

Letter from Ms. Ramous
7th Grade Teacher, Dwight Middle School

Dear Mr. Lance Hoppes and Dr. Eli Whitney

I would like to thank you for setting up and funding the field trip to Seaworld. When I first heard about the trip, I was a little afraid and skeptical. I did not really want to go. The reason I was afraid is that most of our students come from socially deprived homes and at times their behavior leaves a lot to be desired. They can be really rough at times. Most of my students never get a chance to leave their neighborhood. I was really worried that they would throw things at the animals or worse. It's really not their fault. They have parents who work low wage jobs and have to put in a lot of hours. They don't get the attention that the children of more affluent parents get. To my surprise, the students behaved very well. I was really surprised when everyone got back to school and no animal was hurt.

During the trip, we visited the penguins, sharks, dolphin exhibits and finally Shamu. What I really enjoyed was the time and ability to speak with the students about what we were experiencing. Virtually none of the children had ever been to Seaworld. Many of them had seen the animals on TV but didn't even know that these animals were here in San Antonio. The experience that we had together actually helped me and my students bond together. I am their teacher but during this trip I was suddenly an interesting human adult, a "trust" kind of person. I know my students do not get much exposure to adults they can admire, much less trust. I do not like the word friend because the kids still respect me as their teacher. This experience of sharing something as an educational outing, forged a bond that gave us a link to each other. We had something we all could talk about. I think it leveled the field. Back in the class room, we now had something to talk about that was real. Learning about science or art can be hard if you do not have a picture or an experience to go with it.

I am totally amazed by the impact that this field trip had on my students' behavior back in my class room. First, my students are better behaved. In the past, when I turned my back on the class, at times one of the students would do something to disrupt the class like throw something. This activity has dropped off significantly. Second, when I turn my back on the class and someone does something to disrupt the class, the other students will now tell me who disrupted the class. They want to learn now. This never happened before. Third, a lot of my students are now interested in reading! They have formed a book club and are starting with a 500 page book called Twilight. Is there anyway you could buy some of these books for me? The number of kids who want to join the book club is really increasing.

This field trip was truly a miracle. There has been nothing but positive experiences by my students and the other 500 in Dwight middle school. Would you please sponsor some more field trips for our students as soon as possible. They really work and our students really need them. I have never seen anything as helpful to my students in such a short period of time. I have been a teacher for a long time and I know what I am talking about. Thank you Motivate Our Students Texas for the GAMER program.

Sincerely,

Ms. Ramous