



## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Camp FAQs

***Question: What is the purpose of 6<sup>th</sup> grade camp?***

According to the San Diego County Office of Education website, the mission of camp is to “To provide students with experiential learning programs that enhance awareness and scientific understanding of the natural world and their connection to it while building self-reliance, teamwork, and a sense of social responsibility.” As described by California Assembly Bill (AB) Number 1330, Chapter 663, the Outdoor Environmental Education Program is designed to “foster stewardship of the environment and an appreciation of the importance of the wise use of natural resources.”

Link: <http://www.sdcoe.net/outdoored2/?loc=home>

***Question: What does the research say about the effectiveness of the camp experience?***

An independent evaluation of 6<sup>th</sup> grade camp was conducted as part of the requirements on AB 1330. This study was conducted in 2005 and involved student, parent, and teacher surveys before, immediately after, and 6-10 weeks after the camp experience. A science assessment was also administered along with the surveys. The study focused primarily on the impact of camp for at-risk youth and underserved demographic groups. The research included a control group (students that did not attend camp) and a treatment group (those that did attend). The conclusion of the study presents the following findings:

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*Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California*

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### **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

This chapter summarizes the major research findings of the study.

#### **Personal and Social Skills**

- According to student assessments gathered immediately after program participation, children who attended outdoor science school showed significantly higher gains in conflict resolution. However, these gains were not significantly higher than the increases shown by the control group. Six to ten weeks later, children who attended the program showed gains in cooperation and conflict resolution that were significantly higher than the control group.
- Teacher ratings provide evidence of a wide range of positive outcomes related to participation in outdoor science school. Teachers rated all children before the treatment group attended outdoor school and six to ten weeks later. According to teacher ratings of each student, those children who attended outdoor science school showed statistically significant positive gains on all eight constructs on which they were rated. In contrast, the control group showed losses on seven of the eight constructs. Children who attended outdoor science school showed significantly larger gains than the control group in six of the eight constructs. These gains were observed in self-esteem, conflict resolution, relationship with peers, problem solving, motivation to learn, and behavior in class.
- Parent ratings of their children did not reveal any significant differences in the five social-emotional constructs between children who attended outdoor school and those who did not.

## Stewardship of the Environment

- According to student assessments gathered immediately after program participation, children who attended outdoor school showed significant increases in one of the three constructs: concern about conservation. However, these increases were not significantly larger than those of the control group.
- At the six- to ten-week point, the control group showed significant losses in two of the three constructs (attitude toward science and environmental behaviors), whereas the treatment group did not show any significant losses.
- According to parent reports, students who participated in the program had significantly larger gains in environmental behaviors ( $p < .05$ ), compared to children who did not attend the program. In other words, parents of children who attended outdoor school observed children engaging in positive environmental behaviors (e.g., recycling, etc.) at home, whereas a statistically significant finding was not observed for ratings by parents of children in the control group.

## Knowledge and Understanding of Science Concepts

- Children who attended outdoor school significantly raised their science scores by 27 percent, as measured by a pre- and post-survey administered immediately upon their return to school.
- The increase in science knowledge was maintained six to ten weeks following program participation, with no significant loss in science scores.

## Benefits for English Language Learners

- This study focused on 255 sixth-grade students, 58 percent of which were identified by teachers as English Learner (EL) students. According to teacher reports, among those students who attended the program, EL students demonstrated gains in cooperation, leadership, relationship with peers, and motivation to learn that were significantly larger than the gains shown by non-EL students for those constructs.

Link: <http://www.sdcoe.net/outdoored2/pdf/AB1330ChapterContents.pdf>

### **Question:**     *What is the financial impact of attending camp?*

The camp fees have increased from \$203 per student in 2004-2005 to \$258 in 2007-2008. Additional costs of attending camp include transportation, teacher stipends, and other related expenses. The actual cost for camp in 2006-2007 was right around \$300 per student. Financial reports indicate that the net deficit for camp in 2004-2005 was \$17,966. In 2005-2006 that deficit was \$5,662. These deficits exist in spite of elementary contributions to the middle school programs and an intensification of fundraising efforts among the middle schools. This year the deficit is at least \$6,500 from Calavera Hills Middle School. As of April 23 (2007), Valley Middle School was \$69,482.10 below their fundraising expectation for 6<sup>th</sup> grade camp. In addition, we recently found out that the transportation cost will increase by \$2,200 beyond our initial expectation.

Link: <http://www.sdcoe.net/outdoored2/?loc=fee>

**Question: *What are the equal access obligations for the school district if some students are unable to attend camp as a result of their financial situation?***

Students must be allowed participate in any school activity. It is the obligation of the school to ensure that students are not denied access to opportunities to learn based on their financial situation. The following is copied from California Education Code 35330:

No pupil shall be prevented from making the field trip or excursion because of lack of sufficient funds. To this end, the governing board shall coordinate efforts of community service groups to supply funds for pupils in need of them.

No group shall be authorized to take a field trip or excursion authorized by this section if any pupil who is a member of such an identifiable group will be excluded from participation in the field trip or excursion because of lack of sufficient funds.

**Question: *How was a decision made about the plans for next year?***

At several points during the school year, Principals were asked to work with their parent leadership groups to solicit input and feedback regarding camp. In the past week online surveys for Middle School students have been distributed and a link has been posted on the CUSD website for parents to provide input via an online survey. Principals were presented with a summary of the AB 1330 research along with financial considerations during a meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Several options were considered by the group:

1. Continue to operate with camp at 6<sup>th</sup> grade and implement new fundraising systems.
2. Shift camp to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
3. Allow school sites to make individual determinations about whether to go to camp.
4. Develop alternate plans to ensure that students develop social/emotional skills, foster stewardship for the environment, and improve science content knowledge.

Based on the historical data and current accounting, option number one appears to be impractical. Shifting camp to 5<sup>th</sup> grade raises concerns related to the maturity of the students and would also impact the ability of elementary schools to continue to provide financial support for the arts and special programs. Allowing schools to make individual determinations would likely result in inequities across the district that violate our obligation to ensure equal access for all students. Based on these considerations, it was the consensus decision of the Instructional Services leadership and principals that alternate plans were the best course of action.

**Question: *Why were parents, teachers, and students not included in the decision-making process?***




In recent years there have been a number of committees that included parents and teachers in conversations about camp. In many cases, the function of the group was to determine if camp was a productive activity. At the moment, the value of camp is not at question. Rather, the question is how can we provide the most cost-effective services to students so that they benefit from social/emotional growth, foster stewardship for the environment, and improve science content knowledge. A parent survey was posted on the CUSD website and the following summary represents some very preliminary input:

Please respond to the prompts below to assist us in planning for outdoor education in Carlsbad. Your responses are completely anonymous. Thanks in advance for your input.



1. Please indicate which of the following statements represent your situation. Check all that apply.

I have a child that has already gone to camp.		20	43%
I have a child in grades K-5 that has not gone to camp.		40	87%



2. In your view, what is the greatest benefit of camp?

Social/Emotional Growth		34	76%
Attitude Towards the Environment		3	7%
Knowledge of Science Content		8	18%
Total		45	100%



3. This year the total fee was approximately \$300 and the cost of camp has increased by \$60 per child in the last three years. Presuming that the cost will continue to increase over time, are you willing and able to pay for the cost of your child to go to camp?

Yes		37	79%
No		10	21%
Total		47	100%

4. Approximately 25% of CUSD students are in need of financial assistance to pay for camp. Are you willing and able to help fundraise for students in need of assistance?

Yes		25	54%
No		21	46%
Total		46	100%

5. With 855 students in 5th grade currently, the cost to send this group to camp next year will be approximately \$256,500. The funding for this program comes from parents and community support. In your opinion, is this the best use of these resources?

Yes		27	57%
No		20	43%
Total		47	100%

17 Responses

**Question:** *What are the plans now?*

A Taskforce will be convened with parent, staff, and administrative representatives from each of the middle schools. This Taskforce will consider options for social/emotional development, stewardship of the environment, and increasing science content knowledge and a recommendation will be taken to the Board by the Superintendent.