



Dear Principals, School Administrators, and Teachers,

This fall we will have the opportunity to enrich classroom instruction on art, science, writing, and the environment with an exciting new resource package. The Robert Bateman "Get to Know" Program is coming to districts across the state and will provide us with a host of cutting-edge, interactive, and thoroughly engaging learning tools designed to reconnect youth with nature and nurture a renewed interest in California's native plants and animals. This program promotes child stewardship for the planet and encourages youth of all ages to become leaders in conservation. Considering the pressing environmental issues facing us all—from climate change to biodiversity loss—the need for programs like this has never been greater.

Originally founded in Canada in 2000 by world-renowned artist and naturalist Robert Bateman, the Get to Know Contest motivates youth to go outside and "get to know" the names of their neighbors of other species. The program has grown from a small nature art contest into a major nationwide campaign in Canada that collaborates with a diverse group of partners and uses the latest research to strengthen human connections to nature while teaching young people about the benefits of spending time outdoors, staying active, and enjoying life-long learning. As you will see, the Get to Know Contest package for schools provides learning opportunities for students, supports environmental instruction currently in place, and best of all, can be added to the classroom at no cost.

After ten years of success in Canada, the Get to Know Contest has expanded into California. Through a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Federation, and countless other organizations, the Get to Know Program will allow Los Angeles County teachers to easily enrich and supplement existing instructional materials.

The main focus of the program's launch this September is the Get to Know Contest – an art, writing, and photography contest that invites students to experience nature and then share that experience through the arts. The Get to Know school package includes a poster and entry forms for your students. All materials are available on line at www.gettoknow.ca. Also to be found on the website is set of lesson plans designed to integrate with California's curriculum standards. Put simply, there is no other resource available that will help us to get students passionate about nature while also allowing us to follow through on the Education and the Environment Initiative, at no cost to educators. This package delivers hands-on learning experiences that are applicable to students in both primary and secondary grades, and I am confident you will consider it a worthwhile and timely addition to your current science, art, and literacy lesson plans.

I invite you to consider adding this resource to your classrooms this September (the contest will run from September 26th to November 30th) and judge for yourself this innovative approach to inspiring students to care for the environment. This contest represents not only an opportunity to increase our students' knowledge about wildlife, but has the potential to change the way they view the environment forever—hopefully creating a new generation of passionate environmental stewards who will drive forward important environmental causes in our communities. It is my hope that school districts in Los Angeles County will work to create a brighter, greener future for our students with the help of the Get to Know Program.

Sincerely,

Dean Gilbert

Los Angeles County Office of Education