

LETTERS TO NEW 4-H LEADERS

Letter 4: Leadership and Teaching Techniques

In this letter you will find:

- ▶ The Child-Centered approach
- ▶ 100 Ways to Say “Very Good”
- ▶ Helping Youngsters Learn
- ▶ Leadership Styles and How They Affect your Club
- ▶ Teaching Tools
- ▶ Characteristics of a Good Leader
- ▶ What to Do About Kids Who Act Up
- ▶ Okay, So Your Activity Ideas or Meeting Bombed

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 a child isn’t interested, you can’t teach him. If he is interested, you can’t keep him from learning.”

Most 4-H leaders don’t think of themselves as teachers. However, through volunteer leaders, 4-H members learn skills in their projects that help develop such lifelong characteristics as positive self-esteem, sound decision making, effective communication skills, responsibility, and cooperation with others. 4-H leaders are successful teachers because they establish a personal relationship. The 4-H project is the tool by which the leader takes hold of a child and becomes a teacher. Learning takes place through the experiences the 4-H member has . . . not what a leader does.

The Child-Centered Approach

The 4-H Program uses a child-centered approach to learning. This means that 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, “What do they need me, their 4-H leader, for?” 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?

100 Ways to Say “Very Good” (almost 100)

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, and then say “very good” to people in a variety of ways. Here are some suggestions:

- WOW!
- MARVELOUS!
- That’s not half bad.
- I’m very proud of you.
- That’s the way.
- I think you’ve got it now.
- Nice going!
- You figured that out fast.
- Now you’ve figured it out.
- You remembered.
- SENSATIONAL!
- That’s really nice.
- You haven’t missed a thing.
- It’s a pleasure to teach when you work like that.
- I’m proud of the way you worked today.
- That’s the way to do it.
- Now that’s what I call a fine job!
- Keep up the good work.
- You’re doing a good job.
- You’re right!
- You did that very well.
- That’s better!
- You’ve just about got it.
- CLEVER!
- You must have been practicing!
- Nothing can stop you now.
- That’s the best you have ever done.
- That makes me feel good.
- FANTASTIC!
- EXCELLENT!
- Congratulations!
- That’s it!
- You’re really improving
- PERFECT!
- I knew you could do it.
- Way to go.
- Right on!
- That’s the best ever.
- That’s quite an improvement.
- Well look at you go!
- SUPERB!
- You’re really going to town.
- Now, you’ve figured it out.
- TERRIFIC!
- Good remembering.
- FINE!
- You’re doing that much better today.
- You’ve got it made.
- Keep it up!
- Way to go.
- Now you have it.
- That’s right!
- You did a lot of work today!
- Now you have the hang of it.
- Not bad
- You’re on the right track now!
- You’ve got that down pat!
- Congratulations! You got it right.
- GREAT!
- That’s good.
- You certainly did well today.
- You’ve got your brain in gear today.
- You are learning fast.
- You are very good at that.
- TREMENDOUS!
- Much better!
- Keep working on it, you’re getting better.
- That’s coming along nicely.
- You’re doing fine.
- WONDERFUL!
- Good for you!
- You just about mastered that.
- Good thinking!
- GOOD WORK!
- Couldn’t have done it better myself.
- That’s better than ever
- You are really learning a lot.
- I’m happy to see you working like that.
- You make it look easy.
- Keep on trying.
- You really make my job fun.
- You’re really working hard today.
- You outdid yourself today!
- That’s the right way to do it.
- I’ve never seen anyone do it better.
- One more time and you’ll have it.
- Good for you!
- You’re getting better every day.
- Good going!
- You did it that time.

Helping Youngsters Learn

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.

Leadership Styles and how they Affect Your Group

What you do, and the results you see, depend a great deal on how you and your members relate in the group. What kind of a relationship or group dynamic would you like to encourage?

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 leader’s 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 trick 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. 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 of experience?

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
- ✓ Library
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Camp

Resources are endless- Using a variety of resources will make 4-H meetings fun and educational. Your county 4-H Office has a resource library. Come check it out! New resources are being purchased every year. These include books, teaching kits, and video tapes that are specific to project areas, general leadership and citizenship.

Characteristics of a Good Leader

A good leader has many characteristics – some may work better for you than others. Most are not more important than any other characteristic, but they may help you enjoy being a successful leader.

These characteristics relate to the way you handle your group of youth (your facilitating style). You may recognize some of your own qualities under facilitating style, and hopefully, not too many under “not-so-facilitating!”

Facilitating Style

- Guides a group through an experience
- Uses different leadership styles when appropriate
- Encourages participation
- Keeps action going
- Is flexible
- Can tolerate low points in action
- Encourages participation by all
- Is generally low key
- Is a good listener
- Cares

Not-So-Facilitating Style

- Takes over leadership and directs others
- Makes decisions for group
- Ignores suggestions
- Environment is tense or inappropriate
- Lacks preparation
- Evades issues
- Gives solutions rather than letting group come to their own
- More concerned with results than the people involved
- Unconcerned
- Uncomfortable to be around

What to do About Kids Who Act Up?

Sometimes kids do act obnoxious...admit it...don't feel guilty. The important thing to remember is that the action is obnoxious, not the person! It's a very important distinction. The behavior is not okay, the youth is.

Young people virtually never act up for the sheer pleasure of it. Youth usually have a reason for what they do. Chances are, a member acting up has a problem, and if you're perceptive (and patient), you might be able to discover the problem and help solve it.

Stop a minute before you let yourself get upset and ask yourself, "why is he or she doing that?"

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 with 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.
3. They may be afraid of failure. Closely related to discomfort 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 branded a troublemaker than 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.
5. Sometimes you have no idea why a particular member is acting up. The quickest way to find out is to ask. For example, "Bob, from the kinds of things you have been doing, I get the idea you are not happy 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!

This is not the end of the world, and it happens to everyone ... see if you can 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 that 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 has 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.

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 UC Extension staff and other leaders:

Check out our website at <http://cetehama.ucanr.edu> or call 530-527-3101 to reach the staff at Tehama County 4-H Office:

4-H Program Representative - **Lynn Strom**, lmstrom@ucdavis.edu

4-H Secretary - **Spring Severson**, sseverson@ucanr.edu

Also visit the California 4-H website at <http://www.ca4h.org>