



South Street Seaport Museum's  
*Gone Fishing: Marine Education Programs for Title I Schools Aboard the Historic Schooner Pioneer*

Report Date: Dec. 17, 2013

Project Period: March 11, 2013 to Dec. 31, 2013

\$3,103 HEP funds awarded, \$4,223 match provided

Goals:

Teach students about the natural life of our urban estuary and humans' impact upon it in an unforgettable setting – sailing a historic ship across the waters of the Harbor of New York and New Jersey.

Summary:

South Street Seaport Museum's schooner *Pioneer* is a working historic ship that sails with school groups for hands-on marine education programs. With support from the New York – New Jersey Harbor and Estuary Program Small Grants Program, the Seaport Museum provided 3 free Pioneer education sails to middle school students from Title I public schools, identified by the Department of Education as having a high percentage of students living in poverty. The program, entitled *Gone Fishing*, gives students the opportunity to see first hand the marine creatures of the estuary, utilizes these interactions to analyze the ecosystem and apply science, and inspires stewardship. Funding for field experiences is a significant challenge for schools in low income areas, and this program enabled under-served children to have an educationally rich interaction with the natural world that they would otherwise not have access to.

Course of action:

The Seaport Museum invited teachers to apply for the free *Gone Fishing* sails by submitting a summary describing how their in-school curricular goals would be supported and extended through the education sail, and verifying their Title I status. Outreach was conducted between February and April of 2013, through web posting and direct emails to teacher contact lists from in-house and partner institutions. Nine applications were received and reviewed by Seaport Museum Education Department staff, and the 3 teachers' classes who demonstrated the strongest connections in goals were selected to sail according to the scheduling and details below:

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013; IS 204; Melissa Diaz's 8<sup>th</sup> grade class

33 students and 3 adults

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013; Urban Science Academy; Principal Patrick Kelly's 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders

24 students and 2 adults

June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013; PS 218; Kathleen Fitzpatrick's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class

28 students and 4 adults

During the Gone Fishing sail, students and teachers explored and analyzed our estuarine ecosystem, and applied science and math to understand interactions in the real world, so that they could become better stewards of our natural resources. Specific activities included:

- Sample marine life with a net – Students helped deploy and retrieve the net under the guidance of professional crew, and later after observing the catch, all creatures were released.
- Set sail – The crew led students in setting sail, focusing on teamwork and responsibility.
- Stations (small group activities) – To increase opportunity for hands- on experience and individualized learning, students broke into small groups that rotated through turns at each station:
  - Touch tank – Under the guidance of the marine educator, students observed their live catch, and when appropriate touched creatures for added experience. Over the course of the program students observed small striped bass, a skate, blue claw crabs, snails, hermit crabs, and mussels.
  - Water Quality – Students tested for pH, dissolved oxygen, and salinity, and used their results to interpret characteristics of a healthy estuarine ecosystem. The data was used for educational purposes only, and so did not require a quality assurance protocol.
  - Harbor Charts – Students used a nautical chart of the harbor to identify features of the estuary and human impact on it.
- Draw conclusions – As the ship prepared to dock, the students reviewed the results of their tests and observations through whole group discussion led by the ship’s educators. The points that emerged were integrated in connection with the harbor ecosystem, and students were encouraged to draw conclusions and consider opportunities for stewardship.

#### Accomplishments:

94 students and teachers participated in Gone Fishing – a unique and exciting educational opportunity on the waters of the estuary.

#### Evaluation:

Metrics for evaluation included student participation in activities and teacher evaluations of meeting the program goals. All students participated in hands-on estuary analysis through the activities described above. Teacher evaluations were overwhelming positive, and are attached for optional additional information. Evaluations attested:

- “activities aligned with Common Core Science and Math”
- “students participated in scientific inquiry”
- “students now feel a connection to the harbor”
- “an opportunity most of them would never have”

And, “They experienced being on an open boat in a driving rain and didn’t complain.”

During the May 8<sup>th</sup> program, most of the morning was clear, but it did start raining at the end as the ship was docking. Principal Patrick Kelly was impressed that the program was so engaging the students didn’t mind the rain.

**Lessons Learned:**

The applications sent in by teachers all had merit, and all were deeply moving in their descriptions of how a field experience on the estuary would benefit under-served students. In consideration of this, the Seaport Museum offered a discount opportunity to the teachers who had applied but did not win the free Gone Fishing sail. Three additional classes participated in an educational sail on the estuary, paying a discount rate, through this offer inspired by the award through the HEP Small Grants Program.

(No pictures or materials were produced.)

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