

C.A.U.S.E. Program Profile

The New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences initiated the Camden Aquarium Urban Science Enrichment (C.A.U.S.E.) Program in 1993 through initial funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

The project has four tiers consisting of the CAUSE Staff Program, an after-school Ecology Club/Aquatic Science Club, 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. Visit (<http://www.njaas.org/Community/CAUSE.html>) for more information.

The CAUSE Staff Program is a personal and professional life skills program that trains high school students interested in science and education 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. Second, third, and fourth year Junior Staffers also help teach the after-school ecology club sessions for elementary and middle school students. CAUSE staff participate in many activities such as community service projects, in house and out house programming such as outreaches, birthday parties and overnight programs.

The CAUSE Program runs from November until the end of August. Training begins in November with a 15-20 week course in basic oceanography marine biology and animal classification. Sessions on public speaking and informal education are included. Junior Staff attend weekly workshops on teambuilding, communication skills, diversity, inquiry-based learning/teaching, job readiness, college preparation, interviewing, and resume writing skills.

C.A.U.S.E. has expanded into a regional collaborative with other area museums' youth programs. Now, youth from the Academy of Natural Sciences, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia Zoo, and the Please Touch Museum all participate in skill-building workshops, lectures and work exchanges to foster networking opportunities and peer mentoring.

The Aquarium partners with four area elementary/middle schools and other community partners such as the Camden Red Cross and local churches in delivering the Ecology Club, Aquatic Science Club and Summer Science Camp Programs. The school partners are: Coopers' Poynt Family School, Rietta Twyne Cream Family School, LEAP Academy Charter School, and Camden's Promise. Many children walk to school therefore, these programs are offered on-site for the convenience of the children and their parents. Family schools also serve as community/parent resource centers for their neighborhoods. Our other community partners recruit students directly from their programming and hold summer camp at their site.

The Ecology Club/Aquatic Science Club Ecology Club is an after-school program offered 5 consecutive weeks and is open to all elementary/middle school students in our partner schools. The program focuses on local and global conservation issues in a hands-on, interactive style. One purpose of the club is to keep the younger students tied to the C.A.U.S.E. program throughout the year. Club participants are usually the same students who attend the Summer Science Camp. This program is frequently the only after-school activity available to students during those years when budget cuts eliminate after-school programming. Aquatic Science Club is an on/off-site after school program offered to community partners, schools, and families.

The C.A.U.S.E. Summer Camp is a five-week science enrichment day camp. 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 trips each week to a natural area, which coincides with the curriculum topic for that week. The camp is offered to any k-8th grade student that attends our partner schools but is primarily for students that attend the morning Basic Skills Improvement Program (BSIP). The camp is held in the afternoons to extend the day for the students and also so working parents are comforted knowing where their child is all day. Camp is held at Coopers' Poynt and Rietta Cream Schools in July and at LEAP Academy and at one of our other community partners in August.

The Parents Initiative involves parents and their children's science learning to help them overcome their own personal inhibitions against science. Once these inhibitions are identified and overcome through family science activities, parents can utilize the skills learned to support their children in their science aspirations and to affirm their scientific interests. The Parents/Guardians of the Junior Staff are invited to the Aquarium twice a year to take part in Family Night. Family Night activities include Family Science, tours, presentations, and games- all led by the CAUSE Staff. 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.