

## Education

### Structured School Program (SSP)

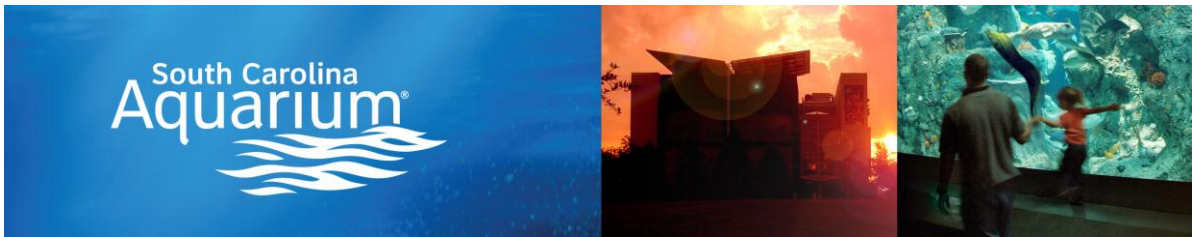
- With the help of over 200 South Carolina educators, the South Carolina Aquarium has developed a standards-based Structured School Program that is offered at *no cost* to the teachers and students of South Carolina.
- K-12 teachers participating in the program learn about the Aquarium's standards-based curriculum through a 3 hour professional development workshop.
- Once at the Aquarium, students participate in hands-on activities that use the exhibits to reinforce the standards-based concepts introduced in the classroom. Using these methods, a visit to the South Carolina Aquarium becomes part of an integrated learning experience and not simply a field trip away from school.
- In 2003, the Structured School Program won the Significant Achievement Award from the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA).

### ***Education Leadership Partners:***

- The Aquarium developed the Structured School Program using the recommendations of over 200 South Carolina teachers and educators. Stemming from these recommendations, the Aquarium has created a statewide network of K-12 educators who serve as Education Leadership Partners.
- As a part of the Structured School Program, the Aquarium has offered four graduate level courses through the College of Charleston for teachers. During the graduate course, teachers "travel" from the mountains to the sea, learning about the aquatic habitats of South Carolina from educators and scientific experts across the state. In addition to field-based learning, the teachers gain a working knowledge of the Aquarium and develop curriculum resources for use within the Structured School Program.
- Upon completion of the graduate course, those teachers who have demonstrated excellence are invited to become Education Leadership Partners who serve as resources of information to other teachers from their geographical areas and who facilitate the Aquarium's teacher workshops.
- The Aquarium offers two professional development workshops each year for the Education Leadership Partners and maintains regular communication via email and telephone.
- Over 70 teachers have participated in the graduate course and 15 currently serve as Education Leadership Partners.

### ***Program Goal:***

- The overall goal of the Structured School Program is to set a standard of excellence in education through the creation, implementation and continual assessment/refinement of standards-based instructional materials and programs that improve the quality of science education for South Carolina students and teachers.



### ***Program Objectives:***

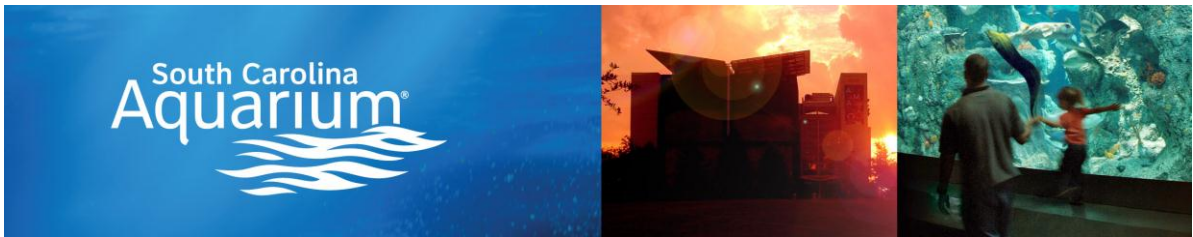
- To establish a statewide network of educators, Education Leadership Partners, who facilitate effective South Carolina Aquarium teacher workshops.
- To develop a program that reinforces the state's science standards.
- To serve over 3,000 South Carolina students each year through the free, standards- based Structured School Program.
- To provide curriculum resources and training opportunities for teachers to effectively implement the Aquarium's standards-based science curriculum, while increasing their level of comfort with science concepts.

### ***Web Based Curriculum:***

- The K-12 web-based curriculum, which was generated and tested by South Carolina's teachers, provides activities and a framework that are based on South Carolina's environment and meets state science standards.
- The curriculum is divided by grade level into K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Each grade level contains three to ten pre-visit curriculum units, a description of what students will do while at the Aquarium, post visit follow-up activities, and an extensive list of supplementary field sites and resources. The curriculum units are comprehensive and can be viewed online.
- In 2002, the curriculum won the award of "Distinguished" and "Best in Show" from the Society for Technical Communication (STC) at the state level and won an award for "Excellence" in the international STC competition.

### ***Teacher Workshops:***

- The South Carolina Aquarium prepares teachers to bring their students to the Aquarium by requiring that every participating K-12 teacher attend a three-hour training workshop prior to their class visit.
- During this workshop, teachers: are introduced to the Aquarium's comprehensive, standards-based curriculum; learn about the Aquarium's web-based distance learning activities available for students; preview the orientation video to the South Carolina Aquarium; and participate in several of the Aquarium's curriculum activities that they will conduct for their students prior to their visit. This precedent-setting approach maximizes the likelihood that teachers will implement the curriculum and engage students in the curriculum activities prior to attending the Aquarium.
- The Aquarium's Educator Programs Coordinator and the Aquarium's Education Leadership Partners facilitate up to twelve workshops per year at locations across the state. Each participating teacher will leave the workshop with the resources needed to prepare their students for their Aquarium visit.
- The South Carolina Aquarium has trained over 2,660 South Carolina teachers through the teacher workshop component of the Structured School Program.



### **Structured School Program:**

To ensure program success the following elements have been incorporated into the onsite portion of the Structured School Program:

- **Emphasis on the quality and integrity of the programming provided** - The quantity of students served should certainly be optimized, but not at the expense of the quality of the programs.
- **Student work groups set at a maximum of fifteen** - This facilitates an open exchange of information among students, encourages students to participate equally, helps students to maintain focus, and helps volunteers and instructors to facilitate learning by reducing the amount of group management required.
- **Programs that run up to an hour and a half in length** - This provides instructors and students with ample time to introduce key concepts, to explore galleries, to travel in between galleries, and to reflect on what they have learned. Time for reflection is instrumental for students to synthesize what they have been doing in the Aquarium and to place it in a larger context of "the big picture".
- **Begin and end classes in an environment free from other visitors** - In this type of environment, students are really able to focus.
- **Utilize trained volunteer educators to implement Structured School Programs** - Working with smaller group sizes to enhance learning requires a higher staffing level.

### **Program results:**

- **To establish a statewide network of educators who facilitate effective Aquarium teacher workshops.**

Seventy teachers have successfully completed the Aquarium's graduate course, have become Education Leadership Partners and have facilitated effective teacher workshops. In 2009, 99% of teachers surveyed rated the workshop as effective/highly effective.

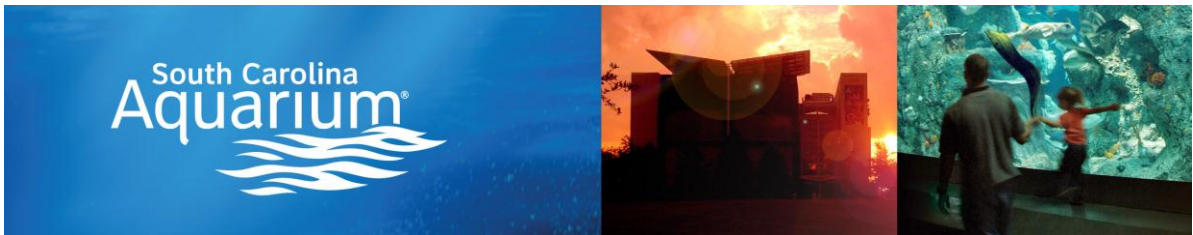
- **To develop a program that reinforces the state's science standards.**

100% of all public school teachers surveyed found that the Aquarium's Structured School Program reinforced state science standards.

- **To create an orientation video for teachers to show to their students prior to their Aquarium visit.**

76% of all teachers surveyed showed the orientation video to their students prior to their Aquarium visit.

- **To serve over 3,000 South Carolina students each year through the free, Structured School Program.**



From 2000-2010 (ten school program years) the aquarium has served an average of 8,600 students.

- **To provide curriculum resources and training opportunities for teachers to implement the Aquarium's standards-based science curriculum, while increasing their level of comfort with science concepts.**

Since 2000, the Aquarium has trained over 2,660 South Carolina teachers through the Structured School Program.

### **Interpretive Programs**

- Every visit to the South Carolina Aquarium reveals something new – a glimpse of new animals in exhibits, budding plants, new programs and more. Themed interpretive programs are presented daily by the Education Staff, and are informative and fun for all visitors – whether they're arriving for the first or fourth time.
- Topics for the interpretive programs vary by season, and are always themed, fun and highly interactive. Daily dive shows, otter feedings, animal shows and behind the scenes tours are offered throughout the day. During the interactive dive program, divers wear special equipment that allows them to talk to visitors as they feed the fish within the 385,000 gallon Great Ocean Exhibit.

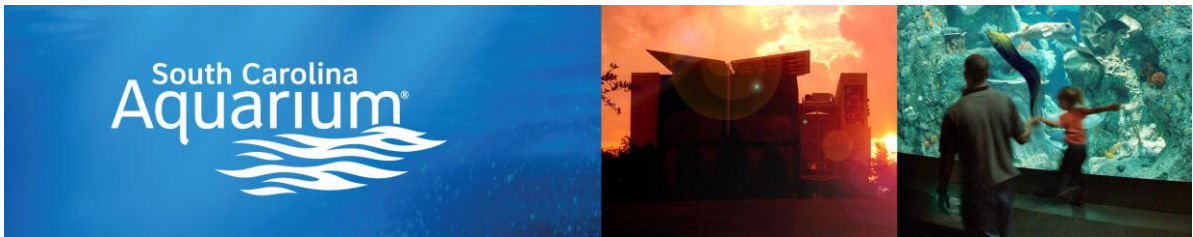
### **Aquarium Rovers: Education Outreach Program**

- A one-hour outreach program to expand student's knowledge of South Carolina wildlife and resources through hands-on activities in their classroom, school, day camp or facility.
- Offer flexible arrangements, on-site educational activities and live animal programs with professional educators.
- Each outreach program is coordinated with South Carolina state curriculum standards and can educate groups of up to 35 participants of all ages.
- Programs Available vary by age group and include: Air, Food, Water and Shelter – Oh My!; Habitats of the Weird and Wacky; Awesome Adaptations; The Great Watershed Caper; Sea Turtle ER

### **Classes and Workshops for Non-School Groups**

#### *South Carolina Youth Shadowing Program:*

- The South Carolina Youth Shadowing program offers young adults a glimpse into the Aquarium world. This program offers the opportunity to observe some of the jobs that keep an Aquarium humming—like aquarist, educator or mammal behaviorist.
- Students apply to the position, write a 300-word essay, and submit a letter of recommendation from a teacher in order to be eligible for the program.



- The program cost is free and is available to students in grade 6-12.

*High School Internship Program:*

- This award winning program (2006 AZA Diversity Award) is currently in its eight year and has served over 170 students throughout the greater Charleston area.
- The South Carolina Aquarium's High School Internship Program provides the opportunity for underserved high school juniors to work in a fun, educational environment with animals and visitors of all ages.
- Students are chosen for the program based on the student's application, teacher recommendations and interview.
- Interns gain valuable job skills as well as aquatic science education during the training classes and then get to put that knowledge to use during the paid summer internship.

*Member Programs:*

- Various programs are offered throughout the year catering to a variety of age groups.
- Each member program has an educational theme that is publicized in the member newsletter.
- Non-members may also participate at an increased rate.
- Sample member programs include: Beach Seining, Night Hikes, Toddler Time, etc.