



Community and Urban Science Enrichment (CAUSE) Program Profile

The New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences initiated the Community and Urban Science Enrichment (CAUSE) Program in 1993 through initial funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

The project consists of the CAUSE Intern Program, a middle school Explorer Program, a summer Science Camp and a parent's initiative. The Program is designed to provide meaningful experiences in science and education, to promote science literacy and to provide educational and/or employment opportunities to Camden City's students. Participants are recruited from Camden City High Schools, Middle Schools and other Camden City youth serving organizations. The CAUSE Intern Program is designed for high school students in grades 9-12. The CAUSE Explorer Program is designed for students in grades 8.

High School and Middle School Programs

The CAUSE Intern Program is a personal and professional life skills program that trains high school students interested in science, education and beyond to work as public program explainers for the spring and as summer camp counselors for the summer camp in the months of July and August. CAUSE Interns participate in many activities such as community service projects, in house and out house programming such as outreaches, overnight programs, college tours, and educational and scientific field excursions. Field excursions include other aquariums, zoos, science museums, and trips into the field. Field work trips can include kayaking, canoeing, seining, water quality testing, and aquatic animal studies. Each year, the CAUSE Interns travel outside of New Jersey for one week to learn and do work in the field. The teens have traveled to places that include the Florida Keys, Cape Cod, Virginia, and Maine.

The CAUSE Program runs from October until August of the next year. First year participant training begins in October with a 15-20 week course in basic oceanography, marine biology, animal classification and live animal training. Sessions on public speaking and customer service are included. CAUSE Interns attend weekly workshops, whose topics include teambuilding, communication skills, diversity, inquiry-based learning/teaching, job readiness, college preparation, creative writing, finance, nutrition, workplace etiquette, interviewing, and resume writing skills to name a few. Session participants also participate in rap sessions and science days.

The CAUSE Explorer Program is designed to train middle-school students in grade 8 interested in science and education to volunteer as community outreach explainers and as assistant counselors for the CAUSE Summer Science Camps. The Explorer Program will engage youth during the transition years from middle school to high school. The program has 4 tiers that focus on science content training, character education, career exploration, and CAUSE summer camp. Participants will learn to conduct and teach science activities and lessons, explore possible careers, develop professional and personal life skills and participate in field excursions. The Explorer Program runs from November or December to August of the following year. We encourage participants to transition into the CAUSE Intern program in the fall.

CAUSE Programming

The CAUSE Summer Camp is a five-week science enrichment day camp facilitated by CAUSE staff. It is held at one of our partner schools and community organizations. Each year camp has a different "theme" and may focus on aquatic and terrestrial organisms, habitats, conservation issues and locales of historical significance. Students go on field excursions each week to natural areas or other science museums which coincides with the curriculum topic for that week. The camp is offered to any K-8th grade student that attends one of our partner schools or community organizations. This program is offered on-site at the community partners for the convenience of the children and their parents.

Community Service and Outreach CAUSE participants visit community based organizations in and around Camden City to teach interactive, hands-on lessons that focus on local and global conservation issues.

The Parents Initiative involves parents and their children's science learning to help them overcome their own personal inhibitions against science. The Parents/Guardians of the CAUSE Staff are invited to participate in some of our cultural activities, trips, and family nights. This allows parents to see their child "in action" and understand what their child is learning in the program. Parents/Guardians of the K-8 campers are invited to participate in Parent's Go to Camp Day. They have the opportunity to attend one of our trips and/or attend a camp session. Parents are also invited to see the projects created by the students at the end of camp.

Regional and National Collaborations

CAUSE has expanded into a regional collaborative with other area museums' youth programs. Now, youth from the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, Franklin Institute, and Philadelphia Zoo, all participate in skill-building workshops, lectures and youth summits to foster networking opportunities and peer mentoring.

CAUSE has expanded nationally to include networking and peer opportunities for youth from the Museum of Science in Boston, New England Aquarium, National Aquarium in Baltimore, Newark Museum, Pittsburgh Children's Museum, and Pacific Science Center. Youth from these organizations attend an annual youth summit in August.