



INCREASING ADULT INVOLVEMENT

Intended Audience:

- 4-H youth and adult leaders

Learning Objectives:

Youth and adult leaders will:

- Understand the importance of and motivation for adult participation in 4-H clubs
- Identify factors that inhibit adult participation in 4-H clubs
- Discover ways to increase adult participation in their 4-H club

Target Essential Element:

Creating a sense of *belonging* comes with a positive relationship with a caring adult.

Time: 30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Pens/pencils
- Red paper (1/participant)
- Green paper (1/participant)
- Handout: “Increasing Parent Involvement - Some Tips from School Systems” (1/participant)
- Handout: “Adults Can Help with 4-H, Too” (1/participant)
- Evaluations

Do Ahead:

- Copy all necessary handouts.

BACKGROUND

Recruiting, encouraging, and supporting adult participation in 4-H clubs can be challenges for 4-H programs. Many club leaders find it frustrating to motivate adults to take on additional responsibilities in their clubs. It’s time to start thinking outside the box and concentrate on increasing adult involvement in your 4-H club to help it reach its full potential.

WHAT TO DO

Activity: Factors Limiting Adult Involvement

(Give each leader a piece of colored paper and a pen or pencil.) Think of one reason that adults are not involved in their 4-H club. When you think of a reason, shout it out and write it on your paper. Don’t repeat a reason that has already been given. Think of a new reason for limited adult involvement. (When the reasons have been exhausted, ask the leaders to take their papers and tape them to the wall. Label this group of papers “Limiting Factors.”)

Many of these reasons cited for limiting participation are issues that every adult faces. Some people choose to use them as “excuses” for not being involved.

Activity: Why We Are Involved

(Give each leader a different piece of colored paper.) We will now repeat the exercise, but this time I want you to think of one reason that people *are* involved in 4-H. (When done, ask the leaders to tape their pieces of paper on the wall, about three feet away from the other colored paper. Label this group of papers “Reasons for Involvement.”)

Although everyone is busy and could have many reasons for not helping out and participating in their child’s 4-H club, many adults *do* actively volunteer. How can we bridge the gap between limiting factors and reasons for involvement? How can adults be encouraged to participate?

Activity: How Can 4-H Bridge the Gap?

(Place several pieces of flip chart paper between the two groups of colored paper.) Now we are going to brainstorm ideas and create new solutions on how we can bridge the gap and encourage adults to increase their participation in 4-H clubs. Write your ideas on the flip chart pieces on the wall. After the program, I’ll type up all the ideas generated through this brainstorming and send them to you.

Research-Based Ideas for Involving Parents

The challenge of increasing involvement of parents is not solely a problem for the 4-H community. Much has been written about this subject in the public school environment.

(Distribute the handout “Increasing Parent Involvement – Some Tips from School Systems.” Quickly highlight some of the research-based suggestions on this sheet. Some suggestions may not be relevant, some may have been suggested already, and others may be new and useful to the group.) How do you feel about the suggestions on this sheet? Do you have additional ideas?



Source:

- Created by Jessica Jens, 4-H Youth Development Agent, UW-Extension, Sauk County.

Conclusion

(Distribute the handout “Adults Can Help with 4-H, Too.”) This sheet is provided to help educate parents, guardians, and interested adults about why their participation in the 4-H club is important and meaningful.

EVALUATION

It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation in the handouts can be modified to meet your needs. An alternative to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection discussion under “Talk It Over.” Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion. Remember to share the evaluation results with 4-H Youth Development Extension staff in your county.

TALK IT OVER**Reflect:**

- What are some strategies that have proven to increase adult involvement in school programs?
- What are factors that may limit adult involvement in your 4-H club?
- What methods do you currently use in your 4-H club to increase adult involvement?

Apply:

- What limiting factors can you address in your 4-H club to improve involvement by adults?
- What can you do to increase adult involvement in your 4-H club?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY**Enhance:**

Before you get into the activity, it’s a good idea to start with a “mixer.” Even if the group knows each other, these types of activities are good for getting people talking and more receptive to the upcoming discussion. If you decide to add this activity, your lesson will be over 30 minutes long. One idea is called “How We Differ.” You’ll need an old trophy or plaque to use as a prize. Divide your original group into small groups of 3-5 depending on the total number of participants. When completed, ask the teams to add up their scores and compare final totals if they want to. At some point, ask them which was more fun: participating, talking, sharing, laughing . . . or winning. If they say “Winning,” take their trophy away and recycle them to make toothbrush handles! The score sheet is attached to this lesson plan.

HELPFUL HINTS

Check out the “4-H Club Parent Participation Survey” from Minnesota 4-H Youth Development. This survey can be used at the beginning of each new 4-H year to encourage parents to commit to participation in the 4-H club and gauge what areas of the 4-H club will have additional adult support. This survey is available at: <http://www.fourh.umn.edu/downloads/4HMG/toolkit/Toolkit-14-Parent-Survey.pdf>.

ADDITIONAL WEBLINKS

- “Education and parental involvement in secondary schools: Problems, solutions, and effects,” by J. LaBahn, Educational Psychology Interactive, Valdosta, GA, Valdosta State University, 1995. Available at <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/files/parinvol.html>.
- “Increasing parental involvement” at <http://www.mstl.org/education/parentalinvolvement.html>.
- “PTO Today.com” at <http://www.ptotoday.com/cgi-ptotoday/MasterPFP.cgi?doc=1002marketing.html&bottom>. Simple marketing ideas that build parent involvement.

Finalized by Strengthening 4-H Club Leadership Work Team: Sept. 2005.



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Some Ideas For



Increasing Parent Involvement From the School System

The challenge of increasing involvement of parents is not solely a problem for the 4-H community. Much has been written about this subject in the public school environment. Some of the following ideas may be useful in increasing adult participation in your 4-H club. Try replacing "school" with "club," "student" with "member," and "teacher" with "organizational leader."

"Schools must understand that lack of participation by parents does not necessarily mean they are neglecting their responsibilities. They simply may not have the time, resources, or know-how to help out. Parents often do not feel welcomed at school. They feel that what they may have to offer is unimportant and unappreciated. Also, parents may not believe that they have any knowledge that the school is interested in knowing."

Ideas for Research Studies about Increasing Parental Involvement

- Flood them with information.
- Make it a school-wide effort.
- Recognize students and parents.
- Involve students in recruiting parents.
- Conduct participatory projects that include the entire family.
- Recruit community members.
- Make the classrooms and the school a comfortable place.
- Find out why parents are not involved.
- Develop a parent handbook of guidelines and tips.
- Have an old-fashioned family night at school.
- Engage in official parent proclamation efforts.
- Vary meeting times to accommodate parent schedules.
- Train parents to help in classrooms.
- "Even if the parents are working and cannot volunteer their time, other available family members could serve as a pool of potential volunteers. If the need for parental involvement is specified and made clear, family members are more likely to feel welcome, useful, and respected. This participation could lead to a fuller involvement with the school."
- "... The school also involves families in simpler ways: Grandparents attend teas, parents enjoy ice cream socials. . . . Community involvement often starts with those gestures. Many parents, church leaders, business owners and older adult volunteers await only a friendly offer to help the schools. Those invitations welcome more role models and resources into the schools."
- "Another important item is communication. More communication between the school and home are needed, but specific types of communication are important. Two-way informal exchanges between teacher/parent are much more effective than one-way communication from the teacher."

Simple Marketing Ideas that Build Parent Involvement

...The real question is why every parent isn't involved. Here's one reason: They don't understand. That's right, most parents don't fully understand what a parent group does and why it can be important to the children and to them. What's so clear to members of the group isn't obvious at all to people who don't belong. Outsiders may have a general idea of what you do, but often that idea is incomplete or, worse, incorrect. So you have to tell them.

Define the Benefit

People don't get involved in an organization simply because they're interested in it. They also are motivated, to a certain degree, by self-interest. They ask: What can this organization do for me? To attract parents to your group, and especially to get them to become active members, you have to answer that question for them. But first, you need to know the answer yourself. Ask yourself and other members of your group these three questions: What does this parent group do for children? What does this group do for parents? Why do parents spend time working with this group as opposed to all of the other things they could be doing with their time?

Get the Word Out

By answering these questions, your group has made clear its basic reason for being (how it helps kids and how it helps parents). You've also identified the ways your parent group is special and why parents should spend their time being involved with it. You've put together the most important information that potential members need to know to make a decision about their involvement in the organization. Now you need to communicate that information.

Every piece of marketing, such as flyers, handouts, and your web site, should reiterate the information you collected. Don't just share this information in your yearly efforts to bring in new parents. Include it on monthly meeting notices and in speeches whenever you talk about the organization. In particular, it should be front and center when doing fundraising. It can be your best fundraising tool, because it tells people exactly why the PTO exists and why they should support it. And don't be afraid to say the same thing over and over. That's how awareness is built and the message is conveyed.

REFERENCES

Fredericks and Rasinski. (1990) pp. 424-425

Schurr. (1992) Sixteen proven parent involvement strategies. pp. 4-9

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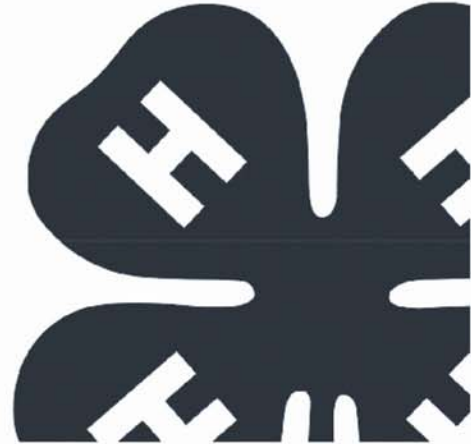
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Adults Can Help With 4-H Too!

Adult involvement is Important!

4-H is an organization that is **primarily run through adult volunteers**. Adult volunteer leaders organize 4-H clubs, lead project meetings, and arrange 4-H activities. **Without adult volunteers, 4-H would not be here** for your children to have fun in, gain new skills in, and grow into capable young adults in. For a stronger 4-H program, for a better experience for your children, and for satisfaction you would not otherwise receive, **please help out in your 4-H club!**



Ways Adults Can Help in a 4-H Club:

Provide refreshments; **provide support to your children**; provide support to your leaders; **brainstorm ideas with your leaders**; volunteer during the fair; volunteer any time during the year; drive to events; **make sure your child gets to the meetings**; help plan meetings, co-lead the club, or shadow the general leader; help in a project area; **volunteer to be a club project leader**; help coordinate a meeting; find a guest speaker; work with your children to plan a recreational program; **encourage record keeping**; help members select, finance, and manage projects; attend 4-H meetings and events

The 4-H Program Needs Your Help Too!

On the county level, adults can...

- o Become active on one of several **countywide committees** such as awards, fundraising, project committees, or many others.
- o Help coordinate and/or lead countywide **project meetings**.
- o Volunteer to **coordinate countywide 4-H activities** such as the performance arts festivals, county fair activities or Cloverbud trips.
- o **Serve as a member** of the 4-H governing body Executive Board

What You'll Gain By Being Involved

This list is endless but it starts with:

Seeing youth grow from 4-H experiences

Learning new skills and knowledge

Meeting **new friends and families**

Having fun!

Enjoying quality time with your own children

Becoming involved in the community

“How We Differ”

In your small group, get to know each other by trying to rack up as many points as possible. The group with the most points wins!

Each category is worth 1 point. Bonus points for each category are listed below.

Categories

For each person NOT wearing a watch.

3 pts—NO jewelry
(wedding bands excluded)

For each different birthday month recorded.

5 pts—born on a holiday

Points for each birth state represented.

5 pts—born overseas

For each shoe size over 12 or under 4.

2 pts—wearing sandals

For visiting each of the following: Grand Canyon, Sears Tower, Epcot Center, Waikiki.

5 pts—for three
7 pts—for four

Points for each different make car driven to this meeting today.

5 pts—if you car pooled
10 pts—if you walked

For appearing on TV, radio, or newspaper. (You must be mentioned by name.)

7 pts—for all three

Points for each sibling, living or deceased. Includes adopted, step, and half-sibling.

10 pts—for twins

For each continent visited. Requires 24-hour on-ground stay.

10 pts—for 6, and
15 pts—for all seven or Antarctica

Points for each last name starting with the letters Z, Q, K, or U.

7 pts—for X letters

Points for each language (other than native) that you speak fluently.

12 pts—for three or more

For each year married (1 person).

3 pts—for 10 years
12 pts—for 20

For each state that you have lived in (minimum 6 months).

5 pts—for 6 month overseas

Points for each living biological parent.

3 pts—for each living grand-parent
7 pts—for each living great-grandparent

Subtract the youngest age in the group from the oldest, and allow one point for each calendar year between the two.

3 pts—for anyone over 65

Increasing Adult Involvement in Your 4-H Club Evaluation

1. How useful will this information be to help you increase adult involvement in your 4-H club?
(circle one response)

Very Useful Somewhat Useful Not Sure Not Useful

2. How valuable was this program to you in regards to your role as an organizational leader?
(circle one response)

Very Useful Somewhat Useful Not Sure Not Useful

3. How many new ideas did you learn?
(circle one response)

0 1-2 3-4 5 or more

4. What will you do as a result of this program?