



Project WILD Field Test Evaluation

Fleming, L. M. 1983. Project WILD Evaluation Final Report of Field Test. Western Regional Environmental Education Council.

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| Program Profile | |
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| Program Description: | Project WILD is an interdisciplinary conservation and environmental education program focusing on wildlife. The program was created for use in both formal and nonformal settings and materials are intended to support state and national academic standards appropriate for grades K-12. The activities can be adapted to meet the learning requirements for academic disciplines ranging from science and environmental education to social studies, math, and language arts. Educators may choose one or more Project WILD activities to support instruction around a concept or skill. |
| Program Goals: | “The goal of Project WILD is to assist learners of any age in developing awareness, knowledge, skills and commitment to result in informed decisions, responsible behavior and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment upon which all life depends.” |
| Program Funding: | Funding for this program is primarily provided by the Council for Environmental Education (formerly the Western Regional Environmental Education Council) and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. |
| Program Links: | http://www.projectwild.org |
| Evaluation Profile | |
| Evaluation Goals & Questions: | <p>The purpose of this evaluation was to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers’ reactions to Project WILD implementation and materials; and • The effect of Project WILD on student knowledge and attitudes about wildlife. <p>In addition to the overarching goals described above, the evaluation also focused more specifically on the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is Project WILD more effective with elementary or secondary students? Does the project’s success depend on grade level? 2. Is Project WILD more successful if teachers receive materials through the mail or through a workshop? 3. Are there differences between teacher and student performance by state? 4. Is student success related to residence in rural, suburban, or urban areas? 5. Does teacher interest affect student learning or attitudes? 6. Was Project WILD used as an interdisciplinary curriculum? Did high school students in one subject area learn more than those in others? |
| Evaluation Methods: | Primary and secondary schools in three states (Colorado, Virginia, and Washington) were recruited to participate in this quasi-experimental evaluation based on geography (rural, suburban, and urban within each state.) |

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| | <p>Teachers interested in participating were assigned to one the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A control group in which teachers received no instruction related to Project WILD; • A materials group in which teachers were sent a Project WILD activity guide and activity evaluation by mail; and • A workshop group in which teachers attended a six hour workshop designed to familiarize them with the Project WILD activity guide. <p>Students of participating teachers were given a grade appropriate pretest survey to assess student knowledge and attitudes related to issues addressed in the Project WILD materials. Near the end of the school year the same students completed an identical posttest survey.</p> <p>Interviews were conducted with some teachers, students and administrators to investigate the use of Project WILD materials in the classroom as well as teacher and student satisfaction with the Project WILD materials.</p> <p>A subset of teachers in the workshop group was also asked to record their use of and thoughts about Project WILD activities. Multiple interviews and classroom observations were conducted with these teachers. In addition, students of these teachers were interviewed and student projects related to Project WILD were assessed.</p> |
| Instruments: | A complete set of evaluation instruments is available in the report. |
| How were results used? | Results guided the development of separate elementary and secondary curriculum guides, a topic index that included interdisciplinary concepts, and secondary teacher workshops that included time to integrate Project WILD with required curricula and examples of local environmental science. The secondary activity format was revised before the first printing of the Project WILD materials. |
| Evaluation Cost: | Not available. |
| Evaluation Insights: | <p>What worked well? Instrument development included many reviews by diverse stakeholders and extensive pilot testing. Formal and nonformal stakeholders were receptive to both qualitative and quantitative methods employed in the study and results reported as descriptive and inferential statistics and case study vignettes and supporting quotes. Results were reported in a variety of forums using many reporting methods.</p> <p>What were the important evaluation “lessons learned”? Lesson learned about item development: Despite extensive review, pilot testing and high reliabilities, “bad” items happen. “I want to be a hunter when I grow up” was analyzed with positive polarity and was one item cited by CBS News when Project WILD received criticism as a pro-hunting curriculum.</p> <p>Lessons learned about quasi-experimental design: Tremendous efforts are required to control for the instrumentation threat to internal validity in a study that involves nearly 7000 students and 300 teachers. Many very creative approaches to the administration of the pretests and posttests were employed by test administrators.</p> <p>Lesson learned about the use of evaluation findings: Not all “important, cost saving” evaluation findings are used. Despite the findings that motivated teachers who received Project WILD materials by mail taught a similar number of activities and had students with significant knowledge gains and positive attitude changes as teachers who attend a workshop, even 25 years later Project WILD continues to be distributed through workshops.</p> <p>What could have been done differently? See above.</p> |
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