

# 10 YEARS OF STORIES



## FIFTH GRADERS LOVE GETTING FIT FOR SCIENCE

When teaching about nature, there's only so much one can do in a classroom. Teachers can bring in specimens, show videos and emphasize facts. But for students to truly appreciate nature, they must experience it. Lakeland Elementary School fifth-graders are experiencing scientific learning in the field thanks to an Innovative Education Grant from the Humble ISD Education Foundation.

"You can only appreciate what you know," Terry Harshaw, Lakeland Elementary Science Instructional Coach, said. "To get students out into the

world – to interact with nature – that is the goal of this grant. We are taking fifth-graders on field trips to ecosystems around Houston."

Students visit a pond ecosystem at Sheldon State Park, a river ecosystem at Jesse Jones Park and an estuary ecosystem at Galveston. The children love wearing Field Investigation Team (FIT) badges, wading into water to collect samples, photographing flora and fauna, and logging results into mini-laptops. They also learn about careers by meeting with professional scientists who work at the sites.

Back on campus, learning continues as students analyze the samples they collect. "They saw protozoa, minnows, mosquito larvae, spirogyra," Harshaw said. "Many were microscopic, so we hooked up a Digiscope, which allows them to take pictures of the microorganisms. They were just oohing and ahing. It was fantastic!"

Grant funds make the trips possible by providing transportation and supplies, including specimen jars, cameras, field guides, thermometers, nets and more. Students experience many "firsts" in their lives because of the trips. At Sheldon State Park, they experienced fishing and saw an alligator in the wild.

The result: Kids are passionate for science. "I want to be a scientist because I love learning about the planets and nature," Lakeland fifth-grader Vanessa Rodriguez said.

Lakeland fifth-grader Nate Hunt summed up what the field trips mean to him: "This is a day I'll remember for the rest of my life."