



We Bring the World to New Jersey



Contact: Brian Aberback
201-460-4619
brian.aberback@njmeadowlands.gov

Contact: Angela Daidone
201-684-7477
adaidon1@ramapo.edu

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 18, 2017**

NJSEA Extends Environmental Education Partnership With Ramapo College

*K-12 Programs Provide Unique, Hands-On
Learning Opportunities in the Meadowlands*

The New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA) today announced the extension of its environmental education partnership with Ramapo College of New Jersey through 2018. The collaboration provides in-demand science programs focused on the Meadowlands' unique urban eco-system in DeKorte Park to students in Grades K-12.

More than 20,000 students from 84 school districts in 10 New Jersey counties experience and learn about the Meadowlands' wildlife and natural resources each year through a wide array of themed classes offered under Ramapo College's comprehensive Meadowlands Environment Center (MEC) programs. Classes are held at the state-of-the-art Center for Environmental Science and Education, an NJSEA facility operated by the college.

"The NJSEA is thrilled to continue working with Ramapo College and give young people a distinctive opportunity to gain an appreciation of the dynamic environment in the Meadowlands," said Wayne Hasenbalg, President and CEO of the NJSEA. "We commend the tremendously dedicated Ramapo educators who have inspired hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren over the years to pursue environmental science studies and become active stewards of our natural resources."

The former New Jersey Meadowlands Commission and Ramapo College entered into a partnership in 2003 to develop a comprehensive environmental education program for schools and the general public through inquiry learning and cross-curricular activities. The Meadowlands Commission was merged into the Sports Authority in 2015.

Educators encourage the use of the environment as a classroom, increase awareness of the resources of the Meadowlands and help communities recognize critical environmental issues.

Classes cover a variety of scientific disciplines including ecology, chemistry, biology, physics, natural history and astronomy. All of the 24 programs offered by Ramapo College satisfy the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and NJ Core Curriculum standards.

“The rigor of the next Generation Science Standards is an opportunity to improve science instruction,” said Dr. Angela Cristini, Director of the Meadowlands Environment Center. “The programs at the Meadowlands Environment Center address these standards because they engage students in the disciplinary core ideas and cross-cutting concepts in science while learning about the environment.”

MEC programs give students the chance to learn and experiment in an interactive setting. They become marsh explorers in DeKorte Park, the home of the NJSEA. Students observe its diverse wildlife habitats and rich vegetation. Student-scientists also conduct surveys, and collect specimens and water samples to examine in the lab.

Programs are tailored to students’ grade levels. For instance, interactive storytelling, interaction with live specimens and cooperative learning stations fully engage students in Grades K-1 on topics such as the food chain, shells and the sun. Kids in Grades 2-3 become field biologists and water watchers, while older grade school students explore sustainable living and build model green buildings.

Middle school students are introduced to biodiversity basics, which include conducting a bird survey. High schoolers study estuary ecology and use scientific methods to collect and test evidence to hypothesize the cause of a hypothetical fish kill.

Students who learn about astronomy visit the NJSEA’s William D. McDowell Observatory, located adjacent to the Science Center. There are also one and two-day convocations for students from Gifted and Talented Programs.

The NJSEA and Ramapo College are committed to serving those who may otherwise lack access to exploring nature in an outdoor education setting. Urban school districts that participate in classes include Paterson, Passaic and Newark. Additional programs offered through the MEC provide experiences for young children, families, adults, older adults and members of the community living with disabilities.

The MEC MarshAccess program, which is considered a national model, offers an extensive range of environmental education experiences for students and adults with wide-ranging disabilities. The pioneering program uses hands-on and field-based learning with assistive technologies for those with developmental, visual, hearing, mobility, learning/cognitive and age-related disabilities.

MEC activities also go beyond the school day and school year. They include:

- Summer Camp experiences for children from Town Recreation programs, YMCA groups, Boys and Girl Clubs, and other summer camps.
- Family Science Nights in partner school districts.
- After School Programs offered in partner school districts.
- Scouting merit badge programs for Brownies, Cub, Boy and Girl scouts.
- Science Adventure Days when schools are not in session but parents are at work.
- Professional development programs for educators.

Since the partnership's formation in 2003, the MEC has obtained more than \$3 million in grant funding from federal and private sources. Programs also receive funding from the NJSEA.

School districts interested in learning more about MEC programs should call 201-460-8300.

###