

4-H Volunteers S.A.Y....



what success in 4-H means

In 2016, a group of California 4-H Youth Development Advisors and Academic Coordinators sought to learn more about how 4-H volunteers viewed youth and families in the program. We sent out an electronic survey to all of the adults volunteers. The survey asked volunteers questions about what kinds of youth and families would be successful and accepted in 4-H. It also asked about policies and requirements of the volunteer's local clubs, and their roles within the clubs. Over 850 volunteers responded to the question about success and how it relates to 4-H youth and families. We read all of the responses looking for individual meanings, and then compared them all together to find broader categories. What emerged were the 5 following themes:

1

Knowledge & Learning

Knowledge and learning was the primary way that respondents defined success, with 49% of the answers relating to theme. For instance, one volunteer said, "4-H has given my child and myself skills and education that we would have not gotten in any other afterschool activity. I define success with expanding knowledge and achieving new skills that are useful for the future."

Ideas within this theme include...



gaining life skills



learning to speak publicly or raise an animal



teaching others what you've learned

Ideas within this theme include...



leadership



personal growth or trying new things



Responsibility and accountability

Character Development

43% of respondents defined success with regards to some form of character development. There were many answers similar to the following: "Success is to build up the character and moral standings of a child through involvement of 4-H" or "Teaches leadership skills and responsibility to young people."

2



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Please note, many survey respondents defined success in terms that included more than one of the above themes. In these cases, the definitions were counted in multiple areas. As such, the percentages listed add up to more than 100%.

3 Social Capital

Many volunteers believed that building social capital was a way to achieve success in 4-H. In fact, 38% defined success this way. One volunteer was able to concisely describe this theme by stating, *"For our youth and families, 4-H develops a bond that brings everyone together..."* while another said, *"Working together to make our community better."*

Ideas within this theme include...



community service



family involvement or
parent/child interactions



developing friendships or
relationships

Ideas within this theme include...



competition



working hard or being
proud of your work



learning to set and achieve
goals

Accomplishment

Accomplishment was yet another way that respondents defined success, with 29% of answers indicating this theme. One quote that exemplified this theme read, *"4-H helps children at all ages and levels of development to set goals, and teaches skills to aid in goal attainment."*

4

Ideas within this theme include...



positive environments



being engaged and having
fun



following interests and
passions

5 Well-Being

The final theme was general well-being of youth. 29% of respondents defined success this way. One volunteer put it like this: *"Success as it relates to 4-H youth and families is providing a safe, fun and educational learning environment that stimulates minds so much they keep coming back. Kids who are interested in 4-H are less likely to make harmful choices and a kid who shows interest should be taught how to apply it in 4-H."*

If you have any questions, please contact John Borba at jaborba@ucanr.edu or Russ Hill at rdhill@ucanr.edu. Thank you to all those who participated in this research!

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