

Leading a Project Group

Oklahoma 4 H Volunteer Development Series



Leading a Project Group

Inside this issue:

<i>Leading a Project Group</i>	1
<i>Creating a Healthy Experience</i>	2
<i>Experiential Model</i>	3
<i>An Environment for Learning</i>	4
First Impressions	4
<i>Project Meeting Checklist</i>	5
<i>Help for You, The Project Leader</i>	6
<i>Program Planning Outline</i>	7

Tips for encouraging Growth Mindset:

- Challenge Participants
- Build Connections
- Provide Meaningful Feedback

YOUR ROLE

As a project leader you can help young people “thrive” in a rapidly changing world. Project leaders create a safe environment where youth

- Belong
- Experience independence
- Practice helping others through generosity
- Experience mastery.

Volunteers need the ability to relate to and communicate with youth, parents, and other volunteers. Project leaders have the understanding that leadership can be fulfilling for both youth and adults.

YOUR REWARD

Every young person has a “spark” or interest. 4-H plays an important role in helping them discover and pursue a spark. In some cases we help them recognize the spark. Project groups provide a healthy environment with quality programs where youth can identify, explore and nourish personal interests

fueling their spark. You will see many “things” planned and created, as well as success and challenges experienced. The quality of the finished product will always be secondary to how youth- and even you grow physically and emotionally.

Yes, be assured the experience will allow you to grow along with the 4-H'er. The experience will be positive, satisfying and even challenging. Remember that attitude and enthusiasm are contagious. Enjoy yourself and let the young people know it!

A PROJECT LEADER’S ROLE

- Isn’t mere information giving
- Isn’t mere entertaining
- + Is creating a healthy and safe learning environment
- + Is structuring a learning experience
- + Is helping the learner interact with information

Position Descriptions - Project/SPIN Leader



MINDSET

Author, Carol Dweck addresses how having an understanding of a fixed vs a growth mindset can affect one’s success and/or failure. Those with a fixed mindset feel they are either good at something or they are not. They often avoid challenges, feedback, and are easily discouraged. 4-H volunteers focus on the growth mindset helping youth thrive. In environments supported by a growth mindset individuals believe that their talents, and abilities can improve over time with practice diligence, and guidance. They look for opportunities to challenge themselves and believe feedback is a tool for growth.

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Higher Education Act), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal and state laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, genetic information, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, or status as a veteran, in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This provision includes, but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. The Director of Equal Opportunity, 408 Whitehurst, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078-1035; Phone 405-744-5371; email: eeo@okstate.edu has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies; Director of Equal Opportunity. Any person (student, faculty, or staff) who believes that discriminatory practices have been engaged in based on gender may discuss his or her concerns and file informal or formal complaints of possible violations of Title IX with OSU’s Title IX Coordinator 405-744-9154.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President, Dean, and Director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 000 cents per copy.

Creating a Healthy Experience

Mastery is building knowledge, skills and attitudes and then being able to demonstrate competent use.

Suitable Sources

Start with 4-H curriculum and Leader/Volunteer guides that focus on the objectives to be learned. 4-H and Extension materials will come in print and electronic form. Start with state specific resources as some competitive activities will evaluate the mastery of specific knowledge and skills. Explore other state and national 4-H-Extension resources.

Spark

Find out what the youth want to learn and do. When possible, give them ownership by letting them help select and direct projects/speakers/field trips. Young people will have a greater commitment to the program when involved in the planning.

Organize the Group

With member/family assistance determine the time and location of the project meetings. Include families with determining how much time and money is reasonable for their family situation.

If your group is a single project club or a special interest group, you may decide to elect officers who will conduct any necessary business meetings.

The number of meetings will depend on the type of project and the goals of the young people. Keeping a simple record of each meeting will help plan future meetings.

If you are the organizational leader for a single project/SPIN club, the club must annually meet all of the

guidelines for a Chartered 4-H club.

Growth Mindset

Establish an environment where youth and adults have a healthy growth mindset. Those with this mindset are more motivated to learn, have better relationships, and are more resilient.

Focus on intrinsic rewards and shared success by helping one another succeed.

Be sensitive to the feelings of each member. See that he/she feels comfortable and accepted. Have enough help so there is time for individual attention. Help the member learn to evaluate his/her progress in comparison to his/her earlier efforts rather than to the work of their peers.

Relationships

It is important to have a healthy youth-adult ratio. This helps to insure

- Youth have positive relationships with caring adults and teen leaders.
- An inclusive environment can be nurtured.
- Youth are more likely to experience a safe emotional and physical environment.

Spend time helping parents/guardians understand they are essential in guiding and supporting, not doing project work. They are part of the fuel for nurturing the spark outside of meetings by helping youth apply and practice what is being learned in 4-H.

Encourage parental/guardian participation and assistance through education, transportation, refreshments, etc.

Mastery is building knowledge, skills, and attitudes and then demonstrating the competent use of this knowledge and skills by a skilled practitioner. The level of mastery depends on the developmental ability of the youth. The growth of mastery is a process over time. All youth need to experience mastery and confidence. Youth with productive opportunities to experience Mastery, tend to become problem-solvers who are motivated, appreciate performance feedback, and continually seeking ways to do things better.

Mastery of 4-H project work is a cycle—do, reflect and apply. The cycle is called the “Experiential Learning Model.”

A variety of teaching techniques will be needed to keep the interest of all youth. Not everyone learns the same. (See Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.103 “Teaching Techniques,” 4H.VOL.102 “Understanding Boys and Girls” and 4H.VOL.135 *Life Skills*)

Record keeping/journaling is a life skill and healthy part of mastery. “Competition” should not be the motivation for learning record keeping. All youth should set goals and record what they learn as part of the educational process of reflection. Record keeping can be as simple as keeping a journal.

Spend time teaching youth what to record in their journal—goals, things done to accomplish goals, skills and knowledge learned, special stories that happen along the way and what they felt in the process of doing the project and completing the goal. Some projects will require more extensive records than others.



I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework. ~Lily Tomlin as "Edith Ann"

Mastery

Parents and volunteers guide members in setting goals. Members should be taught what goals are and how to work toward the goals. They should be provided with an understanding that we don't always reach a goal and when we don't, teach them how to determine the reason why and then how to re-set the goal so the goal is obtained.

Group goals, such as civic engagement projects should be set with consideration for the group and the individuals' abilities. (See *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.110 Goal Setting*)

Develop Independence

The ability to see oneself in the future is to have hope and optimism to shape life choices, which facilitates the transition into participating in the future.

4-H provides that sense of future orientation because youth have something to look forward to.

Involving our youth in making decisions that impact project work or life's events rather than passively submitting to the will of others develops their potential to become self-

directing and self-sufficient adults.

Encourage Generosity

Finding yourself begins with losing yourself in the service of others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community. Service is more than a product; it is a process that provides developmental opportunities, i.e. cooperation and participation in the 4-H recognition model.

Project work provides those occasions to help friends succeed in growing skills and being successful in personal goals.

4-H Recognition Model

The 4-H program encourages a balanced use of five accepted forms of recognition. (See *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.105 Recognition Model*)

- Cooperation—recognizing people who work toward a common goal
- Participation—praises people for taking part in the experience
- Progress Toward Self-Set Goals—learning to set

goals and planning a way to achieve the goals

- Achieving Standards of Excellence—set standards for evaluating a product or skill
- Peer Competition—there are winners and losers

4-H competitive events are intended to be educational. When a member decides to “compete” the child is putting their skill and knowledge out there for another to evaluate. Prepare youth for competitive events:

1. Explain competition and the act of judging. Help them to understand how one learns from the experience.
2. The quality and level of skill and knowledge put into a *competitive* project will be much higher so the end product illustrates what the child learned/mastered.
3. Explain the method of judging being used at the contest. They need to know 4-H exhibits are evaluated—against a set of standards, specific criteria, or pure competition.



Experiential Learning Model

This is the “Learn by Doing” aspect of 4-H. Learn by doing means 4-H is teaching participants through the experiential learning process.

1. The participant experiences the activity
2. Shares the results
3. Processes the experience through discussion, reflection and analysis

4. Generalizes about the experience by relating it to real life experiences, and
5. Applies what was learned to similar or different situations or practices

Experiential learning is a cycle. Participants do, reflect and apply the information continually building upon

what they have learned. Through both the process and experience participants are developing life skills. (Pfeiffer and Jones, 1985)



Volunteer Development Series—*4H.VOL.118 Experiential Learning*.

An Environment for Learning

A major portion of teaching project work will involve education. Educational experiences will include a review, new material, a “hands on” experience and intentional time for reflection and application. Consider incorporating each of the following in a project meeting.

Progress Reports:

Build in time to check progress since the last meeting. This can be done in individual conferences or group sharing. The purpose for progress reports is to discuss difficulties or challenges encountered and keep youth motivated and focused.

Group progress reports can naturally transition to having confidence to participate in a formalized public speaking opportunity. As youth become comfortable sharing they formally organize what is

learned in the form of a speech/demonstration/working display. (*See Volunteer Development Series, 4H.VOL.104 “Public Speaking”*)

Review Materials:

A review of information allows the volunteer to determine what is being learned and retained. It also provides a common starting point and leads into new information.

New Information:

Provide instruction, demonstrate, and then let the youth experience it for themselves. Take time following the Experiential Learning Model— “Do,” “Reflect” and “Apply.”

Activity Period:

In some projects, members will do most of their project work at home. No matter the project, always include

learning activities that stimulate interest and provide variety. Members might:

- Work on a specific project/activity
- Participate in judging experiences
- Take a tour or field trip
- Participate in a discussion group/committee work
- Plan/practice public speaking or other forms of communication
- Update journal/records

Summarize:

Debriefing is important. Review what was learned and how it applies to life. Share what will be done at the next meeting. Give assignments for the next meeting. Consider the members’ age levels, abilities, and interests.

Business Session

Sometimes you will need to plan time for a business meeting/committee work.

If your project is part of a multi project /community club, contact the President and club leader and ask that a topic be placed on the agenda.

In a single project club or special interest group, the group can handle business issues when necessary. Be sure business meetings are well publicized to members.

First Impressions

Plan carefully for the first project meeting. It may be your first contact with the members and their parents. Good beginnings and first impressions pique a high level of interest. The Program Planning Outline and the Project Meeting Checklist on the next two pages will be helpful.

As members arrive, have examples and literature available to pique interest. Consider an icebreaker or

activity to introduce everyone. When possible tie it to the subject matter.

Present an interesting preview of the project.

You might present a demonstration, have an experienced 4-H member tell about the project or have members work on a simple activity.

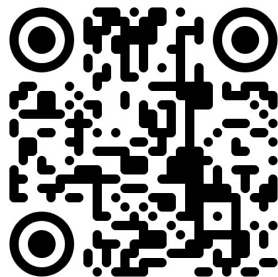
Briefly introduce journaling and explain the expectation that everyone set goals for their project.

Goal setting should be a joint venture of the member, parent/guardian, and leader to insure success and commitment.

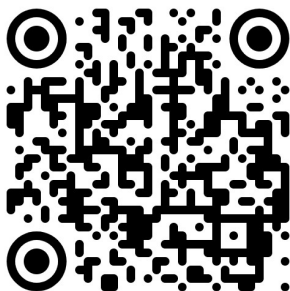
At the second or third meeting, when the child is more familiar with the project and they have discussed it at home, let them record their goals in the journal.

During the first meeting there will be some business to be settled such as

Help for You, The Project Leader



OK Project and Volunteer Guides



National 4-H Curriculum

LITERATURE

- 4-H Project Leader's Guide
- 4-H Member's Project Manual/Guide/Literature
- Viable and reliable materials produced by another State 4-H program or organization.
- Cautiously use internet sources as the information may not be research based or may not coincide with the project objectives.
- Use reliable and respected books and magazines. Be cautious using trends, fads and celebrity endorsements that do not coincide with the project objectives. * This does not mean these things cannot be done as fun side items that complement project work.

COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE

Contact your county office.

PARENT-VOLUNTEER CONTINUING EDUCATION

Adult opportunities may be organized through a club, County Extension Office or at the district or state level. Continuing education gives volunteers an opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas.

TEEN LEADERS

In most project groups, teen leaders will be a valuable addition. Contact your club leader or Extension Educator(s) for information on how to obtain a teen leader for your group.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Parents and other community members are often very willing to share their skills and time with young people. Get to know your parents and their interests. ASK for help. Amazing things happen when you ask!

It may even be that someone does not have the skill but they are willing to learn right along with the kids.

The safety and well-being of our minors should always be first and foremost. If a volunteer is not "certified" by OK 4-H, they must not be left unattended in the presence of minors. Certified volunteers must always be present.

Guest volunteers should complete Form 5 "Non-Certified Adult Volunteer."

"As a project leader you can help young people "thrive" in a rapidly changing world."

Resources:

- Dweck, C. *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. 2006. ISBN 978-0-345-47232-8
- Helping 4-H Youth Thrive <https://helping-youth-thrive.extension.org/home/> (2023)
- The Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development Programs

Program Planning Outline

Program

Time

Location

Date

What I want to accomplish:

Materials and equipment needed:

What tasks need to be done in advance:

How will the members participate:

Assignments for next meeting (s):

Business Meeting Agenda: