

## School's Out for Summer

By Sarah Wilson



School is officially out for the summer, which means the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) has wrapped up another exciting year of educating Orange County students about the importance and value of water. During the 2017-18 school year, MWDOC's Water Education School Programs reached over 85,000 students at the elementary and high school levels.

As part of a contract with Discovery Cube Orange County, elementary school students, grades 1-6, are presented grade-specific assemblies and tested on their water knowledge with a keypad device before an assembly program begins, and then again afterward to measure engagement and concept retention. This year, students learned about the water cycle, the local climate and ecosystem, water use efficiency, and water as an important resource to the state and local community. At the conclusion of the assembly, each student received a Ricki the Raindrop booklet to take home and share what they learned with their families.

Through a partnership with Orange County Department of Education, Inside the Outdoors (ITO), the CHOICE High School Program offers students, grades 9-12, comprehensive classroom instruction on California water sources, policy issues facing the local and statewide community, and challenges water professionals face delivering water to homes, businesses, industry, and agriculture across the state. This past school year, participating high schools were offered three visits by ITO's "Traveling Scientists." On the first visit, students were educated about where California water comes from, challenges in delivering a reliable source of drinking water in Orange County, and how to be more water efficient. Pre- and post-visit assessments were conducted with individual student-response keypad systems to actively engage students in the program and measure concept comprehension and retention. On the second visit, students were given the unique opportunity to debate current water policy. Specifically, students reviewed briefing books on the California WaterFix and EcoRestore projects, and then debated the merits of the proposed projects in class. For the final visit, students were asked to organize a schoolwide expo with ITO staff and share the experience with their peers including California's water supply and water career pathways.

In an effort to provide water education and resources to additional high schools, beginning with the 2017-18 school year, MWDOC incorporated a condensed version of the CHOICE high school program into the CORE budget. This CORE program included a digital resource guide for students and teachers with training and support videos, a contact list to speakers organized by expertise, and the option for a one-time "Traveling Scientist" classroom presentation for teachers who integrated at least two elements of the resource guide into their lesson plans.



Additionally, for the first time this year, students were given the opportunity to submit videos for “Voice4Water” – a Southern California video competition offered by Leaders of Environmental Action Films (L.E.A.F.). Students were encouraged to submit 30-second videos describing what water means to them highlighting the significance of water use efficiency, water quality, and availability of water resources. Tiffany Ramirez, an Orange County high school student from Katella High School, was awarded by MWDOC and Disney for her video “Water is color in my life” – <http://indi.com/9bvw3>.

Looking forward, MWDOC’s school program contractors have started reaching out to local schools on behalf of MWDOC member agencies to schedule visits for the 2018-19 school year. As always, member agencies are invited to attend any of the elementary school assemblies or high school program visits. To learn more about MWDOC’s Water Education School Programs, please visit <https://www.mwdoc.com/water-education/school-program/>.