



2023 Healthy Living Conference – City of Hope Year-Round with Pomona Hope

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ABSTRACT

Pomona Hope seeks to promote healthy living in our community through enrichment workshops and a community garden. Many of our students and families face poverty, unstable employment, and barriers due to documentation status which can cause stress, lack of access to nutritious and diverse foods, and lack of access to safe places to move and play. Our neighborhood has minimal public green space, and our community garden is one of the only areas to enjoy outside within a mile radius. Pomona Hope students received instruction in our shaded outdoor classroom where volunteers ran workshops on nutrition, conservation and environmental justice.

INTRODUCTION

Pomona Hope was founded in 2003 by a group of neighbors and parents with the goal of building a safe place for students to play and learn after school. Today we serve between sixty and eighty K-12th grade students and their families annually. Year-Round with Pomona Hope (school year and summer cycles combined) is more than an after-school program or summer camp. It is a tight-knit community with deeply invested adults who care for our youth. We believe in the importance of a holistic approach to after-school education. Students receive daily focused homework and tutoring time, and academic enrichment workshops covering topics such as STEM and reading intervention. However, we also emphasize the physical, social and mental well-being of our students. These topics are addressed through weekly workshops such as community garden, the arts, mental health, and daily physical activity in our gym.

Project Goals

- Pomona Hope students are knowledgeable about basic nutrition, associate positive emotions with physical activity and play, and demonstrate age-appropriate social-emotional skills.
- Pomona Hope volunteers and interns thrive in their roles and are a critical part of our success.



What We Did

- Each age group spent 90 minutes a week in the garden exploring and learning through hands-on activities
- Post-assessment of student knowledge to measure impact and knowledge retention
- Weekly mental well-being workshops and weekly mental health check-ins with all students
- Daily guided physical activities in our gym for all age groups
- Twice-annual surveys of volunteers, quarterly volunteer appreciation events

Results

Average Student Knowledge Retention by Age Group

K-2nd	3rd-5th	6th-8th
75%	94%	94%

Students were tested on their retention of the material taught in their garden workshops. Score represents average retention for each age group.



Partners

SoCal A Rocha, Growing Roots, First Presbyterian Church of Pomona, The Lighthouse, The University of La Verne, Project Horseshoe Farm



CONCLUSION

Through interactive hands-on instruction in our community garden, students across the age ranges served demonstrated excellent retention of the materials presented. We did find that our youngest students had lower retention rates than our older students, although they still demonstrated decent retention. Perhaps future lessons could be adjusted further to accommodate this age range, or perhaps topics could be re-addressed throughout the year. Our hope is that the knowledge our students learned in topics such as nutrition, conservation, environment and the importance of physical and mental self-care will carry with them into adulthood.