.”***

In short, nature-based education for marginalized children provides essential building blocks for success, for closing achievement and enrichment gaps, for building social-emotional skills, and for cultivating a generation of stewards of our local environment.

We take our participants to resource-rich locations such as the creeks, beaches, mountain trails, and open spaces in Santa Barbara’s abundant front country. Our core routines include child-centered exploration, awareness, and the building of naturalist skills. We also teach conflict resolution, communication and peacemaking.

What is the Bridge to Nature program?

At Title I Schools

The Bridge to Nature School day program provides a 3.5-hour nature-based mentoring program for students in 4th grade. One day each month, half of the class heads out during 3.5 hours of class time for hands-on, student-centered learning, relevant real world problem-solving, inquiry, and interaction with the natural world. The other half of the class has the benefit of smaller group concentration.

Teacher Michael Macioce of Adelante Charter school writes, ***“One reason I believe Adelante is an excellent school is because of our commitment to equity and experiential education especially in STEAM subjects. Wilderness Youth Project helps us to provide a regular, deep connection with the natural world, facilitated by caring guides who support the students’ well being and boost their capacity for learning.”***

Bridge to Nature School Day Program is Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) aligned and supports English Language Arts and social-emotional learning.

At Community Partners

WYP is building a bridge to nature in the community, identifying partner agencies where we can meet kids who, otherwise, won’t have access to the benefits of ongoing mentoring in nature. We meet at community centers in low-income neighborhoods, low-income housing providers, early childhood support centers, and afterschool programs dedicated to supporting marginalized populations. These programs meet weekly throughout the school year, meeting in a small group with 12 students, 2 counselors and 1 volunteer.



Why fully subsidized programs?

Yale Social Ecologist Stephen R. Kellert wrote: ***“Children’s direct and regular experience of the natural world is an essential, irreplaceable dimension of healthy development.”*** And yet children today spend an average of 7 minutes or less outdoors. By providing full scholarships to our Bridge to Nature programs for very low income students, we overcome the barriers of cost (and transportation). Providing equitable access to nature is one way we can contribute to closing achievement, access and enrichment gaps in our community.

Kids who come to Wilderness Youth Project...

- Feel Connected To Nature
- Are Physically And Mentally Healthier
- Have Higher Self-Esteem
- Are More Cooperative With Others
- Are Good Problem-Solvers
- Feel More Capable And Confident
- Are More Creative
- Do Better In School
- Have Good Self-Discipline
- Are Tomorrow’s Conservation Leaders



**Wilderness
Youth Project**

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