



adventure risk challenge



ARC 2024 SUMMER PROGRAM REPORT

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WHAT IS ARC?

Since 2004, Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC) has been facilitating meaningful leadership, literacy, and outdoor experiences for high school students. In ARC's outdoor classroom, students have the space to think critically about their stories, their academic growth, and their post-secondary aspirations.

mission

Adventure Risk Challenge's mission is to empower underserved youth through transformational literacy, leadership, and outdoor experiences.



vision

Our vision is that all youth become stewards of their own future, their communities, and the environment.

Students can participate in ARC during the summer and/or the academic year!

ARC PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

We have six overarching goals that are inherent to all ARC programming:

1. To develop participants' **literacy skills**, including **reading, writing,** and **public speaking**, and increase **confidence** in academic endeavors;
2. To create opportunities for participants to develop effective **communication skills** with peers and adults;
3. To develop participants' sense of **respect** for self, others, environment, and community;
4. To create opportunities for participants to take **personal responsibility** for themselves and their group;
5. To encourage participants to take **positive risks and challenges** in their lives; and
6. To foster **independence and leadership** skills in our participants.



ARC ACADEMIC YEAR OPPORTUNITIES

The ARC Community Leadership Program is a multi-year progression that provides leadership opportunities, academic support, and mentoring for students throughout high school. Through an integrated literacy, leadership, and outdoor curriculum, students grow to be more deeply engaged learners, leaders, and community members. We offer workshops, outdoor weekend retreats, college-access support, and leadership opportunities.



The program is currently offered at four high schools: **North Tahoe, Truckee, Firebaugh, and Dos Palos.**

Most students begin as Rising Community Leaders, meeting weekly for workshops in or after school. They engage in our leadership curriculum and are invited on a series of weekend outdoor experiences. The program is designed to help students develop the interpersonal skills and academic tools needed for high school success.

Please visit our [website](#) for more information about our year-round program.

ARC SUMMMER OPPORTUNITIES

Our summer program offers an unforgettable multi-day adventure, alternating between welcoming **backpacking** expeditions and time at an outdoor **basecamp**. Students receive hands-on instruction in **literacy, environmental science, leadership,** and **outdoor skills**, all while navigating the complexities and joys of living with a **close-knit cohort** of high schoolers and **experienced outdoor educator instructors**. Students can choose between a 34-day immersive experience or an 11-day introductory journey.

Immersive courses are **34 days** and include three multi-day backpacking trips and three basecamp components, plus **rock climbing** and **whitewater rafting**. Immersive course students will write a **metaphor poem** and a **reflective essay**. They will also **interview** a community member, make a short **scientific video**, and participate in a final **running** challenge.



Stepping Stone courses are **11 days** and include one multi-day backpacking trip and one basecamp component, as well as an **adventure activity**. Stepping Stone course students will write a **personal manifesto**.



ARC SUMMER OUTCOME GOALS

1 literacy development

Stepping Stone

Build confidence in reflective writing and sharing through scaffolded opportunities and regular practice

Immersive

Develop reading, writing and public speaking skill advancement through entire integrated curriculum

All of our summer courses are grounded in our four pillars of literacy development, positive relationships, leadership development, and outdoor experience and connection.

Here are the specific outcome goals for each course length in each pillar area:

2 positive relationships

Stepping Stone

Build positive self, peer, and adult relationships through immersive time together

Immersive

Develop positive self, peer, and adult relationships through extended immersive time together

3 leadership development

Stepping Stone

Build self leadership skills through values based curriculum

Immersive

Develop leadership skills through scaffolded opportunities, targeted feedback, and repeated practice

4 outdoor experience and connection

Stepping Stone

Create a positive immersive experience in outdoor spaces through backpacking, and rock climbing and/or rafting

Immersive

Create positive extended experiences and build confidence in outdoor spaces



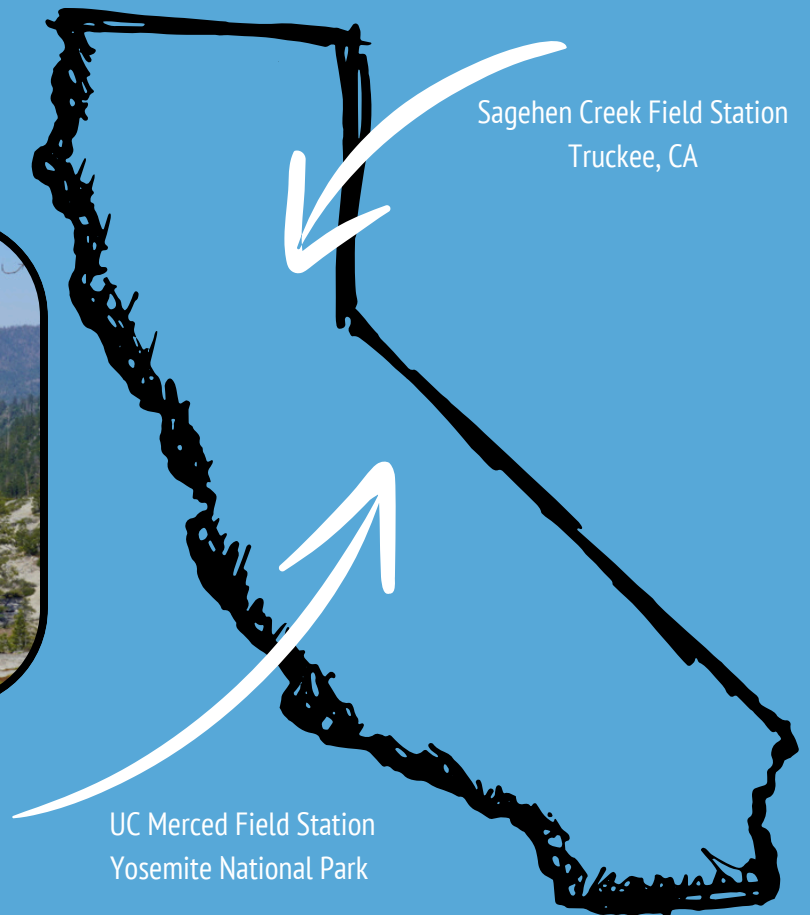
2024 ARC SUMMER COURSE DIRECTORS

ARC Program Director &

Tahoe Site Manager for 2024 - Mel Hoffman

ARC staff since 2010. Outdoor educator for over twenty years.

Significant experience leading wilderness expeditions for youth. Bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis and Wilderness First Responder Certified.



Sagehen Creek Field Station
Truckee, CA

UC Merced Field Station
Yosemite National Park

ARC Summer Program Manager &

Yosemite Site Manager for 2024 - Heather Ekstrom

ARC staff since 2023. Outdoor educator and back country guide for over twelve years. Extensive experience leading wilderness expeditions for all ages. Bachelor's Degree in Environmental

Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

2024 YOSEMITE IMMERSIVE COURSE

Central Valley Program Coordinator

& Yosemite Lead Instructor - Alonso Santos-Gonzalez

ARC staff since 2023. Bilingual. Experience leading trail crews for California Conservation Corps. Bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Yosemite Instructor - Halle Jacobs

Extensive experience in outdoor education and personal endeavors throughout the US. Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Barnard College and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Yosemite Instructor - Zoe Onderdonk

Experience in outdoor programming and guiding in a wide variety of outdoor activities. Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from UC Santa Cruz and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Yosemite Instructor - Oliver Silverman

Experience in outdoor programming and leading youth conservation crews. Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from UC Santa Cruz and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Staff



Students



- **Cam Matteo Ortiz Briones**
 - West Hanford High School
- **Joel Issac Ontiveros**
 - Firebaugh High School
- **Lilli Ann Mathiesen**
 - Woodlake High School
- **Mariano Raul Alvarado**
 - Dos Palos High School
- **Quix Allen**
 - Woodlake High School
- **Sergio Ruelas Jimenez**
 - Atwater High School

2024 TAHOE IMMERSIVE COURSE

Staff



Tahoe Program Manager & Tahoe Lead Instructor - Maddie Leh
ARC staff since 2021. Outdoor educator for five years. Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Anthropology from St. Olaf College and Master's degree in Nonprofit Management from Regis University and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Tahoe Program Facilitator & Tahoe Instructor - Gilian Meyers
Experience leading youth conservation crews and teaching English. Bilingual. Bachelor's degree in Society and Environment from the UC Berkeley and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Tahoe Instructor - Kara Sun

Experience in outdoor education in both residential and field based programming. Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from Carleton College and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Students

- **Clara Burton**
 - Truckee High School
- **Iris Omarlin Macias**
 - North Tahoe High School
- **Kaya Rose Hainsworth**
 - Truckee High School
- **Yaritza A Macias Chavez**
 - North Tahoe High School



2024 YOSEMITE STEPPING STONE A

Central Valley Program Coordinator

& Stepping Stone A & B Lead Instructor - Melany Ricardo

ARC staff since 2020. ARC Summer Graduate 2016.

Bilingual. Current student at Fresno State University and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Stepping Stone A & B Instructor - Sadie Smith

Experience in outdoor programming instruction and coordinating. Current student at Elon University studying Strategic Communication and International & Global Studies. Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Stepping Stone A & B Instructor - Sam Gerteis

Extensive experience in outdoor programming in adverse conditions. Bachelor's Degree in Forestry with a minor in Wilderness Emergency Medical Services from the University of Vermont and Wilderness EMT.

Stepping Stone A Instructor - Emma Turcotte

Experience in outdoor programming with underrepresented youth in urban environments. Bachelor's degree in Human Development and Social Relations from Earlham College and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Staff



Students



- **Andres Eloy Gonzalez**
 - Firebaugh High School
- **Jose Mikel Hernandez**
 - De Anza High School
- **Paige Deeming**
 - Los Banos High School
- **Paul Duenas**
 - Hayward High School
- **Salomon Joel Herrera**
 - Firebaugh High School
- **Vicente Dylan Madrigal**
 - Firebaugh High School

2024 YOSEMITE STEPPING STONE B

Staff



**Central Valley Program Coordinator
& Stepping Stone A & B Lead Instructor - Melany Ricardo**
ARC staff since 2020. ARC Summer Graduate 2016.
Bilingual. Current student at Fresno State University and
Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Stepping Stone A & B Instructor - Sadie Smith
Experience in outdoor programming instruction and
coordinating. Current student at Elon University studying
Strategic Communication and International & Global
Studies. Wilderness First Responder Certified.

Stepping Stone A & B Instructor - Sam Gerteis
Extensive experience in outdoor programming in
adverse conditions. Bachelor's Degree in Forestry with
a minor in Wilderness Emergency Medical Services from
the University of Vermont and Wilderness EMT.

**Central Valley Program Manager
& Stepping Stone B Instructor - Jesus Alejandro**
ARC staff since 2015. Outdoor educator for eight years. ARC
Summer Graduate 2012. Bilingual. Associate Degree from
Merced College and Wilderness First Responder Certified.

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- **Cassandra Lupian Sy**
 - Dos Palos High School
 - **Gael Adan Servin**
 - North Tahoe High School
 - **Izabella Orta**
 - High Tech High School
 - **Leilani Carrasco Partida**
 - North Tahoe High School
 - **Lila Ann Weir**
 - Truckee High School
 - **Vallerie Andrea Laguna**
 - North Tahoe High School

Students



IMMERSIVE & STEPPING STONE CURRICULA OVERVIEW

Through ARC's integrated rigorous academic instruction & outdoor education, students develop positive social and cooperative skills, raise their overall academic performance, learn about their role in stewardship and conservation of our natural environment, and become more engaged members of their communities.

IN THE IMMERSIVE COURSE, YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN:

- A daily English Language Arts curriculum aligned with Common Core and the California State University Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum, focused on **reading comprehension, building vocabulary, improving grammar, thinking critically, and public speaking**;
- An **Environmental Science** curriculum organized around place-based education standards, introducing students to the natural world and to conservation concepts;
- A creation of a **science video** on a topic of their choosing from research to **script writing**, making a **storyboard**, to **filming, editing**, and presenting the video.
- The writing of a **metaphor poem**, a formal **thank you letter**, and a **reflection essay**;
- A **public speaking** event of poetry;
- **Interviews** with adult community members;
- **Three backpacking expeditions**, including a final **youth-led expedition** and a **solo** overnight wilderness experience;
- **Rock climbing** and **whitewater rafting**; and
- Daily **leadership activities** integrating our **identity** and **community** exploration curriculum with ARC's four **core values**: service, growth, compassion, and determination.

IN THE STEPPING STONE COURSE, YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN:

- A **values-exploration** curriculum with **daily journaling** exercises designed to build confidence and a secure sense of self;
- An **Environmental Science** curriculum organized around place-based education standards, introducing students to the natural world and to conservation concepts;
- The writing of a **personal manifesto**;
- A **backpacking expedition**;
- **Rock climbing** and an exploration of Yosemite Valley;
- Daily opportunities to work **independently** and **cooperatively** and **celebrate** their expression of ARC's four **core values**: service, growth, compassion, and determination.



Immersive Course Curriculum Details

Metaphor & Poetry

Students learn about descriptive detail, imagery, and explicitness in writing and poetry, read and discuss others' work, draft and edit a poem of their own, and recite their poem in front of an audience at our Voices of Youth culminating event.

Reflection Essay

Students receive direct instruction in essay structure and organization. They write an essay based on their personal experiences utilizing a strong thesis and topic sentences, and they craft a clear introduction, body, and conclusion.

Interview & Thank You Note

Students learn interview techniques, brainstorm questions, conduct interviews with community members, and incorporate details from their interviews to craft a personal thank you note for their interviewee.

Short Story Reading & Discussion

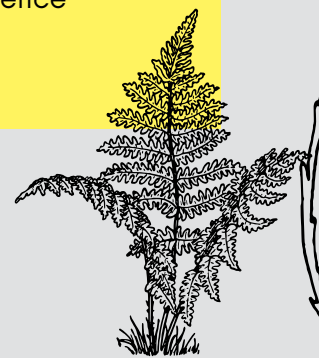
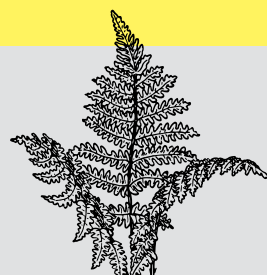
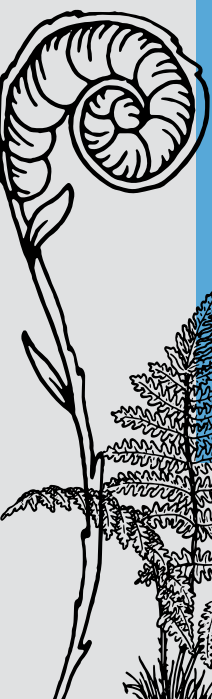
Students focus on critically reading and analyzing short stories. Small groups read aloud, pausing frequently to define vocabulary, practice correct pronunciation, and assess comprehension of story content.

Language Power

Students engage with language through sentence level exploration and curiosity. Curriculum is designed to support students to use language for their own purposes and to improve confidence and self-efficacy.

Environmental Science

Students engage with nature through observation and reflection. They observe flora and fauna, use field guides to make identifications, and document their findings. The curriculum culminates with students creating a script, storyboard and filming a 2-minute video on a science topic of their choice.



Immersive Course

Common Core Alignment

	Anchor Standards for Reading: Literature (RL.9-10)						Anchor Standards for Language (L.9-10)						Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (SL.9-10)						Anchor Standards for Writing (W.9-10)					
	Key Ideas and Details			Craft and Structure			Conventions of Standard English		Knowledge of Language		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use		Comprehension and Collaboration		Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas		Text Types and Purpose		Production and Distribution of Writing		Research to Build and Present Knowledge		Range of Writing	
Instructional Units	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	3	4	5	6	2	3	4	5	6	9	10
Metaphor Poem	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x		x
Reflection Essay							x	x	x			x	x						x	x	x	x		
Interview and Thank You Letter							x	x	x			x	x		x				x	x	x	x		x
Short Story Reading	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x				x							
Language Power	x	x		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x							
Environmental Science							x		x			x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Wilderness and Leadership **							x		x			x	x	x			x			x				x

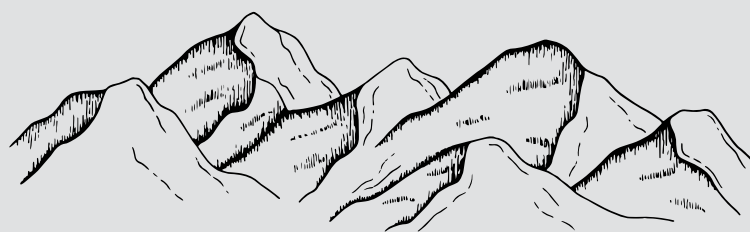
** Wilderness and Leadership includes reading, writing, and speaking components of Leader of the Day, Journalist, and Naturalist responsibilities as well as evening meeting participation.



Programming Related to State Standards for Literacy

34-Day Immersive Courses in Yosemite and Tahoe		
Course Days	Academic Activity	Time Per Student
Days 2-8 <i>Expedition 1</i>	Writing: 1 hr per day Reading Activities: 30 min per day Environmental Science: 1 hr per day	17.5 hours
Days 9-14 <i>Basecamp 1</i>	Language Power: 1 hr per day Writing Class: 2 hrs per day Reading Comp and Vocabulary: 1 hr per day Independent Reading: 30 min per day Environmental Science Class: 2 hrs per day	39 hours
Days 15-20 <i>Expedition 2</i>	Solo Assignment and Journaling Rock Climbing Journaling Environmental Science Script	10 hours
Days 21-24 <i>Basecamp 2</i>	Language Power 1 hr per day Writing Class: 2 hrs per day Interview Prep, Interview, & Thank You: 8 hrs Reading Comp and Vocabulary: 1 hr per day Independent Reading: 30 min per day Environmental Science Class: 2 hrs per day	27.5 hours
Days 25-28 <i>Expedition 3</i>	Poetry Reading Practice	2 hours
Days 29-34 <i>Basecamp 3</i>	Language Power: 1 hr per day / 4 days Writing Class: 4 hrs per day / 4 days Reading Comp and Vocabulary: 1 hr per day / 4 days Independent Reading: 30 min / 4 days Public Poetry Practice and Event: 8 hrs Environmental Science Video: 8 hrs	42 hours
		Total Hours Per Student on Literacy-Related Instruction: 138 Hours Total Student Hours on Literacy-Related Instruction: 1,380 Hours

11-Day Stepping Stone Courses in Yosemite		
Course Days	Academic Activity	Time Per Student
Days 1-5 <i>Expedition</i>	Daily Journaling Activities Reading Activities Environmental Science	10 hours
Days 8-11 <i>Basecamp</i>	Manifesto Writing Process Manifesto Presentation	8 hours
		Total Hours Per Student on Literacy-Related Instruction: 18 Hours Total Student Hours on Literacy-Related Instruction: 216 Hours



Physical Education Time Record

34-Day Immersive Courses in Yosemite and Tahoe		
Course Days	Physical Activity	Timer Per Student
Days 2-8 <i>Expedition 1</i>	7 days backpacking: 6 hrs per day	42 hours
Days 9-14 <i>Basecamp 1</i>	Physical Fitness: Running, Sit-ups, Push-ups, Stretching: 1 hr per day 1 day whitewater rafting: 5 hrs	10 hours
Days 15-20 <i>Expedition 2</i>	5 days backpacking: 6 hrs per day 1 day rock climbing: 5 hrs	35 hours
Days 21-24 <i>Basecamp 2</i>	Physical Fitness: Running, Sit-ups, Push-ups, Stretching: 1 hr per day	4 hours
Days 25-28 <i>Expedition 3</i>	4 days backpacking: 6 hrs per day	24 hours
Days 29-34 <i>Basecamp 3</i>	Physical Fitness: Running, Sit-ups, Push-ups, Stretching: 1 hr per day Culminating 5-7 mile run: ~3hrs	8 hours
Total Hours Per Student on Physical Education: 123 Hours Total Student Hours on Physical Education: 1,230 Hours		



11-Day Stepping Stone Courses in Yosemite		
Course Days	Physical Activity	Timer Per Student
Days 1-5 <i>Expedition</i>	5 days backpacking: 6 hrs per day	30 hours
Days 6-7	Rock Climbing: 5 hrs Day Hike: 6 hrs	11 hours
Days 8-11 <i>Basecamp</i>	Stretching & Walking: 1 hr per day	4 hours
Total Hours Per Student on Physical Education: 45 Hours Total Student Hours on Physical Education: 540 Hours		

2024 SUMMER COURSE POST-SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

22 students across all courses responded to a **post-survey** at the end of their course to help us understand the impact of our programming in our four pillar areas: **literacy development, positive relationships, leadership development, and outdoor experience and connection.**



DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS



20 of 22 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC.

**90% “I FEEL MORE
CONFIDENT IN THE
PROCESS OF WRITING”**

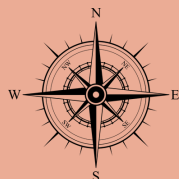
POSITIVE PEER AND ADULT RELATIONSHIPS



20 of 22 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC.

**90% “I FEEL MORE
COMFORTABLE BEING
MYSELF IN A GROUP”**

FOUNDATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS



21 of 22 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC.

**95% “I SEE VALUE IN
WORKING THROUGH
CHALLENGES”**

IMMERSIVE & OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES



22 of 22 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC.

**100% “I WANT TO SPEND
MORE TIME OUTDOORS”**

IMMERSIVE STUDENT METAPHOR POEM EXCERPTS

LA TÍMIDA MARIPOSA

YARITZA MACIAS CHAVEZ -
TAHOE IMMERSIVE STUDENT



I was once a green and pink caterpillar,
Just eating on flowers, green cloverleaves.
Relaxing under the luminous sun.
Living the best times of my life.
Confident in my skin.

Age 7

I started to feel weird in my body.
I kept getting bigger and bigger each day.
Building insecurities,
Ashamed of my jiggly body.
"Tímida de la ropa entada."

Age 10

Other caterpillars surrounded me, saying,
"You're fat."
"You look like a pig."
"If you jump on the ground you're going to start a hurricane."
I went still like a flame of a dancing candle being blown out.
I looked at myself in the mirror and cried.
Asking, "Why was I born so ugly?"

...

I am ready for metamorphosis,
To transform into a greenish blue butterfly.
I want to be able to release the enzymes, my insecurities
That attaches me to my caterpillar form
Which I've held onto for so long.
I want to appreciate my body,
Showing my true colors,
Knowing that it's ok to be a medium or large.
It's ok to show my stretch marks.
It's ok to wear baggy clothes.
I want to let go of the negative self-talk.
I want to fly away and be free.

I will feel proud of myself.
I will use my voice to ask for help and support
When feeling negatively about my body,
Knowing it's ok to feel sad and confused.
I will feel mentally free, less stressed.
I will look in the mirror and say,
"I am beautiful. I am smart, I love my body, I love myself."

THE STAR OF MY LIFE

SERGIO RUELAS-JIMENEZ



The Star of My Life
By Sergio Ruelas-Jimenez

I was once 7,
Fearful of nothing but the dark.
But I was naïve.
Luckily, my bright star was there to guide me all the way
through,
Like when it would take me to work and make me watch as it
fixed things
Or taught me to work without expecting payment in return.
Since before I was born, it had planned for me,
Preparing a green, grassy field for me to run in.
And when I was born on the 2nd floor of a hospital in Phoenix,
Arizona,
I felt the heat-
Not only from the blazing desert outside
But from the love and warmth of my sun.
In the coming years,
It would grow delicious food to feed me,
Watched me while I played, and kept me warm in the winter.
It taught me right from wrong.
It unknowingly taught me how to hotwire a car,
How to hop a fence,
How to spin a car around a turn.
No one knows I do this, so don't tell anyone.
Sure, I dress nice and speak formally, but I'm still ghetto.
I'm not ashamed of being ghetto, though.
I'm glad.
Because in a place where many follow the footsteps of
criminals
And idolize gangsters and thieves,
I followed the example of my sun
And proved to everyone that I'm strong enough to break that
cycle.

...

Even through the tough and rough,
My sun will be there for me.
Because where I'm from, in Winton, California,
Rich or poor, our coffins are all made of wood.
And there's no banks in Heaven,
So the only thing that is worth anything
Is family.



IMMERSIVE STUDENT REFLECTIVE ESSAY EXCERPTS



NATURE'S GROWTH

QUIX ALLEN -
YOSEMITE IMMERSIVE
STUDENT

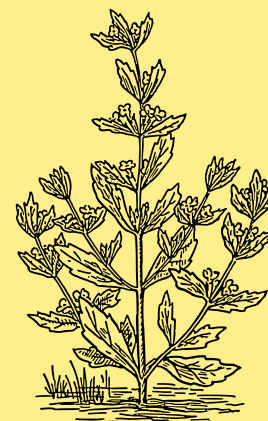
As my moon-basking ends, I awake to her glowing body already set below the horizon. It's day 3 of our 3rd expedition, and we pack up camp. We decide to spend our morning at Evelyn Lake, my moon-bathing sibling, lightened by the dawn. The bees buzz among the flowers. The sun shines, the sky a picture-perfect blue with clouds like a children's drawing dotted about. The lake sparkles under the sun and the little creeks flowing into it burble happily. Laughter rings out from those on the sandy beach and those in the water. I lay in the flowers, spread-eagled under the sun, and listened. I feel myself become refreshed, the glory of this perfect world brushing away the struggles of the past couple of days. It brushes away the tears, the remnants of yet another painstakingly long hike up steep, sunlit hills. Washing away the overwhelming feeling of unpreparedness, the claustrophobia of last night's sleep, the tension between Team Ninja Turtles as we all grew more and more exhausted. The breeze whips away my fatigue, my aching soreness (especially in my feet), and the fears of not making it. I have made it. I have pushed through these challenges, the mental and the physical, and now I am here. Here in this perfect world....What do I live for if not these moments? Returning to my roots, the earth, the fractured fragments of myself mending themselves together under the light of the ever-blazing star I revolve around. Every piece of me is here, flowing into a broken and mended collage of who I was, who I am, and who I will be. I am one with the nature I lay amongst. I am the dirt, foundation of our feet, our land, our homes. I am the flowers, sweet and brilliant, providing life for the critters that provide life to us. I am the breeze, bringing new stories and a cooling air to refresh our weary spirits. I am the sun, bringing light and warmth and nourishment to everything. I am the water, ever flowing, clear, cool, life itself. Most importantly, I am myself. I am just a man, ever-growing, ever-changing, like all of nature. And that is beautiful.



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

KAYA HAINSWORTH -
TAHOE IMMERSIVE
STUDENT

Through growing confidence and expressing my emotions, I began to trust myself. I saw the culmination of this rock climbing at Donner Peak. Before my climb, I rested my hands against the grainy rock, sweaty with nerves and anticipation. The coarse rope rubbed my fingers as I tied my figure eight knot, looping it through my climbing belt and tying it off. I thought, I won't make it to the top, it's too hard and rocky and tall and you've never done something like this before. The far-off cheers of my group echoed in the distance as I began my climb. Fear rushed through me as my feet lifted off the ground and my thoughts became jumbled. You can go back down right now, I thought to myself, and at the time, it was quite tempting. I could put the anxiety and embarrassment behind me if I didn't make it all the way up and I could just forget about it and move on. But my hands continued grasping for purchase against the hot stone and my feet wedged themselves into cracks. I paused as I balanced on a ledge, again thinking about giving up and lowering back down. Yet, I continued the climb and eventually, there was nothing left to grab. My eyes were set on my hands in front of me but when I looked up, I was greeted with a clear, blue sky instead of gray, lichen-covered rock. An overwhelming sense of pride washed over me, feeling thrilled about what I had accomplished and inspired by my willingness to not back down when faced with a challenge.



STEPPING STONE STUDENT PERSONAL MANIFESTO EXCERPTS



**THIS MANIFESTO IS
FOR WHEN I FEEL
UNWORTHY OF
WHAT I'M DOING
AND BURNT OUT.**

**ANDRES GONZALES -
STEPPING STONE A**

"I live to create what I love no matter what. I have many things I hold to my heart in my life. I am a musician because *I* love it. I climb because *I* love it. I bike because *I* love it. Without love, I simply would not enjoy what I currently do. I do everything because of my love for it. These things make me what I am, and I love me, so why should I ever change me because of a slight hiccup? At the end of the day, I do all this because of my passion for it, so I shouldn't shift anything even if it feels too hard to even try sometimes. People that I love will always hold and support me through these times, so even if I am completely done, others still can help me back on my feet. If they don't, are they truly worth me? Others shouldn't affect what I love or my sense of worth, ever. There may be many fish like me in the endless sea that is this world and they may seem like they are better than me, but the thing is, none are me. Even if they are better, why does it matter? I still love what I do and do it for a reason. Without love, I would not have made it this far and I am not changing that.

...

I want to achieve the dreams my childhood self would always dream about, whether it was being a musician with people I trust or opening a kitchen with my family. Without love, these "dreams" would simply fail to exist. I will always love what I do in my life, and if I don't, I will take a step back and re-evaluate until the love inevitably comes back. Self-discipline will push me on edge at times, but as annoying or trivial as it may feel, I will stay locked in for my own sake and only my own. I will always push through thick and thin, even if it is as hard as being stuck on a cliff or as simple as getting interviewed. The determination will ALWAYS stay with me until I turn around and realize that it is over and everything that kid-me wanted in life, no matter how simple or crazy it sounds, is now a reality. I truly live to create what I love no matter what, and nothing, NOTHING will stop me since I am me."



**THIS MANIFESTO IF FOR THE TIMES I FEEL
BURNT OUT, UNMOTIVATED, AND
UNFORGIVING.**

BY VALLERIE ANDREA LAGUNA - STEPPING STONE B

"I am from a family bonded by love. From an empowered, loving mother. From my courageous and nurturing Abuelita. From the hard working ethic and pride my Abuelito carries. I am from the sangre de Guanajuato y Ciudad De México. From the smell of cooking tamales and the sound of cumbia flowing. I am from tears, anguish, and sweat. They have given me more than I can put into words and never asked for anything in return. My Grandparents gave up what they knew and parted from their loved ones for us and our success. My mother works endlessly to be the best mother this world has seen.

...

Education. To have knowledge is to hold power, to hold power is to hold the ability to teach and share the things you have learned. I value education because it is a privilege. It has been a privilege to learn from my family, our culture, and why we live the life we do. It has been a privilege to learn all I have through school, classes, and teachers. It has been a privilege to learn from the experiences I've had throughout life. My family taught me who I want to be and that is not something to be taken lightly. School has taught and prepared me for my present and future, allowing me to be as knowledgeable as I can. Life has taught me to be forgiving towards myself, and to be grateful for those dear to me. Moving forward I will bestow my knowledge amongst others, I will love and treat myself with kindness, I will never take for granted the things I've learned or the lessons presented to me, and I will live my life open to being educated. No matter who I become, where I am, or who I am with, I will uphold the privilege of education by always learning and growing my intellectual abilities for myself and others. I strive to honor, to make a difference, and to be educated."

WHAT THE STUDENTS HAD TO SAY



“I learned that what I bring to a group is appreciated and valued. More importantly, I was reminded how to do that for myself.”

Stepping Stone B Student



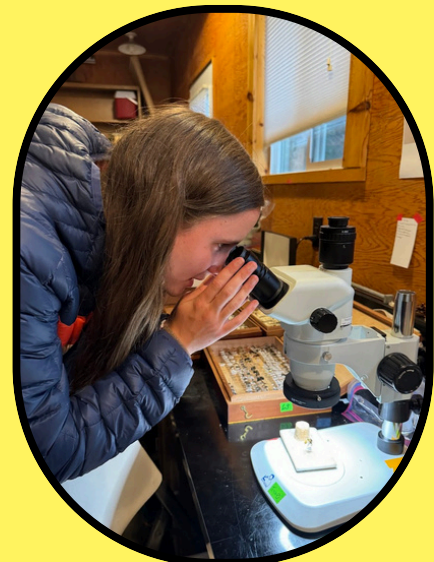
“I learned how important it is to build community. Without a strong community everything would fall apart.”

Yosemite Immersive Student



“I learned how to communicate my feelings and advocate for what I need.”

Tahoe Immersive Student



“ARC has taught me to stand up for yourself and that being different is a good thing. I think this will help me live a better life.”

Stepping Stone A Student

Celebrating all of the growth, compassion,
service & determination that the ARC
community gave & received this summer season!



Contact Us!

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