For Immediate Release

Vineyard Expands Science Program with an Emphasis on Exploration

April 12, 2019 - Livermore, CA - During a field trip to the Oakland redwoods, students breathe in the fresh forest air while measuring the carbon dioxide levels with a digital tool to confirm what they can already feel: the redwood forest does a wonderful job of reducing carbon dioxide levels to clean the surrounding air. During this trip, students from Vineyard Alternative School – home to the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District’s (LVJUSD) independent study programs – enjoy the natural world and discover the scientific applications they can relate to it. This is just one example of many educational excursions that Vineyard students are participating in this year that contribute richness and real-world context to their education.

Other field trips this school year have included environmental studies at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, bird watching in Sycamore Grove, and a rainbow trout release at Shadow Cliffs. This fall, Vineyard students were invited to join Livermore High School teacher Renee Haugen’s Field Biology students in a whale watching trip in Monterey Bay. Vineyard students will be visiting Half Moon Bay tide pools at the end of April and, in May, monitoring the water quality in Arroyo Mocho.

Vineyard science students attend weekly two-hour lab classes in small groups of 10 to 20. They complete the rest of their week’s studies independently, through teacher-created, online, or textbook-based assignments. The field trips offered at Vineyard round out the students’ experiences in the sciences with relevant, locally-based learning opportunities, enhancing their regular studies.

The California Department of Education developed a blueprint in 2015 for environmental literacy in education that identified the value of meaningful learning experiences that leverage opportunities in one’s community for exploration in nature, school grounds, local outdoor science programs, museums, aquariums, and science centers. By frequently exploring the natural resources in their surrounding community, science students at Vineyard are able to connect their education with the world around them and expand their scientific inquiry outside of the classroom.

The science program at Vineyard has seen significant expansion, both inside and outside of the classroom, for the past several years. Three years ago, Vineyard offered its first college-preparatory lab science Biology course, followed by Conceptual Physics the next year. The 2018-19 school year has seen the addition of Field Biology, and more options will be available next year as Vineyard plans to add Chemistry and Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science courses.
In addition to the support from its parent and guardian community – who have been instrumental advocates for science funding – Vineyard can rely on its fellow LVJUSD partners to provide top-tier education to its students. Granada High School’s William Rasor has already generously shared his extensive Conceptual Physics curriculum with Vineyard. Regina Brinker, LVJUSD’s STEM Coordinator, has supported Vineyard’s science program with encouragement, inspiration, practical materials, professional development, and in-person visits to its science classes and field trips.

“I want to especially acknowledge the tremendous efforts from Vineyard’s own Gretchen Reynolds,” said Principal Carla Estrada-Hidalgo. “Her commitment to providing exciting, educational lessons ensure that all of her students have fruitful learning experiences that will last a lifetime.”

Thanks to the combined support of the LVJUSD community and the bounty of diverse natural resources around them, studying science at Vineyard is a rewarding experience for students. The variety of classes, field trips that enhance each subject, and commitment of dedicated educators provide a valuable framework for environmental literacy to augment the school’s science curriculum. As the Vineyard science program expands, so too does the appreciation of its students for the sciences as they absorb lessons that instill new insights into their world.

Photos of rainbow trout release at Shadow Cliffs courtesy of LVJUSD

###

ABOUT LIVERMORE VALLEY JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
LVJUSD is an award-winning district that serves more than 13,900 students in transitional kindergarten through 12th grade at nine elementary campuses, two K-8 schools, three middle schools, two comprehensive high schools, and two alternative schools. The LVJUSD features International Baccalaureate Programmes and a STEM pathway, TK-12. The mission of the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District is to ensure each student will graduate with the skills needed to contribute and thrive in a changing world. For more information about the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, please visit [www.livermoreschools.org](http://www.livermoreschools.org)

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS:
School Board President Craig Bueno, cbuenotrustee@lvjusd.org (925) 918-7345
Superintendent of Schools Kelly Bowers, Ed.D. kbowers@lvjusd.k12.ca.us (925) 606-3281
Director of Community Engagement Philomena Rambo, prambo@lvjusd.org (925) 960-2917