

Evaluation of
New Hampshire Education & Environment Team
Summer Institute
2003-2006



Prepared for
New Hampshire Project Learning Tree

Prepared by:
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“For me, there are no words that can express the life changing experience I had [at the summer institute]. The richness of the activities and the knowledge I gained was life altering. It has made me more aware of the wonders of our earth, and also the need to take care of it and to pass this on to the children, who are our future.”

— 2005 participant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summer Institute Overview

The New Hampshire Education and Environment Team (NHEET) is a partnership among:

- New Hampshire Project Learning Tree
- Project WET at the NH Department of Environmental Services
- Project WILD and WILD Aquatic at the NH Fish & Game Department
- Homes for Wildlife at the NH Fish & Game Department
- GLOBE Program at the University of New Hampshire
- USDA Forest Service, State & Private Forestry Conservation Education Program
- USDA Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest Conservation Education Program

In 2003, NHEET began offering a multi-day summer institute for teachers. The purpose of the summer institute is to foster change in teacher practice related to integration of natural science in a Kindergarten through grade 8 curriculum. The NHEET partners believe that if teachers attend a multi-day professional development institute and follow-up workshops focused on natural science content and the skills to teach that content, K-8 teachers and students will increase their awareness, knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of New Hampshire's natural resources. (See Appendix A, Institute Logic Model for details about the design and theoretical framework for the summer institute.)

This evaluation, conducted in the fall of 2006, seeks to measure changes in teacher practice as a result of a teacher's participation in the NHEET summer institute. This report includes results from participants in the summer institutes for the years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006.

This report is prepared for the Board of Directors and staff of New Hampshire Project Learning Tree. It is intended to inform strategic decisions about how best to leverage resources in professional development. The evaluation findings are also expected to influence programmatic decisions by NHEET in the design of future summer institutes.

Main Findings

The purpose of the summer institute is to foster change in teacher practice related to integration of natural science in a PreK-8 curriculum. For the purpose of this evaluation, **we define *desired change in teacher practice*** as follows. Summer institute participants were surveyed in these areas using a Likert scale.

- Greater study of natural science
- Greater use of interdisciplinary strategies and hands-on investigations
- Greater use of curriculum materials in designing units
- Greater use of school grounds or other local natural areas

Survey results report an overall increase in all four dimensions of teacher practice measured.

1. **Greater study of natural science.** Over 95% of participants reported an increase in knowledge for teaching about the local environment and an increase in ability to teach natural science concepts and topics to their students. In addition, participants reported that participation in the institute influenced their awareness, knowledge, and appreciate for New Hampshire’s natural landscape.
2. **Greater use of interdisciplinary strategies and hands-on investigations.** Respondents reported that the summer institute had a positive effect on their teaching natural science in conjunction with other disciplines. In addition, respondents reported that more of their natural science lessons are being taught “hands-on”.
3. **Greater use of environmental education curriculum materials in designing units.** Respondents are better able to align environmental education curriculum materials with their school’s curriculum goals.
 - A majority of respondents felt prepared to lead activities from Project Learning Tree, Project WET, Project WILD, and Homes for Wildlife. Approximately half of respondents felt prepared to lead protocols from the GLOBE Program.
 - When designing new units, the majority of respondents include activities from PLT, WET, and/or WILD, while approximately one-third of respondents include activities from GLOBE and/or Homes for Wildlife.
 - Participants value the resources and resource professionals introduced to them through the institute and follow-up workshops.
4. **Greater use of school grounds or other local natural areas.** Nearly all respondents reported that involvement in the summer institute has helped them to see the outdoors as a natural extension of the classroom.

“I am more apt to take the children outside for extended periods of time, finding various ways to integrate language arts and math. My students have realized the benefit and see themselves as stewards of the schoolyard habitat.” — 2005 participant

Additional Findings

Respondents reported two additional values not targeted in this evaluation.

1. **Value in collaboration with other teachers.** Several respondents commented on the value of collaborating with other teachers at the institute and back at school. NHEET prefers that teachers participate as part of a school team. This comment supports the value of this approach.

“I think being with other teachers at the institute helped me gain confidence to teach in areas that I already thought important. It reaffirmed my conviction to get the children outside!” — 2005 participant

2. **Continued communication between NHEET and institute participants.** Respondents commented on the value of continued communication between NHEET and institute teachers. Additional research into follow-up workshop attendance may elicit connections between participants in follow-up workshops and survey results.

“Thanks for the continued communication; it helps keep your program in the foreground of the planning process.” — 2003 participant

Suggestions for Improvement

Several suggestions for improvement emerged from analysis of survey results.

1. **Clarify institute objectives for designing curriculum units.** While respondents indicated that they found value in designing a curriculum unit during the summer institute, only 40% actually use this unit in their classrooms. Several factors may contribute to this, including changes in teaching responsibilities. The existing structure may be appropriate if the objective is to practice curriculum planning for environmental education, including use of the EE curriculum materials provided. If the objective is for participants to use the unit, however, the NHEET partners should examine why more teachers are not using their unit and modify the curriculum planning structure as appropriate.
2. **Continue to focus on activities that can be done in the schoolyard and local outdoor areas.** Survey results suggest that the summer institute has been an effective mechanism for increasing teacher and student use of the out-of-doors. Nearly 80% of participants have increased their use of the schoolyard and local natural areas, viewing the outdoors as an extension of their classroom. As one 2004 participant stated, *“I try to incorporate as many connections to our local natural systems in my lessons as possible. I would love to teach 80% of my curriculum outside.”* A comment from another participant supports a focus on studying the schoolyard and local natural areas rather than more distant locations. *“[I] have been limited by unavailability of natural space to take kids to near my school. I have resorted to two to three outings a year during which I bus kids to various locals to get outdoor water experiences.”*
3. **Consider the objectives for featuring the GLOBE program at the institute.** Among the environmental education curriculum materials provided at the summer institute, the GLOBE Program is used least by participants. One-third of respondents reports incorporating GLOBE protocols into new units. One-third uses the protocols in their teaching. In 2005, NHEET partners recognized that GLOBE was not adequately addressed for participants to be prepared to use the program and reduced its presence in the 2006 institute.

BACKGROUND

New Hampshire Project Learning Tree

New Hampshire Project Learning Tree (NHPLT) offers professional development to educators in one of the country's most time-honored environmental education curricula. Developed in 1973 and continuously updated to address educational changes, the Project Learning Tree (PLT) curriculum delivers an award-winning series of activities for students in pre-Kindergarten through grade 12.

While an international office in Washington, DC is responsible for developing the curriculum materials, NHPLT is an independent nonprofit organization responsible for delivering professional development in the curriculum at the state level. NHPLT is widely regarded as one of the most effective state PLT programs in the country. Professional development activities developed and tested here serve as national models.

One area where NHPLT is pioneering the greatest change is the design of professional development. Traditionally, PLT has relied on one-day workshops to train teachers. NHPLT has moved beyond this workshop model to provide a continuum of professional development opportunities for educators. This evaluation seeks to analyze the effectiveness of intensive multi-day institutes in fostering change in teacher practice.

Teacher Professional Development

A critical component of national school reform is sustained, high-quality professional development for educators. This focus on teacher training began in the 1990's with the adoption of state and national academic standards and accompanying tests, and continues under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB guidelines for professional development discourage one-day workshops, in favor of sustained and job-embedded training.

In New Hampshire, professional development for teachers is guided by personal and district-wide master plans that are tied to the results of student performance on standardized tests. These master plans move away from discreet, one-day workshops towards sustained and intensive training in content areas and classroom practices.

This systemic change encourages programs like PLT to move beyond our traditional one-day workshop model and provide more sustained support to teachers and schools. NHPLT has experimented with several approaches over the past several years to meet school and teacher needs better. One model is an intensive three-year, whole-school program. Formative and summative evaluations (2004 and 2005) of this project found significant positive changes in teacher knowledge and classroom practice, as well as growth in student enthusiasm and community involvement. (Go to http://www.peecworks.org/PEEC/PEEC_Research/S006EE542 to download these evaluation reports.)

Another significant new approach to training teachers is through multi-day residential summer institutes with follow-up training and support during the school year for participating teachers. This evaluation seeks to determine the degree to which this model addresses its desired changes in teacher practice.

Summer Institute Design

In 2003, NHEET began offering a multi-day summer institute for teachers. The purpose of the summer institute is to foster change in teacher practice related to integration of natural science in a Kindergarten through grade 8 curriculum. The NHEET partners believe that if teachers attend a multi-day professional development institute and follow-up workshops focused on natural science content and the skills to teach that content, K-8 teachers and students will increase their awareness, knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of New Hampshire's natural resources. See Appendix A, Institute Logic Model for details about the design and theoretical framework for the summer institute.

While the institute has evolved over the past four years, several constants remain in place. The institute is held in August at the residential Barry Conservation Camp in Berlin, NH. Each institute focuses on natural science content and the skills to teach that content to K-8 students. Before attending the institute, participants complete a variation of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) questionnaire¹, a tool that describes the levels of concern that individuals experience as they adopt a new practice. Participants also complete a pre- and post-institute rubric that assesses knowledge of natural science topics. Additional constants include advertising, participating organizations, most session presenters, and environmental education curriculum materials distributed.

Three characteristics of the summer institute have varied over the four years.

1. **Duration.** In 2003, the summer institute was three days. In 2004, it was extended to five days and remained that way in 2005 and 2006.
2. **Theme.** In 2003 and 2004, the summer institute theme was *Linking Science to Math and Language Arts*. In 2005 and 2006, it was *Curriculum Connections Through Schoolyard Investigations*. While much of the content remained similar, this thematic change did prompt several changes in the organization and delivery of training sessions.
3. **Structure.** The relative mix of session topics and time spent on topics has shifted throughout the four years. Some session presenters have changed.

Follow-up workshops are offered during the school year to institute participants, focused on those topics chosen by the teachers. Participants self-select which, if any, follow-up workshops they attend. Follow-up workshop topics have included winter tree identification, mapping, weather and climate, and children's literature.

¹ Hall, Gene E. 1974. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model: A Developmental Conceptualization of the Adoption Process within Educational Institutions. University of Texas at Austin.

Intended Uses of Evaluation

This evaluation seeks to measure changes in teacher practice as a result of a teacher's participation in the NHEET summer institute. While all the NHEET partners are interested in this information, this report is prepared foremost for the Board of Directors and staff of NHPLT. It will inform strategic decisions about how best to leverage resources in professional development.

NHPLT identified four key intended uses of this evaluation, as follows:

- **Measuring teacher practice change.** The evaluation seeks to assess the effectiveness of a residential summer institute and follow up training and support in fostering sustained change in teacher practice.
- **Leveraging professional development resources.** The results of this evaluation, in conjunction with the recent whole-school evaluation, provide meaningful documentation of program outcomes as the NHPLT board and staff review and revise the organization's strategic plan in 2006-2007.
- **Informing National PLT.** National PLT is keenly interested in the efficacy of different professional development approaches. These findings may inform consideration of alternative workshop models at the national level.
- **Enhancing NHPLT evaluation capacity.** NHPLT is committed to enhancing its in-house capacity to conduct utilization-focused program evaluation as a cost effective strategy for long-term program improvement. NHPLT staff performed most of the evaluation tasks, using PEER Associates as consultants to advise on the design of the evaluation plan, appropriate instruments, and tabulation of results, as well as to provide an external review of the findings.



EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Summary of Methodology

NHPLT staff took the following steps in conducting this evaluation.

1. Identify stakeholders. List all individuals and groups with interest in our evaluation findings.
2. Prioritize stakeholders. List stakeholders in order of priority, determine key decisions that stakeholders will make from evaluation findings, and identify evidence needed to make these decisions.
3. Determine evaluation questions. Identify what questions will obtain the evidence needed for the high priority stakeholders.
4. Determine strategy and tools. Identify which evaluation strategies and tools will most effectively answer the questions.
5. Design and pilot test evaluation tools.
6. Implement evaluation tools.
7. Conduct Standards of Desirability exercise.
8. Analyze evaluation results.
9. Report results.

Detailed Methodology

Stakeholder Identification and Prioritization

The following stakeholder groups were identified for this evaluation. They are listed in order of priority.

1. NHPLT Board of Directors
2. NHPLT Staff
3. NHPLT Funders
4. NHEET Partners

NHPLT staff then identified key decisions that stakeholders would likely make as a result of the evaluation, as well as the evidence stakeholders would need to make these decisions.

1. NHPLT Board of Directors

Decision 1: To what extent, if at all, to continue this intensive approach to teacher professional development

Evidence:

- To what extent the summer institute leads to changes in teacher practice and demonstrates sufficient evidence of meeting anticipated impacts.

- To what extent the degree of change in teacher practice is cost-effective as compared to PLT's other professional development programs.

Decision 2: To what extent, if at all, to continue to participate in the NHEET partnership.

Evidence:

- To what extent the NHEET partnership objectives meet overall PLT program objectives effectively.
- To what extent that participation in the partnership has a positive impact on staff in the areas of professional development, networking, outreach to the education community, collaboration and productivity.

2. NHPLT Staff

Decision 1: To what extent, if at all, to allocate resources, specifically time and funding.

Evidence:

- To what extent the summer institute leads to desired changes in teacher practice and demonstrates sufficient evidence of meeting anticipated impacts.
- To what extent PLT staff time at the institute supports desired change in teacher practice.
- To what extent summer institute participants recognize and trust NHPLT staff.
- To what extent PLT activities are sufficiently cited as part of the materials that help teachers infuse interdisciplinary, hands-on study of natural science into their curriculum.

Decision 2: To what extent, if at all, to continue this intensive approach to teacher professional development.

Evidence:

- To what extent the summer institute leads to desired changes in teacher practice and demonstrates sufficient evidence of meeting anticipated impacts.
- To what extent the degree of change in teacher practice is cost-effective as compared to PLT's other professional development programs.

3. NHPLT Funders

Decision 1: To what extent, if at all, to invest in NHPLT.

Evidence:

- To what extent the summer institute meets their objectives, known to be as follows.

- Teachers and students are aware of the value of forests, forestry, and the forest products industry.
- Students have the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about the environment.
- To what extent the quality of change in teacher practice fostered by participation in the summer institute is as or more important than the number of teachers trained by PLT in traditional one-day workshops.
- To what extent the summer institute provides a cost-effective investment in professional development, as compared to other professional development programs (PLT or others).

4. NHEET Partners

Decision 1: To what extent, if at all, to keep the summer institute as an integral part of the partnership.

Evidence:

- To what extent the summer institute leads to desired changes in teacher practice and demonstrates sufficient evidence of meeting anticipated impacts.
- To what extent each partner's staff time at the institute supports desired change in teacher practice.
- To what extent the summer institute participants recognize and trust the staff from each partner's organization.
- To what extent each partner's activities are sufficiently cited as part of the materials that help teachers infuse interdisciplinary, hands-on study into their curriculum.
- To what extent that participation in the partnership has a positive impact on each partner's staff in the areas of professional development, networking, outreach to the education community, collaboration and productivity.

Dimensions of Teacher Practice

For the purpose of this evaluation, we define *desired change in teacher practice* as:

1. Greater study of natural science
2. Greater use of interdisciplinary strategies and hands-on investigations
3. Greater use of curriculum materials in designing units
4. Greater use of school grounds or other local natural areas

Survey Design

A survey was used to collect data from institute participants. Survey Monkey™ was used to administer the survey, largely because of the survey management options provided through this service. The survey was designed for descriptive analysis and allows direct comparison of standard questions across professional development activities. NHPLT intends to evaluate most of the professional development activities it offers, comparing changes in teacher practice across varying doses of time and funding.

This evaluation focused on the four main dimensions of teacher practice described above. Three to five questions were drafted to solicit information about each dimension. While some error exists in all measurement, using multiple questions to seek the same idea canceled out much of that error.

NHPLT staff drafted and revised questions with continued guidance from PEER Associates as consultants. This revision process was repeated ten times, until both NHPLT staff and PEER Associates determined that the questions adequately, concisely, and clearly addressed the core dimensions of teacher practice and the goals of the institute.

Once the final draft was ready, the survey was pilot tested by three volunteers. The first represented a NHEET partner; the remaining two were volunteers with limited background knowledge of NHPLT or the summer institute. This pilot testing process ensured that questions were clear and logical and that the survey was easy to use.

NHPLT staff initially intended to conduct follow-up phone interviews and small-group focus groups to elaborate on results obtained from the survey and elicit information from non-respondents. A high response rate is not as critical for interviews and focus groups as with surveys. The increased time and funding associated with interviews and focus groups, combined with the representative sample of responses received through the survey, led NHPLT staff to conduct analysis using solely survey responses.

Survey Results

Between 2003 and 2006, a total of 84 people participated in the summer institute. The survey was administered to 82 of these participants, as contact information was no longer available for two participants. Surveys were sent electronically to 78 participants. The remaining four participants received paper surveys, as no current email addresses were available.

An introductory email was sent to participants on September 21 and September 26. The invitation to complete the survey was sent on September 29. A follow-up email was sent on October 6 and a second reminder was sent on October 13. A final email was sent on October 18.

Forty-four of the 82 institute participants who were surveyed responded, 43 electronically and one on paper. Two participants (1 from 2005, 1 from 2006) answered only demographic information, so their responses are not included in the results.

Standards of Desirability exercise

NHPLT staff conducted a Standards of Desirability exercise with NHEET Partners and with the NHPLT Program Committee, as recommended by Michael Quinn Patton². Working through a use scenario prior to discussing data analysis can help program designers to set realistic expectations about what the results will look like. As Patton states, *“many of the most serious conflicts in evaluation are rooted in the failure to clearly specify standards of desirability in*

² Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text*. 3rd edition. SAGE Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, CA. 1997.

advance of data collection. This can lead both to collection of the wrong data and to intense disagreement about criteria for judging effectiveness.” (p. 306). This exercise enabled NHPLT staff to introduce both groups to the core dimensions being addressed within the evaluation, examine whether any additional information needed to be collected, and ensure each group was prepared to use the results when presented.

Potential bias or error

NHPLT staff took numerous steps to minimize bias or error. There are several potential sources of bias or error within this evaluation, however, including the following.

1. **Institute structure, theme, and duration.** The duration, theme, and structure of the institute changed between 2003 and 2006. (See page 9 for a summary of these changes.) While these changes limit the ability to compare results directly and attribute them to a particular action, the survey design does allow the ability to compare the various years.
2. **Follow-up workshops.** Survey questions addressed the impact of follow-up workshops on teacher practice, in addition to the summer institute itself. This presents some bias, as participants self-selected whether to attend follow-up activities and which ones to attend.
3. **Response rate.** The survey yielded 42 responses, a response rate of 50%. Possible reasons why participants did not respond to the survey include comfort with electronic surveys, lack of access to a computer, administration of the survey at the beginning of school year, and inactive email addresses.

NHPLT staff elected to conduct analysis using the 42 responses. The sample is representative of institute years, grade ranges, individual vs. team participants, and other demographic categories. Data are not sufficient for detailed statistical analysis due to small sample size and the lack of pre/post surveys. NHPLT staff recognized this potential bias or error and chose to continue with descriptive analysis of the results.

4. **Internal evaluator.** NHPLT chose to design, administer, and analyze the evaluation as part of our commitment to build internal capacity for utilization-focused evaluation. While using an internal evaluator can introduce bias or error, this was mitigated by deliberate planning and close consultation with the independent consulting firm, PEER Associates. Using an internal evaluator not only increases internal capacity and keeps learned knowledge in-house, but also gives a deeper understanding of data, as the evaluator has an enhanced context for understanding results.

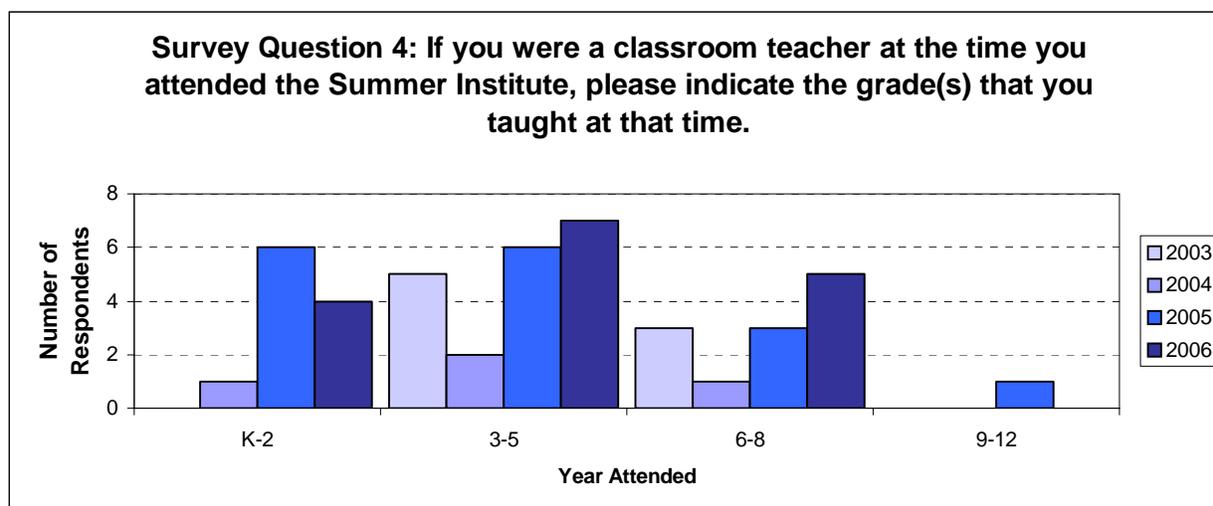
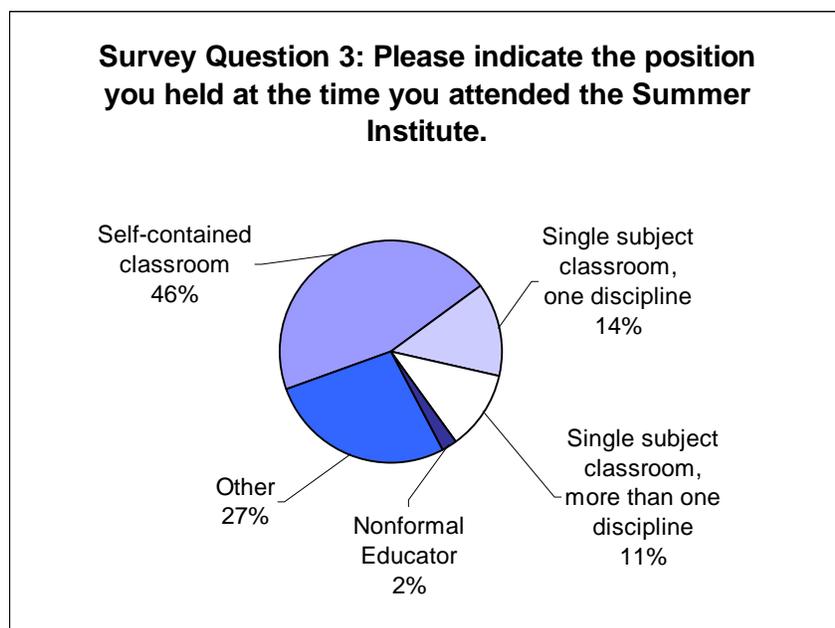
RESULTS

Description of the Sample

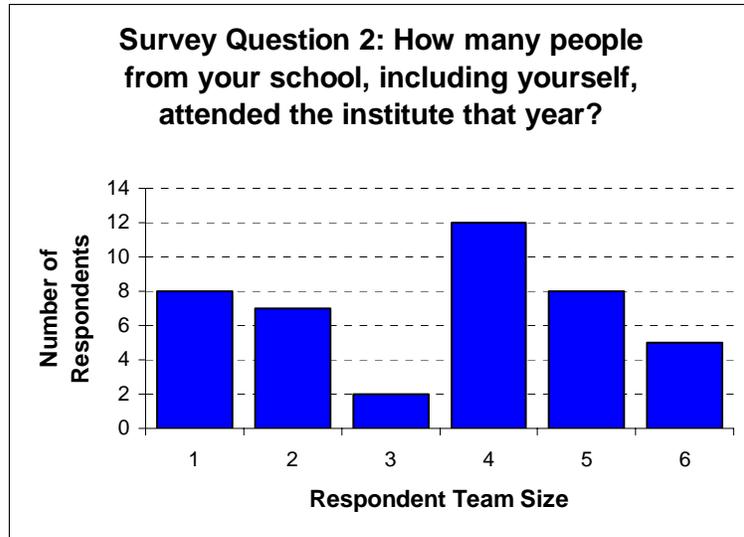
Forty-four of the 82 institute participants surveyed responded, 43 electronically and one on paper. Two participants (1 from 2005, 1 from 2006) answered only demographic information, so their responses are not included in the results. Survey respondents represent the following years. Overall, survey results are based on responses from 42 of 84 participants, or a 50% response rate.

- 2003: 8 of 21 participants (38%)
- 2004: 4 of 11 participants (36%)
- 2005: 15 of 28 participants (54%) Results based on 14 of 28 (50%)
- 2006: 17 of 23 participants (74%) Results based on 16 of 23 (70%)

Over 70% of respondents held classroom teaching positions, with 46% of respondents working as teachers in self-contained classrooms. The majority of the classroom teachers responding to the survey worked in K-8 education, with only 6 respondents working in secondary (9-12) education.



A priority for institute organizers has been recruiting teams of teachers from participating schools, rather than individual teachers. Approximately 50% of respondents attended the institute with a team of between two and four members. One-quarter attended with teams of five and six members. The remaining one-quarter of respondents attended the summer institute on their own.

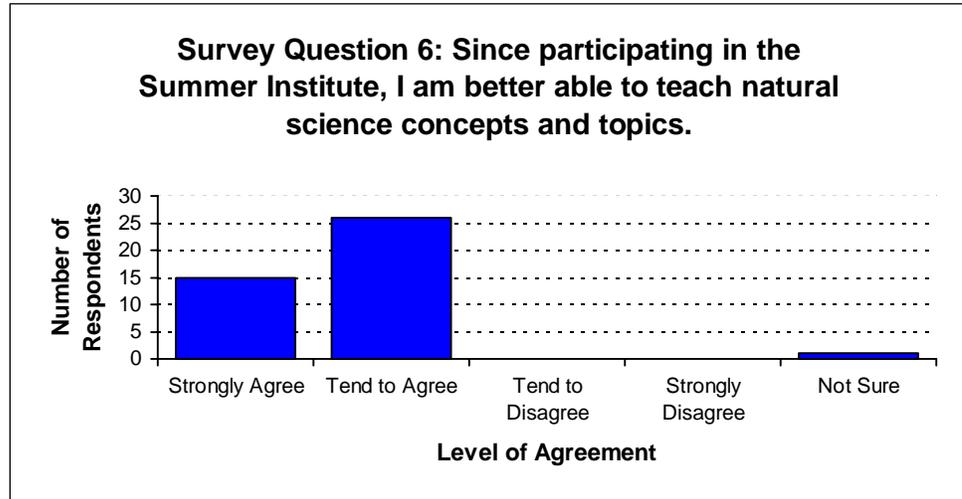


Findings

Study of Natural Science

Participants reported an increase in their knowledge and skills for teaching natural science. In addition, participants reported that participation in the institute influenced their awareness, knowledge, and appreciation for New Hampshire’s natural landscape. A typical response was, “*I have a greater knowledge of NH environmental topics that I regularly share with my students.*” (2003 participant).

The most notable increase reported was in participant knowledge of natural science topics and concepts. Over 95% of participants reported an increase in knowledge for teaching about the local environment, and an increase in ability to teach



natural science concepts and topics to their students. As content knowledge was a core component of the institute in all years, this suggests that the content included in the institute was successfully imparted to participants.

“The experience I had at the institute was amazing! I already am a nature lover and have much knowledge about interconnections, but being there gave me a ‘child’s eyes’, reminding me of how much fun they can have in learning about outdoors and all of the benefits we get from observations and participation in our wonderful world of nature.” — 2003 participant

Over 85% of participants felt that participation in the institute impacted their awareness, knowledge, and appreciation for New Hampshire’s natural landscape. The four participants that disagreed attended during 2005 and 2006.

“For me there are no words that can express the life changing experience I had there. The richness of the activities and the knowledge I gained was life altering. It has made me more aware of the wonders of the earth, and also the need to take care of it and to pass this on to the children, who are our future.” — 2005 participant

81% of respondents reported that their participation in the summer institute had an effect on the use of natural science investigations in the classroom. Six respondents (14%) reported that participation had minimal effect on their use of natural science investigations. Four of these six attended in 2006.

“My students have realized the benefit and see themselves as stewards of the schoolyard habitat.” — 2005 participant

Similar results were reported for changes in participant skills for teaching natural science topics. Over 78% of participants felt that participation in the summer institute prompted changes in their skills for teaching natural science topics, while seven participants (16%) reported minimal change in their skills.

This survey did not account for prior experiences in the classroom; it is possible that participants were already skilled in teaching natural science and using natural science investigations and, thus, did not change these behaviors. In addition, respondents are somewhat limited in teaching by school/district curriculum structure. For example, one 2003 participant reported that the *“summer institute was a great learning experience, but unfortunately had little effect on how or what I teach,”* because hands-on natural science lessons were already being taught by the school enrichment coordinator. Review of the CBAM survey and knowledge rubric administered before and after the institute could provide additional information about this dimension.



Use of Interdisciplinary Strategies and Hands-on Investigations

Since its inception in 2003, the summer institute has focused on the connection of disciplines. This is evident in both the institute themes, *Linking Science to Math and Language Arts* (2003 and 2004) and *Curriculum Connections Through Schoolyard Investigations* (2005 and 2006), as well as the institute structure.

81% of participants reported that the summer institute had an effect on their teaching natural science in conjunction with other disciplines.

“I learned how to integrate fictional stories (language arts) into my science teaching in a meaningful way.” — 2003 participant

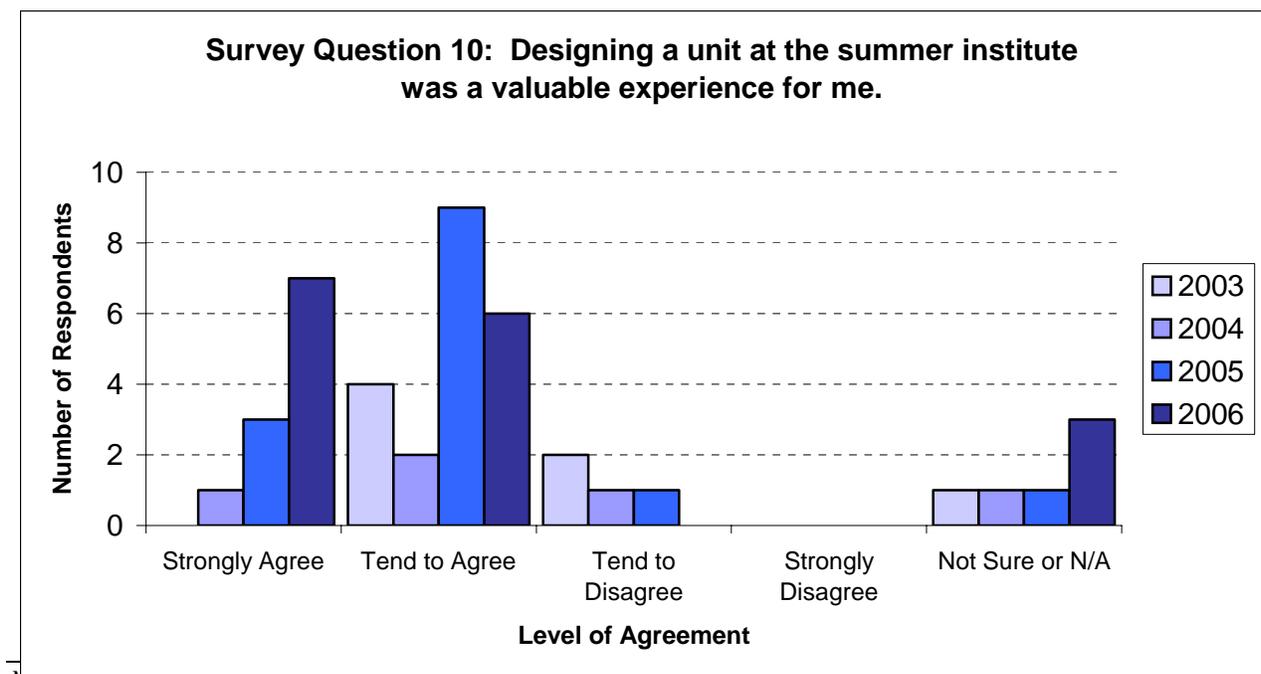
“Although I’ve used science to integrate with math before, I am able to integrate more math because of the wide variety of possibilities.” — 2004 participant

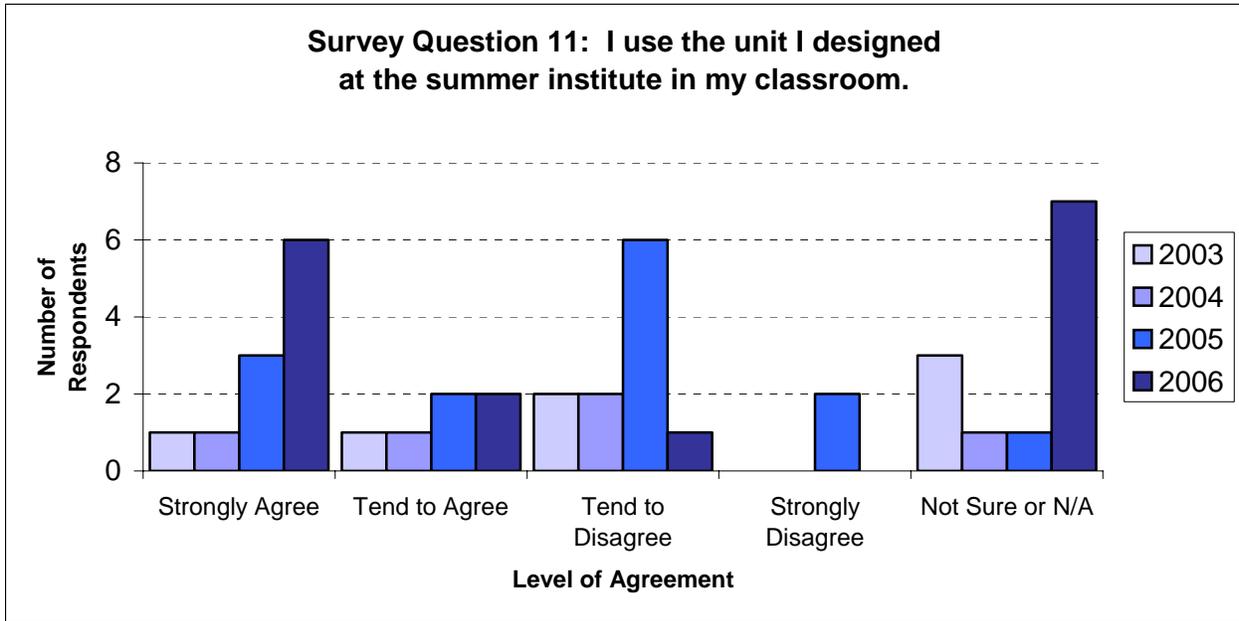
Over 88% of respondents reported that, as a result of participation in the summer institute, more of their natural science lessons are being taught “hands-on”.

“I have learned to incorporate several hands-on lessons from the guides into my curriculum and I am sharing them with my colleagues. It’s really exciting!!” — 2006 participant

“I am more aware of the importance or value of ‘hands on’ experiences.” — 2003 participant

A core component of the summer institute has been time set aside for curriculum planning, during which participants work individually or with their teams to create a unit of study for their classrooms. While the strong majority of participants (76%) felt that designing the unit was a valuable experience to them, only 40% of participants actually use the unit they design.





Of the 13 participants (approximately 30%) responding that they do not use their unit, over half were participants in the 2005 summer institute, perhaps indicating a connection to the structure and content of the institute during that year. Review of post-institute participant evaluations may provide additional insight into this.

“I have a wealth of materials to use, thanks to the Institute. A challenge I am working on is careful selection of lessons so that there is a flow and continuity to what I do. (I feel this is a positive challenge!)” — 2006 participant

The remaining 12 participants (approximately 30%) responded that this question did not apply to them. Five were in positions other than classroom teacher, suggesting that they do not use the unit they designed because their positions do not allow for this. More telling, however, is that seven of these attended the institute in 2006, perhaps indicating that they haven’t yet had time to implement the unit they designed.

Use of Environmental Education Curriculum Materials

Since beginning in 2003, the summer institute has incorporated environmental education activities from Project Learning Tree, Project WET, Project WILD and WILD Aquatic, the



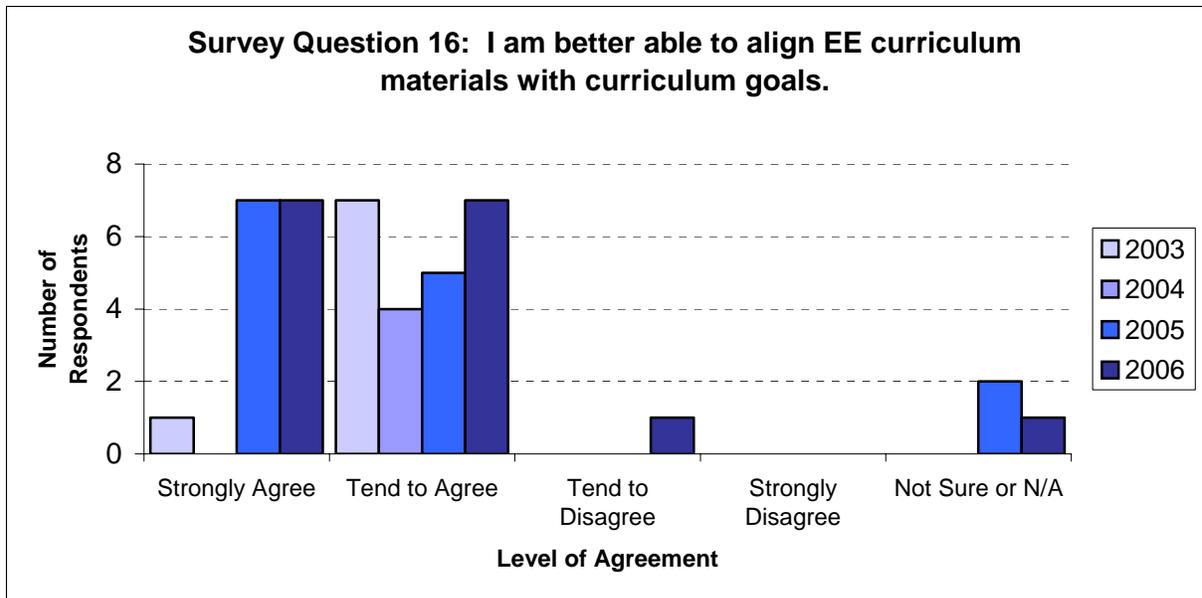
GLOBE Program, and Homes for Wildlife. These activities have been used largely to demonstrate the teaching of content through hands-on activities.

“I have renewed desire and ability to weave environmental education into my teaching of our district science curriculum.” — 2006 participant

90% of respondents reported being better able to align environmental education curriculum materials with their schools’ curriculum goals, as a result of participating in the summer institute.

“Although I had some of the books prior to [the institute], I felt more comfortable using them after I had experienced [the activities] myself.” — 2003 participant

“I am more aware of activities I can use for instruction...big help!” — 2003 participant



Participants reported also valuing the resources and resource professionals introduced to them through the institute and follow-up workshops.

“It helped teach me about the valuable resources available to me by using the program guides as well as contact sources from Fish and Game and the US Forestry Service.” — 2006 participant

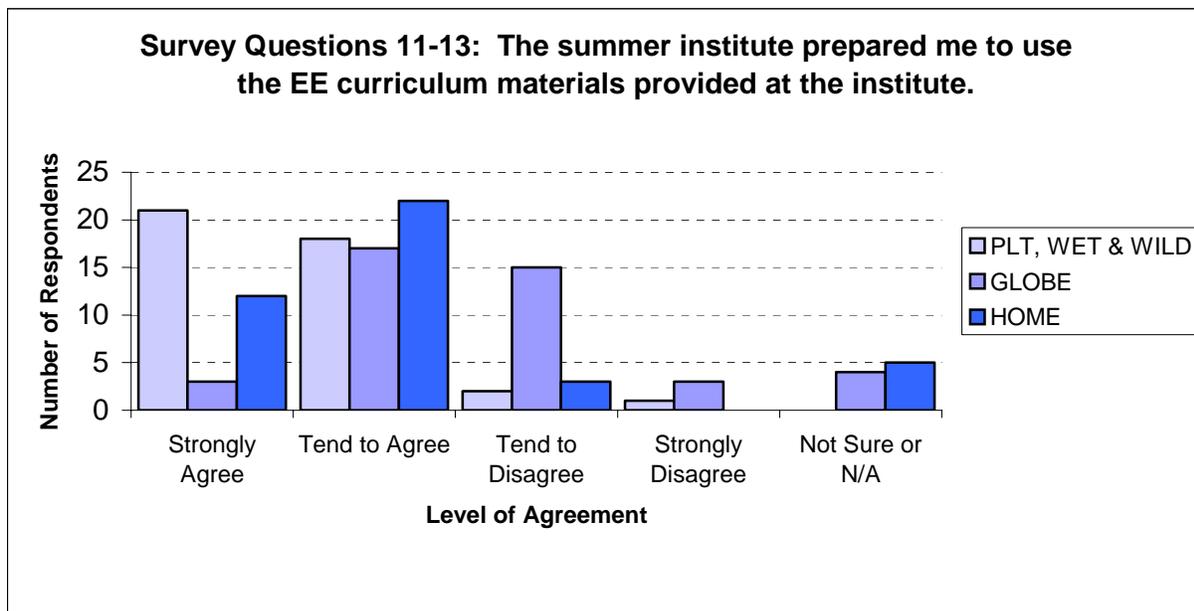
“I make sure to use the resources that you offer such as Project WET’s Incredible Journey activity, as well as Jessica Morton. She brings out the [groundwater] models each year and talks about water and why it’s important to conserve and protect it.” — 2005 participant

Comfort with Environmental Education Curriculum Materials

The vast majority of participants reported feeling prepared to use the environmental education curriculum materials received at the summer institute. Most notable, 93% of participants reported feeling prepared to lead activities from PLT, WET, and WILD.

The majority of respondents (81%) reported that they felt prepared to use Homes for Wildlife activities within schoolyard investigations. The only participants to disagree attended during 2003 and 2004, before the institute structure changed to focus on curriculum connections through schoolyard investigation.

Approximately half of respondents felt prepared to lead protocols from the GLOBE Program. In 2006, training in the GLOBE Program was significantly scaled back during the institute, as partners believed that participants needed more intensive training in GLOBE protocols to feel adequately prepared to use them. Despite this change in structure, eight of those who felt adequately prepared to lead protocols attended the summer institute in 2006. This may reflect the additional GLOBE training these teachers received during the 2006 academic year at their schools. This grant-funded training initiative funded the teachers' participation in the summer institute.



Level of Use of Environmental Education Curriculum Materials

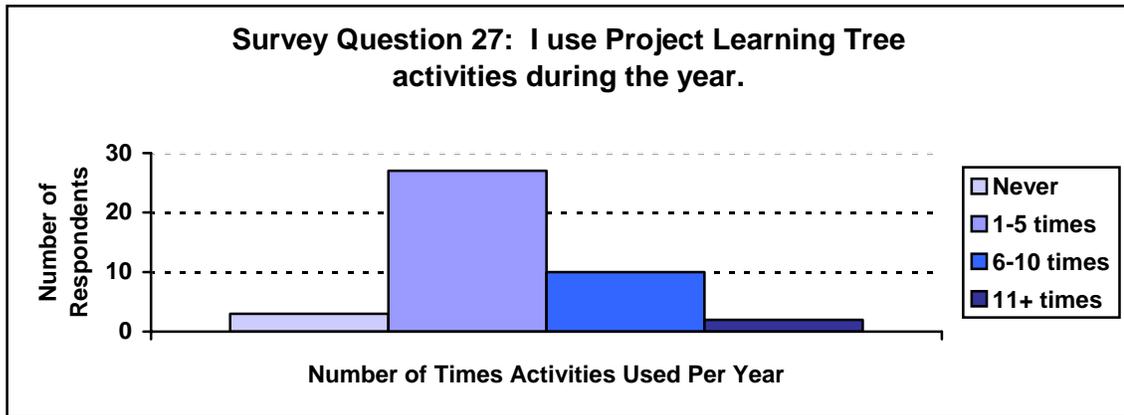
Respondents report using the EE curriculum materials when designing new units and using activities from the guides on average 1-5 times per year. Participant use of EE curriculum materials may be dependent on the curriculum topics taught by each participant, but this finding suggests that participants of all positions and grades are finding a means to integrate the materials into their classrooms.

“I have been reassigned from life to earth science teaching and now need to revisit the materials I have to see what I can use in my new curriculum, I have not

had a chance yet to do much meaningful planning, but I will utilize the materials when I do, because I value them.” — 2003 participant

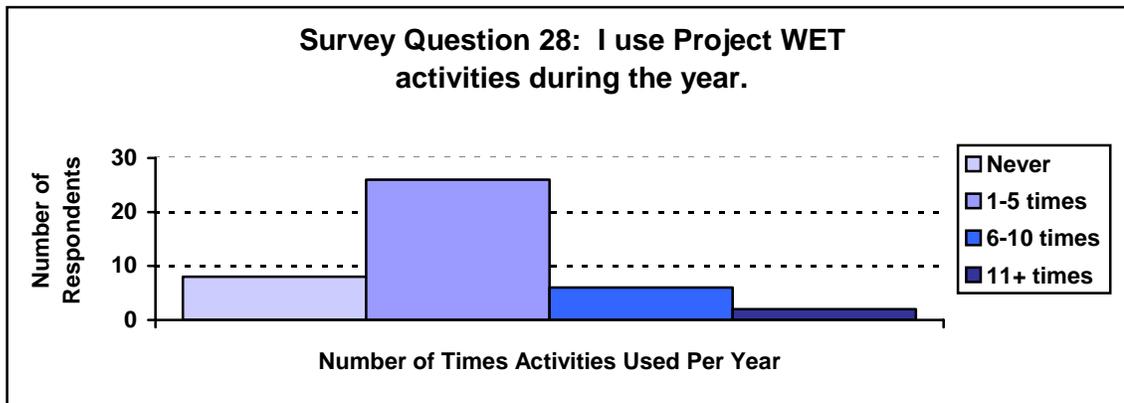
Project Learning Tree

- When designing new curriculum units, the majority of respondents (88%) include activities from Project Learning Tree.
- 64% of respondents use PLT 1-5 times per year within their teaching. Two respondents (5%), both from 2005, use PLT activities more than 10 times per year. Three respondents (7%) never use PLT activities.



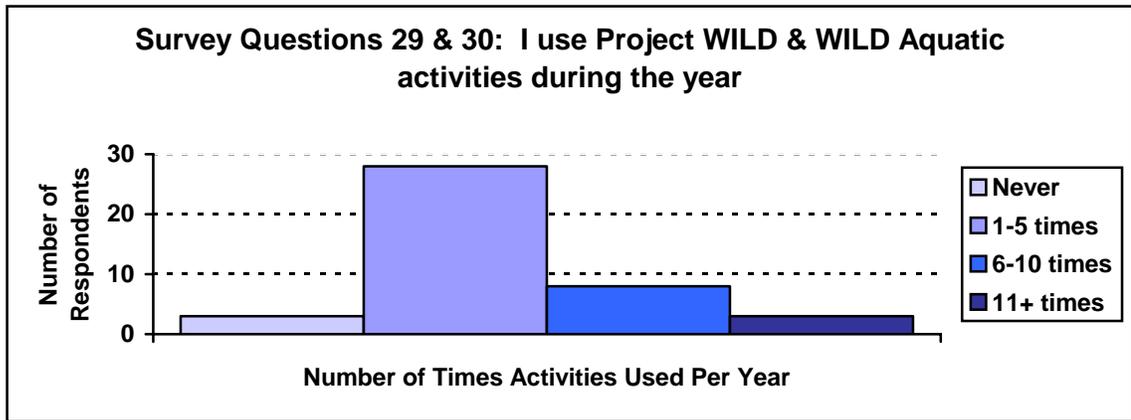
Project WET

- When designing new curriculum units, the majority of respondents (71%) include activities from Project WET.
- 62% of respondents use Project WET 1-5 times per year. Two respondents (5%), both from 2005, use Project WET activities more than 10 times per year. Eight respondents never use Project WET activities.



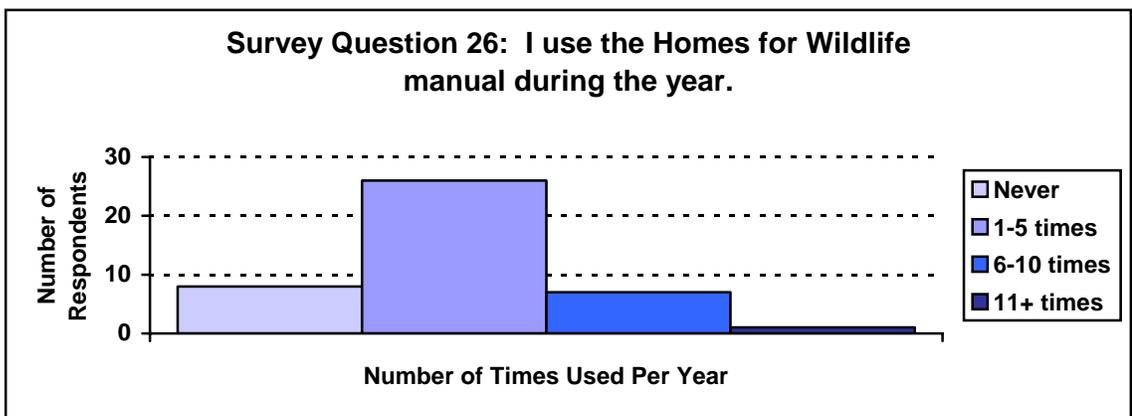
Project WILD & WILD Aquatic

- When designing new curriculum units, the majority of respondents (79%) include activities from Project WILD.
- 67% of respondents use Project WILD 1-5 times per year. Three participants use Project WILD activities more than 10 times per year. Three respondents (7%) never use activities from Project WILD.
- 31% of respondents use Project WILD Aquatic activities 1-5 times per year. An equal number of respondents (31%) never use Project WILD Aquatic activities. One participant, from 2005, uses WILD Aquatic activities more than 10 times per year.



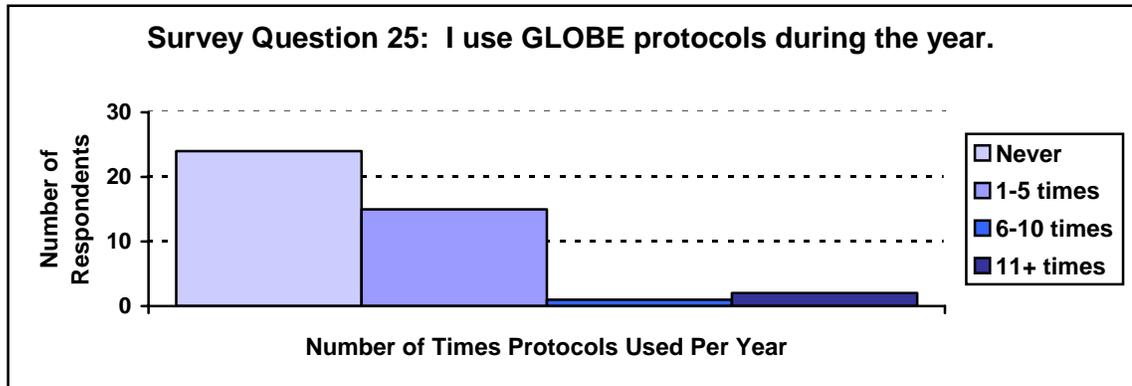
Homes for Wildlife

- When designing new curriculum units, approximately one-third of respondents (33%) use the Homes for Wildlife manual. There is little difference in response among years, despite a change in institute structure in 2005.
- 62% of respondents use the Homes for Wildlife manual 1-5 times per year. One respondent, from 2005, uses the manual more than 10 times per year. Eight respondents (19%) never use Homes for Wildlife.



GLOBE Program

- When designing new curriculum units, one-third of respondents (33%) include GLOBE protocols. Approximately half report not using GLOBE protocols.
- 36% of respondents use GLOBE protocols 1-5 times per year. Three respondents use GLOBE protocols more than 6 times per year. Of those who do use GLOBE protocols, half of them participated in the 2006 summer institute. 57% of respondents report that they never use protocols from the GLOBE Program.

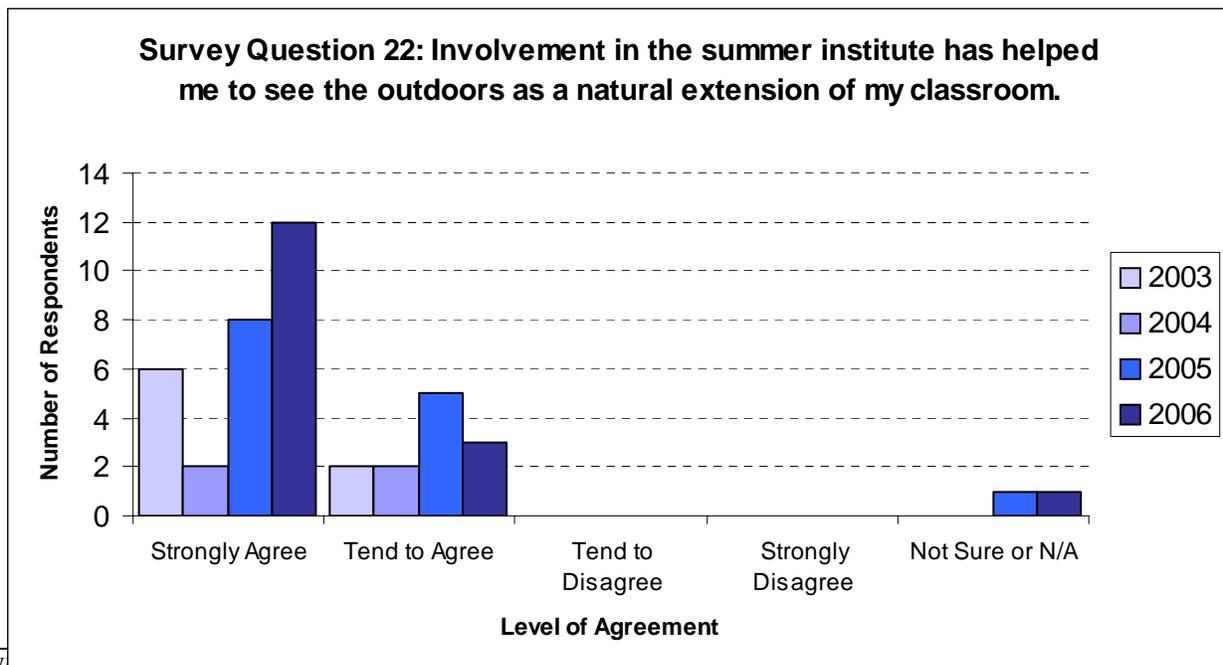


Use of School Grounds and/or Local Natural Areas

Over 95% of respondents reported that involvement in the summer institute has helped them to see the outdoors as a natural extension of the classroom.

“I am more apt to take the children outside for extended periods of time, finding various ways to integrate language arts and math.” — 2005 participant

“Our trips outside have more of a purpose—there is a scope and sequence that wasn't always in evidence before.” — 2005 participant



Over 75% of participants spend more time teaching in the schoolyard or local natural areas because of their participation in the summer institute. Of these respondents, 25 attended in 2005 and 2006, suggesting that the 2005 and 2006 institutes were particularly effective at promoting outdoor teaching.

“[I] gained more confidence about the validity of going outside to learn.”

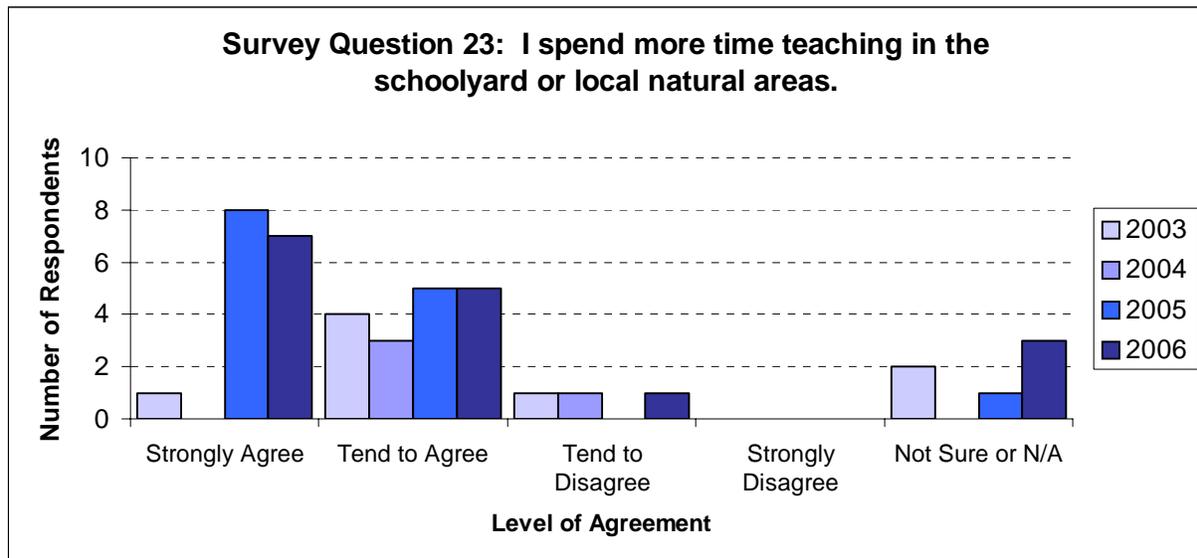
— 2005 participant

“I try to incorporate more outdoor activities and more activities that can be done outside even if they don't have to be done there.”

— 2005 participant



Three participants (7%) did not report increases in time spent teaching outdoors. It is possible that these respondents were already using the outdoors a great deal and thus didn't increase their teaching time outdoors, as a 2003 participant stated, *“I always used the out of doors so the institute didn't really change that but did help focus what I was doing and give us some great resources.”*



Additional Findings

Respondents reported two additional values not targeted with this evaluation.

1. **Value in collaboration with other teachers.** Several respondents commented on the value of collaborating with other teachers at the institute and back at school. NHEET prefers that teachers participate as part of a school team. These comments support the value of this approach.

“I think being with other teachers at the institute helped me gain confidence to teach in areas that I already thought important. It reaffirmed my conviction to get the children outside!” — 2005 participant

2. **Continued communication between NHEET and institute participants.** Respondents commented on the value of continued communication between NHEET and institute teachers. Additional research into follow-up workshop attendance may elicit connections between participants in follow-up workshops and survey results.

“Thanks for the continued communication; it helps keep your program in the foreground of the planning process.” — 2003 participant

Suggestions for Improvement

Several suggestions for improvement emerged from analysis of survey results.

1. **Clarify institute objectives for designing curriculum units.** While respondents indicated that they found value in designing a curriculum unit during the summer institute, only 40% actually used this unit in their classrooms. Several factors may contribute to this, including changes in teaching responsibilities. The existing structure may be appropriate if the objective is to practice curriculum planning for environmental education, including use of the EE curriculum materials provided. If the objective is for participants to use the unit, however, the NHEET partners should examine why more teachers are not using their unit and modify the curriculum planning structure as appropriate.
2. **Continue to focus on activities that can be done in the schoolyard and local outdoor areas.** Survey results suggest that the summer institute has been an effective mechanism for increasing teacher and student use of the out-of-doors. Nearly 80% of participants have increased their use of the schoolyard and local natural areas, viewing the outdoors as an extension of their classroom. As one 2004 participant stated, *“I try to incorporate as many connections to our local natural systems in my lessons as possible. I would love to teach 80% of my curriculum outside”*. A comment from another participant supports a focus on studying the schoolyard and local natural areas rather than more distant locations. *“[I] have been limited by unavailability of natural space to take kids to near my school. I have resorted to two to three outings a year during which I bus kids to various locals to get outdoor water experiences.”*

3. **Consider the objectives for featuring the GLOBE program at the institute.** Among the environmental education curriculum materials provided at the summer institute, the GLOBE Program is used least by participants. One-third of respondents reports incorporating GLOBE protocols into new units. One-third uses the protocols in their teaching. In 2005, NHEET partners recognized that GLOBE was not adequately addressed for participants to be prepared to use the program and reduced its presence in the 2006 institute.

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Hall, Gene E. 1974. *The Concerns-Based Adoption Model: A Developmental Conceptualization of the Adoption Process within Educational Institutions*. University of Texas at Austin.

Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text*. 3rd edition. SAGE Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, CA. 1997.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Summer Institute Logic Model

Appendix B: Evaluation Overview

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

Appendix D: Survey Letters

Appendix A: Institute Logic Model

HYPOTHESIS: If teachers attend a multi-day professional development institute and follow-up workshops focused on natural science content and the skills to teach that content, K-8 teachers and students will increase their awareness, knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of New Hampshire's natural resources.				
Resources & Inputs	Activities & Strategies	Outputs (end of institute)	Outcomes (end of year 1)	Impact (end of year 5)
<p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NH Project Learning Tree Homes for Wildlife, NH Fish & Game Dept Project WILD, NH Fish & Game Dept Project WET, NH Dept of Environmental Services GLOBE Program, Land Cover/Biology Team, UNH USDA Forest Service, Conservation Education <p>Teachers / educators</p> <p>Resource specialists to train teachers in content and skills</p> <p>Resource materials</p> <p>Graduate credit (2005//06)</p> <p>NH curriculum frameworks</p> <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> US Fish & Wildlife Service (2003) USDA Forest Service (2004) PSNH (2005) PLT/WET/WILD joint workshop revenue Registration fees 	<p>Collaboration among partners</p> <p>Intensive professional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLT Project WET Project WILD Homes for Wildlife GLOBE Program Natural science content Inquiry skills Teaching outdoors Understanding By Design <p>Sustained professional development through follow-up workshops in content and skills</p> <p>Sustained contact between partners and teachers through print and electronic communication</p>	<p>Teachers possess increased knowledge of natural science content and inquiry skills.</p> <p>Teachers have a new or revised inquiry-based unit of study including learning objectives, assessment, activities from the curriculum programs, teaching methods, timeline, resources needed, and community connections.</p> <p>Teachers are able to lead three activities or scientific protocols from the curriculum programs.</p> <p>Teachers prepare journals that document what they are learning and how they are using their curriculum planning time, as well as reflect on how they will apply these learnings to their curricula.</p> <p><u>Additional for course credit:</u></p> <p>Teachers will lead at least one activity from a curriculum program in the classroom and reflect on its implementation. (2005/06)</p>	<p>Teachers teach natural science in combination with other disciplines and use activities from the curriculum programs.</p> <p>Teachers regularly use their schoolyard and local natural areas as an extension of their classroom.</p> <p>Students are more engaged in learning natural science and conduct inquiry-based projects.</p> <p>Teachers and students possess a stronger sense of respect and responsibility for the schoolyard or other adopted areas. (2005/06)</p>	<p>Teachers favor an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based approach to teaching and use this approach when designing new units.</p> <p>Teachers incorporate activities from the curriculum programs when designing units.</p> <p>Teachers and students possess increased awareness, knowledge and appreciation for NH's natural landscape, as well as the skills to be responsible stewards.</p> <p>The schoolyard or other adopted areas are enhanced by student projects. (2005/06)</p>

Appendix B: Evaluation Overview

Category	Evaluation Strategy/Activity	Personnel Accountable	When
<i>1. Surveys</i>	a. Develop Participant Survey (note: Survey will allow triangulation with interview and other data, will not be sufficient for detailed statistical analysis due to small sample size, lack of pre/post or dosage measurements. Some questions will allow direct comparison with CS2P.)	NHPLT staff, Michael Duffin to provide support	June - August
	b. Administer Participant Survey	Beth Lesure	September
	c. Enter and Process Data	Beth Lesure	October – November
	d. Analyze and Report	Beth Lesure, MD Support	December – January
<i>2. Other</i>	e. Meetings, Communication, Administration	NHPLT staff	June – January
	f. Prepare final report, share with stakeholders, funders.	NHPLT staff	January

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

NH Project Learning Tree seeks to better understand how the Summer Institute you attended at Barry Conservation Camp has impacted your classroom practice, if at all. You can help us tremendously by giving candid answers to the questions on this survey. We know you have many demands on your time and are extremely grateful for your willingness to participate in this survey. It should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete.

THANK YOU!

.....
Please give us some basic information about yourself.

1. What year did you attend the Summer Institute? (Please check all that apply.)

- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006

2. How many people from your school, including yourself, attended the institute that year?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

3. Please indicate the position that you held at the time you attended the Summer Institute.

- Classroom Teacher – Self-contained classroom
- Classroom Teacher – Single subject class, one discipline (i.e. teach science classes)
- Classroom Teacher – Single subject class, more than one discipline (i.e. teach science classes and language arts classes)
- Nonformal Educator
- Other (please specify) _____

4. If you were a classroom teacher at the time you attended the Summer Institute, please indicate the grade(s) that you taught at that time. (Please check all that apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PreK | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | |

<i>How much do you agree or disagree?</i> For each question, please circle only one number that best matches your opinion. <u>Please do not leave any blanks.</u>	STRONGLY AGREE	TEND TO AGREE	TEND TO DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT SURE or N/A
5. My knowledge for teaching about the local environment is greater because of my participation in the Summer Institute.	4	3	2	1	0
6. Since participating in the Summer Institute, I am better able to teach natural science concepts and topics.	4	3	2	1	0
7. Participation in the Summer Institute had little effect on my use of natural science investigations in my teaching.	4	3	2	1	0
8. The Summer Institute prompted minimal change in my skills for teaching natural science topics.	4	3	2	1	0
9. The Summer Institute has helped me to make more of my natural science lessons “hands on”.	4	3	2	1	0
10. Designing a unit at the Summer Institute was a valuable experience for me.	4	3	2	1	0
11. I use the unit I designed while at the Summer Institute in my curriculum.	4	3	2	1	0
12. The Summer Institute had little effect on my teaching natural science in conjunction with other disciplines.	4	3	2	1	0
13. The Summer Institute prepared me to lead activities from Project Learning Tree, Project WET and Project WILD.	4	3	2	1	0
14. The Summer Institute prepared me to lead protocols from the GLOBE Program.	4	3	2	1	0
15. The Summer Institute prepared me to use Homes for Wildlife in conducting schoolyard investigations.	4	3	2	1	0
16. Because of my participation in the Summer Institute, I am better able to align environmental education curriculum materials with curriculum goals.	4	3	2	1	0
17. When designing new units, I include activities from Project Learning Tree.	4	3	2	1	0
18. When designing new units, I include activities from Project WET.	4	3	2	1	0

<i>How much do you agree or disagree?</i> For each question, please circle only one number that best matches your opinion. <u>Please do not leave any blanks.</u>	STRONGLY AGREE	TEND TO AGREE	TEND TO DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT SURE or N/A
19. When designing new units, I include activities from Project WILD.	4	3	2	1	0
20. When designing new units, I include protocols from the GLOBE Program.	4	3	2	1	0
21. When designing new units, I include activities from Homes for Wildlife.	4	3	2	1	0
22. Involvement in the Summer Institute has helped me to see the outdoors as a natural extension of the classroom.	4	3	2	1	0
23. Because of the Summer Institute, I spend more time teaching in the schoolyard or local natural areas.	4	3	2	1	0
24. The Summer Institute had minimal impact on my awareness, knowledge and appreciation for NH's natural landscape.	4	3	2	1	0

<i>How frequently, on average, do you use activities from the following programs over the period of a year?</i> For each question, please mark only one choice that best matches your opinion. <u>Please do not leave any blanks</u>	NEVER	1-5 TIMES	6-10 TIMES	11-20 TIMES	MORE THAN 20 TIMES
25. GLOBE Program					
26. Homes for Wildlife					
27. Project Learning Tree					
28. Project WET					
29. Project WILD					
30. Project WILD Aquatic					

31. How, if at all, is your teaching practice different as a result of your participation in the Summer Institute?

THANK YOU!

Appendix D: Survey Letters

Introduction **Subject: Summer Institute Survey**

Dear Summer Institute Participant:

NH Project Learning Tree seeks to better understand how the Summer Institute you attended at Barry Conservation Camp has impacted your classroom practice, if at all. You can help us tremendously by giving candid answers to the questions on this survey.

We know you have many demands on your time and are extremely grateful for your willingness to participate in this survey. It should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete.

In exchange for your time and thoughts, we would like to offer you a choice of two incentives.

Option 1: In 2006, PLT revised its PreK-8 Activity Guide. This guide includes two new activities, better assessments, improved reading connections for all activities, technology enhancements, updated background information and much more! By completing the survey, you will receive the guide free of charge through a 3-hour “refresher” workshop in the late winter or spring. Teachers are raving about the quality of this new guide, it’s not to be missed!

Option 2: You will receive a classroom set of tree cookies (quantity of 12) grown here in NH.

Your responses will remain confidential. By completing the survey online, Survey Monkey will collect and tabulate all responses without attributing them to individuals. Quotes may be used in reports, publications, or discussions, again without identifying the individual. In keeping with our commitment to your confidentiality, Survey Monkey will simply inform us when you have completed the survey. Your name, however, will not be linked to your answers. We will follow up with you at that point to learn which incentive you prefer.

Here is a link to the survey: [SurveyLink] Please complete the survey as soon as possible; our deadline is Friday, October 13.

If you would prefer to complete the survey in paper form, I would be happy to email or mail you a hard copy. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Thank you!
Beth Lesure, Education Coordinator
NH Project Learning Tree
603-226-0160
info@nhplt.org

If you choose not to receive further emails from me, please click here [RemoveLink].

Reminder Letter

Summer Institute Evaluation Deadline Coming Soon!

Dear [FirstName]:

Our records show that you have not yet completed our Summer Institute Participant Survey. NH Project Learning Tree is evaluating the institute to better understand the degree to which the Summer Institute has impacted your classroom practice, if at all.

We know you have many demands on your time and are extremely grateful for your willingness to participate in this survey. It should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete.

We ask that you complete the survey by Friday, October 13. Our goal is for every participant in the institute over the past four years to complete the survey.

Here is a link to the survey: [SurveyLink] If you would prefer to complete the survey in paper form, I would be happy to email or mail you a hard copy.

Your responses will remain confidential. By completing the survey online, Survey Monkey will collect and tabulate all responses without attributing them to individuals. Quotes may be used in reports, publications, or discussions, again without identifying the individual.

In exchange for your time and thoughts, we would like to offer you a choice of two incentives.

Option 1: In 2006, PLT revised its PreK-8 Activity Guide. This guide includes two new activities, better assessments, improved reading connections for all activities, technology enhancements, updated background information and much more! By completing the survey, you will receive the guide free of charge through a 3-hour “refresher” workshop in the late winter or spring. Teachers are raving about the quality of this new guide, it’s not to be missed!

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If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Thank you!
Beth Lesure, Education Coordinator
NH Project Learning Tree
603-226-0160
info@nhplt.org

If you choose not to receive further emails from me, please click here [RemoveLink].

Final Letter

Last Call for New Guide or Tree Cookies!

Dear Summer Institute Participant:

This is your last chance for a new PLT PreK-8 Activity Guide or classroom set of tree cookies! Respond today to receive one of these great incentives!

Our records show that you have not yet completed our Summer Institute Participant Survey. We are keenly interested in adding your responses to those of the many teachers who have already responded. Our goal is for every participant in the institute over the past four years to complete the survey. The purpose of the survey is to determine the degree to which the institute has affected your teaching practice, if at all.

Here is a link to the survey: [SurveyLink] Please complete the survey as soon as possible; our deadline is Friday, October 13.

Your responses will remain confidential. By completing the survey online, Survey Monkey will collect and tabulate all responses without attributing them to individuals. Quotes may be used in reports, publications, or discussions, again without identifying the individual.

In exchange for your time and thoughts, we would like to offer you a choice of two incentives.

Option 1: In 2006, PLT revised its PreK-8 Activity Guide. This guide includes two new activities, better assessments, improved reading connections for all activities, technology enhancements, updated background information and much more! By completing the survey, you will receive the guide free of charge through a 3-hour “refresher” workshop in the late winter or spring. Teachers are raving about the quality of this new guide, it’s not to be missed!

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In keeping with our commitment to your confidentiality, Survey Monkey will simply inform us when you have completed the survey. Your name, however, will not be linked to your answers. We will follow up with you at that point to learn which incentive you prefer.

If you would prefer to complete the survey in paper form, I would be happy to email or mail you a hard copy. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Thank you!
Beth Lesure, Education Coordinator
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