IMPLEMENTING 4-H PROJECT EXPERIENCES:
KNOWING OUR AUDIENCE

Activity Plan – Wisconsin 4-H Leader Training Series   ACTcc020

Wisconsin 4-H Community Clubs

Intended Audience:
- 4-H youth and adult project leaders

Learning Objectives:
Project leaders will:
- Recognize that all youth are not the same but develop physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally through several different stages
- Learn the importance of planning project experiences appropriate for the developmental stages of youth in their group.

Target Essential Elements:
Project work provides members with opportunities for *mastery* as they become engaged in learning and develop new skills through their project work.

VRKC Taxonomy:
Volunteers will increase their expertise in *educational design and delivery* as they develop skills in *implementing* learning opportunities that effectively promote positive personal development.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Supplies Needed:

Ideal 4-H Member Activity
- Tape
- Easel paper
- Sticky notes
- Pencils

Knowing Our Audience Activity
- Hard candy
- Handout

BACKGROUND

The physical, emotional, intellectual, and social characteristics of the members with whom we work differ greatly depending on the members' ages. We must tailor our teaching – both what we teach and how we teach it – to fit the developmental stages of our audience. In this lesson we will learn more about the developmental stages of youth and about how we can tailor our activities to fit each stage.

WHAT TO DO

Introduction

Among the many roles of a 4-H project leader is that of "teacher." Because youth learn differently at various ages and at various stages of their development, we must adapt our objectives and teaching methods to fit our audience. It's important to know our audience and their physical, emotional, intellectual, and social characteristics in order to plan appropriate learning experiences for them.

Activity: The Ideal 4-H Member

Ask leaders to picture their ideal 4-H member. Have them write the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social characteristics of that member on sticky notes, at least one characteristic for each category, only one idea per note. Have them post their notes on the appropriately labeled easel sheet. (Sheets labeled with the words "physical," "emotional," "intellectual," and "social," and taped to the walls in advance).

Ask leaders to stand. Go from sheet to sheet, asking them to sit down if they don't measure up to a particular characteristic of the ideal member. For example, ask them to sit down if they're not "athletic" or to sit down if they don't always think "creatively." Continue in this manner until all are seated.

Process the experience – none of us is "ideal" and it's unlikely that any of our members will measure up to the standards of the "ideal member" described by the leaders.

Activity: Knowing Our Audience

Pass around a bag of hard candies, asking each leader to take the flavor of their choice. Form groups of four or five per group, with each group representing one of the flavors of candy. For example, leaders selecting the peppermint candies form one group and those selecting the cinnamon candies form another. The number of different flavors in the bag is determined in advance, depending on the number of groups desired. Add or subtract candies from the bag as needed to ensure that groups will be of about the same size.

Introduce the activity by saying that now it's time for us to think about who our audience really is, since probably none of our members is "ideal." Members come in different ages, sizes, shapes, and genders, and with different levels of experience. Should we treat them all the same? Program the same for each age group or gender?

- Easel paper
- Tape
- Markers (several colors per group)

Handouts
- Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development. (Print in advance from http://4h.missouri.edu/resources/materials/LG783.pdf.)
- Examples
- Evaluation

Do Ahead:
- Have supplies and handouts ready.
- Prepare easel paper to post on wall for "The Ideal 4-H Member" activity.
- Prepare bag of hard candy for "Knowing Our Audience" activity.

Sources:
- Developed by Carolyn L. Belczyk, 4-H Youth Development Educator, UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Program.
- "Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development," Jamie Tomek and Mary Jo Williams, MU Extension, University of Missouri-Columbia.
- "Developmental Stages of 4-H Project Members," Barbara Barker, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Waushara County, UW-Extension, and Charles Prissel, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Polk County, UW-Extension.
- "The Ideal 4-H Member" activity, Jenny Wehmeier, Family Living Educator, Walworth County, UW-Extension.
- "Strengthening 4-H Project Leader Support" UW-Extension work team, January 2001, whose work provides a

Assign each group a particular age and gender of member to "draw," depicting that member's typical physical, emotional, social, and intellectual characteristics. Possible subjects include a 9 year old girl, a 9 year old boy, a 13 year old girl, and a 13 year old boy. Have each group tape its drawing to the wall and report on the characteristics they've illustrated. Distribute the handout "Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development" and compare the characteristics described by the groups in their drawings with what the experts say.

Process this activity by asking questions that challenge leaders to think about the differences and similarities among the members in their project groups and about ways that they need to program to meet the needs of all of their members.

Activity: Scavenger Hunt
Ask the leaders specific scavenger hunt questions, challenging them to find the answers in the "Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development" handout. Create additional questions as desired.
- For which age group do we need to plan learning activities with members of the same sex?
- Which group is intellectually most ready to make college visits and participate in field trips to help guide their career choices and prepare for their future?
- At which stage do we need to recognize that changes in hormones and thinking contribute to mood swings, which may require greater work on our part to accept their feelings and to be careful not to embarrass or criticize?
- In which stage are youth ready to be involved in setting rules and planning the group's activities?
- With which group should we be certain to provide a wide range of brief activities, so that all members have a chance to succeed?
- At which stage should we avoid competitions between girls and boys?

Most of the project curriculum guides (literature) available for use by members and leaders clearly identify targeted grade levels. The reading level of the guides and the suggested activities have been designed to fit specific developmental stages and are appropriate for use with members of the suggested grade levels. Encourage leaders to keep in mind, however, that every youth develops individually, and two youth of the same age or in the same grade may be at very different stages in their development.

Closing
We need to know our audience – their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual characteristics – in order to select the most appropriate learning objectives and teaching methods to use in helping them accomplish their goals.

TALK IT OVER
Reflect:
- Why is it important to understand the developmental stages of youth before we decide what and how we'll teach?
- Name some ways that 4-H project experiences might be adapted to suit a younger audience. What about an older audience?

Apply:
- How will knowing more about the different developmental stages of our members help us to plan more relevant project experiences?
- How might you use the information about development stages when planning your next 4-H project meeting?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY
Enhance:
- Most 4-H project groups include youth of various ages and developmental stages. In fact, this is true of many of our 4-H programs and activities. Challenge leaders to think of ways to teach a group that includes a mix of older and younger youth. How might they effectively engage older youth while still meeting the needs of younger members?

| foundation for this project leader training series. | o Involve older youth in planning and teaching a series of brief hands-on lessons for younger youth, possibly using a skillathon or learning-stations approach. o Involve older youth in additional, more challenging project meetings or career-exploration experiences. o Challenge older youth to design individualized project experiences outside the group meeting. o Challenge older youth to plan and present demonstrations of project skills for younger members. **Simplify:**
• Skip "The Ideal 4-H Member" activity to shorten the session.

EVALUATION
It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation provided at the end of this lesson plan can be modified to meet your needs. An option to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection question discussion. Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion.

ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS
• "Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development," Jamie Tomek and Mary Jo Williams, MU Extension, University of Missouri-Columbia, http://4h.missouri.edu/resources/materials/LG783.pdf.
• "Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth," *New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series*, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, http://www.rcre.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/4h/e148/401-402.pdf.
• "Ages and Stages," Massachusetts 4-H, http://www.mass4h.org/volunteers/ages_stages_training.html.

Finalized by the Strengthening the Vitality of 4-H Community Clubs Work Team, March 2007. |

Handout

Examples

Following are examples of how other leaders have applied the key principles from this lesson in real life situations:

Example #1: Vegetables

The process of helping members select what plants they will grow in their vegetable garden can vary depending on their ability to make decisions and process information. For younger members, you will help them determine what vegetables (carrots versus tomatoes) they are interested in growing. If you are doing this in the winter, have them cut out pictures from a seed catalog and to make a picture collage which may become their garden. You can assist older members in determining which variety/cultivar of vegetables they plan on growing. For example, when selecting tomatoes, you might select Roma tomatoes if you were using them for sauces and paste or you would select Goliath or Brandywine for eating fresh. They may also consider the growing degree days needed for the plant to mature. This age group could use graph paper to actually plan out their garden.

Example #2: Foods

Discuss what type of food products youth typically enter in the foods revue and fair in the different project levels beginning with the younger members. Younger members typically enter things, such as cookies, brownies, and dips for fruits/vegetables. Have participants identify why these types of projects are appropriate for younger members. Some of the responses should include: the preparation of these items typically involve a few steps, they have prescribed directions, the foods are ready to eat in a short amount of time, etc.

Have participants share what types of food items older project members typically prepare for the foods revue or fair. Have participants identify why these projects are more appropriate for older members. Some of their responses may include they have multiple steps that involve more time, such as yeast breads and main dishes; these foods also allow the youth to be creative by adding ingredients to change to a desired flavor or taste; they include skills they have already developed in addition to new ones, etc.

Examples prepared by:
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Handout

Implementing 4-H Project Experiences: Knowing Our Audience Evaluation

1. Please rate the following: How useful will this information be when developing learning objectives and selecting teaching methods appropriate for the age and developmental stage of your audience?

   Very Useful   Somewhat Useful   Not Sure   Not Useful

2. Please answer the following: Do you have a better understanding of the different developmental stages of youth and about how we can tailor our activities to fit each stage?

   Yes   No

3. What will you do as a result of this program?