

Project WILD Evaluation Impact Studies I and II: Findings from Questionnaires, Observations, and Interviews

**Prepared by Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. for
Project WILD**

March 2000

This report presents the findings from a study of current and former Project WILD users. The two main goals of the evaluation were to provide Project WILD staff with reliable information about the program's audiences to assist the organization's planning efforts and to involve Project WILD State Coordinators in evaluation training and data collection in an effort to institutionalize evaluation.

Five instruments were utilized in the study, and the report summarizes their development, use, responses, and analysis:

- mail-back questionnaire to 2,200 educators to determine the characteristics and use patterns of current and former Project WILD users (452 were returned),
- observation protocol to study how Project WILD is being used by classroom teachers with their students,
- post-observation teacher interview protocol to provide context for the observations,
- telephone interview protocol to ascertain why educators stop using Project WILD, and
- training protocols to instruct State Coordinators how to administer the instruments.

Findings indicated that Project WILD has a core audience of experienced elementary school teachers who teach a range of subjects rather than one specific discipline and that there has been a drop in Project WILD use by "other" educators (para-professionals, librarians, day-care providers, home-school parents), science/environmental education teachers, and language arts teachers. It was recommended that to expand the audience base, Project WILD should target teachers at all grade levels and increase efforts geared toward those educator groups that have dropped off in their use of Project WILD.

In assessing use patterns, the research found that most former Project WILD educators decided to stop using the program within two years of starting, that current Project WILD educators use a few activities each year—often the same ones—when the activities' content and skills match their regular curriculum, and that teachers are under pressure to fulfill state or district curriculum requirements. The report recommends that educators need a support network and that Project WILD needs to demonstrate how activities match curriculum standards.

Overall, educators gave a high rating to the Project WILD workshops and complimented the hands-on nature of Project WILD activities.

The report provides in-depth discussion and supporting documentation of research and participant responses.

The report recommends that to facilitate future evaluation projects, Project WILD should design a standardized questionnaire and database for State Coordinators to use to collect and keep track of current and former user demographics and teaching characteristics.