



*'The MERITO Program has given my students in an inner city school the opportunity to have access to a world class science program complete with visiting scientists, science equipment, and field trips; an awareness of the environment and how their actions affect the ocean. It has provided my students, many of who had never even visited the beach five miles away from them, the opportunity to visit the islands and revel in the beauty of the marine sanctuary that had previously been so close, yet so far away from them.'*  
Quote of: 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Nancy Karnowski, 2008

## Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans 'MERITO' Academy



MERITO Academy students remove ice plant during a field trip to East Anacapa Island. Photo: Rocio Lozano-Knowlton

The Channel Islands MERITO Academy is a partnership program of the larger MERITO (Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans) initiative at Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary with a number of regional organizations. It is a hands-on marine and environmental education program geared for students underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields and who reside in Ventura or Santa Barbara Counties. The goal of Channel Islands MERITO Academy is to provide high quality, sustainable science programming integrating Earth and Ocean sciences into 4th to 8th grade level public education and extended learning programs resulting in the active contribution to ocean protection by educated and engaged youth. The Channel Islands MERITO Academy provides to the educators enrolled in the program the training and resources needed to implement the Channel Islands MERITO Academy Curriculum in their classroom or after-school programs.

The Channel Islands MERITO Academy Educators Workshop instructs and enables educators to utilize the lesson plans contained in the MERITO Academy curriculum in their classroom and to plan their field experiences accordingly. In addition, the program provides partial or total sponsorship of the field trip transportation to coastal sites and the Channel Islands; instruction by MERITO Academy bilingual staff during the field experiences; support materials and eligibility to educational services provided by partner organizations such as Oxnard College Marine Education Center, UCSB Marine Sciences Institute, Santa Barbara City Creeks Division, City of Oxnard, City of Ventura, The Nature Conservancy, Channel Islands National Park and Ventura County Office of Education among other agencies and organizations.



MERITO Academy 5<sup>th</sup> grade students monitor the rocky inter-tidal beaches of Santa Barbara Channel coast. Photo: Rocio Lozano-Knowlton



The Channel Islands MERITO Academy Curriculum includes 50 lesson plans in seven modules aligned to California Education Standards in mathematics, science, language arts, visual, and performing arts, and English language development. Each module is correlated to the Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and the California State Environmental Education Initiative Principles and Concepts containing background content, activities and worksheets.



MERITO Academy students monitoring sandy beach in the Santa Barbara Channel Photo: Rocio Lozano-Knowlton

Field experiences for students take place at sites such as Coal Oil Point Reserve, Carpinteria State Beach and Creek, Ormond Beach Wetlands, Leo Cabrillo State Park beaches and the Channel Islands (Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands).

The field experiences take place at a number of sites previously scouted and carefully selected for each locality to meet the curriculum standards and to be relevant to the student's communities. Field activities may include a visit to local waste water treatment plant, recycling center, beach or park clean ups, water quality testing, native plant restoration, bird identification, bird or plant phenology studies, sandy beach and rocky inter tidal monitoring, and plankton collection and identification depending on grade level.

The MERITO Academy is a partnership program between Channel Islands Marine Resource Institute, The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and The Nature Conservancy with Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary in collaboration with many governmental and non – governmental organizations (City, State and Federal), public and private schools in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.



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