



Kids Healthy Outdoors Challenge (KHOC)

2021-22 School Year Report

July 2022

KHOC is funded by:



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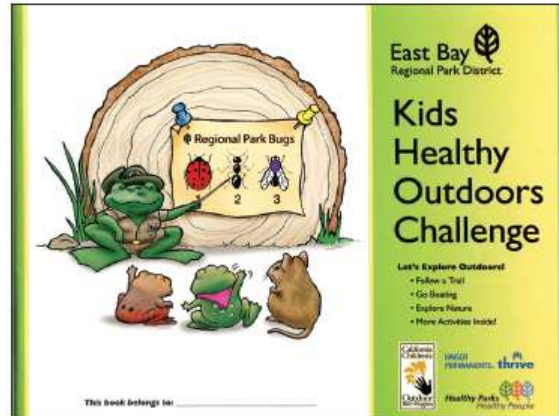
Photo Credits from Peralta Elementary School in Oakland and Shore Acres Elementary in Bay Point. This report also features “Dear KHOC” letters from students at Shore Acres.



Students at Castle Rock

I. Introduction and Summary of 2021-22 KHOC Program

Purpose of the Project: *Kids Healthy Outdoor Challenge (KHOC)* began in 2012 with a goal of promoting outdoor education while also supporting third grade curriculum content in Alameda and Contra Costa County school districts. KHOC was designed as a tool to support, not supplant, the teaching of required content in a new way—outdoors, with teachers leading activities.



KHOC includes a teacher guide and an age-appropriate student workbook, produced in both English and Spanish. The workbook has ten sections aligned with the *California Children's Outdoor Bill Of Rights*,¹ which states that every child in California, by the completion of their 14th year, should have the opportunity to experience 10 key outdoors activities: e.g., Connect to the Past, Explore Nature, Follow a Trail, Plant a Seed, Ride a Bike, Learn to Swim.

Each participating teacher is asked to use KHOC lessons *and* to go on one or more class trips to an EBRPD park.² Anticipated **outcomes** include:

- Increasing participant comfort and skills in teaching outdoors, and importantly, increasing the *time* third grade classrooms spend outdoors.
- Diverse teachers supported in meeting third grade curriculum content standards.
- Increased use of EBRPD resources to support learning.
- Increasing level of physical activity outdoors, promoting health and well-being, and life-long parks use, for teachers, diverse students and their families.

KHOC and COVID Updates: KHOC was disrupted in March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school shutdowns made it impossible for most classes to take park trips; only about 25% of classes participating in school year 2019-20 got to the park before school lockdowns. And in school year 2020-21, with most learning occurring virtually, KHOC was cancelled outright.

In school year 2021-22, EBRPD sought to resume KHOC *safely*, and prioritized participation for those teachers who had their class trips cancelled in spring 2020. These 40+ teachers received a special invitation to apply. We knew that participation might be lower than in previous years, and ultimately, 80 teachers applied.

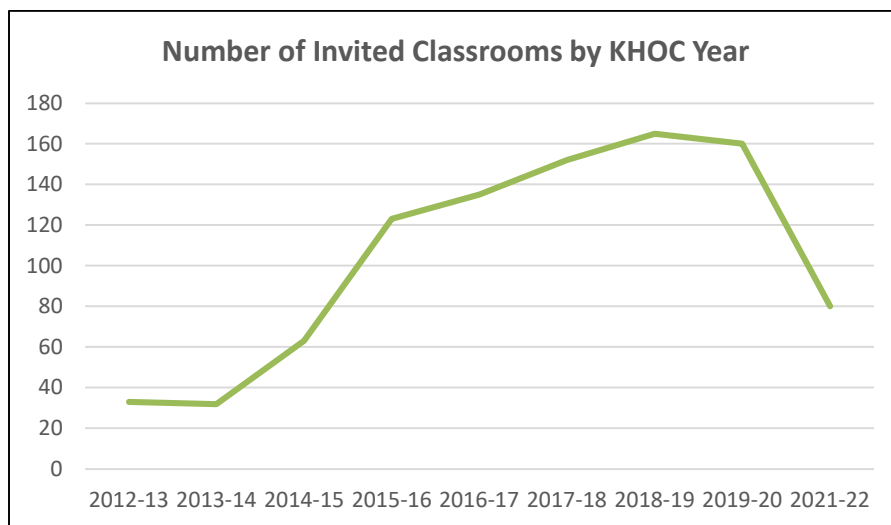
¹ Developed by the CA Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism, http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24952

² Teachers may also request an EBRPD naturalist to help guide their park trip, but having a naturalist is not a formal part of KHOC, and KHOC teachers do not receive scheduling priority. However, *self-guided trip kits* have been introduced at teacher orientations.

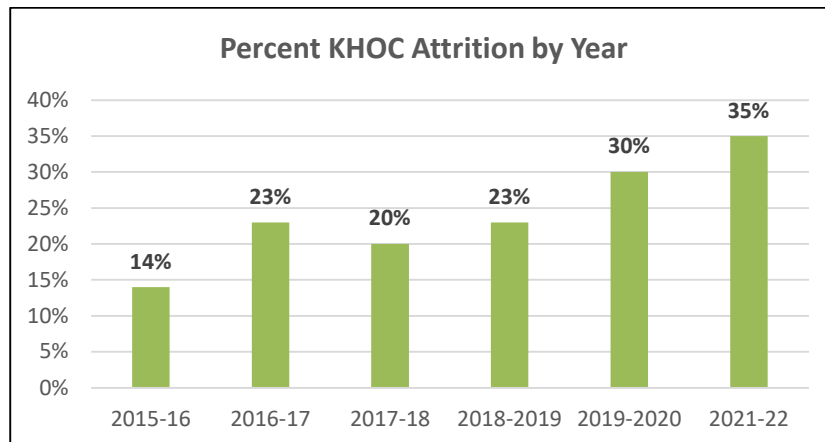
In order to get the free bus for the park trip, teachers needed to attend the KHOC orientation that occurred **virtually**, on Zoom, for the first time. An *optional* in-person orientation was also offered, focusing on activity kits for teachers to take self-guided field trips at four parks. This also gave teachers a chance to pick up the KHOC booklets for the students at their schools.

Teachers and Schools Invited to Participate: In fall 2021, 80 teachers/classrooms applied to KHOC, representing 25 schools and 11 public school districts. All classrooms were invited to participate: 49% came from Contra Costa County schools and 51% from Alameda County schools.

In recent years, KHOC had invited 150-160 classrooms annually, so this was a significant decrease, due to caution on the part of teachers *and* EBRPD about large numbers of participants:



Teachers received their invitations in late October 2022, with mandatory virtual orientations held in December. This was also about the time the Omicron virus was beginning to surge, and the impact of COVID on the school year was unclear. Ultimately, only 52 of 80 teachers (**65%**) attended the orientation and participated in KHOC. This attrition was higher than in past years:



Contra Costa County teachers were more likely to *not* attend the orientation: 46% of Contra Costa invitees dropped out of KHOC vs. just 24% from Alameda County.

KHOC Participants: Of the final **52 participating teachers/classrooms**, 40% came from Contra Costa County (n=21),³ and 60% (n=31) came from Alameda County. They represented 21 schools and 11 districts. The schools represented were 36% urban and 64% suburban.

The 52 participating classrooms contained about **1,200 students**; average classroom size was 23. Among students, there was wide variation in socio-economic status, with low-income status measured by eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Meals (FRPM): this rate ranged from 8% to 100%. On average, 61% of students were eligible for FRPM. Many were also English Language Learners:

	Average	Range
% students eligible for FRPM	61%	[8%, 100%]
% English Language Learners	35%	[3%, 85%] Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Tagalog, Mam, Vietnamese, Russian, Farsi and Arabic commonly spoken

The diverse students were approximately 41% Latinx, 9% African American, 20% White, 15% Asian, 3% Pacific Islander, <1% Native American, 8% More than One Race, and 4% Other/Unknown.

Of teachers, **31%** (n=16) were *Previous Participants (PPs)* in KHOC compared to 49% in 2019-20, and 44% in 2018-19.⁴

Park Trips

There were **43 KHOC park trips** taken during the year (compared to 86 in the last full KHOC year of 2018-19). Over 2,000 students and other passengers attended these trips.

The **most popular park trip destinations** were Black Diamond Mines (an historical preserve that contains relics of three mining towns, and former coal and sand mines), and Tilden Nature Area (with rolling hills, ponds and a riparian ecosystem):



Students at Black Diamond Mines

³ This is an increase from 33% in 2019-20. The CCC participation high point was in 2018-19: 44%. Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee has made a grant investment in KHOC.

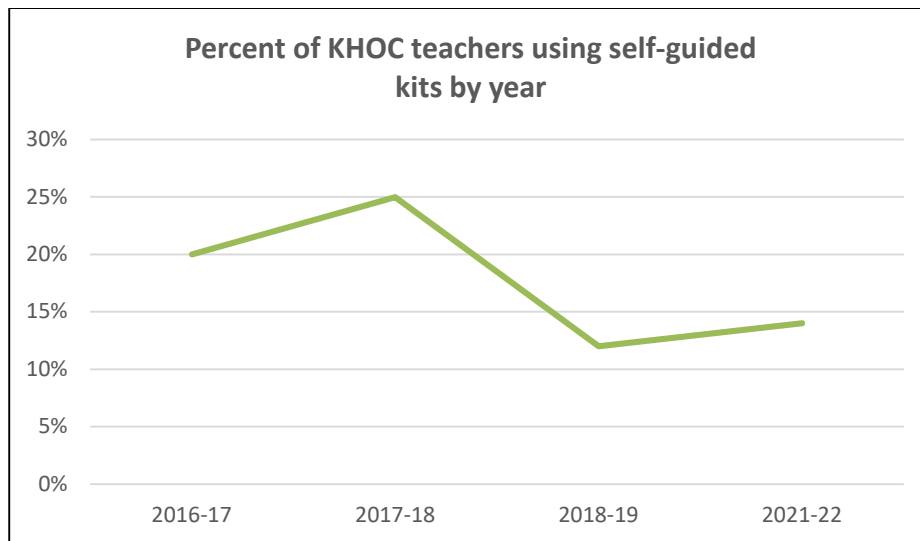
⁴ KHOC general limits participation for any one teacher to three years total. Experienced teachers are asked to check out self-guided park options, and are offered a supply of KHOC booklets for their class. One caveat is that if a teacher with 3+ years of experience applies along with less experienced teachers, and if that school requires all third grade classrooms to have the same experiences, those teachers *may* participate.

2022 EBRPD Parks Visited by Percent of Trips

Black Diamond Mines	33%	Diablo Foothills	5%
Tilden Nature Area	19%	Big Break	5%
Coyote Hills	12%	Redwood	2%
Del Valle	12%	Crab Cove	2%
Ardenwood	9%	Martinez Shoreline	2%

Most teachers (**86%**) chose to have a naturalist guide their park trip, but **14% of KHOC teachers opted to do a self-guided trip** using a kit initially designed for use at four park locations.⁵ (Most of the materials and activities in the self-guided kits can be used at *any* EBRPD location.)

It is a program goal for teachers to learn to lead self-guided trips outdoors, increasing their skills, however the rate of teachers doing so is down from its high point (25%) in school year 2017-18.



Summary of KHOC Survey & Findings: In May of each school year, EBRPD conducts a survey of participating teachers to learn about their experience, gain input, and importantly, determine the **impact** KHOC had during the year.

This year, we had a reduced cadre of participating teachers (N=52), and a survey completion rate of 54% (n=28). Despite this small sample, we received important input. We also saw very encouraging results regarding program impact, including:

⁵ Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park in Oakland, Garin Regional Park in Hayward, Radke-Martinez Regional Shoreline in Martinez and Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area in Pleasanton.

- **86%** of survey respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they **“spent more time teaching outdoors this year than last year.”**
- **92%** Agreed or Strongly Agreed that KHOC **“made their class want to spend more time being active outdoors.”**
- **96%** Agreed or Strongly Agreed that in the future, they **“intended to continue teaching lessons to get kids active outdoors.”**
- **81%** Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would **“return to EBRPD parks with their class next school year.”**
- **100%** said their students **“wanted to return to EBRPD parks in the future, or with their families.”**
- **100%** said they **“would participate in the KHOC again.”**

KHOC is a great program. Being able to have the use of a bus that is paid for is amazing and allows more of the third-grade students at my school to go on this field trip.
~A KHOC Teacher

As KHOC enters its **10th year** this fall, this report details suggestions to improve the program. Even more importantly, it explores ways to adapt KHOC to respond nimbly to changing events, including resurgences of COVID-19. In fact, given health and *mental* health concerns, opportunities to teach and learn outside are now more critical than ever.

Dear KHOC:

Thank you so much for letting us enjoy the field trip. You made us so happy. My favorite part was the sand. I also loved the volleyball. It was so much fun. The sand is still in my sweater. But it's OK I really enjoy the sand, I'll like to go with my family...I'm gonna maybe go to the swimming pool.

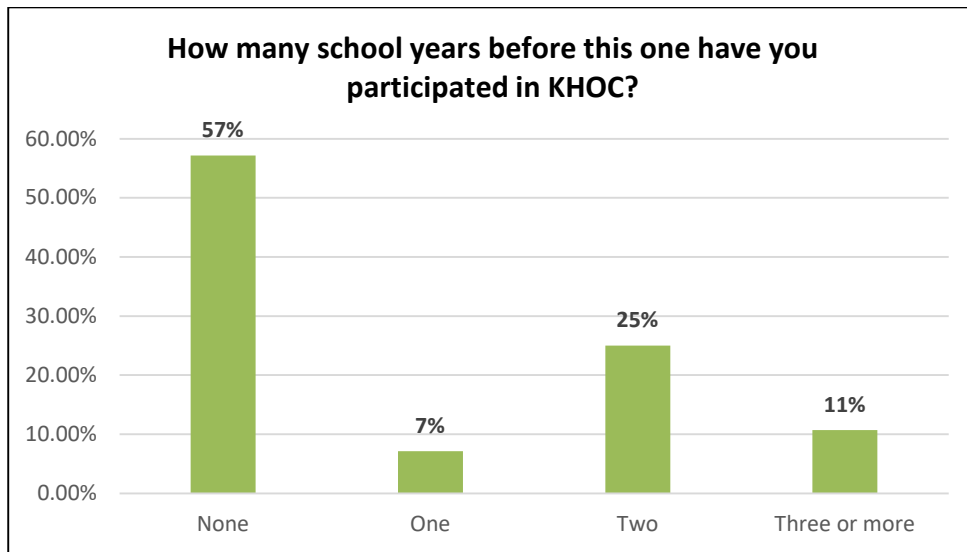
~Zoe, a KHOC Student from Shore Acres Elementary

II. Educator Survey Results

I. Survey Respondents: Every year, EBRPD tries to make KHOC revisions based on teacher feedback that comes to us via a year-end survey, and through communications with teachers during the year.

To gather feedback from participants (N=52), the 2022 Educator Survey was sent via SurveyMonkey on May 17 and remained open through June 3. In all, **28** complete or partial responses were received, a completion rate of **54%**.

Among respondents, **57%** had never participated in KHOC before, while **11%** had participated three or more times:⁶



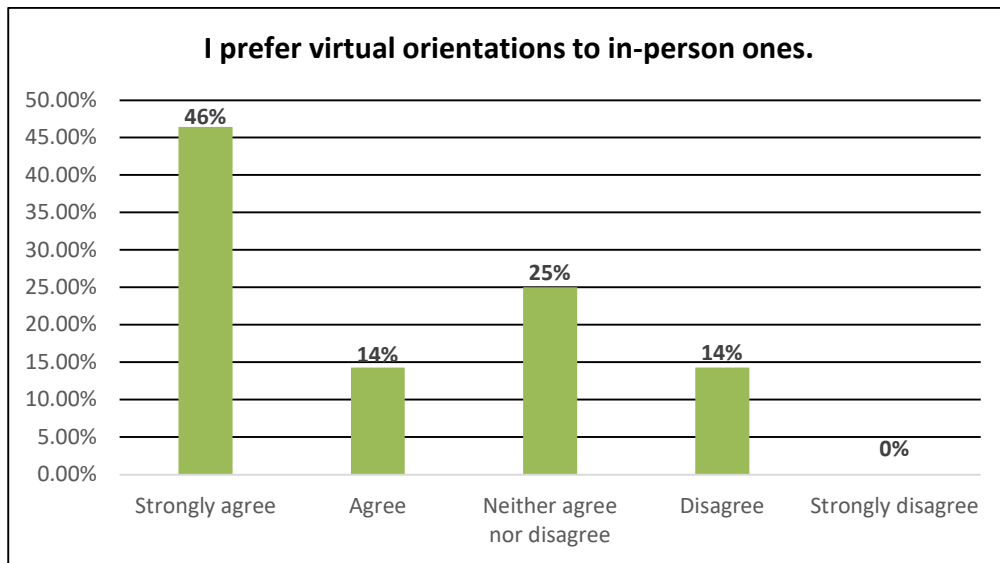
2. The KHOC Orientation: At the beginning of each school year, EBRPD requires teachers to attend an orientation to participate in KHOC. In fall 2021, this mandatory orientation occurred **virtually**, on Zoom, for the first time.

There was also a second, *optional in-person* orientation in January 2022 for teachers to pick up KHOC booklets and learn about the self-guided field trip activity kits.

Our survey asked teacher for feedback on both orientations.

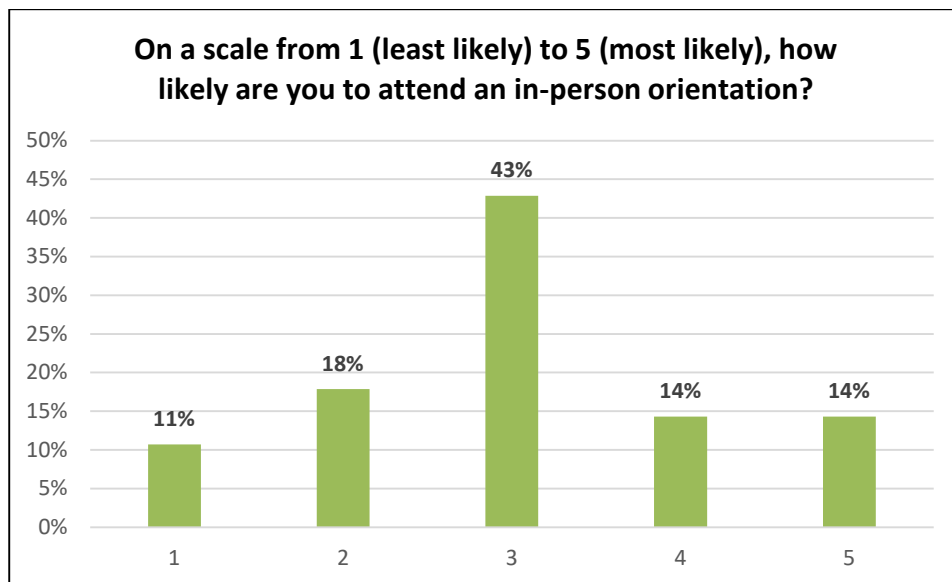
⁶ While the program has a three-year limit, if a teacher with 3+ years of KHOC experience applies along with less experienced teachers, and if that school requires all third grade classrooms to have the same experiences, those teachers *may* participate.

First, we wanted to know how teachers felt about in-person vs. virtual orientations, generally. Virtual orientations were preferred (by **60%** of respondents) to in-person ones.

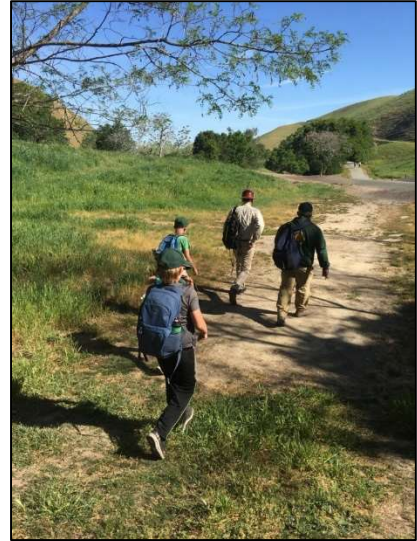


Questions about the mandatory 2021 Virtual Orientation: Most teachers (**64%**) Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the **“virtual teacher orientation prepared me to implement KHOC in my classroom,”** while 25% were neutral on this question. However, **10%** (n=3) respondents **Strongly Disagreed** that the virtual orientation prepared them to implement KHOC. (Potential reasons for this disagreement are discussed in the comments below).

Respondents were torn about returning for in-person orientations. When asked, rating on a scale from 1-5, how likely they were to attend a *future* in-person orientation (with 1 being the least likely and 5 being the most likely), **29%** were *likely* to and **29%** were *unlikely* to. The rest were neutral:



Orientation scheduling is often a challenge given that teachers typically aren't selected for KHOC until early October, however, most teachers would prefer orientations be held as early in the school year as possible. **Sixty percent (60%) of respondents preferred October for orientations**, or even earlier. One teacher said, "September allows for more flexibility for team planning." At latest, survey data suggest orientations should be finished by early November.



Students at Black Diamond Mines

While some teachers commented that they liked the virtual orientation ("Since I have participated in the in-person orientation multiple times before, the virtual orientation was perfect!"), some felt that the orientation was time-consuming or unnecessary.

Comments included:

- *It would be nice if there was more flexibility with teachers' schedules. Maybe it could be self-paced and completed independently somehow, possibly by being recorded on zoom a viewable to those who cannot attend or to be put into a slideshow that is shared to everyone.*
- *I recommend that you have a video and a follow up Google survey or 15-min chat with a KHOC person instead of the orientation. As a teacher our weekends are much needed time with our families! If you did a video teachers could watch it at a time most convenient for them.*
- *I felt that the orientation was too long. I think that a lot of the information could have been shared in a written format.*
- *Since we were selecting a program with a naturalist, I felt some of it wasn't necessary.*

To improve the efficacy of the teacher orientation, one teacher noted, "I'd suggest clarifying the two options of having a naturalist vs. doing own and having to pick up supplies. The idea of picking up supplies at a different location than the field trip was confusing. It was fine, I think it took some **clarifying questions** until it all made sense."

Note: The need for teachers to ask clarifying questions is a key reason why KHOC orientation is important. The process for bus reservations is particularly complicated, and with Parks Express staff attending the orientation, teachers have the opportunity to clarify the process in real time. (With a new online reservation system rolling out in 2022, orientation will be especially important). In addition, many teachers aren't aware of self-guided trip kits and require multiple exposures to this information to benefit from it.

Questions about the 2022 optional in-person orientation: Due to the pandemic, EBRPD made an in-person/in-park orientation *optional*. Only four respondents (**14%**) reported they had attended the optional in-person orientation at an EBRPD park. Of these, **100%** reported they had received a **demonstration of the self-guided trip activity kit** during the orientation. One teacher

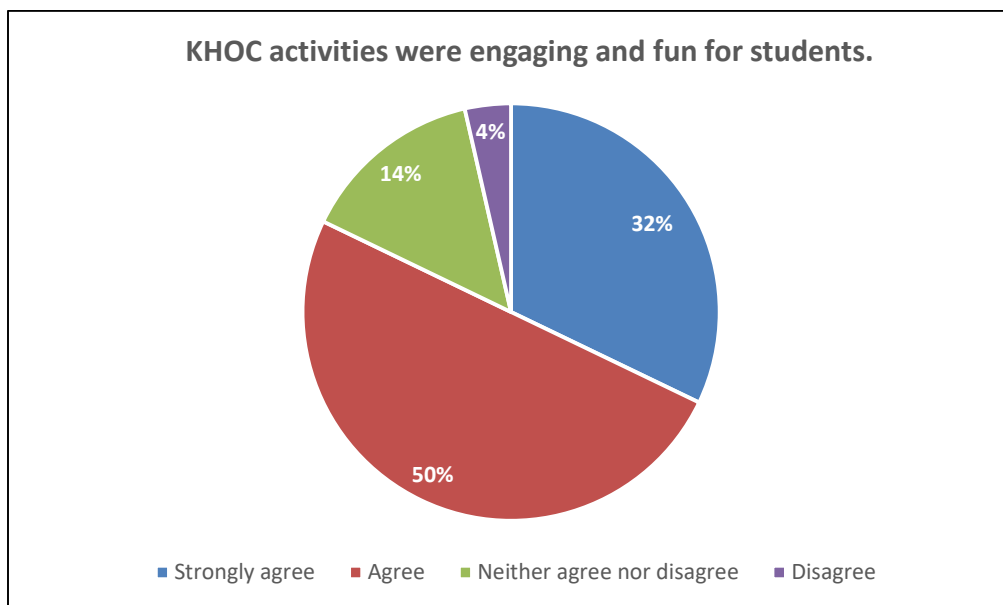
commented that the presentation was “well-organized, informative, [and] supportive,” but another said, “It was held at a park that I wouldn’t go to, so it was hard to use what was taught.”

3. KHOC in the Classroom: KHOC includes a teacher guide and student workbook (in both English and Spanish) that includes interactive, engaging activities that students can complete either in the classroom or on their park trip.

The students loved doing their KHOC booklet. We read it together as a group.
~A KHOC teacher

Pre-COVID, teachers would pick these materials up at an in-person orientation, but because the in-person orientations held in 2022 were *optional*, far fewer teachers attended. While teachers could also pick up booklets at many EBPRD Visitor Centers, not all did.

Our survey results showed that fully **35%** (10 of 28) of respondents **had not obtained the KHOC booklets** and lesson materials. Of the teachers who *did* obtain the materials, **89%** (16 of 28 respondents) used KHOC kids’ booklets or lesson materials with their classes. Of teachers utilizing the KHOC materials, **89%** agreed KHOC activities were **age and grade-appropriate** for students (11% were neutral on this question). The majority (**82%**) also Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the KHOC activities were **engaging and fun** for students:



KHOC lessons are designed to be used by third graders of **different cultural backgrounds and language abilities**, including Spanish speakers. We asked teachers how students of different cultural backgrounds and language abilities reacted to KHOC activities, and they told us:

- *The activities worked well with all of my student groups because we did a lot together as a class and the kids who needed support had a model.*
- *My class struggle a little with the open questions. Multiple choice works better for them.*

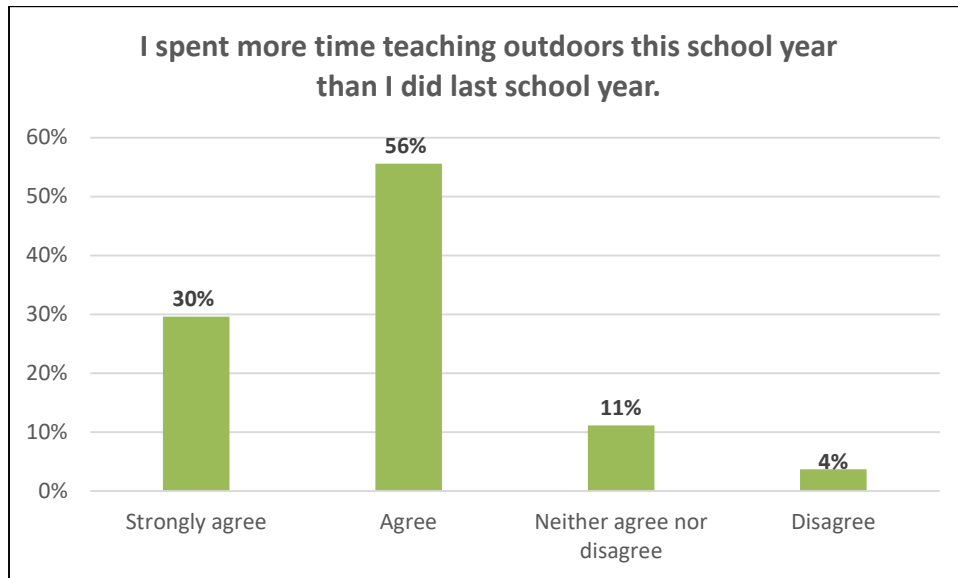
- All of my students enjoyed and were able to complete several of the KHOC lessons. I had some students who had trouble making the kite and needed extra support.
- The materials were accessible for all students across ability level.

Visuals on each page was great for all my learners, especially my English and visual learners. Many lessons we couldn't do such as camping, fishing, swimming, but they were encouraged to do with family at home.
~A KHOC teacher

Finally, teachers were asked to comment and give **overall feedback on the KHOC lessons**, and how students reacted to them. One teacher remarked “The lessons and the videos were great. We enjoyed the outdoor activities and games,” and another, “The students enjoyed the lesson on history.”

KHOC started ten years ago with a goal of increasing participant comfort and skills in teaching outdoors, and surveys in past years have shown that the program succeeds at this. We also seek to increase the *time* third grade classrooms spend outdoors.

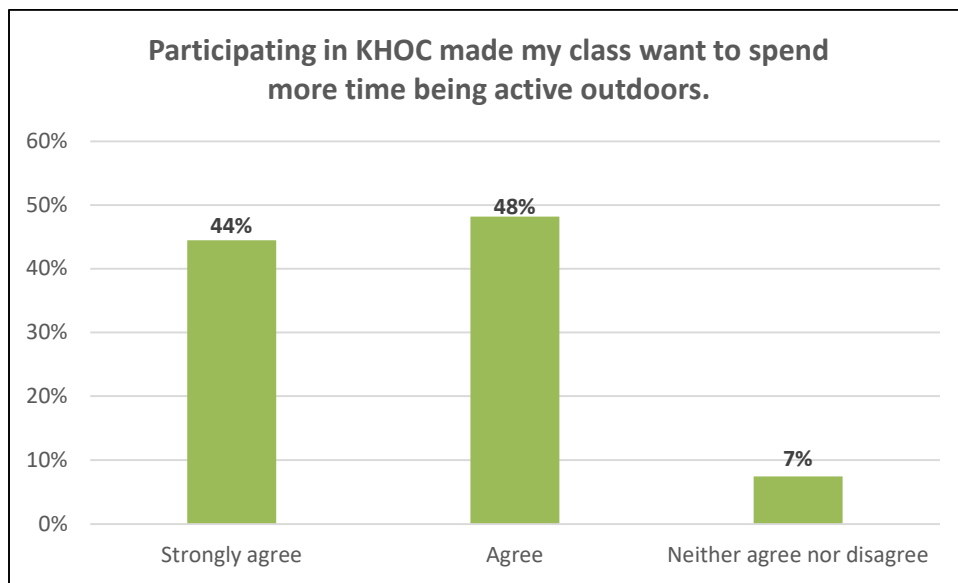
This year, **86%** of survey respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they “**spent more time teaching outdoors this year than last year.**”



COVID shutdowns last year may have impacted responses to this question. Moreover, the impact of COVID in classrooms may have actually *encouraged* teachers to take classes outdoors.

Being outdoors is so much safer. I think the programs are perfect for school field trips during a pandemic. Fresh air, nature, exercise, learning together outdoors—we all needed this!
~A KHOC teacher

The vast majority (**92%**) also Agreed or Strongly Agreed that KHOC “**made their class want to spend more time being active outdoors.**”



4. KHOC Activities - Park Trips: Teachers chose between two types of park trips: 1) one with an EBRPD naturalist-led program, or 2) a self-guided trip utilizing activity kits available at four EBRPD parks (Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park, Garin Regional Park, Radke-Martinez Regional Shoreline, and Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area). Most of the activities in the kits can be used at *any* EBRPD location.

In recent years, EBRPD has incentivized teachers to take the self-guided trips because it increases skills and knowledge that teachers can use for the rest of their careers.

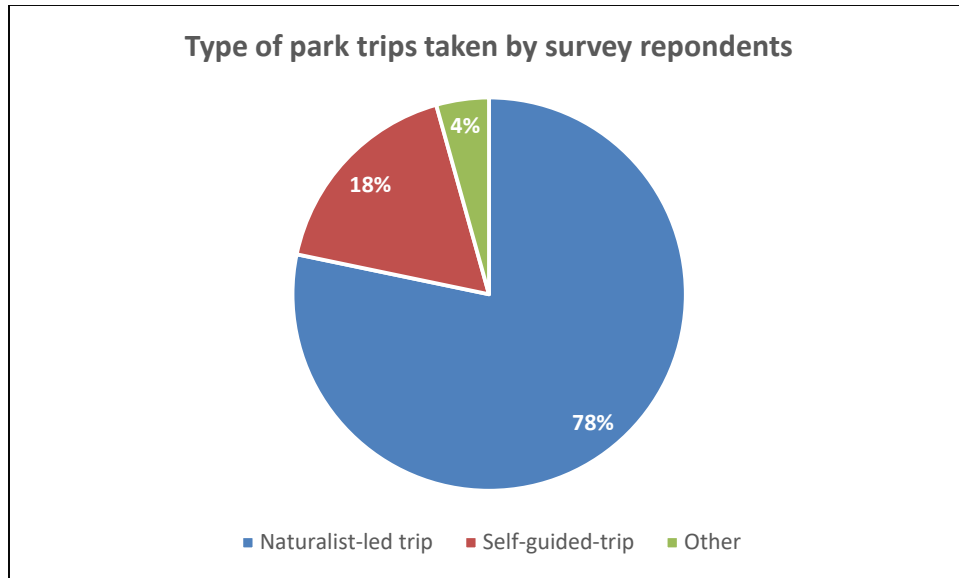
It was amazing!! Best field trip ever! I definitely want to go back next year. We had been studying about fossils and got to see fossils in the mine. That was an experience the kids will remember for many years to come.

~A KHOC teacher, on the naturalist-led program

As part of the survey, EBRPD asked respondents, if they were aware that teachers who took the self-guided class park trip received a **free Regional Parks Foundation membership** (with benefits including free day-use parking). Just **63%** of respondents were aware of this incentive (another important reason to orient teachers to their options).

Of 28 survey respondents, **89%** had taken a KHOC park trip; **78%** (n=18) chose the naturalist-led trip, and **18%** (n=4), the self-guided trip.

A small number (4%) chose a hybrid type of trip: “*We did self-guided in the morning, followed by a naturalist program in the afternoon.*”



These rates are similar to those in the overall cadre of 52 participants (86% naturalist-led, 14% self-guided.)



Students at Castle Rock

Naturalist led programs continue to be very popular: **94%** of those who took this type of trip indicated they would choose it again in the future. Comments were enthusiastic, and included:

- *Having a naturalist-guided program greatly enhanced the learning for my class. It made the self-guided part more understandable for my class.*
- *It was great having a naturalist-guided program because they were very knowledgeable about the plants and animals in the area. The info they shared was interesting and useful for the kids... The hands-on portions were great such as feeling the raccoon pelt.*
- *Having someone who knows the park and history was helpful, especially giving us access to the farm animals at Tilden.*
- *It greatly improved our experiences. We got to see live animals and learn from in depth knowledge of experts.*

- This was the best option to introduce students to the outdoors and increase engagement with the content. The naturalists modeled appropriate enthusiasm and respect for nature.
- Having a naturalist was very helpful. They bring site knowledge and site familiarity with them to the excursion.

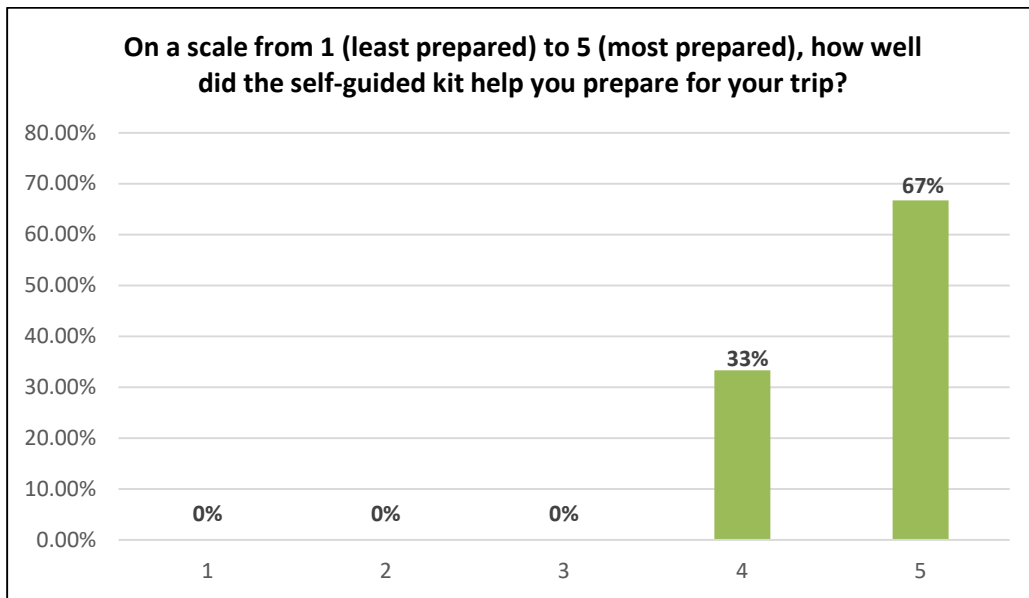
Dear KHOC:

Thank you for the three buses and for giving us your books so we can learn about different stuff like oak trees... I really enjoyed the field trips, Big Break we learned about farm owls and owl pellets.

~Ximena, a KHOC Student from Shore Acres Elementary

Because EBRPD is promoting **self-guided park trips**, we wanted to learn *why* some teachers chose them. Though we had a very small sample (n=4), we learned that the **Regional Parks Foundation membership was an incentive** for some, and that **being well-prepared was another**. One teacher remarked, *“I have done the self-guided trip before, I feel comfortable at Castle Rock, and I wanted to get the East Bay Park membership.”*

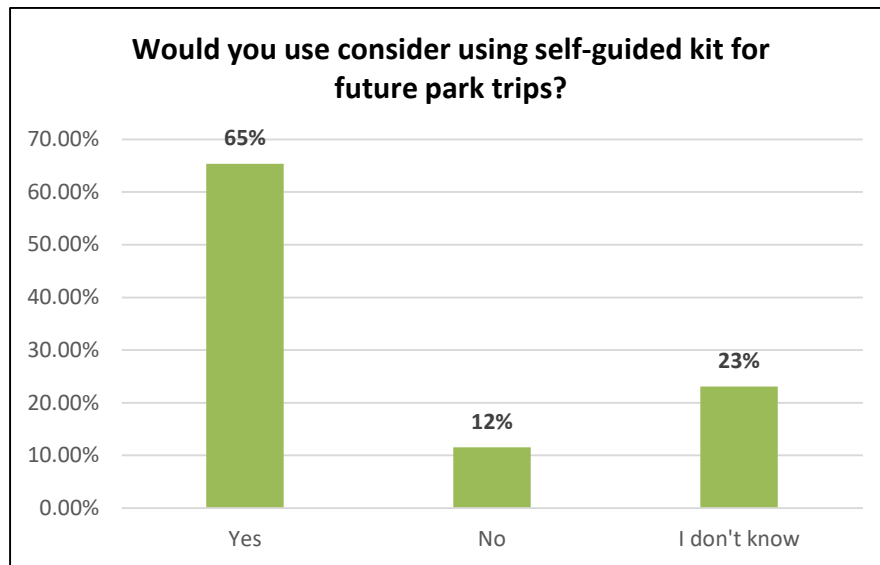
Three of four self-guided trip takers used the activity kit, and on a scale from 1-5, **100%** indicated they felt prepared, though one teacher remarked, *“I think the instructions could be more clear.”*



We loved using the self-guided kits. I knew how to use everything. We used the binoculars and magnifying glasses. Since we had 3 third grade classrooms, each small group shared binoculars and every student used a magnifying glass. It was perfect!

~A KHOC Teacher

Encouragingly, **65%** of *all* survey respondents said they would “**consider using a self-guided kit for future park trips.**”



5. KHOC Processes: COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on education in general and preparing for safe activities has been a defining feature of KHOC this year. This may continue into future years.

We wanted to find out if our safety planning (e. g., virtual orientation, masking, social distancing on buses) was adequate and effective. We asked teachers to think about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their class, and asked **how safe they felt participating in in-person KHOC activities this year**, rating on a scale from 1 (least safe) to 5 (most safe):

We had our field trip back in March and my students are still reminiscing about our time at Coyote Hills. They had a wonderful time and the naturalist there were so knowledgeable and engaging.

~A KHOC teacher

The **vast majority (96%) felt safe** (answering 4 or 5), and the final 4% were neutral (3). This suggests that KHOC processes are adequate to ensure teacher comfort, though one teacher did comment that the bus was crowded during their trip, and that “*having more buses available so that kids can space out more would be great.*” Other comments included:

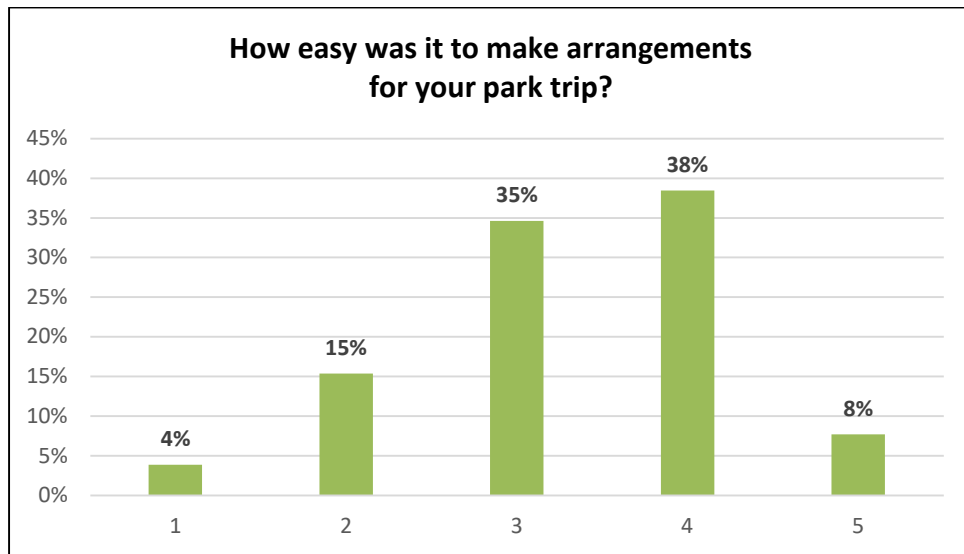
- *I really appreciate having the orientation via zoom and being able to use the kits!*
- *I loved that we were asked to wear our masks. At the time we went to Black Diamond Mines-masks were optional in the classroom.*
- *I think limiting the event capacity and having participants wear masks made things feel safer.*
- *I felt that EBRPD did a great job making in-person activities safe for everyone.*

Another key program process, one that is frequently challenging, is **reserving a park trip, naturalist program and school bus.**

EBRPD has designed a new reservation system, but because the KHOC website was being re-designed during the school year, the system was not yet active. Teachers had to book their trips through a web form used by Parks Express, the department that arranges school trips.

“The free bus makes it so much easier to make the trip happen. I think lack of transportation is the biggest hurdle in visiting the parks.”
~A KHOC teacher

We asked teachers how easy it was to make trip arrangements on a scale from 1 (the most difficult) to 5 (the easiest); **81% of respondents rated the ease of arrangements at “3” or better:**



However, when asked about any challenges in making reservations, there were a number of comments, **especially about the amount of time it took to get a response to the reservation request.** Ten (10) respondents had comments about this issue, such as:

- *It took a long time to confirm the bus. The process needs to be quicker so we can plan the field trip on our end.*

- *I think quicker response time would be helpful given we didn't have a lot of time to schedule the trips and buses. Also starting the signup time in the fall gives teachers more time to schedule out their field trips.*
- *It was unclear at first if we request bus then naturalist or naturalist to secure date then get the bus. Also, after submitting the bus request I didn't hear back that for verification until I followed up weeks later. They had booked our district buses, but we weren't notified until I asked.*

Some of these comments are explained by an EBRPD data glitch that took a while to correct. Transportation staff knew there were requests, but the system wouldn't let them retrieve them. Comments on other topics, including ease of system log-in, included:

- *The online system reservation said I could log in to check progress on my application for naturalist-led trip yet I couldn't even log in to check that... Then when we did receive the bus confirmation, it kept asking us to log in to see our invoice and we had no access to that as well.*
- *I had some trouble accessing the transportation reservation confirmation because of a log-in issue. I was able to get help eventually, but it was a bit stressful for a couple of days trying to figure it out and confirm the reservation details, bus arrival time, etc.*
- *As a grade level team, we were unsure if everything was completed and set for the trip, so we had to check-in frequently. If we hadn't followed up on things, we might have missed out on something important. We weren't quite sure who to go to for information.*

Note: In school year 2022-23 the new streamlined reservation app will be used, and teachers will be able to book a naturalist and a bus at the same time. If they want to do a self-guided trip, there will be a “bus only” option. Upon submission, teachers will receive a confirmation that their request has been received.

Dear KHOC:

Thank you for letting us dissect the owl pellets and the opportunity to do the hike. Thank you for letting us play volleyball. Our field trip was the best ones we had ever had.

~Daniel, a KHOC Student from Shore Acres Elementary

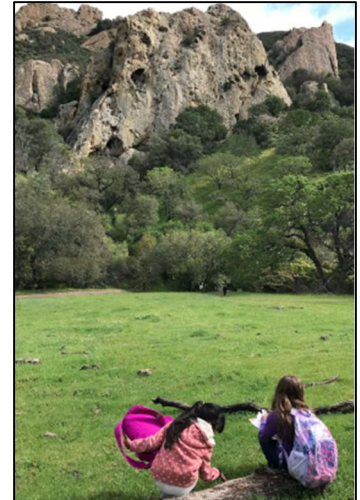
6. KHOC in Future Years: EBRPD also wanted to find out about future plans teachers had for using KHOC or teaching outdoors. Encouragingly, **96%** Agreed or Strongly Agreed that in the future, they **“intended to continue teaching lessons to get kids active outdoors.”**

In addition, **73%** Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they **“planned to use KHOC lessons and/or booklets with other classes in future school years.”** (The remainder neither agreed nor disagreed).

And **81%** Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would **“return to EBRPD parks with my class next school year.”** (Again, the remainder were neutral on this question).

All respondents, **100%**, also said they **“would participate in the KHOC again.”**

KHOC can have a major impact even beyond the classroom. An impressive **100%** felt, based on student reaction to the park trip, that **“students wanted to return to EBRPD parks in the future, or with their families.”**



Students at Castle Rock

Teachers say KHOC has a big impact on families too!

“One student said the field trip was the best he had ever been on. Then he said the Martinez Shoreline was the best place he had ever been. Many students said they returned with their families.”

“Parents who went on the field trip asked about touring the mines with their families. The students talked about going on hikes with their families and going to different parks.”

One parent chaperone said: “I’m so glad I came. I thought it would be hard but it was so fun and great for the kids to get out. I’m going to tell more families about this [park]. I’m going to come again soon.”

“My students loved visiting Black Diamond Mines! I appreciated how much it tied in with the history of our town of Clayton. Many students went home excited and wanted to come back to explore more with their families.”

“Many students were very excited and said they would be coming back to Coyote Hills to go hiking again or to ride their bikes.”

“Every time we did a lesson in the booklets, students would ask, ‘Are we going boating/biking/etc.?’ and I would tell them they can with their families. They seemed excited about that.”

“Students wrote about their field trip and said that going to Castle Rock gave them the idea to go with their families during spring break.”

“Students have asked for addresses and maps to the field trips we’ve taken so I’ll be providing them to my class. They are excited to take their families.”

“Most of my students talked about going back to Ardenwood with their families! They loved the activities and programs there”.

“My students told me: ‘I didn’t even know we had this [park] here!’ ~ ‘Our [naturalist] was so smart and funny!’ ~ ‘I’m definitely asking my mom and dad to bring me back here, like today after school!’

III. Recommendations & Plans for the Future

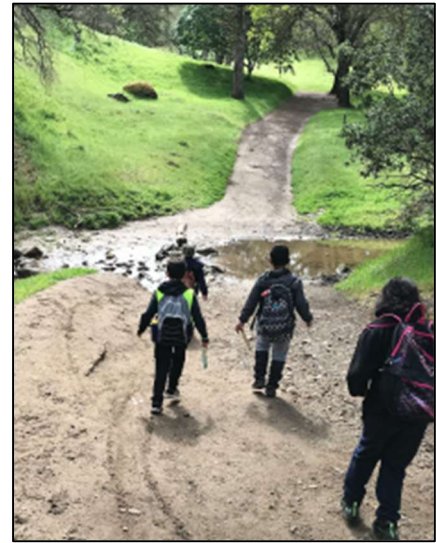
Implemented in 2012, KHOC has adapted and grown for a decade, becoming an established program in many school districts. KHOC outcomes consistently show the program has an impact on the way that educators teach, and how third graders experience outdoor spaces and activities.

Over the past few years, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated changes to the program, including the use of Zoom, and safety protocols for park trips. We strive for KHOC to be a “living program” that adapts to meet needs, and in the spirit of continuous program improvement, explore recommendations and plans for the upcoming year.

Orientation: KHOC teachers in school year 2021-22 became the first cohort to take the mandatory KHOC orientation via Zoom. Many considered this a time-saving convenience, but one drawback is that **not all teachers obtained KHOC materials**, including the kids’ booklets.

EBRPD made the materials available at an optional in-person orientation for the park activity kits, but few teachers chose to attend. And while KHOC materials were also available at many park visitor centers, our survey results showed that many teachers never picked them up.

Teachers responding to the survey were split on the question of returning for in-person orientation, though this would help ensure that students receive the KHOC booklets. Teachers overwhelmingly want orientations to be held **as early in the school year as possible** (e.g., October) so that they have time to plan KHOC activities for the year.



Students at Castle Rock

These are important considerations in planning for school year 2022-23. EBRPD is considering a hybrid model with both virtual and in-person options. If COVID conditions permit, EBRPD will require at least one teacher from each school attend an in-person/in-park orientation. This helps solidify outdoor teaching skills, and ensures teachers obtain the student booklets and teacher guide.

It is also notable that Contra Costa County teachers were more likely *not* to attend the mandatory orientation than Alameda County ones. This may have been due to confusing district directives around COVID-19 in Contra Costa County.

Park Trips: The involvement of naturalists on park trips is a popular part of KHOC, however, naturalist-led programs don’t provide the same opportunity for teacher growth and learning.

For several years, KHOC has been encouraging (and incentivizing) teachers to lead their own park trips by providing optional orientation to activity kits that can be used at park locations. Any teacher choosing to lead a self-guided trip receives a free Regional Parks Foundation membership, but in 2021-22, few teachers did.

*The students had a great experience on our trips. We did have to cut our visit to the cemetery short because we came across a rattlesnake. The kids were concerned but also so excited that we got to see a rattlesnake up close.
~A KHOC teacher*

This could be due to the fact that many teachers were new to KHOC this year, and didn't feel confident leading the trip. In addition, it had been two years since teachers even had the opportunity for a park trip, and many have been overwhelmed responding to COVID changes in their classrooms. Finally, the training for the optional kit was in-person in January, during the Omicron surge.

Again, providing in-person orientation may increase the rate of self-guided trips, ensuring that all teachers will be exposed to (and taught how to use) the kits.

The KHOC Website and Trip Reservations: Unfortunately, the KHOC website was being re-designed during school year 2021-22, so teachers did not have an accessible hub for information and instructions. EBRPD has also designed a new reservation system, but because it was not yet active, teachers had to book park trips through the old Parks Express web form this year.

The new KHOC website will go live before August 1, 2022, as will the new bus reservation portal. We believe new systems will streamline processes, and address teacher concerns such as delays in confirming reservations.

Cultural and Social Justice Considerations: In our 2019 KHOC evaluation, one teacher pointed out that the KHOC workbook discussed native peoples as if they were "in the past" instead of living cultures in our region. Her valuable comments resulted in an update of the KHOC booklet emphasizing that the Ohlone people have lived here since time immemorial, and that their community thrives in the East Bay today.

As KHOC adapts, we will seek out and incorporate **diverse perspectives**, knowing that this makes the program stronger. EBRPD plans to review KHOC materials for untold stories and community connections. Program revisions will be rolled out in school year 2023-2024.

Goals and Participation Targets for Next Year: Each summer, EBRPD sets KHOC participation targets for the following year. Given the impact of COVID-19, we expected that 2021-22 would have fewer participants.

*Thank you for all the work you do and continue to do to offer opportunities to the school communities!
~A KHOC teacher*

Next year, EBRPD will strive to make KHOC available to as many interested teachers as possible. With the transportation currently available, this will be between 80-100 teachers/classrooms.

As we enter our 10th program year, KHOC will continue to innovate outdoors education, improve childhood wellness, and promote healing recreation opportunities for children, teachers and families.

Dear KHOC:

Thank you so much for helping us go to Castle Rock and for letting us use the binoculars and the magnifying glasses. Also thank you for letting us hike I loved it so much. Also for buying the buses and I hope your park gets 5 stars.

~Nathan, a KHOC Student from Shore Acres Elementary

Thank you to KHOC funders!

*The Regional Parks Foundation
Kaiser Permanente
Andeavor Community Investments
Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee*

And for support and inspiration from:

