



**FAST FACTS**

**Project:** Colorado Wildlife Research

**Teacher:** Amy Schmer

**School:** Preston Middle School

**Website:**  
prestonmiddleschool.org

**Location:** Fort Collins, CO

**Start date:** 09/08/2011

**End date:** 05/20/2012

**Unique requests of participating mentors:** Students working at Sylvan Dale Ranch to improve wildlife habitat. Looking for mentors who can help student with scientific inquiry.

**Challenge:** Provide teachers with basic, affordable.

**Solution:** mentors

**Results:** Classrooms throughout the district.

**Contact:**  
david@telementor.org

## Preston Students Getting Wild!

Colorado middle school students participate in a unique research project that has them howling for more science and learning.



**Digging in.** Middle school students in Amy Schmer’s class tend to a wildlife guzzler they built on the Sylvan Dale Ranch near their school. Various wildlife have benefited from a cool drink, while students record some of their data by way of motion-triggered cameras.

the multi-year, project-based association to take place between the school and the ranch. How did he do it? He simply asked the ranch owners and they said yes.

**Science Research Heaven.** “We now have 3,000+ acres on which to conduct science research,” says David. “This is a dream come true for me. I’ve been looking for an opportunity where students are tackling real wildlife issues, improving wildlife habitat, and collaborating with real professionals every step of the way. That dream is now a reality thanks to the ranch owners and many others who have stepped up to the plate.”

The students have now installed the ranch’s first wildlife guzzler—a stock water tank for wildlife. Sixth graders were literally swinging pick axes and setting up fixed

**Amy Schmer has** never seen her class quite like this. Amy is a sixth-grade science teacher at Preston Middle School in Fort Collins, Colo., where she and her students are participating in a unique wildlife research project in conjunction with nearby Sylvan Dale Ranch, an historic working horse and cattle ranch in Loveland. David Neils, director of the International Telementor Program, an academic project-based mentoring program that matches students with real-world professionals, arranged for



“I got involved because I knew that this was a one-of-a-kind opportunity for me and my students. I knew that I wanted my students to do something special.”

—Amy Schmer, Teacher, Preston Middle School - Fort Collins CO




**Authentic Learning, Real Results.** *Students in Amy Schmer’s Science Class at Preston Middle School in Fort Collins, Colo., have learned a valuable lesson about authentic learning that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. As part of their Colorado Wildlife Research Project, they have not only built a guzzler for regional wildlife, but they’ve recorded their data—and changed their views on science research forever.*

movement-triggered cameras to document their studies. A few weeks later they already had their first thirsty visitor.

When David visits the classroom, he says, there are never less than five hands in the air at a time. “It’s electric,” he says. “Students thrive when they’re learning math and science in a way that makes a difference. This kind of learning will be something they remember for the rest of their lives.”

From a teacher’s perspective, Amy’s class is working on real science projects in collaboration with professionals in the workplace who are mentoring them through the secure, web-based messaging system provided through the International Telementor Program. Students are getting help beyond their teacher and their parents from concerned professionals who are listening to what they

have to say and guiding them forward in more depth than possible through the usual route. Sounds great, but what do the students themselves have to say about all of this? Let’s just say, they’re loving it every step of the trail.

“Our purpose is to spread the word on how the telementoring program and the mentors have been helping us with our wildlife project, based on a guzzler that is giving many animals a source of water that is close by,” says one student, Maggie. “Our mentors have been helping us with our project and giving us many good answers and help to use for up at the guzzler and for a further project in either seventh or eighth grade.” She says that the mentors have really helped them to learn about nature and science. “Our mentors help us like when we need an answer to a certain question they can sometimes give it to us or when we need a link to a website animals, they can always provide their help.” Mentors also provide advice when students give them their points of view on what they should do to help the guzzler and for what they need to take away from the guzzler, according to Maggie. “Our guzzler is big enough for bears and has an escape ramp for smaller animals like birds, or field mice. Since the beginning of the year, we have worked very hard on giving these animals a good source of water. We have a lot of fun working on this project and it has done good to the animals up at Sylvan Dale Ranch.” 

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students in the wildlife research project at Sylvan Dale Ranch:

- ☑ will maintain a notebook with all their gathered information
- ☑ are involved with the guzzler in some form
- ☑ will understand how the guzzler works and why it is needed

[www.telementor.org](http://www.telementor.org)

The International Telementor Program ■ David Neils, Founder/Director

