

For many students, a trip to the forest can be a game changer

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As California's children settle into the new school year, about 1,500 students will soon take the field trip of a lifetime to see the giant redwoods.

The nonprofit Save the Redwoods League works with schools from Santa Cruz up to Humboldt.

Emily Wiberg, a fourth grade math teacher at Achieve Academy in Oakland, said the day trip to Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park is a game-changer for children from under-resourced communities.

"For the majority of them, it's their first time being out in nature," Wiberg pointed out. "It's really exciting to see them getting their hands dirty and exploring."

Wiberg's class also takes part in the watershed program at Crab Cove, in partnership with the East Bay Regional Park District. There, children put on waders and examine the marine ecosystem. Trips for older students focus more on scientific data collection.

Deborah Zierten, education manager for the Save the Redwoods League, said the program promotes diversity, equity and inclusion by creating opportunities in all communities.

“We try and provide free bus transportation, or if they’re able to provide buses, we always provide free instruction when we get to the forest,” Zierten explained. “We don’t want to charge because we don’t want that to be a barrier.”

The program hopes to inspire students to consider careers in forestry and natural-resource management.