



Guidelines for 4-H Cloverbuds

A Cloverbuds Volunteer Guide

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WELCOME

to South Dakota State University Extension's 4-H Cloverbuds Program. 4-H Cloverbuds is a non-formal education program designed specifically for children ages 5-7. Children of this age are a distinct audience for 4-H, with learning characteristics and developmental needs that are different from older children/youth. They are not "mini-4-H members." Their needs and interests require activities and events designed especially for them.

Cloverbuds participate in non-competitive, social experiences. Cloverbuds do not complete judged or large animal projects. This is an era of connective experiences.

THE PHILOSOPHY

The 4-H Cloverbuds program is a part of the South Dakota State University Extension's 4-H Youth Development program. The primary goal of 4-H Cloverbuds program is to promote a child's healthy development – mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally. The program has clear parameters, which have been drawn from research about the needs of this age group.

The purpose of the program's ten parameters is to help 4-H Extension professionals and volunteer leaders make decisions regarding developmentally and age-appropriate programming. The parameters are consistent with the principles of K-3 Youth in 4-H: Guidelines for Programming.

The goal of programming for 5 -to- 7-year-olds is to promote healthy development in children by enhancing the life skills of:

- Social interaction
- Self-esteem
- Physical mastery
- Making choices
- Learning to learn

Parameters for Cloverbud programs

The primary question that developers of a Cloverbuds program should ask themselves is:

Does this activity meet program objectives to promote healthy child development as outlined in the following parameters?

- Activity based.
 - Variety of short-term experiences.
 - No more than 20 minutes – to hold the children's attention.
- Cooperative learning centered.
 - Curriculum and activities are conducted in small groups as opposed to doing projects or activities alone.
 - Especially in children, it has been clearly proven that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, social skills through positive relationships, and healthier psychological adjustment (self- teen) than competitive or individualistic programs.
- Non-competitive.
 - Children are engaged in curriculum activities that are non-competitive without setting up categories or classes that create inequities.
 - Children of this age have a difficult time psychologically understanding winning and losing. Feeling and fact are often merged and when children lose, they relate negative feelings to their self-worth and identity. Children in non-competitive environments are more likely to develop confidence, creativity, and competence than children in competitive situations.

- Fairs are open to participation for Cloverbuds, but for exhibit only.
 - Children can exhibit work completed in their Cloverbud clubs or groups. It is important to make sure that it is non-competitive, and equal recognition is given to all participants. Young children can be given advice or tips on how to improve their exhibit or work.
- Activities are developmentally and age appropriate.
 - The activity should be designed for the appropriate age level (5 -to- 7-years- old).
 - Cloverbud-aged children have limitations in what they can do physically, understand mentally, grasp emotionally, and how they interact socially.
- Activities are safe for children.
 - Special considerations must be given to ensure emotional and physical safety. Cloverbud activities must be low risk and safe, even if a child does not participate as directed.
- Cloverbud activities are distinctly different from activities for 8 –18 -year-olds.

Topic	4-H CLOVERBUDS	8-TO-18-YEAR-OLD 4-H PROGRAM
Type of Learning	Activity Centered	Project Centered
Type of Instruction	Leader Directed	Self-study, Individual, & Leader Directed
Recognition of Standards	Participation	Achievement
Recognition of Goals	Participation	Competition, Achievement
Learner Resources	Activity Manual	Project Manuals

- Curricula are success oriented.
 - Allow children to gain confidence and promote self-esteem by mastering Cloverbud activities.
- Animals and animal subject matter should contribute to Cloverbud objectives and follow established parameters.
 - Any animal activity should meet the parameters stated above and support Cloverbud objectives, such as self-understanding (self-esteem) and social interaction skills. Animals can serve as excellent subject material for Cloverbud curricula. The parameters of safety, liability, and non-competition require that some restrictions may be necessary to maintain program objectives.
 - More specific reasons for being cautious with direct animal involvement are as follows: (a) children 8 years of age and younger often lack the mental and physical skills for controlling and understanding-the strength of large animals. Some children between the ages of 5 and 8 lack the abilities to be successful when involved with animals. Therefore, SDSU Extension’s 4-H Youth Development program does not allow, authorize, approve or support any exhibiting, showing, riding, etc. of large animals (cattle, sheep, swine, goats and horses) for youth younger than eight years of age (as of January 1 of the current 4-H year) in 4-H activities/events throughout the year.
- Activity is fun, positive, and focuses on the five general life skill areas through the experiential learning cycle.
 - The activity is enjoyable, not tedious. Attention should be given to how the activity contributes to the life skills of self-understanding, social interaction, learning to learn, physical mastery, and decision-making.
 - Life skills are best attained through the five steps of the experiential learning model.
 - » Experience – engage the child in an activity.
 - » Share – reactions to what happened.
 - » Process – group discusses what was important about the experience Generalize – the group decides what are common themes about the activity
 - » Apply – group talks about how to use the information in other ways.

In exploring whether an activity is appropriate and fits 4-H Cloverbuds program philosophy and objectives, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it activity-based and short term?
- Does it involve cooperative learning in which children work with and not against each other?
- Is it non-competitive and are children equally recognized?

- If Cloverbud children participate in a fair, is it for exhibit only? No judging.
- Is the activity safe – both physically and emotionally?
- Is the activity developmentally and age appropriate, keeping in mind the children’s physical, social, mental, and emotional characteristics?
- Is the activity intended for Cloverbud children as opposed to members in the 9 -to-19 -year-old pro- gram?
- Is the curriculum success-oriented? Can the children do the activities successfully?
- Do activities involving animals contribute to Cloverbud objectives and parameters?
- Is the activity fun, positive, and focus on the five life skill areas through the experiential learning cycle?

* If you answered YES to all the questions, then you probably have an excellent activity to use with the 4-H Cloverbuds Program. If not, explore modifications and discuss them with Extension Youth Development/4-H professionals.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The commitment of 4-H to experiential education (hands-on learning), supporting the development of life skills, and fostering citizenship is key to all the work we do with children and youth. Policies that affect different age groups and settings will vary. Based on the needs, interests, and developmental tasks of children ages 5-7, the following policies and guidelines have been established.

Who May Participate

- The Cloverbud program is designed specifically for children ages 5-7, and all children in those grades are welcome to participate.
- Although growth and development tend to progress in predictable stages, no two individuals develop at the same pace. Therefore, membership age of Cloverbuds may often overlap the age eligibility of regular 4-H membership (age 8 as of January 1 of the current 4-H year). This allows children to be involved in Cloverbuds and/or regular 4-H based on their individual growth and development.

Competition

- Competitive activities are developmentally inappropriate for children of this age range, and thus Cloverbuds emphasizes cooperative rather than competitive experiences. Children are encouraged to develop social skills through cooperative experiences with their peers. They also are allowed freedom of not having undue emphasis placed on the product of their efforts. This is a time to experiment with new skills and experiences, not to strive for perfection.
- Children in this age group have only begun to deal with failure or being less than the best. Therefore, it is not appropriate for children aged 5-7 years old to participate in competitive situations. However, it is appropriate for a child to participate in non-competitive 4-H activities and to be recognized for their participation.

Children as Leaders

- Children aged 5-7 years old are not normally ready for positional leadership. Electing officers can cause some children to feel left out and put undue pressure on the children elected. They need a strong sense of group belonging and identification.
- In keeping with good parenting practices for this age group, children should be encouraged to explore possibilities and to make choices (as a group) between two or three options. Children can be encouraged to accept specific responsibilities for the group (taking turns bringing refreshments, calling other children to invite them to the activities, etc.), but adult leaders need to be ready to accept greater responsibility for the organization of the experiences than they would for older children and youth. The adult is still the center of a child’s experience at this age.

Team Leadership

- South Dakota State University Extension requires that there be at least two adult volunteer or staff with any group of 4-H members, referred to as the “Rule of Three”. It is strongly recommended that those two adults are unrelated to each other with a group of 5-7 year old children.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN AGES 5-7

Children aged 5-7 years old develop and learn in ways that differ from those of younger children and older youth. Understanding the developmental and learning characteristics of this age group provides a foundation for developing effective programs.

The remainder of this section presents an overview of the developmental and learning characteristics of children ages 5 - 6 and ages 7- 8. Remember that these are generalizations, and all children develop at varying rates. For example, a physically advanced child may be slow to develop language. Such uneven development is also evident when comparing children within a group. Just think of the different heights you find among 6-year-olds!

Generalizations can serve as guideposts for planning activities, choosing materials, etc. but getting to know the children is the best way to plan.

CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AGES 5-6

CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS
Physical Development	
Physical growth is slower than during infancy and early childhood.	Plan lots of physical activity with each meeting.
Muscular coordination and control are uneven and incomplete. Large muscles are easier to control than small muscles.	Plan activities that use large motor skills and introduce fine motor skills one at a time.
Able to manage tools and materials more skillfully than during preschool years but still need repetition and practice.	Provide projects that don't require perfection.
Can throw different sized balls better than they can catch them. Most cannot bat well.	Introducing new physical activities that require coordination such as roller-skating, bike riding, jumping rope and simple outdoor games.
Most can learn to snap fingers, whistle, and wink.	-
Mental Development	
Ask and answer questions in literal terms.	Plan active learning around concrete objects.
Most are just learning letters and words. By six, most can read words or combinations of words.	Give instructions verbally and visually. Don't expect them to read.
Short interest span, sometimes as little as 5 -10 minutes.	Plan a series of small activities with physical exercise in between, rather than one longer more intense session.
Define things by their use, e.g., pencil is for writing.	Provide lots of materials and media for learning (e.g., paper, paint, brushes, glue, building blocks, games, puzzles).
Can distinguish between their own left and right, but not in other people.	Avoid a lot of paper and pencil activities that require writing.
Social Development	
Developing cooperative play. Prefers to work in small groups of two or three. Still likes to focus on his/her own work or play.	Organize projects and activities that involve two or three children. If there is a larger group, break activities into sections so that only two or three are involved at one time.
May begin to pair up, to have a best friend; however, the best friend may change frequently.	Help children develop friendships, through learning to share, to take turns, to follow rules and to be trustworthy (not tattling).
Mother (or parent) is still social focus as prime caregiver; however, may fall in love with kindergarten teacher.	Organize activities with high adult/child ratios.

CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS
Like being part of and around family.	Develop projects and activities that involve focusing on the family.
May have a need to be first, to win, or to be the best and may be bossy.	Avoid competition or activities that select a single winner or best person.
Can be unkind to others, but extremely sensitive to criticism of self.	Use imaginary play that involves real life situations. (Playing store, playing house)
Can engage in group discussions.	-

CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AGES 7-8

CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS
Physical Development	
Period of slow, steady growth. May repeat an activity again before mastering it.	Provide opportunities to practice skills but use projects that can be completed successfully by beginners.
Still inept at some activities using small muscles but have improved large muscle activities like riding a bike, skating, or jumping rope.	Will have difficulty with some fine motor projects such as gluing, cutting, hammering nails, bouncing balls, etc.
Learn best if physically active.	-
Can throw a ball better than can catch a ball.	-
Mental Development	
Enormous curiosity and delight in discovery.	Encourage projects that can be done repeatedly in different ways.
Can recognize some similarities and differences.	Activities that require sorting, organizing, or classifying will be enjoyed. Use lots of activities that require the children to participate in a "hands on" way.
Can do some abstract thinking, but learn best through active, concrete methods.	Give instructions verbally and visually. Most children will be able to read and comprehend simple art instructions.
Beginning to take in perspective of others.	Guide the children in reflecting on their learning experience.
May spend more time alone doing projects, watching TV, or daydreaming.	Can introduce some written assignments and activities. Most children will prefer to be active.
Beginning to tell time.	-
Humor has a new meaning.	-
Emotional Development	
Increase awareness of themselves, more sensitive to others.	Involved them in doing things for others.
Enjoy being part of the family.	Enjoy making gifts for family.
Worry about failure or being criticized.	Provide lots of adult encouragement and praise.
May claim tasks are too hard rather than admit being scared.	Be sensitive when teaching a new concept or skill that a child may resist.
Will try themselves out on others to see how they are accepted.	-
Social Development	
Value adult interaction and may be more polite to adults.	Introduce the "art of social graces." Teaching table manners and other social niceties will be more accepted.

CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS
Begin to seek choice of same gender playmates and development of playgroups.	Activities will be more successful if children can be grouped in same-gender groups.
Begin to internalize adult feelings towards religion, ethnic groups, and money.	Promote social activities that appreciate and emphasize diversity of families and lifestyles.
More outgoing, curious, and talkative.	Provide learning activities that stimulate conversation.
Begin to develop friendships that involve sharing secrets and possessions.	Select activities that involve the child's curiosity and creative abilities.
Have high expectations of parents and adults and are critical when parents "mess up."	Use lots of songs, rhythms, fairy tales, and comics to help socialize the group.

CREATING POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The Cloverbud Program is a child-centered program, which means that the interests and needs of the children drive the program.

Thus, knowledge of the developmental and learning characteristics of children 5-7 years old has direct implications for the way we design activities. In general, positive learning environments are created for children when programs:

- Provide one responsible person for every six children. (Some activities require a higher adult child ratio, sometimes one to one.) Because of variations in developmental stages, it is important to have a high adult-child ratio in learning situations so that each child receives the individualized attention needed to be successful. A parent or older youth may help to provide appropriate support.
- Involve the children in selecting and planning activities. Children who help select the learning activities are more likely to maintain interest and to integrate new skills and knowledge with what they already know. Leaders should help children select from identified options.
- Change activities often according to the needs of the children. Keep children interested and involved by offering a variety of learning activities, with variation in the pace and range of experiences. Keep youth actively "doing things." Have children use all their senses. Alternate "sit-down" and "moving" activities.

Avoid talking to the group for longer than 5 -10 minutes at a time.

- Encourage children to talk and collaborate with each other. Children learn best when they are engaged in activities that allow them to practice, demonstrate, explain, and apply their learning. Collaborating with peers offers opportunities for these activities and helps foster the ability and interest to work cooperatively.
- Include adults who are positive behavior models. As children enlarge their circle to include the greater community, adults outside the home have an increasing influence in their lives, introducing new information, new skills, and new points of view. Adults also have significant influence in helping children feel good about who they are and what they can do. It is important that 4-H Cloverbud leaders understand the importance of their role and represent positive models of the behavior we wish children to develop. Older teens can also fulfill this role.
- Promote cooperation rather than competition. It is inappropriate for children aged 5-7 to participate in contests where they are judged. Developmentally, these children need experiences that foster cooperative effort, emphasize the learning process over a product, and reinforce a positive concept of self.

Competition undermines each of these needs. It is appropriate to recognize children's efforts and to display their work. It is also appropriate to give positive and personal feedback.

- Use positive guidance and discipline. Children in early childhood are learning self-control, and they need the positive guidance of adults to do so. To become socially competent, children must be taught skills for appropriate social behaviors, such as taking turns, dividing, and sharing resources, and working cooperatively. Use misbehavior as a teaching opportunity to show children how to apply appropriate skills.
- Provide individualized learning as well as learning in small groups. Learning activities should include a variety of

experiences to accommodate the children's varied ages, stages, interests, and needs. Parallel activities may be used to allow children at different stages to participate in a way that suits their developmental needs.

Family Involvement

The world of the young child revolves around his or her family even as he or she seeks greater involvement with peers and other adults. The interest and involvement of family members in 4-H Cloverbuds is an important support for the program.

Family members should be encouraged to participate in the program in any way they can. Invite them to help with field trips or special projects, share leadership of the group, or simply take time to talk with their child about activities.

Scheduling activities that are family focused is another way to encourage family involvement. If you make members of the family aware of their importance to 4-H Cloverbuds, they are more likely to participate.

Children With Special Needs

Children with special needs are found in every community. Despite their special needs, these children are more like other children than they are different. They have the same basic needs for friendship, participation, and recognition that other children have. Involving children with special needs in the 4-H Cloverbud Program provides valuable learning opportunities for all involved.

The children with special needs benefit from interaction with their peers, and the other children learn to understand the nature of disabilities and to see the child rather than the disability first. Likewise, you, as a leader, will learn new information and develop new skills because of working with children with special needs.

The 4-H program historically has included youth with special needs and 4-H Cloverbud leaders continue the tradition. By working closely with parents, you can make the necessary accommodation to ensure a successful experience for all members.

Guidance And Discipline

All children misbehave from time to time. It is a natural consequence of growing, exploring, and testing. Your response to inappropriate behavior will depend on the specifics of the situation, the personality of the youngster, and your own personality and skills.

There is no best way to respond to all situations. However, a good strategy is to prevent misbehavior from occurring in the first place. You can avoid many problem situations simply by making sure an activity is developmentally appropriate. To help prevent problem behaviors, follow these guidelines:

- Greet children individually each time you meet.
- Develop positive relationships with children.
- Plan so that activities are well organized.
- Keep children actively and constructively involved.
- Convey clear and consistent expectations for behaviors.

When inappropriate behaviors do occur, it becomes your responsibility to teach appropriate behavior. Here are six guidelines for dealing with misbehavior:

- Identify the cause of the behavior.
- Formulate a response strategy (for instance, redirect a child's efforts, change partners, or provide individual assistance).
- Consistently enforce rules and consequences.
- Maintain self-control.
- Avoid power struggles.
- If misbehavior persists, involve parents to help solve the problem.

Remember, your goal is to help children develop self-control. You can do this by modeling appropriate behaviors, by helping them learn the skills needed, and by providing opportunities to practice those skills.

Planning Events And Activities

The Cloverbuds program will involve children in a variety of settings. Whatever the delivery mode, here are some suggestions for planning an activity:

- Plan to ensure that activities are well organized.
- There must be 2 adults at each event.
- Limit meeting times to 1-to-1.5 hours using a variety of activities from 10 to 15 minutes in length.
- Welcome each child personally to the activity.
- Consider using songs or games to open and close the session.
- Tell the children at the beginning of the meeting what activities have been planned. Before shifting from one activity to another, give the children 5 minutes' notice of the impending change.
- Keep snacks simple and nutritious.
- Plan activities that have a limited number of steps and can be finished in a single meeting.
- Maintain flexibility. Outcomes are not always what you expect. Be prepared for children finishing early or losing interest and for any "minor disasters" that may occur.
- Take a few minutes after each meeting to reflect on what worked well and what didn't. Use this information to help ensure success in future meetings.

Planning Your Own Lessons

Volunteers are encouraged to use the curriculum materials provided for the 4-H Cloverbuds program. These materials have been developed specifically for children aged 5-7. 4-H materials developed for older youth are not appropriate for younger children because they do not meet their developmental needs.

On occasion, you may feel the need to create your own lesson. When designing a lesson, it is recommended that you include the components established by the National 5 - 8 Curriculum Task Force. These guidelines will help ensure that your lesson is meaningful and focused, and that you are prepared to carry it through.

- **Lesson Title** – This should reflect the concept or major activity of the lesson.
- **Objective** – State what you want to accomplish.
- **Time Required** – Estimate the amount of time the lesson will require.
- **Suggested Group Size** – Identify how many children will be involved and how many leaders/older youths will be required to supervise the lesson.
- **Materials Needed** – List all materials and equipment needed for the lesson.
- **Background Information** – Think about and list information you and/or the children must have before beginning the lesson.
- **Additional Resources** – Identify resources in the community that could contribute information and experiences to the lesson. Field trips, community members with special skills, and the public library are a few possibilities.
- **Preparing the Learner** – Plan one or more introductory activities to provide the children with needed background information.
- **Learning Activity** – Plan the lesson as a series of logically sequenced steps and write out each step.
- Try to visualize the steps as you plan them and think about how the children may respond. Most lessons, or a series of related lessons, will incorporate the following five steps.
 1. The "doing" activity.
 2. A time for children to "share" their reactions or observations.
 3. Discussion of what happened during the activity.
 4. A chance to think about how the activity has meaning for their daily life.
 5. Discussion of how they might use their new knowledge in the future (Life Skills Experiential Learning Model –Do, Reflect, and Apply).
 - » **Evaluation** – Decide beforehand how you will determine whether you have achieved the objective of the lesson. Possible ways to evaluate success are observation of children's behaviors during the activity (and any products they create) and asking the children questions about the lesson.

- » **Follow up** – Think about ways the children might extend their learning by engaging in related activities that provide additional information or a chance to practice new skills. Plan such activities for future meetings or provide parents with suggestions for following up on the lesson at home.
- » **Positive Reinforcement** – Provide each child with recognition for effort or accomplishment during the lesson time. Positive reinforcement may be a positive comment from the leader or from other children, an opportunity for the child to talk with others about his or her own work, or a sticker or certificate.

Your Role As A Volunteer

Please read and adhere to the responsibilities and qualifications listed in the Cloverbud Volunteer Position Description found at: <https://extension.sdstate.edu/4-h-volunteers>

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

The greater community provides a rich resource base from which you may draw. Often citizens with special skills or interests are eager to share their knowledge with children, if invited to do so. Field trips bring added relevance to topics you are exploring with the group.

There are also opportunities available that allow children to participate in and contribute to their community.

These community service activities give children a chance to connect with their communities and take pride in their accomplishments.

Conclusion

A successful 4-H Cloverbud program is the result of teamwork. Team members include volunteer leaders, older youth who serve as assistants, 4-H members, and families, and the 4-H Extension staff. Team members' cooperative efforts create experiences that help children gain knowledge, develop skills, and form attitudes that contribute to a successful childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Thank you for joining the 4-H Cloverbud team.