

Developing Youth through the 4-H Experience

From the beginning, youth work in extension has cut across all subject-matter fields.

The primary aim of the 4-H Youth Development program is to provide opportunities for mental, physical, and social growth. Informal education provided by the Cooperative Extension Service uniquely supplements the training received in the home, church, school and other youth-serving agencies. 4-H educates through individual project work, local clubs, project groups, events and activities, short-term programs, school enrichment and afterschool programs.

Oklahoma is a national leader in developing youths' abilities to become productive citizens and catalysts for positive change in a diverse and changing society. Through 4-H youth development education, youth will:

- Feel valued and empowered as a resource in the community.
- Practice effective problem solving and decision making skills.
- Be environmental stewards.
- Demonstrate positive character and ethical behavior.
- Appreciate human differences.
- Have a strong sense of community and social responsibility.
- Contribute to positive relationships with families, peers and community.
- Demonstrate communication and leadership skills.
- Value lifelong learning.
- Feel the personal pride that comes from achievement.

As a result, 4-H Project Work becomes an opportunity for reaching the child. Through project work youth "Learn by Doing," develop into capable, competent, and caring adults, as well as being taught desirable habits and attitudes. Members learn to help one's self, which leads to helping others.

Today's philosophy of youth work has departed from the early belief that knowledge about subject matter is an end in itself. Emphasis is now on how well the child learns to make intelligent decisions and applying the information to real life experiences.

The 4-H program began as a way of teaching skills to young people and their families. But mastering skills is not enough in today's world. 4-H teaches the learner how to learn through a process of goal setting, decision making, planning, inquiring, researching, applying, communicating and evaluating. Alert 4-H members include the "why," as well as, the "how" in their project work.

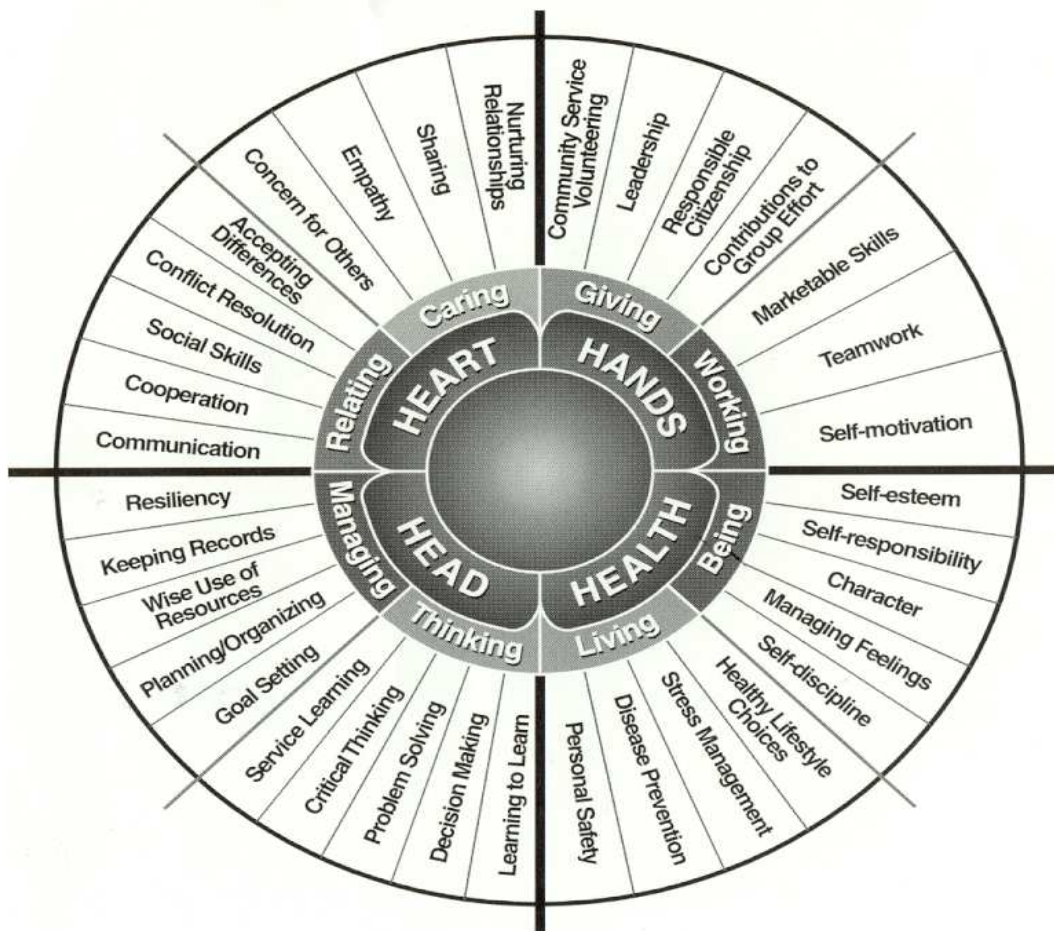
Life Skills Development

The true measure of success in 4-H work will be found in the growth and development it brings to each individual member. Our programming concentrates on helping young people acquire life skills from their 4-H project work and experiences. Life skills are the ways we apply learned skills to real life situations. These skills are best learned when practiced at the developmental level of the learner.

The Targeting Life Skills Model developed by Iowa State University Extension (1996) targets life skills in a bull's-eye - aiming 4-H youth toward life skills development using the four H's of the clover. A well-balanced 4-H experience for the individual, club event or activity will focus equally on all four quadrants of the model.

In designing an educational experience, it is suggested that the parent, volunteer or educator select and focus on one skill from each quadrant and integrate it into the subject matter content. The key to "life skills" development is the individual having an opportunity to talk about and apply an experience to other aspects of their life. Example - How is following directions for a recipe and measuring ingredients correctly applicable to other experiences in life?

Targeting Life Skills Model



4-H project work and activities fit within one of four program priorities in Oklahoma. These include:

- Enhance Leadership Development
- Enhance Health and Wellness
- Improve Science and Technology Literacy
- Promote Environmental Education

Career Exploration

Guiding young people toward their individual, educational and vocational goals is a vital part of the Cooperative Extension Service Youth Development Program.

In career exploration, members are encouraged to recognize their own potential in a particular field. Through project work, young people learn about such things as job opportunities, vocational training, jobs requiring college degrees, jobs requiring other specialized training and how to prepare for a job interview.

Planning is the Key

The key to a successful 4-H experience is planning. The capacity of young people to plan and carry out their own programs is often underestimated. The planning process must be taught and applied at all levels of the 4-H experience. Parents, volunteers, and Extension Educators teach the process through planning a speech, planning a member's project year, planning a club year and even through the act of serving on a committee. Youth and adults are partners in the planning process at the individual, family, club and county level. To learn more about planning and goal setting see Volunteer Development Series Lit. 856 "Planning" and Lit. 857 "Goal Setting."

Developing youth through the 4-H experience will require the following:

- Using 4-H project manual(s) or good resource(s) for sound information.
- Setting goals and planning the 4-H project work.
- Being dedicated and committed to working the plan.
- Evaluating each step – verbally and in writing.
- Participating in club and county activities.

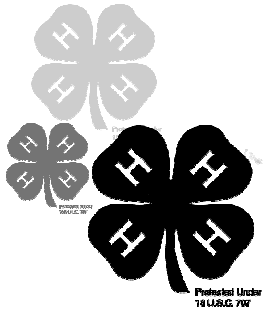


4-H Volunteers & Parents

The Oklahoma 4-H Program is committed to providing Parent-Volunteer Training on the local, county, district and state levels. The training opportunities provide individuals with positive social interaction with their peers and an opportunity to exchange ideas. For your personal development and 4-H skill enhancement watch your county newsletter for details and check out the **Oklahoma 4-H Home Page** at www.agweb.okstate.edu/fourh for district and state opportunities.



Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
4-H Youth Development
www.agweb.okstate.edu/fourh



Review Questions Unit 2A

Name _____ County _____

Address _____ Zip _____

Club _____ Phone _____

E-mail Address _____ Date Completed _____

A minimum of three (3) 4-H Parent-Volunteer Self Study Lessons may be completed as one of the four necessary trainings required to maintain active status as a Certified 4-H Volunteer. The completed review questions from each lesson must be filed annually by the date specified by your county office.

The primary aim of the 4-H Youth Development program is to provide opportunities for mental, physical and social growth. 4-H educates through what vehicles?

4-H Project Work becomes an opportunity for reaching the child. Identify why we do project work.

4-H teaches the learner how to learn through a process. Identify the steps in the process.

What are "Life Skills" and their relationship to 4-H Project Work?

How can you apply the Targeting Life Skills Model when working with 4-H members?

4-H Project Work should include a time for exploring what? _____

What two fact sheets in the Volunteer Development Series will assist you in teaching planning and goal setting to 4-H members?

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| Extension Office Use Only Date Received by Extension Office _____ Reviewed by _____ |
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