



MSBSD STUDENTLine



Mission: Mat-Su Borough School District prepares students for success
Dr. Deena M. Paramo, Superintendent

MSBSD STUDENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

October 12, 2012

MSBSD is moving forward...

River Rangers—Teeland Middle School
Katherine Ellsworth, Principal
Josh Smith, TMS Assistant Principal

By Rhett Buchanan, TMS Teacher
Rhett Buchanan and Mike Shea are RR advisors

Teeland Middle School’s River Rangers program was founded in 2006, and has introduced more than 1400 Valley students to the place-based, hands-on science of stream ecology. Each May, Teeland seventh graders visit local streams. Their work includes:

- Sampling macroinvertebrates
- Measuring the water’s flow volume
- Assessing water chemistry
- Studying the critical components of salmon habitat

After the preliminary work is completed, students participate in a streambank restoration project. The Little Susitna River, Cottonwood Creek, Wasilla Creek, and Elk Creek all show evidence of middle school students who are dedicated stewards of community resources.

To fund transportation and materials costs for these field trips, co-founders Mike Shea and Rhett Buchanan received grants from many national organizations, including State Farm, Toyota, HP, Toshiba, Lowe’s, ING, Intel, Project Learning Tree, and the NEA Foundation. Local partnerships with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, US



Fish and Wildlife Service, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, and Mat-Su Conservation Services have all been pivotal in making this program successful.

This August, the CBS TV show “Aqua Kids” filmed a



series of episodes in southcentral Alaska, and featured work done by the River Rangers at Cottonwood Creek. Former River Rangers students Zach Neubauer and Jade Gilpin, along with Mr. Buchanan, were interviewed by the camera crew as they stood knee-deep next to a streambank they restored in 2010. This episode is expected to air Saturday morning at 7:30 a.m. on local station KTVA in October.

The long term success of the River Rangers program testifies that the best science instruction is based not in a textbook, but the local natural world. The knowledge and enthusiasm for science that the River Rangers develop are carried with them for years to come. As participant, Zach Neubauer states, “The River Rangers program really gave me a tangible connection to our local ecosystem, and caused me to form an attitude of respect and excitement towards all the amazing things that are happening just outside our doors.”

A tangible connection...