

Baytown Nature Center: A Teacher's Vision

Janet Simon

Janet Simon is a teacher with the Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District Baytown, Texas. She has taught elementary, junior school, high school, and college student. Currently she serves as Reading Department Chairperson at Baytown Junior School. Janet has M.A. in reading from West Virginia University.

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Teacher and Baytown Nature Center Subcommittee Member

Observing students exploring the nature center and wondering about this habitat and its history is the vision. To transform the vision into reality we must teach the teachers with the hope they will introduce their students to the Baytown Nature Center.

Goals for Teaching the Teachers

In cooperation with the Goose Creek Consolidated School District, we designed a program to help teachers recognize the Baytown Nature Center as a diverse natural resource with a rich historical past and to encourage them to use the area with their students.

Overview

The six-hour nature center in service begins with a welcome from instructors and a distribution of journals. Throughout the day the participants write and share their reflections and knowledge so they can learn from each other as well as the leaders.

Under the tutelage of David Dauphin, we begin with birding and proceed to the following activities:

- * locate and make plaster casts of animals for later identification
- * collect, identify and taste plants
- * gather and learn names of insects
- * search for and identify shells along the shoreline
- * discuss the experience of Indians living in this area
- * listen to historical accounts of early visitors
- * learn about famous Texans in this area
- * seine in the bay and examine the catch
- * take measurements of a house foundation and draw conclusions about the original floor plan
- * explore the western shore for Indian artifacts
- * pick up man's litter and make generalizations
- * journal and share insights
- * evaluate the experience

Teacher Responses

Responses from evaluations and journals vary. Teachers express surprise at the transformation of the former subdivision; many have not visited the area. They write of their frustration with man abusing the nature center after they collect litter. In their evaluations they enthusiastically support using the nature center as an outdoor lab.

“Where teachers come, students will follow.”

And here come the kids! The students' reactions parallel to those of their teachers. Both experience an awakening of curiosity and interest in the outdoors. Listening to students speak about preserving this area represents a fringe benefit to each of us.