D'Ippolito Elementary School students braved the strong scent of a clamshell pile recently dropped off in their Vineland school yard to take part in a statewide oyster research program.

The Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, associated with Rutgers University, has recruited South Jersey students for its community-based oyster restoration and the education program.

The youngsters bagged clamshells that will be set in the tidal waters in Cape May County at the end of June to become safe havens for oyster larvae.

At end of the summer, the shell bags with the larva will be shifted to protected waters off Gandy's Beach in Downe Township to mature.

Local schools are supplementing the hands-on experience with class lessons, using the Delaware Bay in physical science and history lessons.

Scientists and students will monitor the progress of the oysters for the next five years.

Fourth-grader Isabella Molina shovels clamshells into a bucket as part of an oyster restoration project.

Colbi Morgan, a fifth-grader, carries a clamshell bag, to a collection pile. The shells will become habitat for oyster larvae.