



SAN DIEGO CHILDREN AND NATURE COLLABORATIVE

2014 Accomplishments

Founded in 2009, the San Diego Children and Nature Collaborative (SDCaN) works with organizations and individuals to enhance opportunities for all children to play, learn and grow with nature in their everyday lives. Our mission is to inspire communities to nurture, empower, and engage youth in cultivating their relationship with nature.

This document outlines accomplishments from January 1 to December 31, 2014 that were inspired, convened, and/or organized by SDCaN.

Goal 1. Increase public awareness of the value of nature and outdoor experiences

Website. The website (www.sdchildrenandnature.org) includes current information about programs and pages for educators, families, and design and health professionals.

Community Fairs. Loose Parts Nature Play activities were organized for children and parents at EarthFair in Balboa Park on Sunday, April 27. Children were invited to play and construct with bamboo poles, tree cookies, twine, sheets, boxes, palm fronds, and other natural materials!

Goal 2. Enhance schools' ability to connect children to nearby nature

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Work groups were established to develop integrated nature-based approaches for field trips that are commonly offered by local nature providers, and the groups' coordinating meetings were held on June 9 and September 26.

Workshops on nature-based learning in NGSS were held for nature educators, co-sponsored by San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) and San Diego State University's Center for Research on Mathematics and Science Education (CRMSE):

- January 31, gathering evidence, in the science and engineering practices (SEP)
- February 28, Common Core principles and applications
- March 14, gathering evidence, for the cross-cutting concepts
- April 18, Earth Science concepts and opportunities
- May 16, more on crosscutting concepts
- November 7, SEP #2 Developing and using models
- December 9, Crosscutting concept #4 Systems and system models

Nature-based Science Workshops. Two 90-minute workshops on Nature-based Inquiry and Learning in After School Settings was offered at the STEMPower conference for not-in-school programs on February 27, each attended by 35 (capacity). Twelve nature-based presentations organized at the San Diego Science Educators' Association conference on March 1 at Grossmont College, each attended by 10-40 teachers.

Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair. Projects were judged and four awards were given on March 21 for nature-based science projects.

Research Project. USDA Forest Service provided a Cooperative Agreement for \$27,000 to develop Technology-enhanced Nature Learning for Middle School Students (with Rincon and Mission middle schools in Escondido). The lessons featured collection of insects and other arthropods in the schoolyard, insect anatomy and identification using stereoscopes in the classroom, and project-based learning to argue for management strategies for local insects and pests.

School gardens. Coordination with the Master Gardeners (MGs) of San Diego County continued. Gardening with Class Conference held on October 18 and attended by 117 educators and 25 Master Gardener School Garden Consultants. Fifteen workshop presenters featured NGSS applications.

Goal 3. Partner with community groups to value, promote and provide opportunities for outdoor experiences.

Family Nature Clubs. More than 1,500 families are part of Family Adventures in Nature (www.familyadventuresinnature.org), with family nature club leaders organizing nature activities each month in the San Diego region. A weekly email is sent, listing the upcoming events and adventures. Join (free!) At www.meetup.com/familyadventuresinnature.

Nature Play. Project developed to organize and charge fees for Loose Parts Nature Play activities organized for schools, early childhood educators, community fairs, and birthday parties.

Goal 4. Drive change in attitudes, skills and behaviors that lead to positive relationships with nature.

A new initiative, Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE!) was explored, to bring together various community partners in a “collective impact” approach to enhance nature settings and learning on school campuses. Some organizations were ready to “sign on” and others would follow, but the initiative lacked sufficient interest at this time.

Goal 5. Promote learning, sharing and networking

Communications. Five newsletter issues were assembled and issued in the spring. Contact list maintained for local contacts, and teachers/educators moved to a separate contact list.

Meetings. Four general meetings were held:

- January 31 from 9-noon at the Girl Scout’s Burnham Hall, combined with the NGSS workshop
- March 27, 5-7 pm, “Happy Nature Hour,” at Mission Trails Regional Park, with 55 attending, 20 tables/exhibits, “network mapping” activity on the patio, and a fabulous view of Cowles Mountain.
- May 16, 9-noon at the Girl Scout program center, combined with the NGSS workshop
- September 17, 4-6 pm at Prado-Balboa Park, “Nature Mingle for Educators” with 90 attendees, great Mediterranean snacks, and a lot of positive energy!

Presentations about children and nature were given at the annual California Parks and Recreation Professionals meeting, a monthly Environmental Education coordination meeting for San Diego County Parks and Recreation staff, and to Environmental Health Coalition staff. SD Unified Schools hosted five community forums for their Vision 2020 process, and SDCaN attended three forums.

Goal 6. Build sustainable organization to support mission

Governance. The San Diego Science Alliance (SDSA) served as SDCaN’s fiscal agent this year.

Board meetings. Meetings were held on January 7, February 4, March 4, April 1, May 6, June 3, August 28, September 16, October 7, November 4, and December 2.

Funding. A cooperative agreement of \$27,000 from the USDA Forest Service and a grant of \$5,000 from San Diego Gas & Electric (for Schoolyard Habitat Workshops) were received. Proposals were submitted (but not funded) for Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE!), Science-Robotics-Nature in Middle School, and Greening Schoolyards and Greening Children’s Everyday Lives. In-kind contributions for meetings held at Girl Scouts of San Diego-Imperial Council program center in Balboa Park, Mission Trails Regional Park, and San Diego Audubon Society.

For more information, contact Anne Fege at afege@sdchildrenandnature.org or 858-472-1293.