

An Evaluation of Project WILD's Effect on Student Knowledge and Attitude Toward Wildlife in Colorado

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The primary purpose of this study was to assess Project WILD's effect on student knowledge and attitude toward wildlife. Project WILD's effect was also tested across an urban-rural gradient to determine if the program affects children from different communities equally.

Study included a total of 26 classes (680 students) of sixth and seventh grade students. Test instrument was a survey.

Analysis showed no significant differences in student attitude and knowledge of wildlife based on Project WILD exposure alone.

Definitive conclusions on the effectiveness of Project WILD cannot be drawn from this evaluation for several reasons:

- Other wildlife-related activities affect student scores (hunting, fishing, hiking, etc.). It is likely that what actually was measured was the cumulative effect of numerous influences that might shape a child's knowledge or attitude toward wildlife.
- While the control group may not have used Project WILD, several teachers used other environmental education curricula. Thus, while attempting to measure only Project WILD's effect, students exposed to Project WILD may have been compared to students exposed to other environmental education curricula. Can't unequivocally state that Project WILD has no effect on student knowledge and attitude toward wildlife.
- It was difficult to find a control group that was not exposed to any environmental education curricula.

Urban students scored higher than their rural counterparts on both the cognitive and affective portions of the questionnaire.

- might be a function of the general trend of increasing wildlife knowledge among older urban students
- teachers in urban areas used more Project WILD activities (5:2). Current emphasis, recognizing that need is great -- may be more effective because it is used more frequently.

Analysis showed no significant differences in student responses between four categories of Project WILD implementation strategies (district infused and required, district provided training but use not required, individual teacher sign-up, not used). Data must be used with caution -- teachers did not adhere to their stated strategy. (Some teachers in control group used Project WILD.)

Participation in wildlife-related activities outside the classroom was shown to have a significant effect on student knowledge and attitude.

Project WILD has an important role in reinforcing positive attitudes towards the environment and providing an opportunity to synthesize, under a teacher's guidance, wildlife information gained from sources outside the classroom.