



# 4-H and Public Schools: Effective 4-H School Enrichment Programs



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Ohio's 4-H school enrichment program is dedicated to the delivery of creative and integrated agriculture and life science programming within Ohio's elementary classrooms. Emphasis is placed on helping students become proficient in their understanding of science content and competent in their ability to apply science knowledge in meaningful ways. In addition, Ohio's 4-H school enrichment curriculum materials are keyed to Ohio's Academic Content Standards and Indicators in science and allow teachers to improve their instruction of science by expanding their repertoire of highly effective, hands-on science activities.

## Definition

School enrichment is an efficient way for reaching diverse youth in large numbers. The National 4-H definition of school enrichment is "groups of youth receiving a sequence of learning experiences in cooperation with school officials during school hours, to support the school curriculum. It involves direct teaching by Extension staff or trained volunteers, including classroom teachers. In addition to camps, special interest programs, project clubs, and community clubs, 4-H school enrichment is another way to teach knowledge and skills to youth. In fact, school enrichment programming has become the most widely used delivery mode in providing educational experiences through to youth.

In a 1999 survey conducted among Extension 4-H Youth Specialists (with respondents from 50 states), 86% reported that school enrichment was conducted in their counties. The most important benefits claimed by the respondents were

- 4-H has gained credibility within the formal education community (92%),
- students have increased knowledge and skills (82%),
- and a greater diversity of under-represented youth have been served (80%).

The major problems identified included

- traditional clientele view school enrichment as something that diverts time and funds from traditional programs such as clubs (32%),
- and schools want free service without contributing their fair share of funds, supervision, supplies, etc. (27%).

## History

During the 1970s, 4-H introduced the concept of school enrichment programming to its line-up of program delivery models. School enrichment programming was viewed as a cost effective alternative for reaching youth at a time and place where their numbers were significant . . . offering opportunities to provide a wide variety of youth with relevant and timely information. The first such school enrichment program, *Mulligan Stew*, was sponsored by National 4-H Council, produced by Michigan State University,

and premiered in 1972 during National 4-H week in Washington D.C. Each of the six half-hour episodes gave grade school children in the U.S. information about foods and nutrition. It was used nationally until 1981, when it was made obsolete with the introduction of the Food Guide Pyramid. As a result of the curriculum's popularity, throughout the 70s 4-H membership was boosted to an all time high.

At the same time, Ohio's 4-H program was entering elementary classrooms with its chick embryology program. The program introduced students to the concept of life cycles and egg-laying creatures through the incubation of chicken eggs. Because of its success, Ohio increased its presence in the classroom, beginning in the 80s, with similar science-based programs. Emphasis was placed on helping students become proficient in their understanding of science content and competent in their ability to apply science knowledge in meaningful ways. Today, Ohio's 4-H school enrichment curriculum materials are keyed to Ohio's Academic Content Standards in Science and allow teachers to improve their instruction of science by expanding their repertoire of highly effective, hands-on science activities.

## **Why Provide 4-H School Enrichment?**

### **Connection to Positive Youth Development**

Non-formal, community-based youth development opportunities through 4-H school enrichment programs provide important opportunities for socialization and learning. They offer youth a context in which to develop critical life skills. 4-H school enrichment programs employ structured activities as a vehicle or strategy for promoting the positive development of youth. These programs occur during school hours at times that enrich the classroom curriculum with hands-on learning opportunities. When designed properly, 4-H School Enrichment programs offer a safe environment that provides opportunities for youth to explore their world, develop skills, and gain confidence and a sense of belonging with peers and adults. Indeed, many studies have documented that youth participation in 4-H school programs can contribute to a variety of positive developmental outcomes, including increased life skills, increased workforce skills, and active engagement in the community through citizenship and leadership.

### **Connection to Extension and 4-H Mission**

The mission of OSU Extension and 4-H is to create supportive environments for culturally diverse youth and adults to reach their full potential by these actions:

- Promote the development of caring relationships between youth and adults
- Facilitate the identification of positive alternatives to meet basic needs of individuals for belonging, competency, power, and generosity
- Channel energy into meaningful education, work, recreation, and community service
- Provide research, resources, and education on life skills for youth and adults

Our goal is to offer school enrichment programs that meet the needs of students and teachers for quality, hands-on learning experiences. All programs are based on current research in subject matter and teaching techniques.

### **Connection to Your Community**

A well-planned school enrichment program also establishes ties to the community in very important ways. First, enhancing classroom learning builds strong relationships with teachers and with local school leaders. Through school enrichment programming, county Extension offices come to be seen as resources for the entire community, with services extended to audiences in addition to those in traditional 4-H clubs.

This in turn builds stronger relationships in the community, and business leaders and others often become partners in various related 4-H programming. Efforts in the schools become truly community-based. Examples of 4-H programming that benefit from strong community relationships are 4-H Career Day; Real Money, Real World; and 4-H agricultural festivals and farm tours.

Finally, classroom instructors, volunteers, and youth involved in 4-H school enrichment often become involved in the traditional 4-H program, thus boosting volunteer participation and youth enrollment. Conversely, 4-H teens involved in school enrichment experience teaching firsthand and begin to see futures as elementary and high school instructors. In Wood County, Ohio, for example, three past school enrichment teen leaders are now enrolled in a university education program.

## **Establishing Your Program**

### **1. Begin by deciding what curriculum you can support.**

4-H educators should be selective in deciding which programs will be supported in their particular county. Educators are encouraged to offer only those programs that they are capable of supporting at any one time. 4-H School Enrichment curriculum materials have been developed by science education experts from across Ohio and targeted to meet specific academic content standards.

### **2. Start small . . . it is OK to do just one building or one topic.**

The number of schools and school districts varies widely from county to county. Likewise, the resources of various county programs vary greatly. It is usually best to start with a smaller number of schools or districts and build the program gradually.

### **3. Know where the curriculum that you chose fits into the school's course of study.**

All 4-H school enrichment materials are targeted toward a specific grade level and specific science education standards. You can find the documents you need on the 4-H website at [www.ohio4h.org/sciencealive](http://www.ohio4h.org/sciencealive). 4-H educators are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these materials before approaching school administrators.

### **4. Develop an effective collaboration with the schools and districts in which you work.**

Educators are encouraged to pay a courtesy visit to superintendents, the curriculum specialists, or other leaders in the school district before beginning or significantly altering school involvement. Share with the district administration an overview of the 4-H Youth Development program and the particular offerings you can make available in the county. Let the building principal know your plans before contacting teachers.

## **Teacher Training**

Educators are most effective when they become a resource to teachers and provide training, volunteer support, and materials for classroom enrichment. Research shows that teachers are aided most effectively when they experience training that is both experiential and inquiry based. Training where teachers experience the curriculum fully in the same way as their students gives the teacher a model for their own leadership of the curriculum. Teach it like you want it to be taught.

### **1. Offer an in-depth training per curriculum area.**

Do not rush the training. Turning the pages of the curriculum while the trainer gives an explanation of activities is less effective than having the teachers take part in the activities. The most effective method is to give the teachers a chance to teach each other.

## 2. Conduct training at a time and place convenient for the teachers.

Often the week before school in August or the weeks after school in June are effective in-service days for teachers. Some districts have special in-service days throughout the year. Many teachers are willing to come to the Extension office or another convenient location after school if a snack or supper is provided. Saturdays may work well in some areas but often are difficult days for teachers to start out again.

## 3. Arrange for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to be offered through the school board office.

## Teacher Support

County programs must tailor their support of school enrichment programs to the level of resources available and the expressed needs of the schools. Think of the following (3) components on a continuum of Good . . . Better . . . Best. You may provide a level of service equal to only component (1) and still achieve the desired outcomes. By moving further across the continuum (1 . . . 2 . . . 3) you will begin to create a classroom environment that embodies all eight *Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development*.<sup>1</sup>

1. Loaning out a teaching kit that is complete with the curriculum and supplies for a particular unit is a valuable service to busy teachers.
2. Follow-up support for the teachers on a regular basis is an effective way to build strong cooperative relationships with teachers. Support may include:
  - phone calls
  - classroom visits
  - teachers will look on you as their supervising instructor
  - observe teachers and provide positive feedback
3. Teaching support for the classroom presentation of the 4-H curriculum to the students is often appreciated by teachers:
  - Educators themselves can team teach the material with the teacher. This is a time-intensive method of teacher support and often limits the educator's ability to serve a wide variety of schools and programs.
  - Program assistants or volunteers from the community may be included in the training for the program and matched as classroom partners with individual schools or teachers.
  - Be sure that the teacher and the partner negotiate who is teaching what.
  - Follow up with partners to be sure that they are doing what they have agreed.

## Program Closure

Educators can support school programs by bringing 4-H methods of educational delivery, evaluation, and recognition to school programs. This is often effective in helping the teacher to celebrate the completion of a unit with the students. Such celebrations help students to see themselves as part of

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<sup>1</sup> According to *Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development: Key Ingredients for Program Success* (available online at [www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/comm/esselements.pdf](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/comm/esselements.pdf)), the Eight Essential Elements are

1. Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult
2. A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment
3. An Inclusive Environment
4. Engagement in Learning
5. Opportunity for Mastery
6. Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future
7. Opportunity for Self-Determination
8. Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others

something special. They also promote the fact that the students are entitled to all the privileges of 4-H membership.

1. 4-H skillathon-type activities are effective alternatives to traditional testing in evaluation of student learning during enrichment activities.
2. A culminating activity that is related to the curriculum can be an effective way to bring the units to a culmination. Examples include
  - GO Plants! – plant a garden
  - Rockets Away – have a launch day
  - ChickQuest – have a farewell party for the chicks, etc.

## **Value of 4-H Presence in the Schools**

### **Staff Development**

- Presentation of proven enrichment curriculum material to teachers will give them greater confidence in their teaching. This has been particularly shown with 4-H science enrichment curricula.
- Some teachers have shown anxiety toward teaching certain subjects such as science. Again, proven and well-presented curricula can reduce such anxiety.
- Educators may provide continuing education units (through the local school district) towards teacher re-certification.

### **Student Enrichment**

- 4-H enrichment activities can help students comprehend and apply difficult concepts using a variety of thinking and process skills.
- These same programs can help prepare students for state achievement tests.
- Participation in school based 4-H activities can open the door to student participation in other 4-H club and community activities.

### **Staff Support**

- Teachers are generally pleased to have ready-to-use curriculum materials
- 4-H teaching equipment and supply kits facilitate the work of teachers and the learning of students.
- 4-H educators can often assist with the delivery of the curriculum either directly or with community school/partner volunteers.
- 4-H educators are often able to provide supervision and support for teachers in the delivery of these programs.

### **Development of Student Proficiency**

4-H enrichment curricula, in the sciences and in other fields, can help students develop proficiency and enthusiasm for learning. This development can lead to stronger achievement test scores. 4-H School Enrichment materials include

- Student-ready activities and worksheets.
- Activities that provide opportunities to assess student comprehension and application of knowledge.
- Opportunities to apply new knowledge to practical situations and to develop skills useful in daily living.

## Relationship Between Classroom Teachers and the 4-H Program

Considerations must be addressed for preparing classroom teachers to function as 4-H school enrichment leaders. Since we are asking teachers to integrate a unique set of 4-H teaching materials into their existing classroom curriculum, a specialized training approach must be implemented.

The following matrix is designed to assist you in preparing classroom teachers for participation in a 4-H school enrichment program. This matrix addresses the important components for any teacher-training process, available resources in this handbook to support each training component and specific instructions.

| <b>Component</b>                                                              | <b>Resources</b>                                                               | <b>Considerations</b>                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Introduce teachers to the concept of 4-H school enrichment programs           | Orientation                                                                    | Overview                                                                                                                                                          |
| Prepare teachers for use of curriculum materials                              | School enrichment curricula<br>Descriptions of resources provided by Extension | Include classroom partners as part of the training <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hands-on activities</li><li>• Follow-up</li><li>• Assessment</li></ul> |
| Orientation of teachers to the role of 4-H and their role as a 4-H leader     | Job description                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Prepare volunteers for their role as classroom partners                       | Job description                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Take time for classroom teachers and partners to schedule what to do and when | Planning form                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                   |

# **Classroom Teachers as 4-H School Enrichment Leaders**

(Sample letter)

## **Role of the Teacher**

As a 4-H school enrichment leader, you can use the 4-H and other resources of Ohio State University Extension to help your students grow and develop in a rapidly changing world.

Your leadership is critical to the success of the 4-H program in your classroom. Young people need relationships with adults who see the need to develop positive self-esteem and meaningful relationships. The young people also need to acquire subject matter knowledge, physical skills and decision-making abilities, and wholesome attitudes toward self and others.

The good things that can happen through 4-H in your classroom will be visible in your students and you. Their confidence will grow as they learn a difficult concept or apply a new skill. They will begin to relate more effectively to other young people and adults.

## **Your Responsibilities**

As a 4-H school enrichment leader, obtain materials and guides for your program from the county Extension office. If training is provided, attend these sessions before implementing the program. Also return completed 4-H student enrollment forms to your county Extension office. Students who participate in 4-H school enrichment programs are eligible to participate in all aspects of the 4-H program, e.g., camps, fairs, special events, and recognition.

## **Use of Classroom/Community Partners**

Work with your 4-H representative to gain assistance with the program. 4-H professionals may be able to provide trained community volunteers as community/school partners. Alternatively, room parents and other volunteers from your school may be able to join the training and then become a partner with the teachers in conducting school enrichment activities.

## **Role of the Extension Professional**

The Ohio State University Extension office in your county and the Extension educator can provide some, if not all, of the following services in support of 4-H school enrichment activities:

- Teacher-ready curriculum materials.
- Teaching equipment and supplies.
- Curriculum supervision.
- Assistance with delivery of the curriculum.
- Partnerships with community resources.
- Materials for student evaluation and to bring closure and celebration to the unit.

## **Volunteer Position Description—Community Classroom Partner**

(Sample Job Description)

### Time Required

- Training session with teachers, two to four hours
- Volunteer in school two days per month / two to four hours

### Location

- Training at Extension office or at a school in your community
- Volunteer at a school in your community

### Skills needed

- Basic classroom presentation skills
- Ability to work with minimum supervision
- Good communication skills
- Flexibility and enthusiasm

### Responsibilities

- Attend training session
- Work with teacher partner in planning sessions after training
- Participate with teacher in presentation of the session(s)
- Pick up and return materials to Extension office

Training provided by Extension professional:

Special equipment provided by Extension office:

For additional information about 4-H School Enrichment programs, go to <http://www.ohio4h.org/sciencealive>