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Introduction

This guide provides information on how to start and manage a Cloverbud Program. The Cloverbud curriculum is a series of short activities that an adult helper can do with a small group of children. It is the only approved Cloverbud curriculum (project) offered in Pennsylvania. Counties may choose whether or not they want to offer the Cloverbud curriculum as part of their youth development program. If Cloverbud is offered, the policy guidelines in this manual must be followed.

Cloverbud members are not “official” 4-H members. To join 4-H, youth must be eight years old by January 1 of the current year. The Cloverbud program is for youth between the ages of five and eight, or in kindergarten through second grade. Members who turn eight after January 1 can remain in Cloverbud until the next 4-H enrollment year.

Cloverbud



The Pennsylvania Cloverbud Program Agent Guide



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Rationale

Many counties in Pennsylvania are offering programs for youth under age eight who are very interested in 4-H projects as they observe siblings or other youth participating in 4-H. They want to join in; however, in some instances, curriculum or activities were designed for older youth and aren't appropriate for youth under age eight, either in content, method of delivery, design, or philosophy. A consistent, age-appropriate curriculum was needed.

Many younger children who are joining a group or becoming involved in youth sports are doing so before they turn eight years old. Introducing children of this age to some of the experiences and activities that they will be able to explore in more depth when they are eligible to join 4-H is a great

way to get them “hooked” on 4-H. Parents of youth become volunteers and support those organizations in which their children are involved. Many times, parents become “hooked” on an organization, whether it is youth sports or another youth organization, early in a child's life, develop loyalty, and continue their involvement, encouraging their child's participation as the child becomes older. Involving parents and children early in extension programs may help increase our 4-H membership and our volunteer base as families grow into 4-H. In addition, Penn State Cooperative Extension has many other programs and resources available to parents with young children. Involving parents in the Cloverbud program may open the door for their involvement in other extension activities.

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A Cloverbud Club is:

- ✿ a group of six to eight youth who meet regularly with an adult leader and/or an older teen helper
- ✿ children who are five to eight years old and are interested in hands-on, fun activities
- ✿ enrolled as a group through the county cooperative extension office
- ✿ noncompetitive
- ✿ supported by families

Objectives

Just like the 4-H program for older youth, the purpose of the 4-H Cloverbud program is to help young people learn the life skills necessary to become competent, caring, and contributing citizens. Specifically, Cloverbuds will:

1. Learn more about themselves and the world around them through the completion of developmentally appropriate individual and group activities.
2. Develop positive attitudes about learning new things by hands-on involvement.
3. Develop a relationship with a caring adult or older youth helper who will serve as a positive role model.
4. Learn about the 4-H program.

Cloverbud Volunteer “Job” Description

Wanted: Caring adults interested in participating in a fun, noncompetitive program for youth ages 5–8. Training

on how to work with groups of children of this age, as well as the content of the curriculum, is provided. Cloverbud volunteers recruit and enroll children into the club. After the club is started, the leader plans a series of meetings in consultation with the Cloverbuds and their families. If you are interested in working with youth and helping them grow into responsible, caring citizens, contact your county cooperative extension office and ask for the 4-H youth educator. Family involvement is strongly encouraged!

Delivery of a Cloverbud Curriculum

1. A Cloverbud group can meet at the same time as a regular 4-H club if the children go to another room to participate in the activities outlined in the curriculum. They should not take part in project activities with 4-H'ers.
2. Existing or new volunteer leaders can start a new Cloverbud club that meets independently of any other meeting or activity.
3. Cloverbud groups can be started with audiences who are not involved or may not be familiar with 4-H. Child care groups, neighborhood centers, summer recreation programs, and after-school programs offer potential recruitment opportunities for Cloverbud clubs.
4. Cloverbud clubs can be started in schools and delivered as part of the existing school curriculum. The classroom teacher, extension educator, school enrichment volunteer, or 4-H program assistant can do direct teaching.

Policy Guidelines

Age

The 4-H age has *not* been lowered to five years old. A new program is established to meet the needs of children who aren't old enough to join 4-H. Cloverbud clubs are open to children between the ages of five and eight or in kindergarten through second grade.

Reporting Cloverbud Youth

Youth enrolled in any type of Cloverbud club are reported as “other youth served” on the A-100 reports. They are not counted as 4-H members.

Curriculum

The Pennsylvania Cloverbud curriculum available on the 4-H Web site (<http://pa4h.cas.psu.edu>) is the approved state curriculum. State curriculum committees will be encouraged to add Cloverbud activities to areas the committees oversee. As new activities are developed, they will be added as additional sessions to the Cloverbud curriculum. The goal of the under-eight youth program should be to promote healthy development through short-term, success-oriented, noncompetitive, and fun activities. The Pennsylvania curriculum is designed to achieve this goal. The curriculum is activity-based, not project-based, in order to accommodate the young child's short attention span, high level of motivation, and eagerness to try new things. The activities in the curriculum encourage physical activities such as running, moving, playing games, and painting.

Competition

The National 5–8 Curriculum Task Force recommends against channeling youth ages five to eight into narrow project areas or vigorous competition. Research indicates that peer

competition is not appropriate for youth of these ages. This type of competition allows for only one “winner.” Youth at this age are still very concrete thinkers. They directly link their success or failure in the activity to the perception of themselves as a winner or a loser. Adults and older youth can think more abstractly and understand that even if they are not the winners of the competition, they are not losers. Older youth are able to separate themselves from the competitive situation. Young children have not yet reached this developmental stage.

Participation, learning, and success should be the ultimate goal of the Cloverbud program. Cloverbuds are not allowed to enter any peer competitive events (judging contests, judged presentations or exhibits, shows, and other performance activities) at fairs or round-ups. They may, however, display their work as part of the fair. Cloverbud participation ribbons should be awarded to every member who displays an exhibit. Since only the approved

activities in the curriculum may be part of the display, no live animals (large or small) may be exhibited at the fair, because this is not part of the curriculum. Cloverbuds may study animals, such as pets, but should bring photographs or a photo story to show what they have learned.

Pennsylvania is not alone in supporting the “no competition” policy for Cloverbuds. The “National Survey of Programs for Pre-nine-year-olds in 4-H” found that 73 percent of those states that offer a program for youth under age eight discourage or do not allow competition in their events.

Also, younger children enjoy the process of creating a product or participating in an activity. Competition can take the joy out of the process by putting too much emphasis on the end result. Children are freer to enjoy learning in a noncompetitive environment!

Many studies have compared the effectiveness of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic

environments with people of all ages. Especially in children, research shows that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, social skills, and healthier self-esteem than competitive or individualistic programs (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1991).

Cloverbud Training and Orientation

A training and orientation session should be provided for Cloverbud leaders to learn about the curriculum, the developmental characteristics of working with youth between five and eight years old, and policies and procedures related to being a volunteer leader.

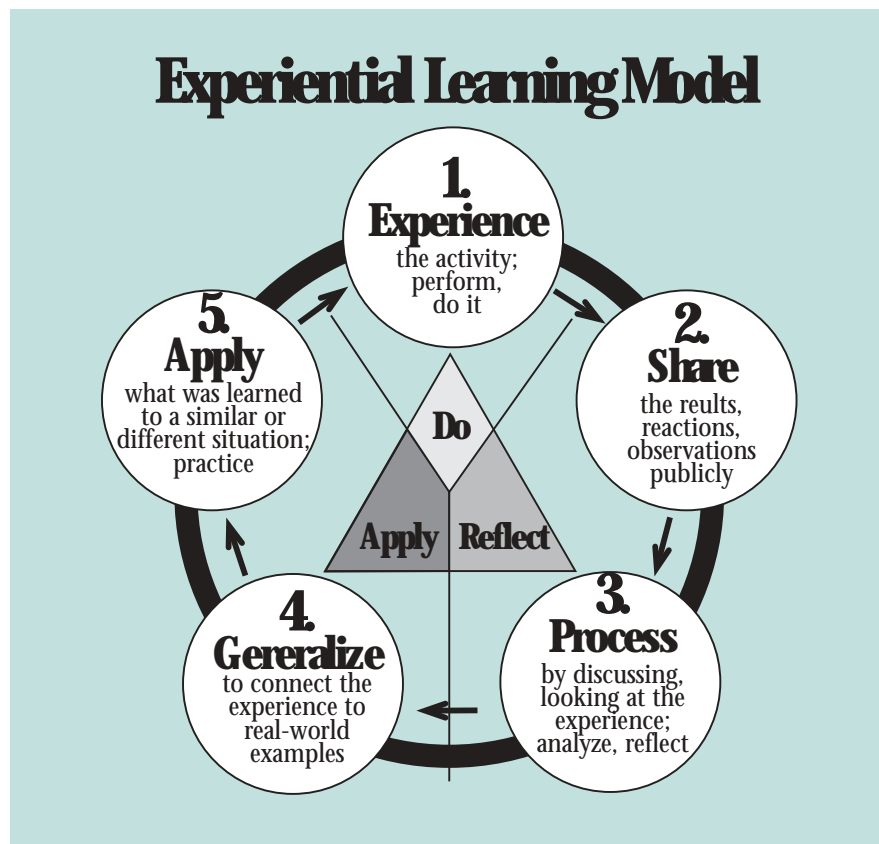
Getting Started

Club Meetings

Each lesson in the curriculum includes objectives, a suggested way to organize the meeting, details about how long each activity should take, and ideas that can help group leaders succeed. Youth of this age do not need elected officers for their club.

The experiential method of learning occurs when children *experience* an activity. In other words, when they *do* something. After they experience the activity, they *share* what happened with someone else. What were their reactions? The leader or adult helper can help the children *process* what they learned by asking more questions. What new questions were generated from doing the activity? Helping the children realize what they learned has application to the real world, because it helps them to *generalize* what they learned. How can what they learned *apply* to other situations?

By helping the children think about and discuss what they did or experienced, the activity becomes more meaningful and is a true experiential activity. All of the steps in the model are important.



Summary of Differences Between the Cloverbud Program and the Traditional 4-H Program

	Cloverbuds	4-H Program
Type of Learning	Activity-centered	Project-centered
Type of Instruction	Leader-directed	Self-study, Individual, and Leader-Directed
Recognition	Participation	Achievement
Recognition of Goals	Participation	Competition, achievement
Learner Resources	Activity manual	Project manuals

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