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School Water Education Program in full force at Dunnell Nature Center

Daily Republic Staff
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FAIRFIELD — Solano County students will spend time this fall learning about local water resources through hands-on science activities at the Dunnell Nature Park and Education Center.

More than 400 elementary students from Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Suisun City, Vacaville and Vallejo are scheduled to participate in the School Water Education Program run by the Solano Resource Conservation District.

The program provides K-12 students water education with a focus on drinking water, stormwater and water conservation.

The field trip includes a mapping and water detective activity where students discover their cities' water resources, a hands-on 3-D EnviroScape model demonstration of how their city is impacted by stormwater pollution, and a watershed hike along Union Avenue Creek where students learn scientific skills of observation.

Many teachers return to the program annually including Dixon Montessori Charter School, whose fourth-grade classes have been participating in the SWEP Dunnell Field Trip program for the past three years.

On a sunny November morning, Dixon Montessori teachers Lara Perfecto and Mara Boggess looked on as student groups bustled from one learning station to the next.

“It’s so important for students to get outside, and this field trip is entirely outdoors," Pefecto said in press materials. "Students get to experience their watershed firsthand, and the conversations continue even after coming back to school, for days or even weeks after the field trip.”

"During our Dunnell field trips we investigate how water is used by people, plants, and animals as we explore the area. We emphasize that since our rainfall in California has always been variable, we should be wise about water use even when reservoirs are full.

"It's typical for students to experience one rainy winter and think water conservation is no longer important, but with climate change making droughts and extreme weather events more intense, we feel this understanding of conservation as a lifestyle is important for students to grasp at a young age," said Stephanie Stock, assistant program manager with Solano RCD.

Solano RCD will open their doors in August to the Solano Institute training, which consists of three days of intensive workshops focused on Solano County water resources and open spaces.

The training highlights the importance of preserving county open spaces and the complexity of the region’s water resources.

SWEP provides some support for this program, which is funded by the Solano County Orderly Growth Committee and Department of Water Resources. Interested teachers should send an email to Shea Kinser at shea.kinser@solanorcd.org for details.

Solano Resource Conservation District’s School Water Education Program is free to participating schools. Registration is currently open. This program is funded by the Solano County Water Agency, cities of Vacaville, Fairfield, Suisun City, Vallejo, Benicia, Dixon and the Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District.

To learn more about this program and Solano RCD's other education programs, visit www.solanorcd.org or email education@solanorcd.org.