

A Study of Environmental Education: Attitudes and Practices Among Teachers at the Secondary Level

Margo Farnsworth; Graduate Seminar Paper -- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Southwest Missouri State University

June, 1989

Questions addressed by this study:

1. Are cognitive or affective gains seen in students after teachers use environmental education materials?
2. How do science teachers at the secondary level view environmental education. Do they think it is an important subject to be offered within the school curriculum?
3. How much do high school science teachers use specialized environmental education materials in their classrooms and what benefits, if any, do they see?
4. How well do specialized programs fit into teachers' class plans?
5. How much and what kind of background do these secondary science teachers have in environmental education?
6. How do teachers' attitudes and practices compare between teachers who use Project WILD and those who do not?

99 science teachers, grades 7-12 from northwest Arkansas and southwest Missouri participated in the study.

Teachers approved heartily of environmental education in the schools. They also showed strong support for the use of specialized environmental education materials in the schools.

Teachers generally agreed that environmental education should be a separate class (HS teachers). However, they also generally agreed that they could fit environmental education materials into their classes if they knew about them in advance.

Teachers agreed that they saw both cognitive and affective gains in students after using environmental education programming.

Teachers' feelings about environmental education in the schools relate positively with their degree of personal commitment to the environment which was generally strong.

In a vast majority of cases, teachers who used Project WILD indicated greater personal commitment to the environment as well as stronger support for environmental education in the schools.

2/Farnsworth -- June, 1989

Conclusions:

1. Environmental education should be included to a greater degree in the public schools.
2. Teachers would support this inclusion and if given proper training, such as that which accompanies programs like Project WILD, would tend to use more environmental education materials of a wider variety.
3. When teachers learn more about environmental education through programs such as Project WILD, their attitudes reflect deeper commitment to the environment than teachers not participating in such programs. It seems plausible that students may benefit from the same process.
4. Both cognitive and affective gains are seen in students after the presentation of environmental education materials.
5. Teachers need further training in environmental education -- ultimately would benefit the students.