



LETTERS TO NEW LEADERS



Letter 4: Leadership and Teaching

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Dear Leader,

Are you having second thoughts about leading a 4-H project? Have you run out of ideas on teaching methods or encountered some disruptive behavior problems? This letter deals with teaching techniques and various kinds of leadership styles.

Introduction

A wise teacher once observed, "If children aren't interested, you can't teach them. If they are interested, you can't keep them from learning." Some 4-H leaders don't think of themselves as teachers. However, through volunteer leaders, 4-H members learn **life skills** in their projects that help them develop such lifelong characteristics as positive self-esteem, sound decision making, effective communication skills, responsibility, and cooperation with others

Life skills are ways of applying information learned by an individual to real life situations. Learning is a life long process. Life skills are on a continuum; learning builds upon past experience.

Look at the list of life skills, that correlate best to the content you are teaching in your project. 4-H volunteer leaders are successful teachers because they establish a long term personal relationship with the child. The 4-H project is the tool which the leader uses to take hold of a child and allows them to become a teacher. Learning takes place through the experiences the 4-H member has in the project.

Life skills include:

- Responsibility
- Personal Safety
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Keeping Records
- Goal Setting
- Cooperation
- Accepting Differences

- Sharing
- Community Service
- Leadership

WAYS TO SAY "VERY GOOD"

People thrive in the climate of love, so give family, friends, and 4-H members plenty of praise, warmth, and signs of affection. People need smiles and approval. Look for good behavior that you want to strengthen, then say "very good" to people in a variety of ways. Here are some suggestions:

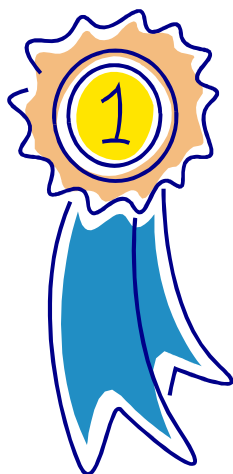
I'm proud of the way you worked today. Now that's what I call a fine job!

You're doing a good job. You did that very well. You've just about got it.





“Together, you and your 4-H members will have fun learning..”



WAYS OF HELP- ING YOUNG- STERS LEARN

Many people associate 4-H with competition. From county and state fairs to judging contests and talent events, 4-H uses competition to motivate youth to achieve. Not all youth respond to competitive learning favorably. Also, competitive activities are not appropriate learning experiences for younger children who have not developed a strong sense of self-worth. In addition to competition, there are individual and cooperative designs.

Competitive – Participants work against each other to show who is best. To attain the goal of winning one must beat all others, only one can win.

If I make it over the mountain first you cannot make it over the mountain.

Individualistic - Participants work against established criteria to show what they have achieved. They work towards meeting personal goals even in a group setting.

If I make it over the mountain, it has no effect on whether or not you make it over the mountain.

Cooperative – Participants work in groups and depend on each other to accomplish a goal.

We can only get over the mountain together.

As a leader you encourage the natural curiosity that youngsters have. You provide

opportunities for “hands-on” learning and help members grow in self-confidence as they learn. Together, you and your 4-H members will have fun learning. Because each age group has different characteristics and unique development needs, it helps to know what they are. These will have an impact on how different members learn. Ask your county 4-H advisor of the University Cooperative Extension for information about developmental differences of boys and girls at various ages.

TEACHING TOOLS

There is a wealth of resources at your fingertips. The challenge is discovering them. Resources can be people, reading material, methods of teaching, or activities. Here are some teaching methods and resources to help 4-H members learn:

Lectures, Videos, Workshops, Slides, Clinics, Club Exchanges, Tours, Field Trips, Discussions, Charts, Project materials, Posters, Games, Guest Speakers, Puzzles, Fairs, Contests, County 4-H Office Presentations, 4-H Record Books, Judging, Parents Show and Tell, Club Officers’ Day, Com-

munity Speakers, and Library Resources are endless- Using a variety of resources will make 4-H meetings fun and educational. Your U.C. Cooperative Extension County 4-H Staff have a list of audio-visual aids that you can borrow from the 4-H office. These include slide sets, teaching kits, and video tapes that are specific to project areas, general leadership, and citizenship. They need to be ordered from your county Extension office about three to four weeks in advance.

The Child- Centered Ap- proach

4-H uses a child-centered approach to learning. This means the program focuses on the needs and interests of youth. For example, 4-H members set their goals for the year, make their plans to reach these goals, carry out their plans, and assess their progress. You may be wondering, “Why then do they need me, their 4-H leader?” Well, you play an important role. It’s through your guidance, understanding, encouragement, and recognition that they will learn how to set a goal and reach it. You help each member set **realistic** goals. You provide needed encouragement when the going is rough. Best of all, you see that proud smile that says, “I did it,” when you recognize them for a

job well done. Did you know that there are at least 100 ways to say, “very good?” How many can you come up with?

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: BUILDING ON LEARN-BY-DOING

4-H promotes experiential (activity based) learning. The traditional 4-H philosophy, “learning by doing” is as appropriate today as it was when 4-H first began. Experiential learning takes an important step beyond the basic “learn by doing” philosophy. It happens when a person gets involved in an activity, looks back at it critically, determines what was useful or important to remember and uses that information to do something else.

The 5 Step Experiential Learning are:

1. **Experience** – Begin with a real or actual experience. This can be an individual activity or a group activity, but it involves ‘doing something’. Activities can include: practicing a new skill, rating items, making things, attending field trips or playing

games.

2. **Share** – Next, get the group or individual to talk about the experience. Participants need to share reactions and observations. Begin to talk freely.

3. **Process** – Discuss how questions are created by the activity. Ask more questions of the learners.

4. **Generalize** – Find general trends or common lessons in the experience. Stress the important points that apply to the “real world”, not just the specific activity. Point out many situations where the lessons might apply.

5. **Apply** – Talk about how the new information can be applied to everyday life or sometime in the future.

The benefits of incorporating an experiential learning design in your projects are:

Use of multiple senses (sight, sound, touch, etc.). This can increase retention of what is learned.

Multiple-teaching/learning methods can be integrated to maximize creativity and flexibility.

“Child-centered” learning becomes the focus.

The process of “discovery” of knowledge and solutions builds competence and confidence.

Learning is more fun for every one.

If youth are actively engaged in learning, they have a greater stake in the outcome of what is going on and are less likely to become discipline problems or drop out.



Youth can learn important life skills that will be used over and over in addition to subject matter content. All five steps are crucial to effective learning and none should be left out. Contact the 4-H Advisors at the 4-H Office for assistance in designing Experiential Activities in your project.

“Experiential learning takes an important step beyond the basic “learn by doing” philosophy. ”

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

1. Learning occurs best in an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance.
2. Youth must have project or activity goals clearly in mind.
3. The ability to learn varies with each youth.
4. For adequate learning to occur, motivation is necessary.
5. Young people must participate in selecting their learning activities.



6. Self-evaluation is the most meaningful evaluation.

7. Complex tasks are done in steps, from the most basic to the complex.

Use of multiple learning strategies enhances learning – auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic.

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND HOW THEY AFFECT YOUR GROUP

What you do, and the results you get, depends a great deal on how you and your members relate in the group. What kind of a relationship would you like to find yourself in?

Us-and-our group

- The leader knows the individual members well and is interested in them and in what they do.
- The club belongs to all the youth and the group will be most successful when it exists for the members' benefit. The leader says, "Let's go, let's find out. How shall we best do this?"
- The leader takes an active part in club affairs but does not control them.

Leader-alongside group

The leader moves along beside the club and with it. The leader watches the progress, offers suggestions, and actively helps do the work. The leader is genuinely interested and enjoys being a leader, but does not have the feeling of owning the group. He or she sees that the job is done.

Leader-out-in-front group

The leader is out in front and draws the group behind. Soon the leader speaks of "my club" which may make it appear to others that the group belongs to the leader.

Programs may be planned, but they only reflect the leaders wishes.

Hands-off group

The Leader sits back, makes no decisions for the group, and forces the group and individuals to chart their own course. Good as well as bad decisions, plans, and programs are permitted to develop. Strong clubs get stronger under this type of leadership. Weak clubs fall apart.

Which relationship is right?

No one relationship is the "right" one. In fact, depending on the situation, each one could be "right." The task is to find the one that works best for you in your

group. You'll probably find yourself most comfortable and the members happiest in one of the four types of relationships described above. However, as interests and experience change, so does the relationship. For example, in a new club starting with young members, you would probably be most effective "pushing or pulling" the club along. Would this still be the "right" relationship after the members and group have had a year or two experience?

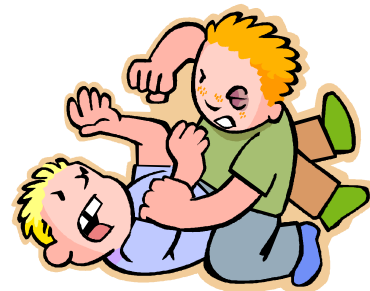


"Youth usually have a reason for what they do."

Youth and families who are not comfortable with a particular type of leadership style may drop out or argue that style of leadership. It is important to keep communication open so that you and the members can create and continue to develop a relationship that works best. The best relationships are never static; both sides need to evolve and grow.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT KIDS WHO ACT UP?

Sometimes youth do act obnoxious...admit it...don't feel guilty. The important





COMMON REASONS PEOPLE ACT UP

1. They want attention. If they disrupt a meeting, they get not only your attention, but attention from other members as well. How about giving the members some responsibility during the meeting? That way, she or he gets needed attention in a positive way.

2. They might be uncomfortable in the situation. Maybe they don't know what's expected, or your group is doing something they have never done before. By acting up, the uncomfortable person doesn't have to figure out what is expected. A few quiet words to explain what to do will probably do the trick. If it doesn't work, a quiet talk while others are occupied might clear the air. Your group may not have discussed and decided on ground rules and acceptable means to communicate individuals' issues at the beginning of the project. Take the time to develop those ground rules and review the code of conduct at the beginning to help set appropriate boundaries.

3. They may be afraid of failure. Closely related to number two, is acting up because of fear of failure. If a person feels that they can't do what is expected, it may be less

embarrassing to be called a "troublemaker" than to be called a "failure."

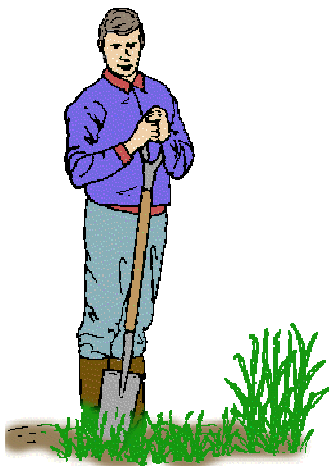
4. They don't like what the group is doing. The activity or project may be too easy or too difficult. It's probably necessary to sit down, one-on-one, and help the member set some goals that he or she would really like to achieve. It is a constant challenge to find effective ways to engage each youth when each has varied interests and needs.

5. It's possible you have no idea why a particular member is acting up. The quickest way to find out is to ask the member. For example, "Bob, from the kinds of things you have been doing, I get the idea you are not happy with being in this group. I would like to work it out with you. How do you feel about it?"

OKAY ... SO YOUR ACTIVITY, IDEAS, OR MEETINGS BOMBED!

Don't be down in the mouth, it won't be the end of the world ... as long as you figure out what went wrong and work to correct it. Maybe the members just weren't interested in what you did. Why? They don't care about the activity. They don't fit in. They don't feel the activity accomplishes anything. There could be other reasons. How can you find out? Ask the members! Does that sound simple? It is! No leader can have all the answers and insights into what young people want, so ask them. Your respect for their opinions and needs will make them feel like you really care. You'll probably be surprised at the results of this positive communication. Just sit down with your members, either individually or as a group and find out what they wish to accomplish. (Goal setting.. remember?) Hang in there! Try some of these suggestions and then try some of your own ideas! You and your club members will enjoy working together in 4-H.

"Your respect for their opinions and needs will make them feel like you really care."

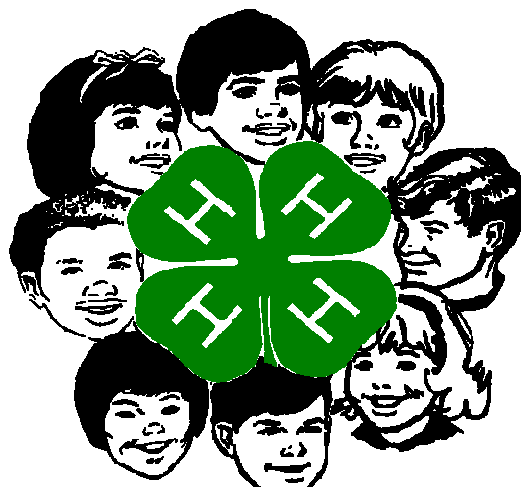


How can I use the information in this letter?

1. New activities to plan into our club program:

2. Other People who could help us and how they might help:

3. Questions to ask U.C. Cooperative Extension staff and other leaders.



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REFERENCE MATERIALS

Iowa State Life Skills Wheel

San Diego County 4H Leader Training Manual

Experienced 4-H Project Leaders

4H Publication Catalogue

Volunteers...the Foundation of Youth Development. A website with online topics including normal youth development, youth group management techniques and working with parents and other adult leaders.

<http://4h.missouri.edu/4h-volunteers/index.htm>



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