Assessing an Environmental Education Program

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Assessing an Environmental Education Program

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Abstract

We developed a comprehensive assessment plan and tested the curriculum to determine whether hands-on outdoor recreation events promote knowledge, attitudes, and performance among at-risk urban children. Knowledge, attitude, and performance assessments were developed, refined and implemented with a variety of age groups participating within the events. Findings revealed that knowledge, attitudes, and performance increased substantially as a result of participating in the outdoor recreation events.
The Program: Discover Mojave

- Half-day events based on environmental themes formed by an environmental educational committee (federal agency and community groups)
- Recreational in nature
  - Events occurred at local outdoor parks or public lands
- Each event had 3 components
  - An awareness session
  - The activity session
  - Debriefing
Wetlands Bird Safari

- Birdwatching at a local park
- Focus on the use of binoculars to find and watch birds
- Learning about birds and their habitats
Fun with Fishing

- Introduction to casting
- Learning about different kinds of fish and their habitats
Cool Canoeing

- Canoeing at a local park
- Learning about strokes and water safety
Assessing Knowledge

- Each event had 2 knowledge questions related to the specific event.
- Knowledge questions were open-ended, requiring children’s written responses.
- Response sheet included a word bank for children’s use.
Assessing Knowledge

Knowledge Questions (Pre)
- What do you know about watching birds?
- What do you know about canoeing?
- What do you know about fishing?

Knowledge Questions (Post)
- What did you learn about watching birds?
- What did you learn about canoeing?
- What did you learn about using a rod and reel?
Assessing Attitudes

- Each event had 5 attitude related items
  - I would like to show my friends how to fish
  - Birdwatching is fun
  - I would like to do another canoeing program
- General attitudes related to environmental themes were also assessed
  - I know how to keep the water clean and safe
- Attitude items were Likert-type
Assessing Performance

- Each event had 2 – 3 specific skills that were used to measure each child’s performance
  - Participant successfully used binoculars to find and focus on an object
  - Participant makes casts properly and safely
  - Participant successfully demonstrates basic paddle stroke

- Skills assessment in the form of a checklist completed by the event facilitator
Procedures

- 13 recreational events involving 72 children were conducted and assessed
- 2 groups of participants
  - Members of an Environmental Science Club (28 fifth graders)
  - Members of a recreational drop-in program (44 children, aged 8 – 12)
  - All participants completed pre and post test measures of knowledge, attitudes, and skills
- Individual and small group interviews were conducted with participants at the conclusion of each event
# Results: Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Knowledge - Pre</th>
<th>Knowledge - Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birdwatching</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>41/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>59/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More Complete</td>
<td>0/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>39/74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>32/74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More Complete</td>
<td>3/74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoeing</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>12/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>21/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More Complete</td>
<td>1/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>None Complete</td>
<td>92/208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partial Complete</td>
<td>112/208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More Complete</td>
<td>4/208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table above shows the results of knowledge in different events. The knowledge is classified into three levels: None, Partial, and More Complete. The table lists the number of participants, the percentage of each level, and the total number of participants.
## Results: Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Performance Skill Demonstration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birdwatching</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Some 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Some 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoeing</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Some 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>Some 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All 94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results: Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birdwatching</td>
<td>17.33</td>
<td>18.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>18.77</td>
<td>19.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoeing</td>
<td>19.11</td>
<td>19.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

- Knowledge increased dramatically over the course of the children’s participation in the events
- The majority of the participants demonstrated all performance skills
- All attitudes were very positive
  - Post-event attitudes were significantly higher than pre-event attitudes