

2018 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

Project Name: Port of Los Angeles Youth Leadership Conference
Port of Los Angeles

Short, Descriptive Summary of the Event: The Port of Los Angeles hosted a Youth Leadership Conference for middle school harbor area students to familiarize them with the broad variety of jobs and careers in the Port as well as tout STEM aspects. Students participated in morning educational presentations and activities, a narrated harbor boat tour, and an afternoon break-out session of their choice with harbor engineers, port environmentalists, port police officers or port pilots all while learning about ports, international trade, the maritime environment and future career possibilities.



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1. Communications Challenge/Opportunity



Understanding that education is the key to a brighter future of engaged stakeholders, the Port of Los Angeles (POLA) is committed to helping students of all ages learn about ports, the maritime environment and the industries and careers that facilitate goods movement and global trade. And with this knowledge, we are building the future Port and maritime industry workforce.

The Youth Leadership Conference was created three years ago at the suggestion of a Harbor Commissioner as a unique way to immerse students in understanding Port operations and impacts on their everyday lives. Middle school students were selected as the target group because the Port currently has many programs targeted at younger and older students (school boat tours, in-classroom presentations, etc.) so this group presented an area of opportunity.

Choosing an interesting and stimulating format was a challenge – these students were from the schools closest to the Port of LA, so likely had some familiarity with the Port. How to keep their attention while deepening their knowledge and positive connection to the Port?

2. Nexus to the Port's Overall Mission

The Youth Leadership Conference supports the overall mission of the Port of Los Angeles. The *Port of Los Angeles Strategic Plan Update 2014* (Strategic Plan) identifies “Strong Relationships with Stakeholders” as one of its four strategic plan objectives. A free event for harbor area middle school students that directly supports school and youth programs helps foster strong relationships with educators, parents and students - essential stakeholders of our community.

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3. Planning and Programming



To maximize our time with these students, the Community Relations team decided that an all-day, interactive, conference-style format would be the most impactful. This would take place on a Saturday at a Port-owned community center on the waterfront. The team felt that by asking the participants to “apply” to the program and to dress in business-style attire, the students would view the day as a special opportunity and their behavior would follow suit. Aligning the program with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) learning, the local middle school teachers and youth programs managers in this area were contacted for their assistance in recruiting the students.

Building the program for the day, the team was determined to make it interactive and of interest to the age-group. The team reached out to port engineers, environmental scientists, economists, police officers and pilots for event support and we were met with overwhelming excitement and participation. Community Relations staff worked in tandem with these partners to create content that was unique and engaging for the students.

In addition to teaching the students about the variety of things that go on at the Port, the team wanted to use this opportunity to highlight the Port as an employer and to plant the seeds that this is a great and interesting place to work.

A secondary target for the event was the student’s parents. The team felt that if the students were excited about what they learned, they would naturally share it with their families and parents – broadening the number amount of education in the community from the event.

Goals: The goal of this program is to educate students about ports and maritime and trade industry careers in an age-appropriate, positive and stimulating way. POLA strives to teach students about the connection that the Port has to their everyday lives; the economic impact of the Port; the career opportunities connected to POLA; and the environmental, security, and community programs underway at the Port.

Objective: The objective was to educate middle school students on the job and career opportunities in the Port and maritime industry, and their parents, in a fun and engaging way through STEM. Secondary objective was to receive positive feedback from students and educators.

Target Audience: Target audience is middle school students in the harbor area.

Secondary Audiences: Secondary audiences are educators and the student’s parents.

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4. Actions Taken & Outputs



Applications for the 2018 Youth Leadership Conference were sent out to the local middle school STEM teachers, as well as local youth program STEM managers, in early 2018. A record number of applications were submitted, 135.

Working with our engineers, economist, port police, environmentalists and port pilots, we created an interesting and informative agenda for the day:

Welcome by Harbor Commissioner Anthony Pirozzi

“Port 101” presentation

“Build a Bridge” activity with toothpicks and Dots candy (engineering)

Morning Break

International Trade activity (economist)

Lunch while taking a boat tour of the Port of LA

Choice of afternoon session:

- Engineering – presentation and activity to see how many books 20 sheets of paper can hold

- Environmental – presentation and activity to see how ground water affects soils

- Port Police – tour of the Maritime Learning Education Training Center and demonstrations by K9 officers

- Port Pilots – presentation and operation of the live GPS equipment used to show ship movements

Awards presentation

The international trade activity was particularly interesting as it involved each student getting a bag of items – small toys such as puzzles, rings, balls, dice, etc., and a few nicer items such as Snickers bars and thumb drives – and being divided into groups by the color of their bag. These students were then asked to rate their happiness with the bag and relate the number to the POLA staff member assigned to their group. The students were then asked to barter/trade within their groups for items they wanted. When the happiness score was taken after this exercise, their individual scores went up slightly overall. The last part of the activity was to open up the bartering process to the entire room. It was very interesting to see the interactions here – the trading and the noise level was very high – and to note that items not found in the bags – the granola bars offered to them as snacks, for instance – made their way into the trading activity. At the end, overall happiness scores went up significantly.

Parents were invited to attend the awards ceremony where each child was called up by name to receive a certificate of participation. We also had teacher chaperones present from each school for the duration of the conference.

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Almost everything for this event was done in house, including event activities, printing, video production, audio visual, and most event set-up and breakdown. Tables, chairs and linens were rented. Other purchases included activity materials including *Dots* candy and toothpicks. Catering and the boat rental were also outsourced. Overall event costs were approximately \$4,000. VIDEO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-XBI1H_Cjk

5. Outcome and Evaluation



As stated above, the goal of this program is to educate students about the Port and maritime and trade industry careers in an age-appropriate, positive and stimulating way. The objective was to receive positive feedback from students and educators and to plant the seed that the Port and maritime industry is a great place to work.

Participation has increased each year we have held the event – so we know we are on the right track. We received very positive feedback from community members and educators on this event. As this is a third-time event, one thing we did not anticipate which became evident this year was that we had students attending multiple years. They were very excited coming in the door and happily saying “Yay! I got Port Police this time – I did Environmental last year!” and staff actually remembered some students from prior years. The fact that middle school students are willing to spend their Saturday at our event more than one time lets us know that we created an engaging, fun and “must attend” program. Going forward, the staff committee will discuss two issues that were apparent this year – potentially eliminating eligibility of 6th graders because of some behavior issues, and deciding if multiple-year participation is something we want to encourage.

Additionally, we had several parents ask us about jobs at the Port and we gave them information and contacts for personnel.

