

## The 4-H Cloverbud Program: *What's it all about?*

### **Cloverbuds – Very Special 4-H Members**

Cloverbuds, the youngest participants in the 4-H Club Program, are enthusiastic, curious, creative, robust and resilient young people who are growing physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally through a period of rapid and often uneven development. The 4-H Cloverbud Program has been designed to meet the very special needs of these five to eight year olds.

Each child develops on his or her own timetable and may outpace age-mates in one aspect of development while lagging in others. Therefore, it is very important that organized activities be tailored to the developmental level of the particular children who participate so that all can experience success – the magic ingredient that allows them to blossom. For this reason the 4-H Cloverbud Program, while focusing on the general developmental needs of five to eight year olds, also provides a wide selection of activities that enables 4-H leaders to choose those that are most appropriate for their own cloverbud members.

In addition to making a judicious selection of activities 4-H leaders also foster youth development by creating positive learning environments that focus on the strengths of their members and help them to meet their four basic needs: *belonging*, *mastery*, *independence* and *generosity*.

The 4-H leader helps cloverbuds to experience a sense of *belonging* by showing interest in them and what they do, actively listening to them and encouraging them to build on their innate abilities.

The 4-H leader helps cloverbuds to experience of sense of *mastery* by offering opportunities to take on new challenges, learn new skills and recognize ways these newly acquired abilities can be applied across various situations. Leaders also enable mastery by modeling and explaining that failure and frustration is not a disgrace but a natural part of the learning process – “If at first you don’t succeed try, try again.”

The 4-H leader helps cloverbuds move toward *independence* by creating opportunities for leadership and self-discipline, and by helping them to recognize the connection between independence and responsibility.

The 4-H leader helps cloverbuds to extend their *generosity* through service to others and by helping them recognize that it is “through giving that we receive.”



## **The Purpose of the 4-H Cloverbud Program**

The overall purpose of the 4-H Cloverbud Program is to foster the development of life skills (described below) that are essential for the cognitive, social, emotional and physical maturation of five to eight year old children. Specifically, this program aims to provide participants with opportunities to:

- develop self understanding, social skills, decision-making skills, learning skills and physical skills;
- gain knowledge in the sciences, literature, and the arts through the experiential (hands-on) learning process (see pages 12 through 14 for a more detailed explanation);
- develop positive attitudes about learning;
- develop on-going relationships with caring adults and older youth who serve as positive role models;
- explore family and community relationships;
- develop understanding of and appreciation for social and cultural diversity.

## **Life Skills for Cloverbuds**

Life skills are abilities, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that must be learned for success and happiness. These skills are not learned all at once but are refined and reinforced throughout life. Even so, there are certain milestones that must be reached along the way before a child will be ready to meet the challenges presented in the next phase of development. For five to eight year olds, who will transition from middle to late childhood by the end of their 4-H Cloverbud years, it is particularly important to make major strides in the development of the five life skills described below:

1. *Self-understanding* – Each child is unique. Each has different interests, personality traits, skills, learning styles and temperaments. In order to expand and refine an understanding of “who I am,” five to eight year olds need to try new things to test themselves, build their base of experiences and begin to master skills. A positive but realistic self-concept is the most important ingredient of emotional health. To foster its development, cloverbud leaders need to:

- nurture creativity and curiosity;
- provide positive and specific feedback rather than generalized praise;
- provide correction quietly, one-on-one, in a caring and consistent manner;
- help members identify their own successes;
- help members to see and appreciate how they are alike and different from other people.

2. *Social interaction* – Between the ages of five and eight children increase their desire to be with other children. As they develop friendships with their peers they become less self-centered and their need to be connected to others in a group strengthens. Experiencing a warm feeling of belonging frees them to relate comfortably with others. To enhance this social development, leaders should:

- organize small group activities through which cloverbuds can talk and work with one another;
- use dramatic play to help members understand how other people might feel or react;
- provide opportunities for building communication skills, including listening skills;
- help members learn how to cooperate, share and resolve conflicts;
- take time to listen and visit casually with each young person.

3. *Decision-making* – The ability to make wise decisions and take positive action are key to the development of independence. Children need to know that they are capable of charting their own path and influencing others, but they also need to understand how their decisions affect themselves and others and be willing to accept responsibility for their actions. Appropriate leadership experiences help children learn the step-by-step processes of decision-making, recognize cause-and-effect relationships and develop a sense of responsibility. To initiate this learning process, cloverbud leaders should:

- create an environment in which it is safe to test decisions and make mistakes;
- help children think about how things that are important to them influence the decisions they make; give cloverbuds opportunities to lead simple tasks and then progress to more difficult ones;
- encourage members to overcome obstacles on their own;
- motivate youth to accept responsibility and praise them when they complete leadership tasks.

4. *Learning to learn* – We all learn in a variety of ways: through seeing and observing, manipulating materials and experimenting, listening and reading. Five to eight year olds are concrete thinkers. Ideally, they need real experiences on which to base their learning, but can expand their capacity to learn in other ways. Activities that involve the use of all five senses (or at least several of them) enhance learning. After working with the same group of children for a while leaders will be able to recognize their different learning styles and though guided reflection can help them to understand how they learn. When children are enabled to learn in their own way, learning becomes easy and is viewed as fun. This “learning is fun” attitude is the basis for life-long learning.

*Mastering physical skills* – Five to eight year olds are full of energy and need activities that are just that – *active!* Learning experiences that enable members to practice both small muscle (writing) and large muscle (ball catching) skills that can be completed successfully by beginners, will use up some of that energy while fostering physical development. When doing crafts, expect the work place to get messy and be aware that for this age group the process is more important than the product.



#### **4-H Cloverbud Activities**

County, state and national 4-H cloverbud activity guides are available for a wide array of activities that are categorized within eight broad program areas (See pages 30 through 32). The meeting plans included in these leader materials have been designed to foster the development of the life skills described above while teaching information and skills related to a particular program area. The activities are appropriate to the developmental level of this age group and they apply the 4-H “learning by doing” method. Most of the leader guides provide a selection of activities within an individual lesson so that leaders can tailor the meeting plan to the needs and interests of the members, the time available and the meeting place. The activities have also been “kid tested” – so, you can be sure they will work well. While you are welcome to incorporate your own ideas and use your own creativity, you are advised to rely on these pre-tested 4-H materials for the bulk of your club program.

#### **Cloverbuds Now – 4-H’ers Forever!**

The 4-H Cloverbud Program is a special part of Cooperative Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program. Tailored to the developmental needs of five to eight year olds, it provides an exciting introduction to the 4-H club experience. Cloverbud leaders play a critical role in fostering the development of the youngest 4-H'ers as individuals and as 4-H members. When they move into the next phase of the 4-H Club Program they will be ready to take on the challenges of greater self-governance and longer-term project work. 4-H club opportunities will grow with them throughout their elementary and high school years. Many 4-H alumni become 4-H leaders as adults – once a 4-H'er, always a 4-H'er!

The first section of the New York State 4-H Club Leader Handbook (pages 1-1 to 1-5) that may be inserted after this page, explains the purposes and principles of our state's multi-faceted 4-H Youth Development Program and documents the effectiveness of 4-H clubs in promoting positive youth development. The second section of that handbook (pages 2-1 to 2-4) which may be inserted at the back of this book provides basic facts about 4-H clubs for all ages. If you find that you do not have the inserts mentioned, please contact your 4-H Extension Educator.



## **4-H Takes You Places**

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## **Cloverbuds in the 4-H Club Program: Questions & Answers**

### **When is a child old enough to join a 4-H club?**

The New York State Cloverbud Policy specifies that a child must turn five by January 1 of the current 4-H year and must have been enrolled in Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year to be eligible to participate in the 4-H club program as a cloverbud member.

Children continue to participate as cloverbuds through age eight. However, a third grader who turns nine during the club year may choose to enroll either as a cloverbud participant or as a regular 4-H club member. The determination must be made at the beginning of the club year by consensus of a parent/guardian, leader and Extension Educator.

### **Can a 5 to 8 year old join any 4-H club?**

Ideally five to eight year olds participate in separate groups with all members in the cloverbud age range. If this is not possible, five to eight year olds may join a club with a wide range of ages. However, cloverbuds should participate only in those activities that are appropriate for their developmental level with adult supervision in the required adult/youth ratio (see page 24).

### **How many children are needed to form a new cloverbud club?**

In New York State a group must have a membership of at least five youth to form or remain as a club. Cloverbud clubs should not have more than sixteen members (no more than twelve youth for five and six year olds). When there are not enough children to form a club some counties will permit individual children to participate in the 4-H Cloverbud Program as “independent members” under the leadership of a parent or guardian until group size requirements are met.

### **How are 4-H cloverbud clubs different from other 4-H clubs?**

*Cloverbud clubs do not conduct formal business meetings or elect officers.* Five to eight year olds are not yet ready to fulfill the responsibilities of club officership and require much more adult guidance when making group decisions. However, a structured routine is important to this age group. Starting each meeting with the same opening ritual, roll call and pledges to the American and 4-H flags, provides structure while introducing the children to some of the elements of a business meeting. Use of a closing ritual is also recommended. Members can be assigned an “office of the day” to help conduct these rituals. This prepares cloverbuds for future roles as club officers when they become old enough to assume such roles. More information about cloverbud meetings can be found starting on page 9.

*The educational component of a cloverbud club meeting consists of activities rather than projects.* A cloverbud activity focuses on developing a single concept and/or skill. For example, the children might plant a simple dish garden and learn that it will need sun, water and food to stay healthy. An activity such as this would be just one in a series of learning experiences for older children enrolled in an indoor gardening project.

*Cloverbud clubs do not conduct nor participate in competitive events.* Five to eight year olds are sensitive to criticism and do not accept failure well. They cannot easily separate the “doer” from the thing that is done – so, failure in an activity is translated into personal unworthiness. Their development is uneven making it nearly impossible to “level the playing field,” a necessity if

competition is to be fair. *For these reasons participation in competitive activities is developmentally inappropriate for cloverbuds.* Even evaluation that does not compare one child's work to another's but simply defines a level of achievement (excellent, good or worthy) is ill advised. Cloverbud activities should be conducted in a positive environment that focuses on the members' strengths rather than analyzing their deficiencies. Cloverbuds need opportunities to practice skills, discover talents and learn about fairness in a non-judgmental environment. Their work should be proudly displayed and their *participation* recognized. Recognition should be informal with all members being recognized equally.

*Cloverbud clubs handle their finances differently than clubs of older children.* For safety reasons cloverbuds do not bring money for dues or supplies to club meetings and they do not conduct door-to-door fundraising activities. They may, however, participate in group fundraising events supervised by adults, such as a bake sale. Parents will decide on how club expenses (activity supplies, refreshments, etc.) will be handled when the club is organized.

*Cloverbud clubs follow a set of program guidelines based on developmental appropriateness.* While cloverbud activities relate to the same set of program areas, as do projects for older members, they are designed to suit the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of children within this age group. That often involves using different kinds of equipment or providing more adult supervision. (See Safety Guidelines for Working with Cloverbuds on pages 24 through 28 for information about specific program areas.) Sometimes a cloverbud will be physically capable of doing something but will not be able to understand the reason for the process or the result. Participation in that activity would be just as inappropriate as participation in an activity that is unsafe because of physical limitations.

### **When, where and how often do 4-H cloverbud clubs meet?**

Clubs can meet in homes, churches, community buildings, schools during non-school hours, and anywhere else in the community that would provide a safe location for young people to gather. Each club decides when it will meet, but most cloverbud clubs meet either right after school or on the weekend. Most 4-H clubs meet at least once a month, but young children need to be involved more often to sustain interest. Once a week or every other week is recommended. Meetings may also be held in seasonal blocks to accommodate members' participation in other activities.

### **How are parents involved in a 4-H cloverbud club?**

Parents are expected to support their children's participation in the 4-H cloverbud club by attending as many meetings as possible, participating in activities with their children and by encouraging their children to repeat or extend their 4-H activities at home. Parents are also expected to cooperate with the club's organizational leader as agreed upon at the beginning of each year.

### **How many leaders are needed to start a new cloverbud club?**

A minimum of two adult leaders is required to start a 4-H club of any age group and at least two adults (leaders, parents or others) must be present at every 4-H meeting and activity. For groups of five and six year olds the group size should not exceed twelve children. For groups of seven and eight year olds a third adult is required if the group exceeds twelve children and the group size should not exceed sixteen children.

### **How can I start a new 4-H cloverbud club?**

The first step is to meet with a 4-H representative (4-H staff member or an experienced volunteer) and the parents of at least five children who are considering participation in the 4-H Cloverbud

Program. To arrange for this meeting contact the 4-H office. During the meeting the 4-H representative will assist the group in making a series of essential decisions and will guide your planning for a successful first year. Agenda items include:

- Meeting site(s), frequency and schedule
- Parent/guardian involvement in 4-H
- Selection of activities
- Tips for conducting club meetings
- Club finances and fundraising
- Date(s) for New Leader Orientation

After participation in the New Leader Orientation program you will be ready to conduct your first meeting with the children.



## Ready, Set, Go!

### **Getting Ready: *Planning is the Key to Success***

Planning a yearly calendar (see sample below) will help everyone integrate 4-H activities with the rest of their personal commitments. While adults and youth should work together to develop the yearly plan, the leader should present children of this age with options that are manageable by the adults.

Parents and cooperating leaders will need an opportunity to review a variety of cloverbud activity plans to learn what each would involve. The 4-H office has county, state and national cloverbud resources from which you can choose. Before discussing possible activities with the members, the organizational leader should know which adults are available to lead activities at which meetings and which activities they are willing to lead. *To ensure appropriate parental participation the adults should have a yearly schedule in mind while the cloverbuds will choose activities within the theme presented to them on a seasonal basis.* Use Tool CB-1, 4-H Cloverbud Club Planning Calendar, to guide your planning process. The yearly plan should balance learning activities with opportunities for community service (see page 19) and social/recreational activities. If a meeting schedule and activity options were not planned during the new club organizational meeting, this should be done before the club’s second meeting.

*Sample Club Calendar* (See Tool CB-1 for blank form)

Club Goals for the Year:

Try 3 new things we never did before.	Make every member feel included and important.
Do something to help our community.	Have fun!

Month/Date	Program, Event, or Activity	People Responsible
September Fri., 9/14  Fri. 9/28	General Meeting, 7 pm Member/parent social and orientation to 4-H; 4-Hers select activities for Oct./ Nov.  Activity Meeting, 5 pm “Trees are Terrific” (lesson & leaf prints)	Joan (Organizational Leader) & Lisa (Teen Leader)  Project Leaders - Eric (Parent) & Manuel (Retired Volunteer)
October Sat. 10/6  Fri., 10/19	Field Trip, 10 AM – 2 PM Apple Picking Picnic  Activity Meeting, 5 pm “Snack Attack” (lesson & apple snack recipe selected by members)	Joan & Parents  Eric & Barb
November Fri., 11/9  Mon. 11/19	Activity Meeting, 5 pm “Exploring the Community”  Community Service, 4 pm Meet at Salvation Army (assemble Thanksgiving Food Baskets)	Donna (Parent) & Manuel  Paula & Nancy

*Encourage full participation from everyone.* Some parents will not be able to lead activities or attend club meetings, but there are other ways to help. Consider using an



interest survey and/or activity sign-up sheet to encourage commitment and to keep track of everyone's interests and availability. (See sample 4-H Cloverbud Parent Participation Survey, Tool CB-2)

*Chartering your club* - The Club Charter identifies a group as an organized 4-H club that is authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem for educational purposes. The Charter stays with the club as long as it is in existence. All chartered clubs are expected to operate within the framework of the 4-H program. The charter does not have to be renewed when leaders change or minor revisions are made in the club structure. Charter application requirements can be found on page 1 of the 4-H Club Secretary's Handbook and the application itself is on page 2 of that book. Since cloverbud clubs do not elect officers the election requirement does not apply. The organizational leader should submit the application soon after the club has met the other eligibility requirements.

*Note:* Leaders can use the 4-H Club Secretary's Handbook to record attendance and other club information that would be kept by the elected secretary in a group of older members.

## **Getting Set: Your first two meetings**

It is very important to get off to a good start. There is a lot to be accomplished during the first two meetings of a new club. Everyone should leave these meetings feeling that they had a good time, understood and contributed to what went on and know what will happen next. Therefore, you may want to arrange for an experienced leader or 4-H teen to attend these meetings and provide guidance as needed. Adapt these sample meeting plans to suit your club's situation:

### ***Sample plan for first meeting***

Invite parents to attend with their children. To accommodate working parents, this meeting will probably need to be held in the evening – so keep it very short.

Wear a nametag. Tell the cloverbuds what your name is (Mrs. Jones/Miss Pat/Pat)

Ask cloverbuds and parents to make nametags for themselves. You may wish to provide magic markers or crayons to use in decorating nametags. (If everyone knows one another very well play an "ice breaker" game or lead an alternate activity instead.)

Give a brief, simple explanation of the cloverbud program.

Show the 4-H clover or give each of the children a 4-H button and explain what the H's stand for.

Teach everyone how to say the 4-H Pledge and talk about its meaning.

Help the children choose a name for their club. Your club's name should be unique within your county, should include "4-H" and should be able to stand the test of time (not trendy or too juvenile to be acceptable as members grow older). While this is happening, parents who have not already done so can fill out enrollment forms and any other records required by the 4-H office.

Serve refreshments.

While everyone munches describe two or three activities (pre-selected as options at the planning meeting with the parents) the cloverbuds might enjoy.

Help the children decide which of the activities they would like to do at their third meeting.

Announce the date, time and place of the next meeting. Explain what the club will do at that meeting and what (if anything) the members will need to bring.

Ask for a volunteer to bring snacks.

Before everyone leaves check the forms filled out by the parents and make sure you have an accurate list of the children, their addresses and phone numbers.

### **Sample plan for second meeting**

*Pre-meeting warm-up:* As members gather involve them in a guessing game, pencil and paper puzzle, setting out the snacks or other activity that will allow for others to join in as they arrive.

*Introduce the opening ritual:* American and 4-H Pledges, roll call. Explain that from now on, members will take turns leading these parts of the meeting. Finish the opening ritual by introducing guests and announcing the program for the next meeting and what members will need to bring.

*Program:* one or two activities lead by leaders, parents or 4-H teens

*Recreation and Refreshments:* End the meeting with games and/or songs. Try to select games that can continue if some members leave earlier than others. Refreshments can be held for the end of the meeting or could be made available when the members arrive, to be eaten during the opening ritual or whenever works best in relation to the meeting time and program planned for the day.

## **You're Ready - You're Set - Now Go! - Tips for working with your Cloverbuds**

### **Be prepared for each meeting**

You have already set up a plan for the year, but it is also important to have a plan (similar to the meeting plans shown on previous pages) for each meeting. Tool CB-3, 4-H Cloverbud Meeting Planner, will help you to put that plan on paper. Those who are leading activities should arrive at the meeting place well before the scheduled meeting time to set up the work space, put out the supplies, etc. so that everything is ready to go when the members arrive.

### **Use effective teaching techniques**

*Get members to use as many of their five senses as possible.* Research has shown that the more involved the learner is in the learning process (the more senses used) the greater the retention of the lessons taught. Remember this adage: "When I hear, I forget; when I see [and hear] I remember; when I do [and see and hear] I understand." So, explain *and* demonstrate *and* have members manipulate the things they are learning about.

*Include both cooperative and individualistic learning experiences.*

In cooperative learning, members work in small groups and depend on each other to accomplish a goal. Cooperative learning encourages the development of social interaction skills, enhances self-esteem of members, and improves their ability to work together. This type of learning experience is characterized by "positive interdependence." That is, the group cannot succeed if anyone in the group is ignored or does not contribute to the group process.

A leader can create a situation of positive interdependence by giving each member a vital piece of information that the entire group must know before it can succeed. Because members must interact with each other to share the information they have, social interaction skills are necessary for group success. Therefore, social skills should be taught **DIRECTLY (DO NOT assume the learner will absorb them by participating in group discussion).**

In individualistic learning each person participates alone. This is often the case when members make something. Although the members are in the same room together each works independently, trying to do his/her own best work.

Having the opportunity to experience both independence and interdependence helps children develop a sense of self-worth (“I am capable; I am needed by others.”)

*Follow all steps of the Experiential Learning Model.* Experiential learning is simply learning through experience. But, it takes more than just *doing* (DO) something. Learning requires *thinking* (REFLECT) about what you did and remembering it in a way that will help you to use (APPLY) it in a new situation. By asking questions that guide children through a logical thought process you help them to learn from their 4-H experiences. Follow *all* the steps illustrated in the model shown on the next page.

*Example:* The leader wants the members to adopt two basic food safety practices. This is how she applies the experiential learning model:

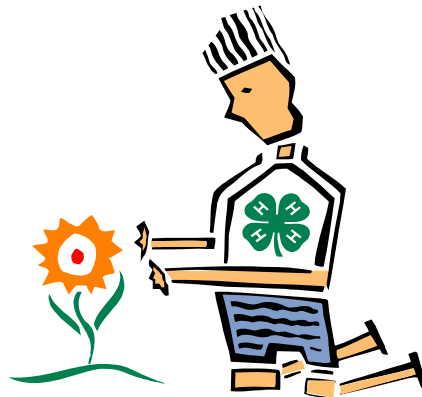
Experience – The children need to do something *hands-on*. In this example the club members make cheese and apple snacks; they start by washing the apples and end by sealing the leftover cheese in plastic wrap.

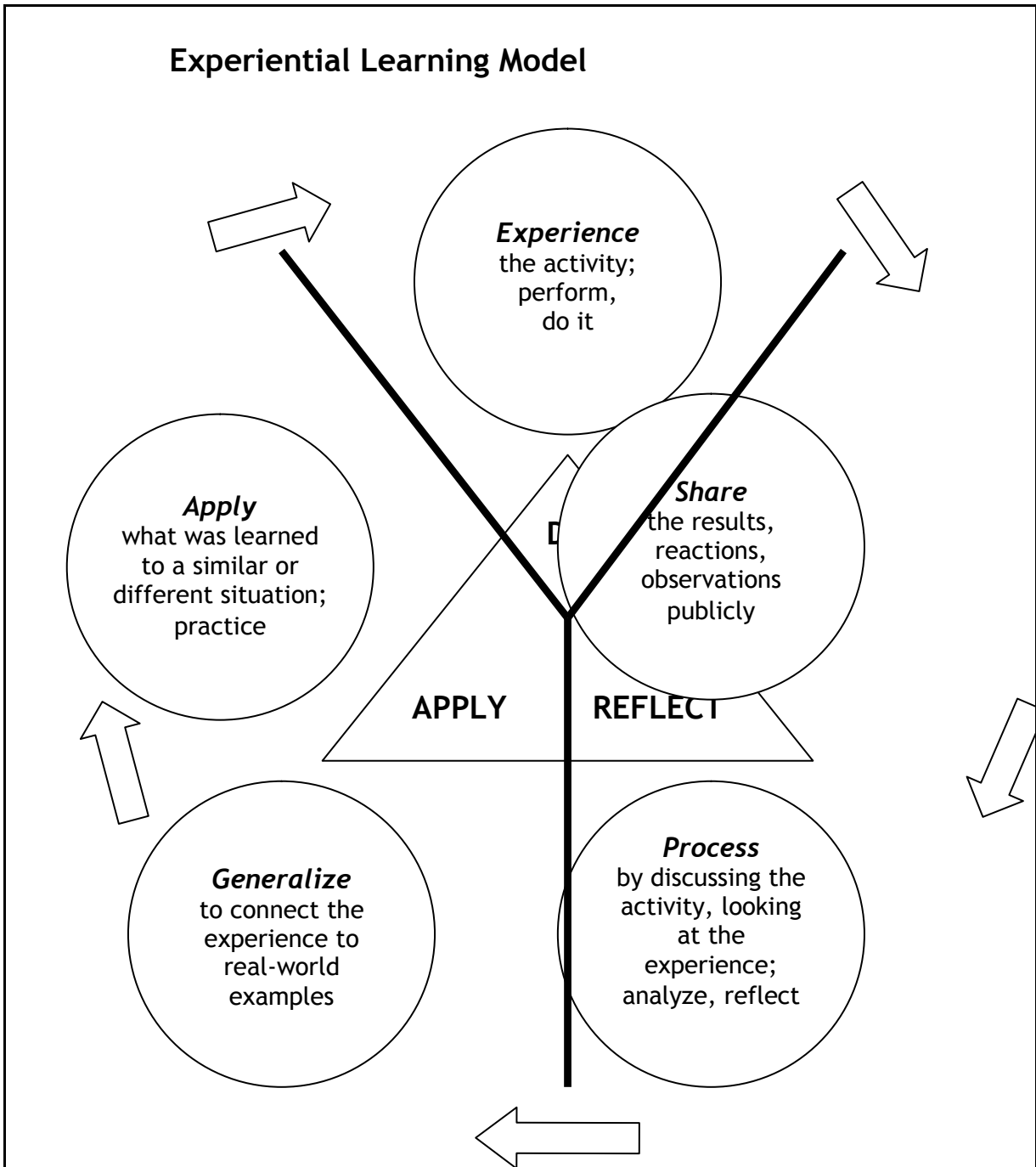
Share (thoughts)– As they eat their snacks the leader encourages sharing: Would you like to make these at home for your family? What is the first thing you should do...? Giving each member a chance to talk, the steps used to make the snacks are reviewed. The members also talk about what they liked doing most, how pretty the snacks looked, how good they tasted.

Process – We want children to think about what they did and why. The leader asks: Why did we wash and dry the apples? Why did we wrap-up the cheese?

Generalize – We want children to learn how what they did today might apply to other things. The leader says: So, we learned 2 *ways we can help make food safe* to eat. What were they again?

Apply – Do you think other foods should be washed the same way as the apples...can you name some? What should you do with the food you have left over from dinner?





*Activity Record Sheets* can be used to reinforce reflection and application and will introduce cloverbuds to record keeping, an important aspect of 4-H project work. While young cloverbuds (five and six year olds) have difficulty writing, they can draw pictures of their experiences or dictate to an adult or teen, who fills in their answers on the record sheet. Older cloverbuds can probably write their own records, but may need some help figuring out what they want to say. When activity records are completed as part of reflection and application, the same questions you use to guide experiential learning will guide the record keeping process as well.

Possible question include:

Did you like doing this project? What things did you like (or not like) doing? Why, why not?

How did you start \_\_\_\_\_?

If you could change something about this project, what would you change?

What is something you learned from doing this project?

Do you think it was helpful to learn this project in a group?

Would you like to learn more about \_\_\_\_; would you like to do something like this again?

Did someone help you with this? How did they help you? Did you help someone? How?

## **Create positive learning environments**

All 4-H programs should result in positive attitudes toward learning. Because each child is a unique person with an individual growth pattern, programs must be flexible and must be adapted to foster each member's feelings of competence and responsibility. In general, positive learning environments for five to eight year olds are characterized by:

Adequate adult supervision - Because of the variation in developmental stages, it is important to have a low child-to-adult ratio so that each child receives the individualized attention needed to be successful and safe. When conducting quiet activities that require no special tools or equipment the minimum club leadership requirements would be sufficient: at least two adults at all times; for five and six year olds (group size should not exceed twelve); for seven and eight year olds add a third adult if the group exceeds twelve children (group size should not exceed sixteen). Lower child-to-adult ratios are required when working around animals or using certain tools or equipment. For information about specific programs see pages 24 through 28.

Youth involvement in planning – When children help to select their own activities they are more likely to maintain interest and to integrate new learning with what they already know. Involving them in the selection of learning activities (from a short list of adult determined options) builds their confidence as learners, fosters personal initiative, and encourages the development of curiosity and creativity.

Frequent change of activities in response to children's needs - Offering a broad spectrum of learning activities keeps children interested and involved. Vary the pace of activities; don't expect members to be engaged in one type of activity for too long. Intermix quiet activities with those that require movement and active participation. For children in this age range, the process of learning may be more interesting than the finished product.

Encouragement of youth interaction - Children talk as they learn and learn best when they can practice, demonstrate, explain and apply their learning. With guidance, children can learn to respect and understand other people, to negotiate, and apply rules of living.

Interaction with positive role models - As children begin to look outside the home for guidance and support, adults and older youth with whom they interact on a regular basis become influential sources of new information, skills and points of view about life. They also have a tremendous influence on the way children feel about who they are and what they can do. Saying something positive to each child at each meeting is one way of bolstering self-confidence.

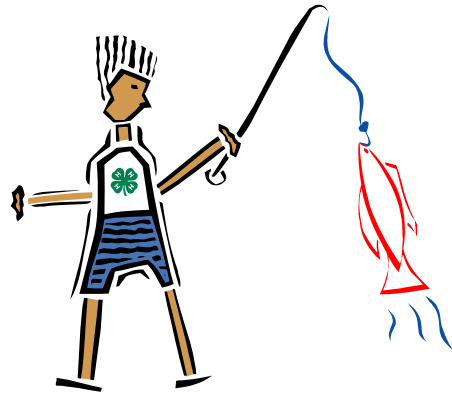
Emphasis on cooperation and an absence of competition – Activities should promote practice of developmentally appropriate skills, provide an opportunity for social interaction, and help children understand and learn about fairness. While cloverbuds should not participate in contests or exhibits that involve judging, it *is* appropriate for them to participate in informal show-and-tell sessions and to display their work. Recognition of participation can promote a sense of pride and feeling of accomplishment.

Positive guidance and discipline - Children of this age benefit from adults who use positive approaches to help them behave constructively and solve interpersonal conflicts. Teach skills for appropriate social behavior, such as taking turns, dividing and sharing resources and working cooperatively.

A mix of individual and group learning experiences - The learning activities should include a sufficient variety of experiences to accommodate the varied ages, stages, interests, and needs of members. Parallel activities may be needed to allow children at different stages to participate in a way that suits their developmental needs. Some may choose to work alone on an activity while others choose to work in groups.

### **Ensure that activities are developmentally appropriate**

A “developmentally appropriate” program is one that is based on the general characteristics of an age group *and* adapts to meet the individual needs of each child. The most reliable way to find activities that are based on the general characteristics of the age group is to select from the many 4-H cloverbud resources that are available to you through the 4-H office or through the National 4-H Council. (See pages 30 through 32 for a partial listing.) However, you will still need to adjust these activities to the developmental levels of your own members. The charts on pages 17 and 18 will help you select activities that will promote healthy development of children between the ages of five and eight. Read carefully, you may find that your six year-olds display some of the characteristics listed on the five-six year old chart and others that are listed on the seven-eight year old chart. Apply the recommendations that match your members’ characteristics, *not* their age.



### **Finally – Have Fun!**

4-H should be fun for your cloverbuds and for you. One of the most important outcomes of participation in 4-H is a feeling that learning is fun. People who enjoy learning are always looking for opportunities to learn new things and so develop their potential more fully. So, think about how your cloverbuds will view the planned activities. If they seem tedious or “schooly” make some changes that will stimulate curiosity or a sense of mystery; increase the amount of action or interaction; use community resources to create a break from the usual meeting routine. When 4-H is fun and members are involved in doing and discovering, they’ll learn, and so will you.

Keep this important point in mind – you are the most essential ingredient of a successful 4-H club. When you are having fun and enjoy the sense of discovery that comes out of experiencing new things your members will absorb your enthusiasm. When you delight in listening to the ideas and even just silly chatter of your cloverbuds, they will bond to you like glue and try their hardest to please you. When you express your belief that they can accomplish what ever they attempt and overcome any obstacles in their way, they will believe you and learn to believe in themselves. The way you relate to your members is much more important than “doing everything right.” So, while we certainly hope that you will follow our recommendations, first and foremost – enjoy yourself, enjoy your members, make 4-H fun!



## **4-H Takes You Places**

**Cornell Cooperative Extension**

☘ 4-H Youth Development

## Because 5 & 6 year-olds are like this:

### **Physically**

- ◇ Muscular coordination and control is uneven and incomplete. Large muscles are easier to control than small muscles.
- ◇ Able to handle tools and materials more skillfully than during preschool years.

### **Mentally**

- ◇ Ask questions and answer them in literal terms.
- ◇ Define things by their use, i.e., a pencil is for writing.
- ◇ Most are just learning letters and words. By six, most can read words or combinations of words.
- ◇ Short interest span, sometimes as little as 5-10 minutes.

### **Emotionally**

- ◇ Sensitive to criticism and don't accept failure well.
- ◇ Strong desire for affection and like adult attention.
- ◇ Cooperative and helpful; they want to please.
- ◇ Get upset with changes in plans and routine.

### **Socially**

- ◇ Developing cooperative play. Prefer to work in small groups of two or three. Still like to focus on their own work and play.
- ◇ May begin to pair up and have a "best friend", however, the "best friend" may change frequently.
- ◇ Mother (or parent) is still social focus as prime caregiver; however may "fall in love" with kindergarten teacher.
- ◇ Like being part of and around family.
- ◇ Can engage in group discussions.
- ◇ May have a need to be "first", to "win", be the "best", and may be bossy.
- ◇ Can be unkind to others, but extremely sensitive to criticism of self.

## Their leaders should:

- ◇ Plan activities that use large motor skills and introduce fine motor skills, one at a time.
- ◇ Plan lots of physical activity with each meeting.
- ◇ Provide projects that don't require perfection.
  
- ◇ Plan active learning around concrete objects.
- ◇ Avoid a lot of paper and pencil activities that require writing.
- ◇ Give instructions verbally and visually. Don't expect them to read.
- ◇ Plan a series of small activities with physical exercise in between rather than one longer more intense session.
- ◇ Provide lots of materials and mediums for learning, (i.e., paper, paint, brushes, glue, building blocks, games, puzzles).
  
- ◇ Provide lots of encouraging words for effort.
- ◇ Provide lots of opportunities for adult interaction with children.
- ◇ Let children help in "adult-like" ways, such as setting up an activity.
- ◇ Give clear description of what your activity or schedule will be and stick to it.
  
- ◇ Organize projects and activities that involve two or three children. If there is a larger group, break activities into sections so that only two or three are involved at one time.
- ◇ Help children develop friendships, through learning to share, to take turns, to follow rules, and to be trustworthy (not tattling).
- ◇ Organize activities with high adult/child ratios.
  
- ◇ Select activities that involve or focus on the family.
  
- ◇ Avoid competitive activities that select a "winner" or "best person".



## Because 7 & 8 year-olds are like this:

### **Physically**

- ◇ Learn best if physically active.
- ◇ Still inept at small muscle control, so will have difficulty with some fine motor activities such as gluing, cutting, hammering nails, bouncing balls, etc., but have improved at large muscle activities.
- ◇ May repeat an activity over and over before mastering it.

### **Mentally**

- ◇ Most children will be able to read and comprehend simple instructions.
- ◇ Beginning to understand the perspectives of others.
- ◇ Humor takes on new meaning.
- ◇ Enormous curiosity and delight in discovery.
- ◇ Are able to collect, sort, organize, and classify.
- ◇ Can recognize some similarities and differences
- ◇ Can do some abstract thinking, but learn best through active, concrete methods.

### **Emotionally**

- ◇ Increased awareness of themselves, more sensitive to others.
- ◇ Enjoy being part of the family.
- ◇ Worry about failure or being criticized.
- ◇ Will try themselves out on others to see how they are accepted.
- ◇ May claim tasks are too hard rather than admit to being scared.

### **Socially**

- ◇ Value adult interaction, and may actually be more polite to adults.
- ◇ Have high expectations of parents and adults and are critical when parents "mess up".
- ◇ More outgoing, curious, and talkative.
- ◇ May be moody, but less likely to direct negative feelings toward others.
- ◇ Begin to internalize adult feelings toward religion, ethnic groups, and money.
- ◇ Begin to develop friendships that involve sharing secrets and possessions.
- ◇ Begin to choose same-sex playmates and develop play groups.

## Their leaders should:

- ◇ Avoid long periods of sitting and listening or just watching so members are active between explanations.
- ◇ Provide opportunities to practice skills, but use projects that can be completed successfully by beginners.
- ◇ Can introduce *some* written assignments and activities. Give most instructions verbally and visually.
- ◇ Encourage projects than can be done over and over in different ways.
- ◇ Encourage children to develop or make collections and introduce other activities that, require sorting, organizing, or classifying.
- ◇ Guide the children in reflecting on their learning experiences but make sure that the experiences themselves are very "hands-on."
- ◇ Involve them in doing things for others.
- ◇ Have them make gifts for family members.
- ◇ Provide lots of adult encouragement and praise.
- ◇ Be sensitive when teaching a new concept or skill that a child may resist.
- ◇ Introduce the "art of social graces". Teaching of table manners and other social niceties will be more accepted.
- ◇ Select some learning activities that stimulate conversation and others that involve the child's curiosity and creative abilities.
- ◇ Use a variety of songs, rhythms, stories, and comics to help socialize the group.
- ◇ Promote activities that appreciate and emphasize diversity of families/lifestyles.
- ◇ Children will enjoy naming their group or "coin" phrases to describe their activities.
- ◇ Activities will be more successful if children can be grouped in same-sex groups.