



EXPLORING CITIZENSHIP

Volunteer Guide

This book belongs to:

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. 4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization. Over 230,000 members in the State of Florida help to make up the community of more than 6.5 million young people across America. 4-H is a non-formal, practical educational program for youth. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of Florida Cooperative Extension, a part of the University of Florida/IFAS.

Introduction

The 4-H Citizenship Project offers you the opportunity to help 4-H members relate all of their 4-H projects and experiences to the world around them. They will learn to care for and share with others through the skills and talents they've developed.

The 4-H Citizenship manuals will serve as a guide for 4-H Citizenship experiences. To be truly meaningful to the real-life needs and interests of your group, your contribution is essential. Each person, neighborhood, and community has individual needs that you can help your group identify. Your challenge is to make citizenship a real life experience for your group.

Overview

Rationale

The committee that cooperated on the development of the 4-H Citizenship materials based the need for a 4-H Citizenship education program on the following rationale:

1. The 4-H Citizenship Mission Mandate is to help young people develop in the areas of Service, Leadership, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement.
2. The various projects and activities found in the Citizenship Curriculum contribute to the development of life skills that help young people become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of society.

Objectives

Because good citizenship doesn't just happen but must be learned and developed, the committee developed the following objectives for 4-H Citizenship materials:

1. Develop the skills necessary for intelligent participation in group decision-making.
2. Help members to understand the rights and responsibilities of membership within the family, neighborhood, community, state, nation, and world, and develop a willingness to assume them.

3. Develop an understanding and appreciation for other cultures.
4. Develop an appreciation for one's family, community, state, and national heritage.
5. Develop an insight into the principles, processes, and structures of government.
6. Demonstrate respect for the rights of others through responsible action.

Curriculum

The 4-H Citizenship curriculum is composed of units presented in a series that will help 4-H'ers learn about themselves and develop better relationships with their family, friends, neighbors, community, state, country, and world. The curriculum emphasizes helping 4-H'ers broaden their view of their place in the world around them and recognize the responsibility they have to that world. The units are written for individual 4-H'ers as they work with others to become better citizens.

Junior Level (Recommended for Ages 8–10)

Unit 1—"Me, My Family, and My Friends"

This unit focuses on self-identity, self-acceptance, and relationships with family and friends. It teaches youth that good citizenship is knowing who they are and being able to relate to others.

Unit 2—"My Neighborhood"

Unit 2 takes the 4-H'ers beyond the family and close friends into the neighborhood and school. It demonstrates that good citizenship is knowing the members of your school and neighborhood and sharing with them.



Unit 3—“My Clubs and Groups”

This unit helps 4-H'ers to learn to function in organized groups so they can be more effective participants. It teaches youth to be better citizens by participating in group decision-making.

Intermediate Level (Recommended for Ages 11–13)

Unit 4—“My Heritage”

In Unit 4, a 4-H'er learns about family heritage through developing a family tree, understanding their history, and studying other selected areas of interest.

Senior Level (Recommended for Ages 14–18)

Unit 5—“My Community”

Unit 5 opens the doors for community understanding and involvement. Youth will learn more about their community and develop a project to enhance their community. It can be a multi-year unit that 4-H'ers can continue to work on as long as they wish.

Unit 6—“My Government”

This unit includes studies of governmental systems, laws, and voting.

Unit 7—“My World”

This unit will help 4-H'ers who are interested in International Studies and experiences to explore their area of interest.

Understanding Your Audience

How can the citizenship program be tailored to the needs of members at different ages and skill levels?

Juniors

Juniors are interested in individual people and objects. Their minds are like sponges. They are mastering many activities, but do not yet organize their experiences very much.

The general goals for this age group are to:

- Develop respect for each individual;

- Develop familiarity and friendship with a wide variety of people;
- Learn simple social responsibilities by seeing how different people help one another; and
- Building an understanding of what responsibilities go with certain roles in society.

Some citizenship activities for this group might be tours of places in the community that are of interest to them and visit with people in the community who have interesting jobs or who are different from the group, such as other races or nationalities.

Lay the groundwork for these activities by preparing the 4-H'ers ahead of time so their experiences will be fully appreciated. Help them to think through why they are doing the activity and what they should be learning from it.

Juniors can learn through community service activities to act with intelligent concern for themselves and others, especially if they can:

1. Have personal contact with people they are helping; and
2. See results from their efforts.

For this age group, community service might include creating items for shut-ins, then visiting those people to present the gifts. Or they might plan a party for another group of young people different from themselves, such as young people with different needs or low-income families.



Intermediates

Intermediates are typically interested in processes and patterns. They are assessing how things fit together—the process of a bill becoming a law, for instance.

General goals for this group are to:

- Learn some processes that are needed to have a functioning community
- Realize that people must depend on one another
- Develop realistic expectations for their communities
- Develop more skills for working cooperatively
- Lay the groundwork for later learning about challenges in society

Their emphasis here is on processes or how things are done and not so much on the personalities of the people they meet.

Some activities that may be of interest to this group are:

- Learning how a town meeting is run
- Attending a court session
- Touring the courthouse or state capitol building
- Seeing the Legislature in session
- Visiting a government agency and learn how it operates
- Beginning learning about various careers
- Having an exchange visit with 4-H'ers of another country or state

Community service activities should help Intermediates to:

- See how things are done so they can understand the planning and work necessary to make a strong community
- See how their efforts help the community as a whole, even if they do not directly benefit the individuals carrying out the project
- Gain satisfaction from working together as a group

Activities might include: clothing drives, register-and-vote campaigns, or renovating a community building.

Seniors

Seniors are interested in principles and problems. They look beyond the processes to the principles underlying them. They are concerned about the values operating through government, for instance. They can also see that we don't always live by our principles, and that there can be conflicts between principles. As they test their new identity, they see their part in meeting social problems.

Goals of this group should be to:

- Realize the complexity of most public decisions
- Develop greater respect for differences of opinion
- Accept responsibility for becoming informed and to inform others
- Develop skills for acquiring and using information
- Develop personal values
- Lay the groundwork for taking full adult responsibilities

The emphasis with late teens is on issues and how they are resolved. The group should look at the different sides of an issue. They should be able to meet with people whom they do not agree with and listen to their points of view. They should build and test their own values as they talk with people holding different values.

This group can develop their own program with adults as advisors. They should be allowed to assume all or most duties for arrangements.

Political Topics of Interest:

- Attend a town meeting when local issues are being discussed/debated
- Attend a meeting of candidates running for political office
- Follow the news. Find an issue you are passionate about. If it is a local issue, contact your locally elected officials and speak with them about the issue. If it is a state issue or national issue, contact your state or federally elected officials and speak with them
- Speak with someone who works in international affairs. Talk with them about the international challenges facing them, their agency, or their organization

Social Topics of Interest:

- Take part in an exchange program
- Identify challenges in your community and develop a project to combat one of these challenges

To learn citizenship through community service, Senior 4-H'ers should:

- a. Have firsthand contact with community problems
- b. Learn to identify themselves as responsible young adults by working with community leaders
- c. Gain practice in program development
- d. Realize that for some problems, there are many possible solutions
- e. Learn to accept that things don't always go as planned



For a “Mixed Ages” Group

You may be thinking, “This sounds fine, but my club has Juniors, Intermediates, and Seniors. Do you expect us to plan different programs for three age groups?” There are several ways to put together the jigsaw puzzle of different age interests into a single program.

Divide into Subgroups

For field trips or discussion, divide the participants by level of maturity, and have an adult or teen leaders with each group. Each group will notice things that are interesting to them, and the leader can help them think through what they are seeing. For instance, after a film, discussion groups might be formed for these different maturity levels.

To take another example, on a field trip to a historic house, you can ask Juniors to take note of way historic residents prepared their food. How is it similar or different to the way their cook their food at home? You can ask Intermediates to look at some of the challenges historic residents faced in their daily life. How have we solved some of those challenges in modern society? What challenges do we still face today? Senior members can think about the social issues facing the historic residents. How did those social issues affect the residents financially, socially, physically, etc.? In each case, the 4-H leaders going through the house with a small group at their own pace would help them see and understand what is there for them.

This does not imply that it is always desirable to separate by maturity levels. Often, there are good reasons to mix younger and older members together, such as a balance of varying experience.

Have Several Mini-Meetings

Ask a resource person to meet several small groups at different times. For instance, if a foreign student is visiting for a weekend, she might show slides of her country (which would really mean different things to different members) at the general club meeting. Additionally, a junior leader might arrange for the foreign student to make cookies with the youngest members, so they have personal contact with her while doing an interesting activity. Later, she can meet with Intermediates to chat about her country and some of its customs and the challenges of learning a new culture. She and the older members could meet for a session on America’s image abroad.

Give Older Youth Leadership Roles

Have your Senior members study a citizenship topic and then create a lesson to teach the younger members of their club. Let the older youth act as facilitators for club projects and lessons. This is a great way to give older members greater leadership experience. Do be careful to balance this with activities in which the older members are themselves participants.



How to Get Started

As a 4-H Citizenship project leader, you will help to coordinate citizenship projects and activities for a small group of 4-H'ers. The first and most important step is to get your group together to what they would like to do for the year. You can help by setting up the time and location of the meeting. Younger youth will need more guidance for their planning. For all age groups, it is important that the youth have the ability to make decisions. The adults should not decide on plans for the year by themselves. It is a youth/adult partnership.

After a general plan or calendar for the project year is developed, the group should decide what leaders and/or committees will be needed to help the group accomplish their goals. Don't try to do it all by yourself. 4-H parents and other volunteers will be willing to help if you can identify specific ways they can assist. Youth can take on leadership roles and work with volunteers. Your county agent is a great resource as well.

Involvement is the key to happy 4-H members. Let them divide up into committees to organize the activities planned. Let the 4-H'ers themselves do everything they possibly can to develop their plans. Remember that they'll learn much more if they do it themselves.

Every meeting should be fun in addition to being educational. Parties, picnics, refreshments, and other similar activities keep 4-H'ers enthusiastic and active. These often can be combined with the educational activities with just a little creative planning. The 4-H Citizenship project offers limitless possibilities because good citizenship relates to every other 4-H project.

Citizenship is often an area that is taken for granted. It's exciting to think of the impact you can have on 4-H members by helping them to intentionally develop good citizenship habits.

Challenge

An effective 4-H leader is an adult or teen leader who makes it possible for 4-H members to get together as a group to learn to do things they would not necessarily do by themselves. A strong leader offers a safe space, suggestions, and support. A good leader doesn't dictate, determine, or direct all activities for the group. The group is only meaningful when the individual members are the doers and the learners. 4-H teaches "learning by doing." 4-H leaders should remember their members' mistakes can actually be helpful learning experiences. The "leader" is really a "helper," and "leadership" is "helpership." As your 4-H'ers grow and develop in their citizenship program, they too can become helpers of others. The time you give to your citizenship members can make the world a better place to live and will be multiplied many times over through each 4-H'er that you help.



Additional Citizenship Units

Good citizenship involves more than understanding and participating in government. Good citizenship is important in relationships with your family, friends, and neighbors. Good citizenship is important to your 4-H club and other organizations you belong to. It means understanding and appreciating yourself and your heritage, and having the same respect for other people and their heritages.

The citizenship project is made up of a series of seven units. The citizenship project consists of the following units:

- Unit 1: Me, My Family, and My Friends
- Unit 2: My Neighborhood
- Unit 3: My Clubs and Groups
- Unit 4: My Heritage
- Unit 5: My Community
- Unit 6: My Government
- Unit 7: My World

I pledge: My Head to clearer thinking,
My Heart to greater loyalty,
My Hands to larger service, and
My Health to better living, for my club, my
community, my country, and my world