



WORKING WITH ALL YOUTH IN 4-H

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4-H & Youth Development

4-H is the youth program of UNH Cooperative Extension available to youth ages 5-18. All youth can expect to participate in Cooperative Extension programs. In 4-H Youth Development programs, youth with disabilities are included in on-going programs and activities. There are real benefits to having all youth participate in this inclusive manner. Youth with disabilities can develop a sense of self confidence and self reliance as they successfully interact with other youth and participate in 4-H activities. Youth who do not have a disability benefit by having the opportunity to learn to see the whole person and his or her unique abilities, not just his or her disability. All members can enjoy the benefits of new friendships and shared experiences.

As a 4-H leader and volunteer you will be working with youth with a variety of interests and abilities. There are a number of things you can do to help each child in the program maximize his or her success in 4-H.

At 4-H Club Meetings:

The 4-H club is the primary way that 4-H programs are delivered to New Hampshire youth. 4-H clubs provide the long term relationships between youth and adults that allows for leadership development, life skill development and in-depth subject matter learning. Located in local communities and neighborhoods, the local club is the 4-H member's primary contact with the 4-H program and 4-H opportunities.

All children have a need to belong and to be accepted by their peer group, and all have a strong desire to build peer friendships. You as the 4-H leader can help each child's 4-H experience be a positive one. The following tips will help you as you work to make each 4-H member feel that he or she belongs and that they are a valued, contributing member of their club.

1. Welcome all children into the club. Often very shy children or youth with less developed social skills will need help in fitting in. Don't single out children as being different, model accepting behavior; if you are warm and accepting many of the children will be as well.
2. Encourage children to share information about their hobbies and interests. We are more alike than we are different. Try this; during role call after each person says "here" have them tell about their favorite hobby, book, vacation. etc.

3. Point out the individual strengths of each child as appropriate.
4. Plan activities so that each child has the chance to succeed and be seen as good at something. Success builds self-esteem.
5. Foster respect for individual differences.
6. Pair children together for routine tasks and projects. Rotate pairs occasionally.
7. Have an isolated youth work with an outgoing youth.
8. Be consistent in your dealings with youth; children like to know what the rules are and what to expect from you. Use a familiar meeting routine.
9. Encourage all youth to take leadership roles.
10. Allow children to see your genuine caring for each child as an individual.

Working With Subject Matter:

There are several things you can do to help children learn and to help children feel comfortable with the project subject matter. Some of these tips include:

1. Establish clear goals. Each child should set one or more goals for him or herself and work toward those goals. You can assist children in setting challenging yet realistic goals for themselves. If a child appears to have trouble learning, you might want to talk with the child's family to better understand the child and how you might most effectively assist the child with his/her goal setting and learning.
2. Break tasks down into small steps and have the children tackle one step at a time. Learn the basic skills first.
3. Have children involved in their subject in a variety of ways. Some people learn best by reading, others by seeing, others by doing and touching and still others learn best by talking about the subject or expressing their ideas and thoughts through a story, poem, picture, or song; by providing opportunity to be involved in the subject in a variety of ways you are more apt to include the preferred learning style of your individual 4-H members.
4. Use familiar terms and examples and relate new learning to past learning.
5. Praise both effort and accomplishment. Provide feedback during the activity. The process is as important as the finished product; praising effort along the way is helpful to the slower worker who might not finish the project at the same time as

the others. You might have the children chart their progress on projects so that they can see a visible sign that they are moving forward.

6. If you give directions keep them simple; willingly repeat your instructions if needed. Give directions both verbally and in writing if possible. If you want to know that a child understands the instructions have them repeat them for you.
7. Allow enough “wait time” after asking a question. Some children need longer to collect their thoughts and to develop their answer.
8. If you are using project manuals encourage the members to underline or highlight the most important words or phrases.
9. Modify activities only as needed to meet the needs of individual children. Remember, however, a challenging youth activity before a modification or accommodation should be a challenging activity after the modification.
10. Give positive feedback; stress their strengths.
11. Work in pairs or groups.
12. Do not emphasize competition.

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