



About Growing Up WILD

Growing Up WILD is an early childhood education program that builds on children's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them. Through a wide range of activities and experiences, *Growing Up WILD* provides an early foundation for developing positive impressions about nature and lifelong social and academic skills.



Growing Up WILD is sponsored by NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife. Whether you work at a public or private school, day care or Head Start center, museum or zoo— a workshop can be tailored especially for you.

Through a generous EPA Environmental Education Grant, we are offering professional development workshops **free** to early childhood educators and childcare resource agency trainers.

For information about attending or hosting a *Growing Up WILD* professional development workshop at your center, contact Liz Jackson at (908) 637-4125 or send email to:

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NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife Mission Statement

The mission of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is to protect and manage the State's fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic values for all New Jerseyans.

Agency Goals

To maintain New Jersey's rich variety of fish and wildlife species at stable, healthy levels and to protect and enhance the many habitats on which they depend.

To educate New Jerseyans on the values and needs of our fish and wildlife and to foster a positive human/wildlife co-existence.

To maximize the recreational and commercial use of New Jersey's fish and wildlife for both present and future generations.

Growing Up WILD is a program of the Council for Environmental Education, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and a nationally recognized leader in environmental education.



Building Connections with Growing Up WILD

Connecting to Success

Since the program's beginnings in 1983, over one million educators have participated in Project WILD training. The effectiveness of this award winning program for use in schools, outdoor classrooms, and nonformal education settings is well documented and known to many. Hands-on, classroom ready activities that connect topics in wildlife and the environment across the curriculum for use by K-12 educators—regardless of their background or subject area knowledge—are hallmarks of Project WILD.

With the recent launch of *Growing Up WILD*, now the high quality professional development and materials available to K-12 educators are also available to educators of young children, ages 3-7. *Growing Up WILD* is an early childhood education program that builds on children's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them. Through a wide range of activities and experiences, *Growing Up WILD* provides an early foundation for developing positive impressions about the natural world and lifelong social and academic skills.

About the Guide

Growing Up WILD: Exploring Nature with Young Children is designed to help educators and caregivers engage young children in activities that encourage exploration of the outdoors. With activities written by educators and wildlife professionals and reviewed by experts in early childhood education, the guide provides an early foundation for developing active, healthy children who appreciate nature and are prepared to enter school with ample learning skills.

The *Growing Up WILD* activity guide:

- Is written especially for early childhood educators of children ages 3-7.
- Features 27 field-tested, hands-on, nature based activities in a full-color 11"x17" activity guide.
- Includes crafts, art projects, music, conservation activities, reading and math connections and much more.
- Involves social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive domains to help foster learning and development in all areas.
- Supports developmentally appropriate practice allowing children to learn at levels that are individually, socially, and culturally appropriate.
- Is correlated to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards and the Head Start Domains.

Connecting to Nature

A young child's connection with nature can be as simple as sitting under a tree, listening to the chirping of crickets, or planting a seed. *Growing Up WILD* builds on these experiences with ideas for outdoor learning.

Benefits

Research has shown that there are many positive benefits to spending time in nature and that it is an important part of a child's overall well-being. Children who have opportunities to play and learn in nature are more likely to:

- Handle challenges and problems more capably.
- Be more physically active, healthy, aware of nutrition, and less likely to be obese.
- Have better mental and emotional health.
- Have a greater appreciation of the arts, music, history, and literature.
- Choose science or a science related subject as a career.
- Become better informed and environmentally aware adults.
- Be happier and smarter.

Connecting to Academics

Growing Up WILD goes beyond building connections to nature and prepares young learners for future success through school readiness. Skills addressed in *Growing Up WILD* include beginning inquiry, word recognition, speech, observation, classification, sequencing, measuring, listening, and cooperating.

Connecting to Families

Growing Up WILD features "Home Connections" cards available in English and Spanish. Activities about plants and animals extend the learning at home for the entire family.

Connecting to Training

You can receive *Growing Up WILD* materials by participating in an interactive, hands-on workshop designed to meet the needs of early childhood educators and caregivers. Experience *Growing Up WILD* activities first hand, learning how they can help you reach your educational goals. Discover how to lead your young learners on an exploration of the natural world outside your classroom while they gain valuable knowledge and skills.