



adventure risk challenge

developing youth literacy and leadership



ARC 2025 Summer Program Report

Yosemite National Park Immersive Course

Yosemite National Park Stepping Stone A Course

Yosemite National Park Stepping Stone B Course

2025 Program Overview

Adventure Risk Challenge has been facilitating leadership, literacy, and wilderness experiences for high school youth since 2004. In Summer 2025, we ran one Immersive Course (33-day) and two Stepping Stone Courses (11-day) that each integrated rigorous academic instruction and outdoor education.

Summer courses offer an unforgettable multi-day experience, alternating between backpacking expeditions and time at an outdoor basecamp in Wawona, California. Students receive hands-on instruction in literacy, environmental science, leadership, and outdoor skills, all while living with a close-knit cohort of peers and experienced outdoor educators.

Through ARC's programming, students develop positive social and cooperative skills, raise their overall academic performance, engage with different types of literacy, learn about their role in stewardship and conservation of our natural environment, and become more engaged members of their communities.

2025 Summer Course Participants

Immersive Course

Lizbeth Avalos Aguilar - Atwater High School
Diego Barajas - Truckee High School
Neve Graham - Forest Charter School
Vicente Madrigal - Firebaugh High School

Damian Ponce Jacquez - Dos Palos High School
Adrianna Serrano - Dos Palos High School
Ian Wasson - Truckee High School
Emily Valles - Roosevelt High School

Stepping Stone A

Ella Boiano - Woodlake High School
Eva Deacon - Loyalton High School
Camila Gomez - Livingston High School
Naomi Ilizarov - Forest Charter School

Kline McCormac - Truckee High School
Anthony Reyes - Richmond High School
Joseluis Sanchez - Firebaugh High School

Stepping Stone B

Linda Belen Mejia - Leadership Public Schools
Kimberly Cisneros-Hart - Woodlake High School
Tyler LaMattino - Hanford West High School
Olivier Olsen - North Tahoe High School

Enrique Ruelas Jimenez - Atwater High School
Emily Santoyo - Firebaugh High School
Nathan Silva - Atwater High School
Jiaxin (Jasmine) Wu - Oakland High School

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

A dedicated team of full-time and seasonal staff run ARC's summer courses every year. In 2025 our seasonal team consisted of two lead instructors, five instructors, and one site manager. Summer staff are responsible for the execution of curriculum, facilitation of community living, and holistic safety of participants for the duration of their course. All summer staff are Wilderness First Responder certified and participate in an 11-day hands-on curriculum and policy training.

Staff are trained in ARC's literacy, science, and leadership curriculum components and are responsible for student engagement based on the following roles:

- **English Lead:** Oversees and leads all English classes & individual student progression on Immersive Course with outcome goals in mind. Scaffolds all steps of the Metaphor Poem drafting and revision process and the Reflection Essay writing process.
- **Language Power:** Leads Language Power lessons and supports English Lead in main classes on Immersive Course. Facilitates student understanding of sentence structure, grammar usage, and literacy acquisition.
- **Manifesto Lead:** Oversees and leads Manifesto and values establishment lessons on Stepping Stone Courses. Scaffolds student writing and understanding of relationship between personal values process and literacy skill development.
- **Science Lead:** Oversee place based science lessons, facilitating student engagement with the natural world in outdoor and indoor classroom settings.
- **Community Conversations:** Oversees group leadership development, keeping the pulse on group needs and facilitating skill acquisition so as to scaffold leadership development and group autonomy.



Curriculum

Course Curricula Overview & Outcomes

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 conservation concepts
- The writing of a metaphorical poem, a formal thank you letter, and a reflection essay
- Conducting interviews with adult community members
- Performing their metaphorical poem at a spoken-word event
- Three backpacking expeditions, including a final youth-led expedition and a solo overnight wilderness experience
- Rock climbing and whitewater rafting
- Daily leadership activities integrating 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 develop a sense of self
- An Environmental Science curriculum organized around place-based education standards, introducing students to the natural world and conservation concepts
- The writing and sharing of a personal manifesto
- A backpacking expedition
- Rock climbing
- Daily opportunities to work independently and cooperatively to explore expression of ARC's four core values: service, growth, compassion, and determination

Immersive 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 Purposes		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		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				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.

All Programs Related to State Standards for Literacy Instruction

34-Day Immersive Course		
Course Days	Academic Activity	Time Per Student
Days 1-7 <i>Expedition 1</i>	Writing Reading Activities Environmental Science	21 hours
Days 8-13 <i>Base Camp 1</i>	Language Power Writing Class Reading Comp and Vocabulary Independent Reading Environmental Science Class	17 hours
Days 14-18 <i>Expedition 2</i>	Solo Assignment and Journaling Poem Revisions	12 hours
Days 19-24 <i>Base Camp 2</i>	Rock Climbing Journaling Language Power Writing Class Interview Prep, Interview, and Thank You Note Reading Comp and Vocabulary Independent Reading Environmental Science Class	22 hours
Days 25-28 <i>Expedition 3</i>	Poetry Revision Poetry Reading Practice	2 hours
Days 29-34 <i>Base Camp 3</i>	Language Power Writing Class Reading Comp and Vocabulary Independent Reading Public Poetry Practice and Event Graduation Poetry or Reflection Essay Reading Yosemite Conservancy Naturalist Environmental Science Lesson	30 hours
Total Hours Per Student on Literacy-Related Instruction: 104 Hours		
Total Student Hours on Literacy-Related Instruction: 832 Hours		

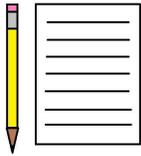
11-Day Stepping Stone Course		
Course Days	Academic Activity	Time Per Student
Days 1-5 <i>Expedition</i>	Daily Journaling Activities Reading Activities Environmental Science	10 hours
Days 8-11 <i>Base Camp</i>	Manifesto Writing Process Manifesto Presentation Yosemite Conservancy Naturalist Environmental Science Lesson	12 hours
Total Hours Per Student on Literacy-Related Instruction: 22 Hours		
Total Student Hours on Literacy-Related Instruction: 330 Hours		

Physical Education Time Record

34-Day Immersive Course		
Course Days	Physical Activity	Time Per Student
Days 1-7 <i>Expedition 1</i>	7 days backpacking	35 hours
Days 8-13 <i>Base Camp 1</i>	Physical Fitness: Running, Sit-ups, Push-ups, Stretching White Water Rafting	13 hours
Days 14-18 <i>Expedition 2</i>	5 days backpacking	25 hours
Days 19-24 <i>Base Camp 2</i>	Physical Fitness: Running, Sit-ups, Push-ups, Stretching Rock Climbing	14 hours
Days 25-28 <i>Expedition 3</i>	4 days backpacking	20 hours
Days 29-34 <i>Base Camp 3</i>	Physical Fitness: Running, Sit-ups, Push-ups, Stretching Culminating 5 mile run	6 hours
Total Hours Per Student on Physical Education: 113 Hours		
Total Student Hours on Physical Education: 1017 Hours		
11-Day Stepping Stone Course		
Course Days	Physical Activity	Time Per Student
Days 1-6 <i>Expedition</i>	5 days backpacking	20 hours
Days 7-8	Mariposa Grove Hike Rock Climbing	12 hours
Days 9-11 <i>Base Camp</i>	Stretching & Walking	3 hours
Total Hours Per Student on Physical Education: 35 Hours		
Total Student Hours on Physical Education: 595 Hours		

Summer Course Assessment Data Highlights

25 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.



Literacy Development

20 of 23 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC:

87% “I know how to improve my own writing.”



Positive Relationships

23 of 23 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC:

100% “I feel more comfortable being myself in a group.”



Leadership Skills

23 of 23 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC:

100% “I see the value in working through challenges.”



Outdoor Experience and Connection

21 of 23 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement below as a result of participating in ARC:

91% “I enjoyed having a break from my phone during the ARC course.”



**Congratulations to all the students and staff from Summer
2025!!**



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