

An Assessment of the Use and Effectiveness of Project WILD (Wildlife in Learning Design) by Teachers and Youth Leaders in Oklahoma

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July 1988

This study assessed the use of Project WILD as an interdisciplinary, supplementary, environmental and conservation education program for educators of kindergarten through high school age young people in Oklahoma. The study identified how the activity guides are being used and the effectiveness of the program as seen by instructor evaluation, and compared the similarities and differences in use by the sample that has received training in the use of Project WILD. Moreover, the project assessed if these similarities and/or differences effect the use of Project WILD within the sample.

Research Objectives and Results (Results in Italics):

1. To determine how Project WILD materials are currently being used by instructors in Oklahoma, specifically:
 - a. To determine of the respondents who have experienced training, how many have used the Project WILD materials.
Project WILD used by approximately two-thirds of those responding.
 - b. To determine if the Project WILD materials are being used as the basis for a course of study or if they are incorporated into existing curricula.
88% include materials in teaching when appropriate; 12% use Project WILD as a basis for a course of study or as a basis for one or more instructional units.
 - c. To assess how many Project WILD activities instructors typically perform with students in the course of a year.
55% conduct 1-6 activities per year; 27% conduct 7-10 activities per year.
 - d. To determine the approximate amount of time spent with students on each Project WILD activity.
44% of instructors report they spend an average of 10-30 minutes per activity; 43% report they spend an average of 30 - 60 minutes.
 - e. To delineate why instructors use Project WILD.
 - f. To rank the reasons for Project WILD use by instructors by priority.
Highest ranking reasons were "providing students with opportunities to learn that are interesting, useful, and instructionally sound," "being able to include concepts about wildlife and the environment in my curriculum," and "to support, enrich, and add variety to my teaching of basic subjects, skills, and concepts."

2. To identify the results (achievement) experienced by students following Project WILD use.

More than 20% of the instructors report that after using Project WILD students "recognize what wildlife is and what it needs to survive;" 22.7% report students "recognize the importance of wildlife habitat" following Project WILD activities; and 15.24% and 14.03% respectively state that students "recognize the importance of healthy environments and how ecological systems function," and "increased responsible decision making." Instructors report MOST students "develop greater awareness of wildlife and the environment," MANY students "acquire knowledge" and "show more responsible attitudes toward wildlife and their environment," and FEW students "acquire increased academic" and "increased social" skills.

3. To determine if the results of Project WILD use with students is consistent with instructor goals for use of the materials.

Instructors report student learning and skill acquisition from Project WILD experience, however, in this study, no correlation was observed between student learning and skill acquisition and instructor goals for use of the materials.

4. To determine the similarities and/or differences existing between elementary and secondary users of Project WILD.

Elementary instructors report they spend significantly longer amounts of time in the use of Project WILD lessons. No differences were found in use by elementary and secondary instructors regarding the number of Project WILD activities done with students each year, the amount of background material read prior to conducting a Project WILD activity, sharing of Project WILD guides with others, and plans for continued use. Teachers at the elementary level were concerned with "making learning interesting as well as useful," and "incorporating wildlife and environmental concepts in their teaching." Secondary instructors were more concerned with specializing in a skill or subject. Facilitators must realize the basic differences in use by participants at training workshops and encourage them to use Project WILD as it best fits their individual needs.

5. To determine similarities and/or differences existing between urban, rural, and suburban users of Project WILD.

Rural, urban, and suburban instructors were similar in their use of Project WILD activities, the amount of time spent on Project WILD lessons, the amount of background material read in preparation for a Project WILD activity, the number of activities done per year from Project WILD, the sharing of Project WILD activity guides with others and plans for continued use. "Incorporating environmental concepts into the curriculum" was found to be significantly more important to urban instructors, and "to meet science requirements" was found to be significantly more important to suburban teachers.

6. To determine if the amount of Project WILD use by instructors is dependent on the length of time participants have had the materials in their possession.

No statistically significant correlation exists.

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7. To identify how teachers as a group use Project WILD.

Teachers assess student learning primarily through classroom discussion and observation. 75% of the teachers who responded and have used Project WILD plan to continue to do so. Over 51% of teachers who have attended Project WILD training to receive materials did so because they wanted to attend. Teachers requested the following additional supplementary materials (in rank order): wildlife resource centers for school districts (skull set, slide show, owl pellets, filmstrips, games, books, etc.), conservation education units with posters on specific topics, 5-10 minute videos on wildlife concepts, wildlife fact sheets, state specific slide shows and pictures.

8. To determine how much of the background information provided in the Project WILD activity guide is read by instructors prior to conducting a Project WILD activity.

Most of the background information provided for each activity in the Project WILD activity guides is read by instructors in preparing activities for use with student groups.

9. To determine the average number of people with whom Project WILD instructors share their activity guides.

It was established that there is no basis for determining how many Project WILD instructors will share their guides, or with how many others.

10. Of the instructors who do not use Project WILD, determine their reasons for nonuse.

Reasons given (in order of frequency) included: plan to use in the future, not currently in a teaching situation or an appropriate situation for Project WILD use, difficulty finding time to plan, curriculum is not flexible enough to incorporate Project WILD, and job does not permit opportunity.