



The 4-H Project

As a 4-H volunteer, you will find that projects in are useful tools for teaching a wide variety of skills to young people. The primary objective of all projects is to help them become more capable adults by learning basic life skills such as planning, setting goals, making decisions and evaluating alternatives. Volunteers must understand the life skills development objective and support it through their actions.

An overall goal of 4-H is to help each member develop his or her capabilities to the fullest. Volunteers must recognize that while they are teaching subject matter they are helping members understand themselves, their role in society, and the skills needed for living.

Planning and evaluating projects

In preparing to carry out a project with the youth, volunteers should keep in mind the importance of youth involvement in project planning. Planning and evaluating are learning tools for the member and teaching tools for the leader. To help the members learn, the volunteer must know what they want to learn and what is already known about the project being selected.

Planning and evaluation are continuing processes with each member and each project. Encourage and teach the 4-H'ers to develop their own objectives for each program year, that is, the things they want to learn or accomplish. Periodically during the year, the member and the leader or a teen leader should review the plan, check progress and revise it as necessary.

Younger members usually need more guidance in setting goals that are achievable but challenging, and this provides a service opportunity for more advanced youth. Remember; these plans must meet the personal objectives of the member.

Another part in the learning process is evaluation. This is the best way to show members that the volunteer is personally interested in each one and their progress. Knowing their adult volunteer's sincere interest in them increases learning for the member.



It is recommended that both the member and leader evaluate accomplishments. Together, the leaders and 4-H members are in the best position to evaluate what has been learned about the project and assess personal growth. Parents can also help leaders and youth in the evaluation process.

In the evaluation of a photography, sewing or animal project for example, it is important for the leader to ask what the member learned. This method helps youth participate more in the evaluation process. It is much deeper and more personal than exhibit judging.

Through this method, members learn that everyone has needs, some common to everyone and others specific to individuals. They also see that needs and values give meaningful direction to what we want to learn and how hard we are willing to work for it.

It is also important for the kids to ask themselves the question: What would I do differently next time? This helps them to self-evaluate and accept responsibility for the choices they made. Recognizing what did not work as compared to what did is an equally valuable teaching element.

Learning increases when members set goals early in the project and have an idea of how they can benefit from the experience and the things they are learning.

As members become more able to identify their wants, needs and values, they also gain a greater appreciation for their personal abilities. This helps them become more self-directed individuals and develop positive feelings of success.

Reference: This publication is an edited and updated version of the "Texas 4-H Leaders Handbook."

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