



## Bay Area Experiencing Environmental Education Explosion

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Like reading or math, science has become a very important part of a child's education. From the study of oceans to geology and the study of volcanoes, elementary school children are now being given the opportunity to study a wider range of environmental science. With new interactive programs, students are now able to learn more than they ever have before about the Bay Area's ever-changing environment.

Many scientific organizations around the Bay Area have created programs for children. A recent scientific success story that has been brought to the Bay Area is the Jason Project.

The Jason Project is an interactive program designed to give children the opportunity to work first hand with leading scientists. Scientists and children work side by side to examine and explore different aspects of the environment. This year, the Jason Project was visited by more than 3,000 elementary and middle school students from around the Bay Area.

With such activities as driving a ROV (Remote Operated Vehicle), trying on scuba gear, and simulating oils spills in Bay Area creeks, students are able learn what scientists and researchers do to help the environment and have fun at the same time.

"It is really important for kids to have an opportunity to have a hands on experience to the

greatest extent possible in science," said Andy Peri, director for the Bay Model in Sausalito, which was the sight of this years Jason Project. Peri, who has been the director for the Bay Model for almost five years, feels that it is important for children to learn science. This is not only so that they can learn how to help our environment now, but also in the future when they are making decisions that can have a major impact on our world.

"The reason why we study science is so we can learn to appreciate nature," he said. "When we learn to appreciate nature, we have more of a chance of wanting to protect it."

Along with learning about the effects of human interaction with the oceans, students are now able to learn more about the different sea species. Scientific organizations all over the Bay Area have designed programs to help teach students about the different plants and animals we see everyday.

The Marine Mammal Center, a hospital designed to help sick, injured and abandoned marine mammals, welcomes classes of all ages to come and learn about marine mammals found not only up and down the California coast, but all over the world.

Doreen Moser, assistant director of education at the Marine Mammal Center, enjoys teaching students of all ages and feels that what the center teaches makes a difference in the lives of both students and marine mammals.

"We are able to teach them about a variety of marine mammals," she said. "In all of our programs we are able to introduce students to the world of marine mammals and how the Marine Mammal Center is able to help these animals and what students can do to help those marine mammals in the marine environment."

Living in the Bay Area exposes children to not only marine, but also many other types of environments.

Jennea Casella, an administrator at Mary Silvera School, feels that because the children are so exposed to so many different types of ecosystems it is important for them to learn about their everyday environment.

"We try to weave environmental science into as much of the curriculum as possible, by incorporating things like creek and garden studies," she said. "It's hard, especially when students study two hours of language arts and an additional hour of math, to fit science in each day on a regular basis."

She said that increasing science time for classes is going to be harder than ever due to the budget cuts and teacher shortages Bay Area school districts will be facing.

She is sure that the student's will not be at too much of a loss, though, because she believes that science is such an important part of every child's life.

## RESOURCES:

Jason Project: [www.jasonproject.org](http://www.jasonproject.org)

Marine Mammal Center: [www.tmmc.org](http://www.tmmc.org)