

# **Characteristics and Motives of Volunteer Facilitators of Project WILD in Ohio**

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The purpose of this research was to describe Project WILD facilitators and the motives for their continuing involvement. The specific objectives addressed by this study were:

1. To describe Project WILD facilitators on the basis of selected sociodemographic characteristics, educational background or training in environmental studies, environmental concern, and individual use of Project WILD materials.
2. To determine the level of involvement of facilitators.
3. To identify motives for participation as a facilitator.
4. To identify the characteristics and motives related to a facilitator's level of involvement.

Three conditions were predictive of a higher level of facilitator involvement::

1. A commitment to environmental education as the most important motive for facilitating.
2. A high level of environmental concern.
3. The ability to conduct Project WILD workshops as a part of the job.

Recommendation: an incentive system to encourage sustained facilitator participation should reflect the fact that the most important motive for facilitating was a commitment to environmental education and to the goals of Project WILD. Facilitators should continually be made aware that their efforts are vital to the success of the program and are important in advancing environmental education both locally and statewide.

## *Literature Review of Other Project WILD research:*

Fleming (1983) conducted the Project WILD field test. Results demonstrated that Project WILD was effective in changing the knowledge and attitudes of students across all grades, from kindergarten through high school. The greatest gains occurred with young, primary students. The more activities a teacher used, the greater the gains in both areas. Teachers tended to prefer receiving the materials in a workshop.

Fleming (1985) -- three schools in Florida. The school that used Project WILD only had the greatest gain in knowledge and the greatest positive increase in attitudes.

## *Results:*

Majority of facilitators are female classroom teachers in their 40's with some training in environmental studies.

Reason most often given for not conducting workshops is no time to plan and conduct workshops.

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A commitment to environmental education ranked highest in motives for becoming a Project WILD facilitator. The majority of facilitators indicated that the importance of environmental education and their desire to help in this area, was the most important reason why they were a facilitator. The second most common reason related to the value of the Project WILD program and its materials.

### **Recommendations for Practice with Volunteers:**

- Facilitators should have the opportunity to acquire new skills or refine existing ones just as staff do.
- Recruiting program should be formalized.
- A system of incentives should be implemented.
- A communication system should be established with regular contact.