Students Conducting Environmental Inquiry (SCENIQ)

MAKING SPACE FOR CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Every person needs connection to the natural world that sustains them. This is especially important for youth living in a fire-adapted region. At Pepperwood, we aim to connect people with nature as early as possible by inspiring an ethic of conservation in the next generation of stewards. Students Conducting Environmental Inquiry (SCENIQ) was launched in the spring of 2012 to connect local students (2nd to 5th grades) with nature using our 3,200-acre reserve as an outdoor science lab. The program features eight hours of immersive, in-the-field learning with two four-hour field trips, one in the fall and one in the spring. These field trips bookend a one-hour classroom visit to the participating school by our Environmental Educators. Our approach is successful because it builds on children’s natural curiosity through hands-on, science-based exploration.

KIDS NEED NATURE

Humans derive mental, physical, emotional and social benefits from spending time outside, but for children this is an integral part of the developmental process. In relating to their natural environment, children hone valuable skills like problem solving, spatial awareness, creativity and focus. Studies have shown that time spent in nature helps children self-regulate, lowers stress levels and even improves social connections with others.

“Our third graders in Calistoga LOVE getting in touch with Nature in the SCENIQ program. Pepperwood’s programs for kids and programs for adults inspired me to complete a master’s project on the power of outdoor education to support children’s well-being, improve science instruction, and foster environmental awareness.”

Jeremy Smith (3rd grade teacher)

SCENIQ’S IMPACT/LOCAL, ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE SCIENCE LEARNING IN NATURE

- Over 900 local students take part in this 9-hour immersive program every year
- 60% of participants are from Title 1 funded schools
- At least 55% of participants are classified as English Language Learners
CULTIVATING CONSERVATION ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

A fun and safe adventure in the forests and grasslands of beautiful Sonoma County, with observation-based science lessons and hands-on learning, is SCENIQ’s approach to inspiring an ethic of conservation in the next generation of stewards. Spending time outdoors leads to a greater likelihood of developing stewardship and conservation attitudes and behaviors. Younger generations need access to opportunities that impart the skills necessary to relate to their natural environment in a respectful way, so that they’ll understand and protect the natural systems that sustain us all.

HOW IT WORKS

Nature has many stories, especially in an ecologically diverse place like Sonoma County. To understand these stories, you need to know how to listen, see, hear, touch, and feel the world around you. Our Environmental Educators coach ecological literacy by creating space for science-based inquiry, observation, hands-on learning, and positive outdoor experiences.