



Bridge to Nature

Wilderness Youth Project is building a “Bridge to Nature” for Title 1¹ students in Santa Barbara.

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. 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 at-risk children provides essential building blocks for success, for closing achievement and enrichment gaps and for cultivating a generation of stewards of our local environment.

¹ WYP strives for equity, working to include students from diverse backgrounds of ethnicity, ability and socioeconomic status. Our goal is to mirror the demographics of Santa Barbara and Goleta.

What is the Bridge to Nature School Day program?

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 we are “moving the needle” on test scores is because of our commitment to student engagement and experiential education, especially in the STEM subjects. As we implement Common Core and a focus on process, Wilderness Youth Project helps us to provide the real life inspiration and information these students need to learn.”*

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 the “Principles of Peace,” which focus on conflict resolution, communication and peacemaking.

Bridge to Nature School Day Program is Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) aligned and uses curriculum documented in “Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature.”



What is Wilderness Youth Project (WYP)?

Our mission is to foster confidence, health, and a lifelong love of learning for young people and families through active outdoor experiences and mentoring.

We envision teaching the next generation of children to be **peaceful, respectful and confident** stewards of our world. Our work also helps to close the academic and enrichment gaps that exist for underserved students.

Operating since 1999, we serve 1,000 youth and adults from Santa Barbara County each year. Our programs include:

- school partnerships during the day
- after-school programming
- early childhood programs
- summer camps
- family camps
- teen expeditions
- camping weekends
- volunteer and community mentoring training, including an apprentice program.

Our goal at WYP is to achieve significant, measurable change in the following four categories:

- **Individual** (curiosity, self-confidence and assuming leadership roles)
- **Social** (respect for others, service to the community, and skill in resolving conflicts)
- **Physical** (enjoyment of physical activity, growing agility and confidence in that activity)
- **Environmental** (respect for the natural world)



**WILDERNESS
YOUTH PROJECT**

Since 1999

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