

University of California 4-H Youth Development Program

**On the Wild Side
2005 Program
Evaluation**

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In Their Own Words

“I feel like a more important person for having given the kids that opportunity and making someone’s day. I feel great after every weekend, knowing I’ve helped make memories...”

“I’ve become a more responsible, flexible, and compassionate leader. Plus, I’ve learned more about nature through teaching than I could have ever learned in a classroom.”



“When I was planning camp...all the adults that I worked with were willing and open. I gave some ideas and took some of theirs. They made me feel very welcomed.”

“I like the focus on biology. I also like that it’s completely for the kids and we’re all volunteers. That it’s completely non-profit and the whole focus of the camp is to teach the kids, not just about science, but about appreciating nature and having a sense of environmental responsibility.”

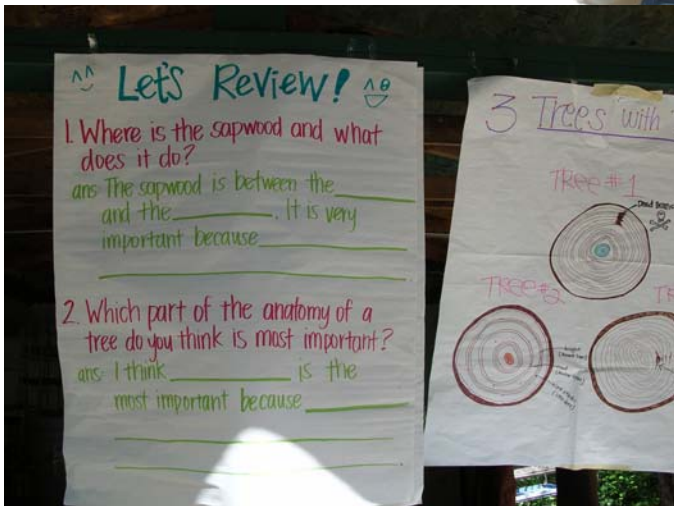




“I learned that a pollinator is the bugs that take stuff out of the flower.”

“If I were a flower, I would have every color of pollen to attract pollinators.”

“Pollination comes from wind and water.”



“Water comes up from the roots through the sapwood to the branch and the leaves.”

“Tree rings indicate how many years old the tree is.”

“I learned lots of things I don't usually learn in school.”



“We went by the river and closed our eyes and listened to nature.”



“I saw the biggest slug and know how to use a compass.”

“For the compass, you have to line up arrows and degrees.”

“Canoeing was great! We almost went into the dam a couple of times, but we had a blast. This activity needs skill and teamwork.”

“Canoeing was fun. I learned new words — bow, stern, starboard, and port.”



“This place is the best ever!”

On the Wild Side 2005 Narrative Report

On the Wild Side aims to enthuse and educate elementary school children about nature and the outdoors, and encourage community involvement and activism in teenagers. It is both a service learning experience for teens who plan and lead the program, and an environmental education experience for elementary school-age participants. Young staff work in partnership with adult volunteers to orchestrate and deliver weekend camp programs to 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students attending schools in low-income neighborhoods.

Project Goals: On the Wild Side is about learning and service, but also about experiencing wonder and a sense of fulfillment. It's as much about the excitement of paddling a canoe for the first time or hugs from campers as it is learning environmental concepts and discovering the gift of giving. Program goals for teen leaders include:

- Skills and confidence in program planning and delivery.
- An increased awareness of the importance of civic engagement.
- A sense of empowerment.
- Feelings of satisfaction and pride in successful project completion.

For young participants, the program goals include:

- Expanded knowledge of the natural world and systems within it.
- The development of an enthusiasm for nature and outdoor living experiences.
- An appreciation for the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship.
- A fun, positive experience with peers and staff in the outdoor setting.

Project Description: On the Wild Side begins in the fall with a core design team of youth and adults who create a project plan. Team members secure funding, recruit teen teachers and adult coaches, organize training, and secure media exposure. The team recruits camp staff by early spring, and the staff attends a *Project Wild* and *Project Learning Tree* training session where they receive copies of these curricula. At a weekend retreat in April (held this past year at the Marin Headlands), staff members select the activities they will teach, chose teaching partners, learn strategies for teaching and working with 4th-6th grade students, and begin to bond as a team.

This year On the Wild Side ran two weekends. Campers and their adult chaperones arrive Saturday morning, are divided into groups and rotate through six teen-led activities. Teen staff sleep under the stars and share family-style meals with campers. A campfire, group games, and a closing ceremony round out the two-day program.

Population Served: Fifteen teenagers planned and delivered the program for 127 fourth, fifth and sixth grade youth. Demographics of participants are listed in Table 1. We recruited teenage participants through high schools, 4-H Clubs, the 4-H YES Project, and partnering organizations. Three teen participants were new to 4-H. Five elementary schools—Bret Harte, Rio Linda, PS7, KIPP Preparatory, and Tahoe—all in low-income communities—participated in this year's program.

Table 1: Profile of On the Wild Side 2005 Participants

Ethnicity	Elementary Students (n=127)		Teen Teachers (n=15)		Adult Staff & Chaperones (n=33)	
African American	50	39%	2	13%	5	15%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	5%	6	40%	2	6%
American Indian	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Caucasian	41	32%	7	47%	22	67%
Hispanic	29	23%	0	0%	4	12%
Gender						
Female	78	61%	10	67%	24	73%
Male	48	39%	5	33%	9	27%

Teens’ Thoughts on the Project: We gathered information from teen participants about their project experience through written surveys (before and after the camp weekends), journals, and a focus group. Adult staff participated in a separate focus group session.

Feelings of Success: All teen and adult staff felt the camp program was extremely successful. Comments from teen teachers included, “All five (activity) stations did an awesome job. The kids’ attention and interest levels were all toward us teachers. Also, there were no behavioral problems.” “The kids enjoyed the game a lot and they participated a lot during the discussions. Journal writing was awesome this year! They focused a lot on writing and reflecting on the activity. Some even drew diagrams of the playing field.” “At first I was a little bit nervous about bed time. Why? I was just scared one of the girls would be afraid and freak out, since they were going to be outside. Guess what? Not one of them got scared! And they all had a blast. Today had to be one of the best days ever!!!”

This is not to say that the camp sessions ran without glitches. On the second weekend, one bus arrived two hours late, throwing the schedule off and requiring several accommodations. And there was one team of teenagers that felt they struggled with their presentation.

“Saturday...an unexpected challenge came. The bus had not gotten to the site so we had to introduce the groups at different times which caused chaos. And the first group got out of hand waiting for the other group, but with a quick meeting the staff mixed up the scheduling so it would work. The day went pretty smooth.”

“...The first group got cheated their first lesson because it got cut short. Out of the two groups (school teams in session), only one showed for 10 minutes and we misread an important part of the lesson so the first group didn’t have much fun or get the lesson’s purpose. After that we did pretty good and kept getting better.”

Teens felt success not only with campers, but in their planning process as well. Since teen volunteers from past programs graduated from high school last year, teen recruitment was a special concern this year. One young member of the design team wrote about his efforts to recruit his peers:

“After the first (planning) meeting...I was worried. I thought that we might not have enough teen teachers. I had to put out a flyer at my school. It was hard to post a flyer at my school. I had to make an appointment with the VP, and she had to approve it so teachers at my school would read it in class. I didn’t think it would bring people to the in to the program, but I hoped so. The flyer did not make it to all of the classes.

“At the meeting before the retreat, two girls from my school showed up from my flyer. It was great to see that the flyer worked. It was the first flyer I put up. I also brought my brother and friend Sarah. I was happy to see new people getting involved...”

When asked what the most meaningful part of the program was, teens shared many things: learning to teach and working with children, being in an environment that augmented the lessons, feeling good about teaching kids new things. But the most frequently mentioned item was bonding and forming new friendships, both with campers and other staff members.

“Every year I look forward to being able to communicate and relate to them (campers) on a certain level. It’s amazing what kinds of friendships and bonds that can happen in just one weekend. I live for this! This program is a wonderful opportunity that I enjoy participating in.”

“What I like most is the feeling of instant community. Although many people are regulars, newcomers feel just as a part of everything as everyone else. I’ll be back next year.”

“The least favorite part was saying good-bye. Me and my cabin had such a great time that we exchanged phone numbers and I already saw Lilian (a camper) yesterday. She lives by my aunt and we connected yesterday and it was cool. (I) hope to come back next year.”

Teens were hard-pressed to think of changes they’d make to improve the program. Keep in mind that the program has evolved over the last five years. Their one suggestion was to increase the sessions from two to three days.

Skill Development for Teens: Teens completed a retrospective pre-post test at the completion of the program to assess growth in leadership. They were asked to rate their skill level on six leadership components. The results, based on a four-point Lichert scale, are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Retrospective Self-assessment of Leadership Skills for On the Wild Side Teen Teachers

Leadership Skill	Skill Level Prior to On the Wild Side Program	Skill Level After On the Wild Side Program	Difference
Making a presentation	3.00	3.70	.77
Sharing my opinion with adults	2.85	3.46	.61
Sharing my opinion with other teens	3.15	3.77	.62
Organizing my time	2.38	3.31	.93
Organizing my supplies	3.15	3.46	.31
Working with younger kids	3.00	3.85	.85

Teens indicated that the skills they grew most in were organizing their time and working with children. The nature of their role as teachers—presenting their lesson within time constraints and directly managing groups of younger youth—likely influenced their perceived growth in these areas. Journal entries and observations verify that each time they taught their lesson, the session improved in content and efficiency, and their confidence as presenters grew.

Expectations of the Experience: Teens that had attended camp in prior years had an idea of what to expect, and their expectations were met: “My experience far outweighs my expectations each year. I love the program and everything it stands for.” Those new to the program (half of the teens were) sometimes discovered things about the experience they had not expected. One youth said it was more fun than she thought it would be, and another commented on having to adjust his teaching style. For one teen, elements of the program surprised her:

“It turned out to be more structured than I thought. The meals were cool! The food was great, and I hadn’t expected it to have been family style, but I think that was more fun and brought everyone closer.”

All teens agreed or strongly agreed that their ideas were used in *On the Wild Side*, and all but one agreed or strongly agreed that the program increased their awareness of nature and the environment. Eighty-six percent of teens strongly agreed that that the experience gave them opportunities to work with people from different cultures, backgrounds and abilities.

Community Impact: Ninety-three percent of teens felt as though they had made an important contribution to their community through the program. There was one teen who didn’t feel *On the Wild Side* made a difference in the community, and another who was unsure about its community impact. Most teens thought their work changed their community in a variety of ways. The most frequently mentioned impacts were providing environmental education and new experiences for children. Several teens mentioned environmental stewardship as a hopeful outcome, recognizing that motivation to preserve natural resources starts with experience and education. Some teens mentioned the impact of the experience on themselves. There were a few who thought the program made a difference, but not a community-wide impact. “I don’t think (it’s made a difference) on a community level but it has made a difference kid by kid.”

New Resources and Partners: We expanded our adult volunteer base this year. Two teachers (one high school, one elementary) joined our design team and served as adult coaches; we added an adult to the kitchen crew and two young men to oversee maintenance and dishwashing. New collaborators in this year’s project included KIPP Preparatory, and two schools brought twice as many students as last year indicating their growing commitment to the effort. Blue Cross of California and private individuals joined the California 4-H Youth Development Program as new financial partners. Though we made contact with both print and television media, we were disappointed not to receive coverage on the event. This is an area for development.

Project Impact on Campers: Our evaluation utilized data from participant surveys, children’s journals, and pre- and post-tests measuring knowledge gain for young participants. The data suggests that participants are learning environmental concepts, and that the program is fun and engaging.

Participants are Learning: As in past years, there is a significant difference in participant's pre- and post test scores measuring what they learned during the camp experience (Appendix, Figure 1). All but one of the five participating sites demonstrated statistically significant knowledge gain in the environmental information presented (Appendix, Figure 2). Journaling activities after each activity allowed children to reflect upon and communicate what they learned: "You can tell how old a tree is by the rings inside," "The sapwood is between the cambium and the heartwood. It is important because it protects it," "Pollen is part of a flower and it is inside of a flower. It is yellow dust," and "I learned about the prey and predator and that a bird is both—they eat worms and we eat them." Not all learning was academic: "What I learned about compasses are that they are not as easy as they look and they are fun," or "What I learned about canoeing is that you should have teamwork."

At the end of camp, participants were given a retrospective pre-post test asking them how much they know about nature before camp and how much they learned about nature at camp. What the children felt they learned was significantly more than what they reported they knew before attending the program (Appendix, Figure 5). The children perceive they're learning, a finding the test scores validate.

A Positive, New Experience: For most students, On the Wild Side creates opportunities to explore and encounter nature in ways they haven't before. The list of new experiences children report illustrates the beauty youth meet in the natural setting: "Looking at the stars," "Finding lizards," "Sleeping outside," "Swimming in a lake," "Going on an adventure," "I rode in a canoe," "Some trees can peel (bark)," "I saw a shooting star." Other first-time opportunities are tied to activities done in the camp setting like, "I set the table" and "How to use a compass." Of the children reporting, 67% indicate it was their first camping experience.

Campers rated the On the Wild Side experience highly. Eighty-two percent felt the program was excellent, 16% said it was good, 1% indicated it was average, and 1% said it was poor (See Appendix, Figure 6). Likewise, teachers and after school program leaders had positive comments about the program.

Plans for the Project: There is no question in the minds of the teen and adult volunteers about continuing On the Wild Side. After six successful summers, the program has developed a loyal following of participants who are committed to seeing the project prosper. This includes schools who are now asked to pick up part of the cost of the program. Securing the necessary money is an on-going question from year to year, but over time the project has seen its funding sources diversify with increased revenue from program fees and contributions. We will use remaining funds remaining from 2005 towards our 2006 program. Other future plans include a greater recruitment effort for new teen volunteers and increased publicity for the project.

As for the teens whose time and energy made On the Wild Side possible, their enthusiasm and jubilation inspires the effort. All hope to serve again next year. "At the end of activities I felt like had just influenced so many kids," one youth wrote. "It was an awesome feeling. Overall, I had an extraordinary time. I am so glad I volunteered for this camp."

On the Wild Side 2005 Financial Report

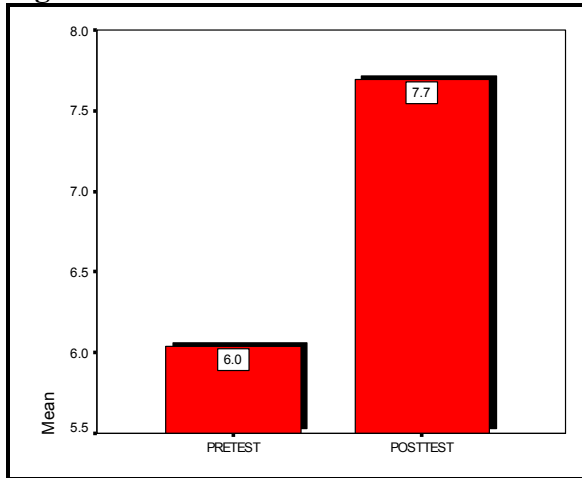
Category	Description	Budgeted	Actual
REVENUE			
Grants	4-H Service Learning Grant	\$5,000	\$5,000
Fees	School sites (8 @ \$250)	2,000	2,000
Donations	Private Donations		
	Anonymous	750	50
	Blue Cross of California		500
	Jeanne McKay		250
	The Lyle Company		500
	4-H County Council Outreach Funds	500	0
Total Revenue		\$8,250	\$8,300
EXPENSES			
Personnel	Lifeguard for camp sessions	150	150
Program Supplies	Program materials	400	468
Facility	Facility rentals	2,400	2,360
Food	Meals for camp sessions	2,300	1,499
Transportation	2 buses for each camp session	2,300	2,380
Program Evaluation	Both summative and formative	700	551
Total Expenses		\$8,250	\$7,408
Total		0	\$892

This budget does not reflect personnel expenses that UCCE or schools may have incurred.

Appendix: On the Wild Side 2005 Test Results

Knowledge Gain: On the Wild Side participants took a pre-and post-test to help measure what they learned through the program. Each participant was given a total score for both the pre-test and post-test, and we compared mean (average) scores between the two. We then conducted a paired samples t-test to determine whether there was a significant difference between the scores. The t-test revealed significant differences ($p=.00$) for the entire sample ($n=113$) participants. As in the past five years, we can say with confidence that the children are learning about the environment through participating in On the Wild Side.

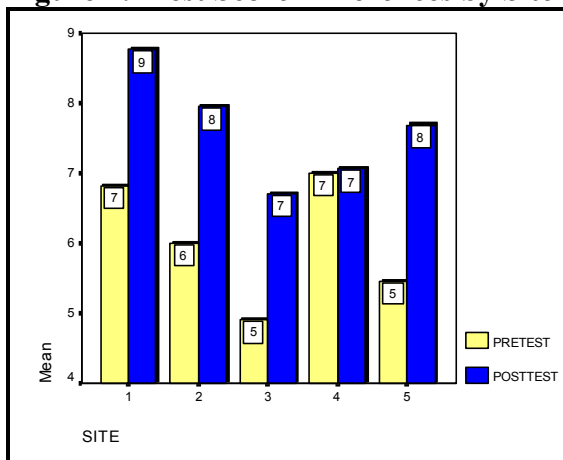
Figure 1: Mean Pre- and Post-Test Scores



	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Means	6.035	7.690
Std. Deviations	1.977	2.122
n	113	113

Site Comparisons: All sites showed significant differences in the pre- and post-test scores (site 1, $p = .000$; site 2, $p=.001$; site 3, $p=.000$; site 5, $p=.013$) except site 4 ($p= .906$). Site 4 was a large group and came minus an adult chaperone. This lack of adult involvement and higher student/adult ratio may have contributed to these results.

Figure 2: Test Score Differences by Site



Site	n	Mean Pre-Test	Mean Post-Test	Difference
1	34	6.824	8.765	1.941
2	18	6.000	7.944	1.944
3	31	4.903	1.326	3.577
4	17	7.000	7.058	.058
5	13	5.461	7.692	2.231

Grade Level and Number of Times in Program: Difference in pre-test and post-test scores were significant for grades 4 and 5 but not for grade 6 ($p=.000$, $p=.000$, $p=.001$ respectively). This can be explained by the small number of sixth graders ($n=8$) in the sample. Another reason for lack of significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores is the ceiling effect, where 6th graders were already scoring relatively high in the pre-test.

One way ANOVA showed a significant effect for both pre-test as well as post-test scores (at $p = .030$ and $.017$ respectively), with number of times participated. This means participants' pre-test scores were significantly higher if they had participated more than once. Their post-test scores were also significantly higher if they were second and third-timers, compared to first-timers.

Figure 3: Test Score Differences by Grade

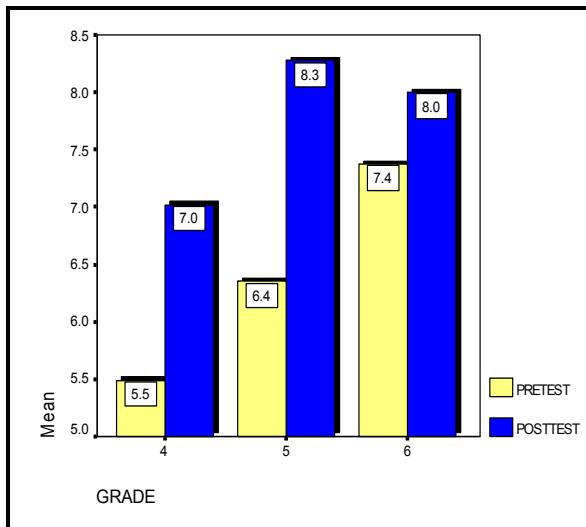
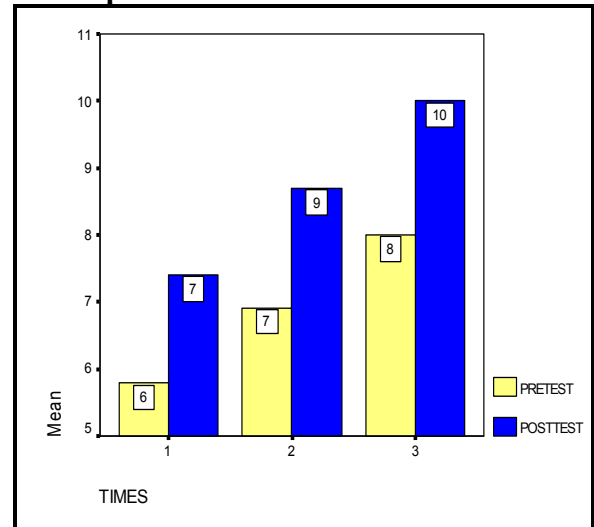
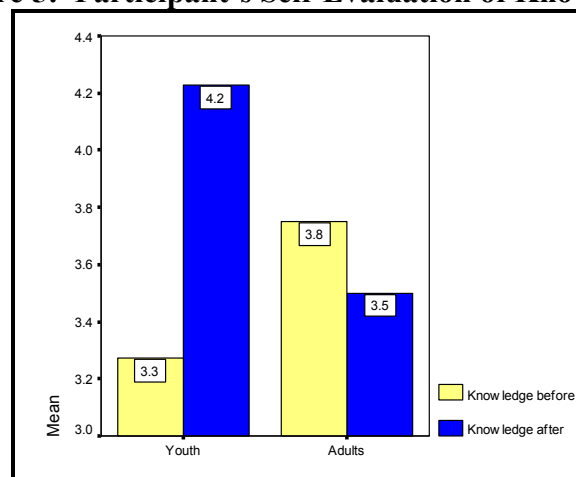


Figure 4: Test Score Differences by Participation Time



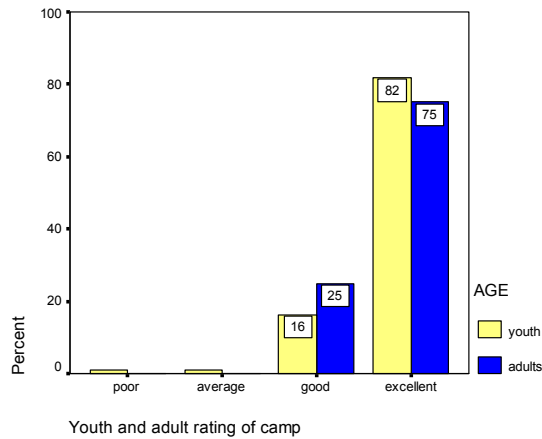
Self-evaluation on Nature Knowledge: A retrospective pre-post test asked participants (both children and adult chaperones) to report how much they felt they knew about nature before camp and how much they learned about nature at camp. A t-test indicated that what the youth felt they learned was significantly more than what they reported they knew prior to camp ($p=.000$).

Figure 5: Participant's Self-Evaluation of Knowledge



Participant's Experience Ratings: As can be seen from the graph, 82% of youth reported the experience as excellent, 16% said it was good, 1% of youth participants said the camp was average, and 1% said it was poor. Three-quarters of the adults rated the experience as excellent with the remaining quarter saying it was good. Bathrooms (likely the age of the facilities) and swimming time (both amount of swim time and changing swimming from in the early morning to afternoon) were items most mentioned by campers as things they would change.

Figure 6: Youth and Adult Ratings of Camp



(Statistical analysis prepared with help from Aarti Subramaniam and the 4-H Center for Youth Development, Davis, California)

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