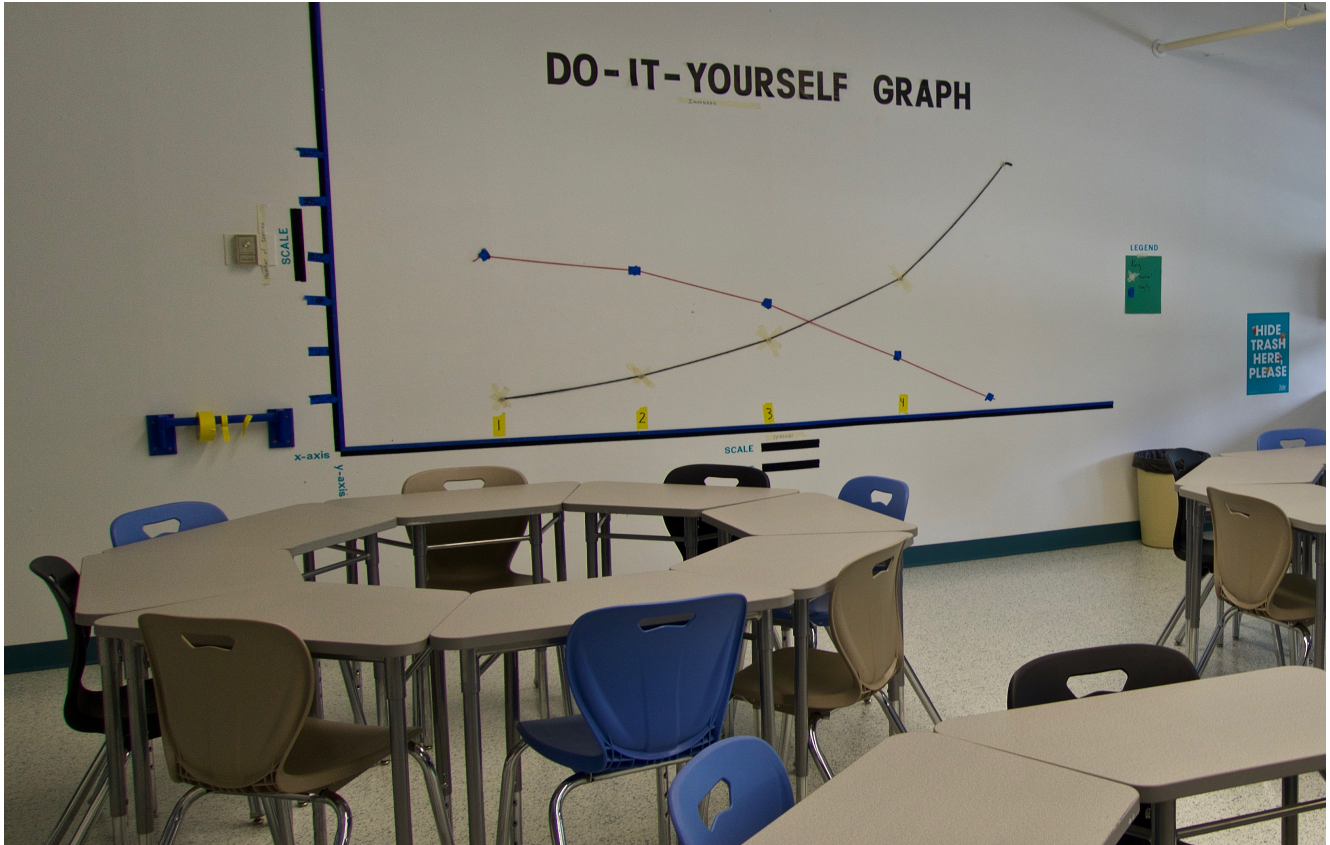


Science center enriches students' lives



A science center at Zephyr Cove is designed for multiple grade levels. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – No books needed. Lake Tahoe is a science lab unto itself.

While students on the South Shore have been taking advantage of learning outdoors through the South Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition, a new resource was unveiled on June 9. An Environmental Science Center is now part of Zephyr Cove Elementary School.

“It’s another opportunity for children to learn about the Lake Tahoe Basin,” Principal Nancy Cauley told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It teaches them how to be stewards of the place they live.”

Getting K-6 students outside to learn has been going on for the past few years on both sides of the state line. The converted classroom will be a resource for ZCES as well as other students in Douglas County, Lake Tahoe Unified and elsewhere.

Water quality, macro invertebrates and bugs are some of the topics students will delve into.

Teachers will be able to access the materials to foster science education in an age-appropriate manner. It's also hands on.

Next year Whittell High School students may be brought into the fold.

Already on one wall is a do-it-yourself graph charting the growth of the mudsnail and magfly in the basin. It teaches youngsters about aquatic invasive species, while also allowing them to plot the findings in a large-scale visual format.



A mural fills one wall in the science center. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lisa Kirkman and the Tahoe Art League are responsible for another wall that is a colorful mural of Lake Tahoe. The various fish that can be found in the lake are depicted as well as other wildlife.

With school about to get out for the summer, the room is expected to be put to greater use starting next school year.

“It creates a home base for outdoor education,” Devin Middlebrook with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency told *Lake Tahoe News*. “They can see, touch and feel. The classroom is for more in-depth learning.”

He was instrumental in getting the grant from the Nevada Division of State Lands Lake Tahoe License Plate Program in 2016 that led to ZCES being able to be part of South Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition, which until then had only been for LTUSD students.

Since then science has been growing exponentially at Zephyr Cove. It has been a community effort with parents, teachers, an anonymous donor, grant funding, TRPA, Rotarians and others pitching in to make the on campus lab a reality.

“It’s teaching kids about where they come from,” Middlebrook said.