

# Success Story: **Project WILD**

April 16, 2022

On Saturday, April 16, the rain and hail held off just long enough for a lively group of 17 formal and non-formal educators to learn outdoors at a 3-hour Project WILD training at the Tacoma Nature Center. Participants came from as far north as Burien and as far south as Vancouver, representing every type of learning center from preschools to interpretive science centers to public K-12 schools and even local colleges. The educators ranged from formal K-12 teachers, both current and retired, to program coordinators, volunteers, and naturalists.



East Sound South FieldSTEM Coordinator, Cindy Haverkamp, and guest teacher, Connor Runyan from the Pierce Conservation District led the participants through a variety of Project WILD experiences. Cindy started off with “Learning to Look and Looking to See,” which included an outdoor Sit Spot. Next, Connor explained how to use community science technology apps such as iNaturalist.



Cindy and Connor divided the group into two, leading groups through a biodiversity study focused on two different habitats for the lesson called “Graphanimal,” which focuses on key math skills. Later, Connor moved the group into the realm of engineering, helping participants to view themselves as land use planners for the lesson “Changing the Land,” starting the group off with the fun outdoor extension called “Shrinking Habitat.” This engaging learning opportunity earned participants 3 STEM clock hours and included a copy of the Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide.

Based on how hard it was to get the participants to come back indoors, it's clear that educators are excited about getting back to in-person workshops with outdoor opportunities. Project WILD trainings are perfect for this, as so many lessons include outdoor activities! One participant stated, "I used to think taking students outside was an "extra," but now I know it is a needed integration for student learning." Another suggested that this workshop "will have such a positive impact on many students." One participant even requested additional training in the Growing Up WILD curriculum, so that this type of learning can be offered to students as young as Pre-K. All would agree that this Project WILD learning opportunity was a great way to spend a spring-time Saturday morning!

