

LIFE: Learning In Florida's Environment

LIFE in Sarasota County brings students to public conservation lands for science-based environmental education, reinforcing existing curriculum and Florida standards through hands-on, field labs facilitated by educators, scientists, and land/natural resource managers.

Background

Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) is a model for science-based environmental education on public conservation lands. The LIFE program began in 2004, in Apalachicola, as a partnership between the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Franklin County Schools. In Sarasota, the LIFE program is unique. It is a multi-agency collaborative effort between UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County and Florida Sea Grant; Oscar Scherer and Myakka River State Parks; Florida State Parks Foundation; Florida Conservation Corps AmeriCorps; Sarasota School science teachers; and EdExploreSRQ.



Methods

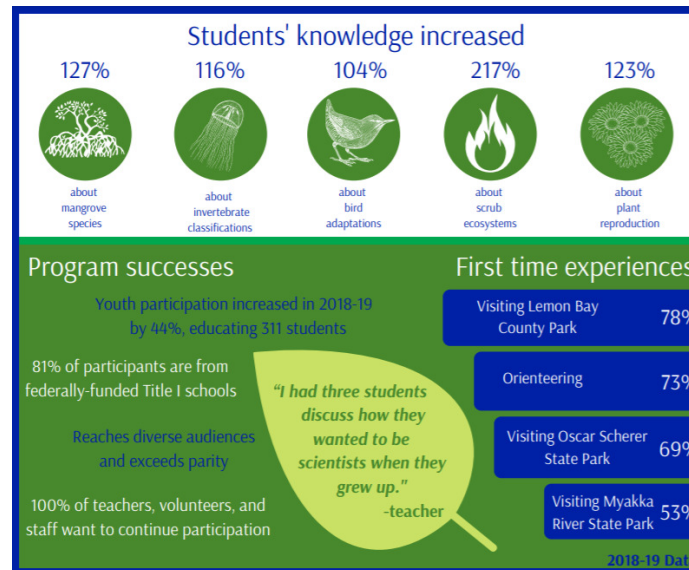
UF/IFAS Extension faculty coordinated curriculum development and delivery, logistics, field site selection, staff/volunteer trainings, and program promotion. In the program's second year (2018-19), 311 students participated in multiple field experiences highlighting three different ecosystems throughout the year. Each experience included an in-class preparatory presentation and skills practice; followed by three standards-based, STEM field labs at each of the three Sarasota County public conservation lands for a total of 10.5 contact hours. Pre-and post-test data was collected in the field from students, and participating teachers and staff/volunteers evaluated the program.

Conclusions

LIFE in Sarasota County successfully educated participants on the importance of local ecosystems, conservation, management challenges, and science-based careers. LIFE is a model for successful environmental and conservation education for youth and should be implemented in your county.



Outcomes



Program Objectives

The LIFE program objectives include supporting school science curriculum and standardized test success by reviewing 3rd-5th grade standards prior to Florida Student Assessment (FSA) science testing. The LIFE program provides youth an opportunity to engage in career possibilities by acting as wildlife biologists, horticulturalists, marine scientists, park rangers, and ornithologists; with the goal of increasing accessibility to science and scientific careers. The Sarasota LIFE program seeks to increase scientific knowledge and skills, and promote environmental stewardship.

Winner of 2018 FANREP Outstanding 4H/Youth Development Program Award



LIFE in YOUR County

For more information on how to implement LIFE in YOUR County, additional activities, and lessons learned visit https://rebrand.ly/uksarasotaext_life, or email sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu

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