



Youth and Accomplishment

A Guide for 4-H Leaders

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As a 4-H leader, you accept responsibility to see that each member of your club has opportunity to grow and develop. Research tells us that each young person needs an opportunity to grow and develop according to his own pattern. Each person must have a feeling of accomplishment if he is to continue to participate and learn in a group setting. There is no single path to success—no one pattern fits the needs of all youth. This leader's guide is prepared to assist you with this responsibility.

The Value of Goals

Goals are essential if 4-H members are to have a base from which to determine accomplishment. We must help 4-H members decide what they want to learn.

A member's goals may be considered in terms of long-range goals and short-term or intermediate goals. The long-range goal may be to give a demonstration at a public meeting. The short-term goal may be to give a show and tell demonstration at a club meeting. Through questions and suggestions you can assist the member to identify what he really wants to learn. When the main goal is determined, help the member select smaller goals or steps he will use to reach his goal. These intermediate goals should be related to the long-range goals and should be determined in part by the maturity, ability, and emotional readiness of the member.

Helping your members determine their goals is essential to helping them evaluate and measure their progress.

Program Flexibility

In the 4-H education program we are working with a wide range of youth from many different backgrounds—the mature and immature, the slow and fast, the emotionally stable and unstable. From research and everyday observations we can readily determine that a flexible program is necessary to meet the many needs represented by these youth. As a leader you will need to determine what you are trying to accomplish with your program—what kinds of experiences you are providing your members. A program that is broad, open, and flexible will offer the greatest possibility for meeting the needs of all youth.

A quote from John W. Gardner will help us look at flexibility in terms of accomplishment. He says, "We know that men are not equal in their native gifts nor in

their motivations; it follows that they will not be equal in their achievements."

If we are to help youth in their development, we must keep them in our programs. Research shows us that in many cases we may not meet or satisfy some of their basic developmental needs. When this happens it seems only natural that the boy or girl will reject our program and turn to some other interest that might be more satisfying.

Working With Youth

Basic needs of youth:

- ✓ A sense of personal worth:
 - Desire for attention
 - Desire for prestige
 - Desire to excel
- ✓ A continuing sense of personal security
- ✓ A feeling of accomplishment

Club meetings, events, and activities can all help fulfill some of these needs; but they can do this only if the member attends and is involved. The member needs responsibility, such as a club office, a committee assignment, or some job to do for the group.

One of your challenges as a leader will be to see that a member is not forced into a mold that he does not fit. Likewise, we must guard against pressure for the member to achieve what he is not ready to achieve. When you expect the slow child to compete with the fast child, the immature with the mature, you may be retarding growth rather than aiding it. When a child cannot complete an assignment, he may feel he is not only failing himself, but also his parents, leaders, and friends.

Because it is easy for us to develop our 4-H program around activities or fairs, we are sometimes tempted to set standards to which we feel all our members should conform at a certain time. When we do this we are forgetting that maturity, ability, and emotional readiness are much better criteria of what a child is able to do than his age or the number of years he has been in 4-H.

Motivation is a key factor to helping members complete a job they have started. A powerful motivational force for 4-Hers is that they gain a feeling of prestige when their family is interested in their activities and approves their accomplishments. Young people like to show or tell their family about something new.

An ideal program has a permissive environment in which the member can learn, have a chance for success, and have pride in what he does.

Guiding Members Toward Accomplishment

There are four ways that a leader can guide club members to accomplishment.

1. Express affection. Show an interest in what the members do and value them as individuals.

2. Show respect. A young person needs to build confidence in his abilities. Give club members help when they appear ready, help them plan ahead, and encourage them to choose an activity in which they can succeed.

3. Give assistance. In your leadership role you will want to prepare for the 4-H member's success and direct his interest towards succeeding. The member must know clearly what he wants to do (goal), be reminded when necessary, and receive help when needed. Give members encouragement and direction in their efforts.

4. Express approval. Let them know how well they have done by praise rather than criticism. To be effective, approval must be honest, sincere, and appropriate. Look for every indication of progress.

There are many ways of achieving. You can help each member have pride and respect for something he has done. As a leader you must be sure your own horizons are wide enough to value a job well done and admit excellence is possible in many ways.

Recognition of Accomplishment

The emphasis on being "best" is a hard concept to get away from because it is stressed throughout the society in which we live. A 4-H member may do excellent work but feel he has failed because someone else has done still better. With this in mind, it will be your challenge to discover the capability of each member. We do not place the main value on those who do best, but on those who try hard, develop good work habits, and make steady progress.

Completion of a task and recognition for it may satisfy several basic needs, such as a desire for attention, for prestige, for excellence, and for a feeling of accomplishment. Recognition need not be limited to

project work. Recognition can be given for individual talent, initiative, enthusiasm, and leadership.

A skillful leader can recognize accomplishment by words of commendation. This should be done at the time of accomplishment. The leader must be sincere. The leader also should be specific by saying what it was that was done well, such as driving that nail or mixing that dough. The leader may wish to make a comparison with past performance.

Your Challenge As A Leader

4-H members will continue to seek your guidance if they find the activities you suggest are worthwhile, satisfying, and within their ability. You will want to become aware of your own feelings about success and failure, and the way you present a task or challenge. Also, your standard for achievement will be important in how the member approaches a project or activity.

In 4-H work it is important that each member learn to evaluate each club task or project activity he undertakes. In many cases the member may have to vary or change his original plans or goals, but as a leader you will be looking for opportunities to encourage him to recognize accomplishments as they are achieved.

Gladys Gardner Jenkins helps us take a look at our ultimate goals as leaders. ". . . our society cannot achieve greatness unless individuals at many levels of ability accept the need for high standards of performance and strive to achieve those standards within the limits possible for them. What we want is a system in which youth at every level of ability are stretched to their best performance and get the maximum education of which they are capable."

You will be able to encourage accomplishment, but you can also help the members develop their own desire to do something to the best of their ability. The "Certificate of Accomplishment" is only an aid. Your words, actions, and manners will really do the job for you. Your words of encouragement or praise will show the 4-H member that you are with him all the way in completing his task or project.