

Youth Environmental Activism Within San Diego High Schools

Author: Charles Schooner

The Environmental Center of San Diego

6/17/2022

### **Abstract**

With the 6th Annual Environmental Leadership Summit fast approaching, it is imperative to gain a current understanding of youth environmental activism within San Diego to plan for the future. The next generation of environmental activism is happening right now and if the Environmental Center of San Diego is to achieve its goals, the organization must help foster this new generation of activists. The purpose of this report is to summarize current youth environmental activism, specifically within the San Diego Unified and San Dieguito Union High School Districts. Data was collected by first combing school websites for any information on environmental clubs or club activities. Club advisors and club presidents were contacted and asked to provide information. If no club lists, contact information, or details on student environmental activities could be found, a school administrator would be contacted and asked about their school's environmental activism. In total, 24 schools were contacted with 9 schools having responded via email and 11 schools having data on their websites making 20 schools with data. Of those 20 schools, 11 have at least one club that performs irregular beach cleanups. There are 5 schools that have at least one club that gardens. In total there are 55 environmental clubs between these 20 schools with an average of 2-3 clubs per school. Only one school has no environmental activism. These findings are important because this information can be used to gain a better understanding of local youth environmental activism. Once an understanding is achieved, it becomes far easier to support and foster current and potential youth activism groups within San Diego.

### **Materials and Methods**

In this paper, youth environmental activism in San Diego was studied by researching student led clubs relating to environmental activism within local high schools. Two high school districts were analyzed. The first school district was San Diego Unified School District with 19 high schools studied. The second school district was San Dieguito Union High School District with 5 high schools studied. Information on environmental activism was collected by examining each school's website and looking for club lists or an ASB website that could provide a club list. Club lists were then searched for clubs relating to environmental activism. These club lists typically have contact information for each club with club presidents and club advisors being listed. Most club lists also had a brief description detailing activities or a social media link where

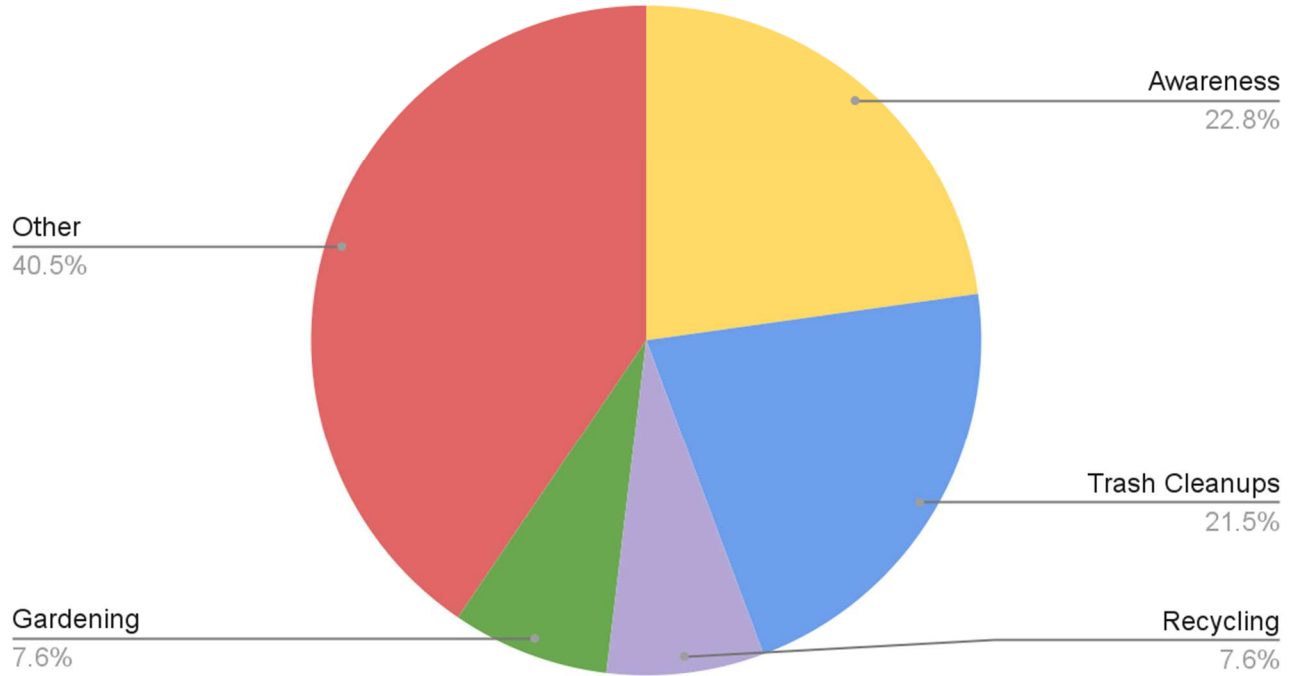
activities were recorded. In both cases, data about local youth environmental activism could be recorded. If there was not sufficient information relating to activities, then the club president or club advisor would be contacted. If no information regarding clubs or club activities could be found on a school's website, then a school administrator would be contacted. From this point, email responses were collected and then used to gather data on each school's youth environmental activism. All data collected was gathered in a central Google document with each school's name, list of clubs, club mission statements, club activities, and frequency of club activities recorded.

### **Results**

Of the 24 schools under the scope of this inquiry, data was only collected from 20 schools. The 4 schools with no data as of writing this report are Canyon Hills High School, East Village High School, Hoover High School, and Sunset Hills High School. The only school with no youth environmental activism was Mark Twain High School. Schools that stood out were Torey Pines, Canyon Crest Academy, and Patrick Henry High School for the number of clubs and for their diversity of environmental activism. Of the 20 schools with data 11 schools have at least one club that performs trash cleanups at rivers, lakes, parks or beaches. There are 11 schools that engage in environmental awareness. There are 6 schools that have clubs that engage in recycling. There are 5 schools that have clubs that perform gardening. Note that most schools have multiple clubs that engage in different activities and that some of these activities are specific to each school. In total, there are 55 clubs spread out between the 19 schools that have data and engage in some form of environmental activism. This averages to each school having 2-3 clubs that engage in environmental activism. There are a total of 18 clubs that engage in environmental awareness. There are 17 clubs that perform trash cleanups. There are 6 clubs that recycle. There are 6 clubs that garden. Note that some clubs perform multiple activities such as both gardening and beach cleanups while other clubs have very little information regarding

environmental activism.

### Club Environmental Activities



### Conclusion

The findings of this report can be used to help advance the goals of the Environmental Center of San Diego by providing valuable information as to the current state of youth environmental activism within San Diego high schools. This is just one small step towards the goal of gaining a full picture of all local youth environmental activism. Because of the small sample size of this investigation, these findings should not be extrapolated to represent all youth environmental activism within San Diego county or within every single high school in the San Diego area. This is a survey of youth environmental activism within the San Diego Unified School District and the San Dieguito Union High School District only. However, these findings are still a general indication of what the next generation of environmental activists is up to. It is recommended that there should be future studies regarding youth environmental activism within all of the other school districts in San Diego County. This report is just one small step towards the Environmental Center’s goal of understanding and fostering local youth environmental activism.