Proposal: Jamaica Bay–Riis Park Environmental Stewardship with District 27 Pilot

Program Overview: *We propose a year-long pilot partnership between a fourth-grade class at PS/MS 183Q in Community School District 27 and the National Park Service (NPS). This initiative aims to deepen students' understanding of environmental conservation, civic responsibility, and natural systems through place-based learning at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Jacob Riis Park, and other NPS sites within the Gateway National Recreation Area. The program will include three field experiences (one in fall, two in spring), aligned classroom instruction, and direct support from NPS educators and the District 27 office.*

Program Dates: September 2025 – May 2026
Grade Level: Grade 4
Partner: National Park Service

Program Timeline & Activities

Season	Activity	Location	Focus	Classroom Follow-up
Fall (Oct)	Field Trip 1: Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge	Jamaica Bay	Ecosystems, biodiversity, observation	Nature journaling, "See-Think-Wonder" reflections
Spring (Apr)	Field Trip 2: Coastal Habitat Heroes	Jamaica Bay	Marine debris, conservation, stewardship	Poster project: community call-to-action
Spring (May)	Field Trip 3: Ecology & History of Riis Park	Riis Park & adjacent wetlands	Habitat restoration, civic memory, natural history	Trail signage or "eco-museum" classroom display

Curriculum Integration: This interdisciplinary program supports a wide range of New York State and NYC DOE standards. Through a combination of classroom learning and field experiences, students will explore real-world environmental and civic issues while building content knowledge and skills across multiple subjects.

- **Civics and HMH Connections – Grade 4 Year-at-a-Glance (Draft)**

A working planning document to align field experiences with classroom instruction and core curriculum can be found here.

- **Math Connections**

NPS Resources: To support classroom learning and enhance field experiences, the National Park Service will provide a range of free educational materials aligned to Next Generation Science Standards. These resources include lesson plans, data collection tools, and citizen science activities that help students engage deeply with the ecosystems of Jamaica Bay and Riis Park. They are designed to be teacher-friendly, adaptable, and hands-on.

- *Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Curriculum* (e.g., Horseshoe Crab Life Cycle, Estuary Ecosystems)
- *Coastal Habitat Heroes* Program: Conservation through clean-up and citizen science
- *Gateway NRA Field Program Guides & Ranger-Led Activities*

Integrated Subject Connections and Standards: This section outlines how the proposed program aligns with New York State Learning Standards across core content areas. Through real-world inquiry, field experiences, and reflective classroom activities, students will engage in interdisciplinary learning that strengthens academic outcomes while fostering civic awareness and environmental stewardship. These connections ensure that the program complements and enhances daily instruction, especially in fourth grade.

Science: Ecosystems, life cycles, environmental impact

- **NYSSLS 4-LS1-1:** Construct an argument that animals and plants have internal and external structures that support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction.
- **NYSSLS 4-ESS3-1:** Obtain and combine information to describe that energy and fuels humans use impact the environment, and alternative sources can reduce the impact.
- **NYSSLS 4-LS1-2:** Use a model to describe that animals receive different types of information through their senses and process the information to respond.

ELA/HmH: Observational writing, journaling, informational text

- **NY ELA Standard 4W2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **NY ELA Standard 4SL4:** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner using appropriate facts and relevant details.
- **NY ELA Standard 4R1/R2:** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what it says explicitly and when drawing inferences.

Social Studies/Civics for All: Civic responsibility, local government, historical spaces

- **New York State SS Framework 4.1:** Students explore New York State's geography, history, economics, and government.
- **Civics for All (NYC DOE):** Students engage with core civic concepts such as rights, responsibilities, and participation in local community and environmental stewardship.

- **4.6 Government:** Local and state governments organize and influence people's lives, including civic action and community decision-making.

Art: Mapping, signage creation, visual reflection

- **NYS Visual Arts Standard VA:Cr2.3.4a:** Document, describe, and represent regional environments and events through art-making.
- **VA:Re7.1.4a:** Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages about the environment.
- **VA:Cn10.1.4a:** Create art that reflects community issues or civic identity.

Math: Visualizing data, problem-solving, financial literacy

- **Data Collection & Graphing:** Students can create graphs, charts or line plots of the species they observe at Jamaica Bay, comparing frequency across seasons or locations. This supports standard **4.MD.B.4** (represent and interpret data).
- **Rounding & Place Value:** Students analyze population counts and environmental data using rounding and place value (**4.NBT.A.3**), helping quantify environmental impact.
- **Budgeting & Financial Literacy:** As part of planning a class-led habitat restoration project, students can engage in budgeting for materials, comparing costs, and making spending decisions. This integrates **4.OA.3** (solving multi-step word problems with whole numbers) and **4.NBT.B.4–6** (adding, subtracting, and estimating with multi-digit numbers).

Learning Objectives: By the end of the pilot program, students will:

1. Observe and describe plant and animal life in coastal ecosystems
2. Understand interdependence within habitats and human-environment relationships
3. Engage in civic action through stewardship activities
4. Analyze the history and ecological evolution of Jamaica Bay and Riis Park
5. Communicate their findings and reflections through written, visual, and oral presentations

Teacher & NPS Engagement

- **Pre-visit**: NPS provides orientation and digital resources for classroom prep
- **During program**: Teachers implement journaling, science, and ELA/HmH extensions tied to field trips
- **Post-program**: Students showcase final projects and presentations to school and NPS partners
- **Professional Learning**: NPS offers PD workshops on environmental field instruction and curriculum alignment

Resource Needs

Provided by NPS	Provided by School
Field trip programming and guides	Transportation (bus and permission slips)
Curriculum materials	Basic classroom supplies (journals, art materials)
Virtual orientation	Tech support for digital student work or virtual showcases

Next Steps

1. Connect with NPS and share the draft
2. ~~Confirm school-based teacher/classroom partner~~
3. Schedule September planning call with NPS educators
4. Finalize field trip dates and confirm transportation
5. Launch with student orientation session in September (virtual?)