



KEEPING OLDER MEMBERS

Intended Audience:

- Adults and youth providing 4-H Club leadership

Learning Objectives:

Club leaders will:

- Give older members a voice in sharing their feelings about 4-H participation
- Recognize the factors that keep older members participating
- Explore feelings that new members and families often experience

Target Essential Elements:

Older youth are more likely to remain involved in 4-H if they are experiencing *belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.*

Time: 20-30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

Older Members Share Their Feelings Activity

- Handout: “Meeting the Needs of Youth: Tips for 4-H Leaders”
- Pen or pencils, Post-it Notes and note cards
- 2 signs on poster paper labeled “+ Positive Factors” and “- Negative Factors.” Make sure there is space around them for displaying Post-it-Notes.

BACKGROUND

Across Wisconsin, we see a decline in 4-H club membership as youth grow older. Let’s look at 4-H Club enrollment in our county last year. What trends do you see?

We also see that some clubs have quite a few older members. Why are they staying? We’ll be hearing directly from youth on why they stay and why they think others may have left. We’ll be getting ideas from them on what we can do to improve the experience of older members.

WHAT TO DO

Activity: Older Members Share Their Feelings

(As we listen to the panel, make Post-it Notes on the “Positive Factors” and “Negative Factors” in the experiences of these older 4-H youth. Write either “+” or “-” before each experience that you record. After the panel presentation, put your notes on these signs. Plan to type these notes for later use.)

(Introduce each panel member with the name of their club and school/home school. Tell the audience how the panel will work.) Each panel member will briefly share their 4-H experience. When everyone is finished, the audience will have the opportunity for questions and comments. You can ask your questions directly or write them on cards for the moderator to use. (Pass out cards for audience use.)



Now it is time for your questions and comments. (Following are some sample questions that the audience might ask the panel after their opening comments.):

- What did you like best about 4-H when you were a younger member? What do you like best about 4-H now?
- What do you like and dislike about being an older member in a club with younger youth?
- Have your interests in projects remained the same or changed? How did your interests change?
- What do non-4-H members at your school think about 4-H?
- Do you know the reasons why any former 4-H members quit? If so, why did they not re-join?
- What would you like to do within your 4-H club that you haven’t done?
- How do you feel about any leadership experiences you’ve had in 4-H?

We appreciate the time these youth spent sharing their thoughts on 4-H. The older youth in your club may have additional thoughts. Consider having a fun get together with them to ask their opinions.

Handouts

- Enrollment numbers in county (share figures on flipchart or PowerPoint presentation)
- Meeting the Needs of Youth: Tips for 4-H Leaders
- Evaluation
- County orientation and general 4-H information

Do Ahead:

- Have supplies and handouts ready.
- Recruit someone to record the reflection discussion to use as an evaluation (optional).
- Panel Selection: 4-5 youth who represent young teens (ages 13-14) and older teens (16+). Invite youth from different clubs representing different geographical areas, genders and amount of county participation. Consider asking volunteers from stronger groups who have teen members to nominate someone for the panel.
- Panel Preparation: Phone the youth and ask them if they'd be willing to share their views to volunteers. Their participation will help both the club and the county improve their programs for youth of their age group. Ask them to talk 1-2 minutes about their 4-H experience: what they do in 4-H (e.g., officer, projects and county opportunities) and why they stay in 4-H. Tell them that if they have a negative experience to share, please do not identify the people involved.

Four Essential Elements of 4-H

Let's look at the 4 Essential Elements that should be part of the 4-H experience. These elements are based on research and were identified by the National 4-H Impact Design Team. The handout, "Meeting the Needs of Youth: Tips for 4-H Leaders," describes four needs of youth that can be met through positive club experiences.

Closing

It's difficult to know what youth are thinking unless we ask them. Older youth are growing in their abilities and their desire for new leadership roles and experiences. We need them on the club and county leadership teams.

4-H Youth Development Extension staff will benefit from your reactions to this session. They will help us to better understand and support the older member experience in our clubs and county. Please share your thoughts on this short evaluation.

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- How do the thoughts of youth on our panel relate to the 4 Essential Elements?
- Which of the Essential Elements seemed most important to the youth on our panel? Why?

Apply:

- What ideas from the panel and discussion might your 4-H club use?
- What ideas should we be thinking about for county level activity or opportunities?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY

Enhance:

- This lesson can be combined with the "Keeping Youth in 4-H: Why Do Some Leave?" and "Keeping Youth in 4-H: Supporting New Members and Their Families" lessons.
- Summarize the panel discussion by taking notes on factors that contribute to older youth staying and leaving 4-H. Print these notes in your county newsletter.
- Consider sharing research related to member retention. For example, see Kirk A. Astroth, "The Challenge of Retaining 4-H Members," *Journal of Extension*, Fall 1985, Vol. 23, No. 3, at www.joe.org/joe/1985fall/sa4.html.
- This lesson can be a "springboard" to developing new opportunities for older youth at the club and county levels. Be prepared to share some "next step" ideas.

Simplify:

- In lieu of a discussion of county membership trends, present the data with your observations.
- If time is short, eliminate the discussion on 4 Essential Elements and modify the reflection questions.

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.

- **Contacting Participants:** Send them a letter or e-mail (response requested for receipt of message) confirming their participation with the logistical details (when, where) and what you are asking them to do.
- **Scheduling the Panel:** Put them first or very early on the agenda. They should not have to sit through a business meeting. The audience will also participate more if they aren't tired and worried about time.

Sources:

- Created by Linda Kustka, Professor Emeritus, Department of Youth Development, UW-Extension.

ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS

1. Jamie Tomek and Mary Jo Williams, "Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development," at www.mo4h.missouri.edu/go/materials/LG782.pdf.
2. The UW-Extension Department of Youth Development web site has a number of papers related to older 4-H youth programs that develop leadership skills in age-appropriate formats: www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/departments/publications/index.cfm. Papers include:
 - Jean Erickson, Deborah Moellendorf, Dan Renzoni and Karen Sipple, "Taking Charge"
 - Paula Huff, Merry Klemme, Rene Mehlberg, James Pointer, Karla Voss and Kristin Wegner, "Northeast District 4-H Winter Leadership Adventure Camp"
 - Debra Ivey, Gretchen Kanable and Karen Nelson, "Southern District Leadership Team"
 - Pam Jangor, "Get R.E.A.L. (Relax, Enjoy & Learn): A Lock-In for 5th and 6th Grade Girls and Their Mothers or Female Caregiver"
 - Denise Retzleff, "Summer Leadership Adventure"

Finalized by the Strengthening 4-H Club Leadership Work Team on September 2005.



4-H Club Enrollment Numbers in (fill in name) County

(Note: Adjust ages to fit your county. Pick the format below that works best for you. Another idea is to translate your county data into a graph. Take the data from your county ES-237 reports.)

	Age												
Year	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
2005													
2004													
2003													
2002													
2001													

	Year				
Age	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					

Keeping Youth in 4-H: Keeping Older Members

Evaluation

1. How useful will this information be in helping your club involve older youth?
(Circle one response.)

Very Useful Somewhat Useful Not Sure Not Useful

2. Do you feel better prepared to work with older youth?

Yes No

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