

# Lower Rio Grand Valley Nature Center

## 2023 TEEA Winner - Education



The Lower Rio Grande Valley Nature Center (VNC) is a six-acre nature park designed to introduce students and families to the flora and fauna of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV).

The VNC in Weslaco is also the oldest nature center in the LRGV and the only non-profit center fully dedicated to environmental education in the area. Their programs include environmental summer camps, school field trips, virtual curriculum, online videos, and after-school and weekend programs.

The core mission of the VNC is education. Staff and volunteers use every piece of the center and park as an educational opportunity to encourage environmental stewardship, natural resource conservation, and healthy ecosystems for wildlife and people. Each year, the VNC serves about 5,000 schoolchildren and 15,000 other visitors, introducing them to the wonders of nature while fostering an appreciation of the Lower Rio Grande Valley's unique plants and animals.

In addition to educational services, the VNC offers an array of programs aimed to improve the social climate of their community. For example, it offers free summer camps to children with disabilities, where participants explore and learn about nature.

The center is a great example of how one place can provide experiential education and inspire people to appreciate nature, conserve resources, and work together to make their community a better place.