

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education announces: Results of State-Funded Outdoor Education Survey Now Available

The Tulare County Office of Education's Clemmie Gill School of Science and Conservation (SCICON) in Springville was one of three programs participating in a state-funded survey designed to measure the impact of outdoor education on at-risk sixth graders in California. The survey, conducted by the American Institute for Research and funded by California Assembly Bill (AB) 1330, Chapter 663, focused on 255 sixth-grade students from four elementary schools who attended outdoor education programs in Los Angeles, San Diego and Tulare Counties (SCICON) between September and November 2004.

Highlights from the findings include a 27 percent increase in science scores by students measured in pre- and post-survey tests administered at school, as well as an increase in science knowledge retained six to ten weeks following program participation. Other positive gains were reported in behavior. Teachers reported that students showed statistically significant gains in self-esteem, conflict resolution, relationship with peers, problem solving, motivation to learn and behavior in class. The control group that did not visit the outdoor education program reported losses in the same constructs.

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The survey noted that 58 percent of the students were identified by teachers as English Learners (EL). 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 over the gains shown by non-EL students. The survey also notes that 56 percent of the group reported that the outdoor school represented the first time they had spent time in a natural setting.

“This survey confirms what we have felt for years,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “The SCICON program is superior tool in science and conservation instruction. It also proves to be an excellent way to aid teachers in development of students’ interpersonal skills.”

A complete copy of the survey’s Executive Summary is available by calling Robert Herman, Public Information Officer, at (559) 733-6606.

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