

The after-school program at San Diego Urban Discovery Academy is designed with three goals in mind. The first is to provide remedial instruction, homework support, and academic enrichment activities to children in a fun and friendly play-like setting. The second goal is to develop, implement, and evaluate new teaching and learning strategies and activities, allowing us to create effective and responsive intervention models that can be adapted for use in a variety of community based programs. As often as possible, these projects have a digital media component which both teaches kids interesting “new literacies” skills and permits them to show the products of their work publicly. Finally, we work to provide university students with practicum experiences, allowing them to test the theories they are learning in their on-campus classes in an organized and systematic fashion, and to deploy their newly-acquired skill sets in real-life settings.

Monday through Thursday afternoons UCSD undergraduates offer an array of activities in which the children can take part. These are organized in a circular arrangement of activity “stations” where the kids have the opportunity participate in a series of tasks, each designed to further their understanding of particular theme, which changes from week to week. The activities are created and lead by the undergraduates who are encouraged to draw from their personal interests and skills, resulting in an ever-changing and never-boring selection of projects for the kids to choose from.

In an effort to expand the children’s awareness of and tolerance for other cultures, we ‘travel’ each week to different country. While in Egypt, for example, the activity stations included ‘mummy math’, where the kids estimated how much wrapping material it would take to cover their bodies. They then wrapped each other up, removed the wrapping and laid it out in the hallway to be measured and compared with their estimate. From ‘mummy math’ they moved on to a hieroglyphic writing project, and from there to an art station where they created clay sculptures inspired by ancient Egyptian artifacts.

Children at the site are encouraged to take part in the design and implementation phases of the projects. In weekly meetings they choose which country to visit next, do on-line research about their chosen destination, and help decide on appropriate activities. Older children at the Academy take on leadership roles, guiding the younger children from station to station, and helping with the various tasks.