

## Strategies to Maximize Student Participation

- **Involve the ESOL and Special Education** departments to ensure that the program is inclusive.
- **Conduct a Parent Outdoor and Environmental Education meeting** one week prior to handing out permission forms. If possible, offer two meetings to meet the needs of parents who work nights.
  - Suggested **presenters** include: 6<sup>th</sup> grade team leaders, grade 6 science teachers, the school nurse, and two grade 7 students and their parents who attended during the previous year (very effective in the Latino communities when the invited students and parents are Spanish speaking).
  - Consider running a parallel **meeting for Spanish-speaking parents**. Arrange for an interpreter to be present at the Parent Meeting. (Ask OEEP coordinator for the power point overview of the program in Spanish.)
  - Use **ConnectEd** to announce the date of the Parent Outdoor and Environmental Education meeting and important dates in English and Spanish.
- **Involve counselors, ESOL teachers, and parent community liaisons** in advertising the parent meeting and encouraging families to allow their children to attend Outdoor Education. Provide Diez Minutos to parent community liaison. (Ask OEEP coordinator for a copy.)
- **Create a competition** for forms and fees between classes and provide a reward like pizza or treats. Use data boards as a visual to track the number of students participating.
- **Assess participation numbers** two weeks before the trip. If below expectations, have students complete a survey with the following choices: A. I have returned by forms. B. I have not returned my forms, but plan to. C. A teacher needs to call my house about Outdoor Education. D. I am not going. Alternatively, conference with each student who has not returned a form.
- **Make personal phone calls** to parents of students who have not returned permission forms. Gently ask if there are any questions or concerns that might be the issue, and attempt to address them. Callers who speak the native language of the parents are highly recommended; the Language Line is another option.
- Arrange for an **Outdoor Education Coordinator** to speak to student groups, if schedules permit.
- **Communicate** with parents and students:
  - **Translated versions of the permission form** and health form are available. Translated forms are only for reference only as the parents complete the English version to hand in.
  - **Financial support, in the form of waivers**, available for families in need. If possible, families are requested to contribute some amount - from \$5.00 - \$30.00. Include a financial assistance request form with the information packet.
  - **Families should not have to purchase special supplies** for the trip; the Smith Center can provide supplies like clothing, coats, and bedding for students in need. Also, consider asking your PTSA to donate items.