

Working with 4-H Cloverbuds

A guide for University of Idaho Extension
4-H Youth Development professionals and volunteers



University of Idaho
Extension

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University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development

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WELCOME

Welcome to the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development Cloverbuds program. Cloverbuds is a special program designed for 5- to 7-year-olds. Children of this age have unique learning characteristics and abilities, and their needs differ from those of older youth. They should not be categorized as “mini 4-H members.” This guide will help Extension professionals and 4-H volunteers to better understand the characteristics of Cloverbuds and to provide proper programming and activities to support a Cloverbud’s development.

PROGRAM GOALS

The goal of Cloverbuds is to provide 5- to 7-year-olds with unique learning experiences in a safe and supportive environment where they can learn and develop life skills.

VOLUNTEER’S ROLE

Certification

All 4-H program or club volunteers who work with youth are required to become certified. This certification indicates the volunteer has passed all screening and training requirements, can work with youth one-on-one, and is capable of providing a safe and educational environment for any participant. The certification process is described in *4-H Youth Development Policies and Procedures*, which is available through the state or county offices of University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development.

Privilege and responsibility

Volunteers have the privilege and responsibility to be role models for youth. Cloverbuds are in a stage of development where adults are very important in their lives. They will look to adults to confirm their own worth and self-esteem. They will also look for guidance on acceptable social behavior and decision making.

Cloverbuds are full of joy and wonder, and volunteers will get to see things through their eyes and experience the excitement with them.

Family is very important to Cloverbuds. It is the volunteer’s responsibility to communicate with the families of Cloverbuds and encourage them to become involved and support their child. This will not only support the child, but support the volunteer as well. Volunteers have the right to require parental participation and support during activities and meetings.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

4-H teaches life skills through the essential elements in positive youth development, also known as the B.I.G. M. (belonging, independence, generosity, and mastery). While these are important elements for all 4-H members, they have slightly different meanings for Cloverbuds because of their age and developmental needs.

Belonging

Everyone wants to feel like they are wanted and belong, and this is especially important for Cloverbuds. These are guidelines to help Cloverbuds have a sense of belonging:

- Cloverbuds should participate in groups, not alone.
- There should always be two adult volunteers with a group of 5- to 7-year-olds. This is not only a safety precaution, but allows the youth to have the personal, individual attention they need. The recommended ratio is 1 adult per 6 to 8 youth.
- Family is important; encourage them to be involved. Activities should be family focused.
- Greet Cloverbuds individually when they arrive at the meetings.
- To establish a positive relationship with the Cloverbuds, get to know each one.
- If Cloverbuds are involved in a 4-H club with older youth, the Cloverbuds should not serve as officers. If there is a separate club for Cloverbuds, they should not conduct business meetings. Serving as officers or conducting meetings may put undue pressure on them and may make them or their peers feel left out when they do not have the same responsibilities. Cloverbuds-aged youth need to have a strong sense of belonging and identification.

Independence

Most Cloverbuds-aged youth are not physically or mentally able to be independent, but they can start to learn life skills like decision making, self-responsibility, and how to learn in a way that will allow them to become independent as they grow.

Some guidelines that will teach these skills are:

- Allow them to learn decision making by giving them two or three options and letting them make choices as a group.
- Have them take turns bringing refreshments.
- Give them the responsibility to call and remind each other about meetings.

- Use the Experiential Learning Model—Do, Reflect, Apply. This will give youth the chance to share their experience with each other, discuss what happened, and think about how the experience is meaningful and how they may use their new knowledge. Volunteers affirming their experience and knowledge will allow them to gain more self-esteem and confidence in their ability to learn and discuss.

Generosity

Providing service to others is an important part of 4-H. Helping Cloverbuds learn at a young age how to serve others and be generous is a great way to start teaching social interactions.

- Cloverbuds will want to be helpful and please. Give them opportunities to help, such as helping set up for the activity by setting out crayons or plates.
- Provide activities in which they do things for others, such as making cards for deployed soldiers.
- Remember, Cloverbuds are just learning to have friendships, so teaching them to share and take turns is very important.
- Introduce manners and other social niceties. They are looking for adult guidance on how to act and what is acceptable.
- Avoid competition. At this age, they are all “the best” and may become bossy if they feel otherwise.

Mastery

For Cloverbuds, mastery is about learning new motor skills and how to do something, not about the quality of the finished project.

- Provide activities that allow them to practice their fine-motor skills.
- Have activities that do not require perfection and that they can complete successfully.
- Introduce new physical activities that require coordination.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 5- TO 7-YEAR-OLDS

Children of Cloverbuds age have specific needs and learning characteristics. They are developing and learning differently from their older and younger peers. The tables below (for 5- and 6-year-olds and for 7- and 8-year olds) provide guidance in understanding the characteristics of Cloverbuds and in planning activities and projects that will help them develop in healthy ways.

These characteristics are only generalizations, however. Each child will develop at his or her own rate, just as they grow taller at their own rates.

Characteristics of children ages 5 and 6 and implications for Cloverbuds programs

Physical development of children ages 5 and 6

Characteristic	Implications
Uneven and incomplete muscular coordination and control. 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 handle 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.	Introduce 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 of children ages 5 and 6

Characteristic	Implications
Ask and answer questions in literal terms.	Plan active learning around concrete objectives.
Most are just learning letters and words. By age 6, most can read words or combinations of words.	Give instructions verbally and visually. Don't expect them to read.
Have short interest spans, sometimes as short as 5–10 minutes.	Plan a series of small activities with physical exercise in between them, rather than one longer, more-intense session.
Define things by their use, e.g., a pencil is for writing.	Provide lots of materials and media for learning (e.g., paper, paint, brushes, glue, building blocks, games, puzzles).
Can distinguish their own left and right, but not in other people.	Avoid a lot of paper and pencil activities that require writing.

Emotional development of children ages 5 and 6

Characteristic	Implications
Sensitive to criticism, don't accept failure well.	Provide lots of encouraging words for effort.
Strong desire for affection and like adult attention.	Provide lots of opportunities for adult interaction with children.
Cooperative and helpful; they want to please.	Provide opportunities for children to help in adult-like ways, such as setting up for an activity.
Say what they think and feel, e.g., "you stink," "you're ugly," etc.	Help children restate feelings in a positive way, using "I" statements. "I feel hurt when you grab my crayon."

Social development of children ages 5 and 6

Characteristic	Implications
Developing cooperative play. Prefer to work in small groups of two or three. Still like to focus on their own work or play.	Organize projects and activities that involve two or three children. In 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, taking turns, following rules, and being 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.
Like being a part of and around family.	Develop projects and activities that involve or focus on the family.
May have a need to be first, to win, or 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 of children ages 7 and 8 and implications for Cloverbuds programs

Physical development of children ages 7 and 8

Characteristic	Implications
Period of slow, steady growth. May repeat an activity over and over 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 at 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 catch a ball.	

Mental development of children ages 7 and 8

Characteristic	Implications
Enormous curiosity and delight in discovery.	Encourage projects that can be done over and over in different ways.
Can recognize some similarities and differences.	Encourage children to develop or make collections.
Are able to collect, sort, organize, and classify.	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 perspectives of others.	Guide the children in reflecting on their learning experiences.
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.
Humor takes a new meaning.	
Beginning to tell time.	

Emotional development of children ages 7 and 8

Characteristic	Implications
Increased awareness of themselves, more sensitive to others.	Involve them in doing things for others.
Enjoy being part of a family.	They 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 to 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 of children ages 7 and 8

Characteristic	Implications
Value adult interaction and may actually be more polite to adults.	Introduce the "art of social graces." Teaching table manners and other social niceties will be more accepted.
Begin to seek same-gender playmates and development of play groups.	Activities will be more successful if children can be grouped in same-gender groups.
Begin to internalize adult feelings toward 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.	Children will enjoy naming their group or activity and coining phrases to describe their activities.
May be moody but less likely to direct negative feelings toward others.	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.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR CLOVERBUDS CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

Cloverbuds is an educational program that introduces young children to 4-H in a fun, non-competitive way.

Who may participate

- Children who are 5 to 7 years old by January 1.
- A child must be enrolled only in the Cloverbuds program.

Chartering clubs

If not a part of a 4-H club, Cloverbuds groups must be chartered (have filled out affiliation papers) to gain recognition for their group and enable them to use the 4-H name and emblem.

Curricula and record books

- Approved Cloverbuds curricula should be used, as they are developmentally appropriate for this age group.
- Cloverbuds curricula are activity oriented, involve cooperative learning, and are focused on life skills.
- Record books are optional. If used, they should be developmentally appropriate, with little writing involved. Cloverbuds may also choose to turn in a Cloverbuds memory book.

Projects

- Cloverbuds is designed to teach young children life skills through a broad spectrum of subject areas.
- Cloverbuds may not participate in ATV, shooting sports, or large-animal projects. Children 5 to 7 years of age often lack the mental and physical skills for controlling and understanding the strength of large animals (Livestock Conservation Institute, 1994).
- Cloverbuds may be involved in lap animal projects. Lap animals are defined as rabbits, cavies, chickens, small dogs, and mini goats that weigh less than the child.

Competition

- The Cloverbuds program must be non-competitive. Competition is developmentally inappropriate for Cloverbuds. They still see themselves as “the best” and do not understand how anyone else can be better. When they win or lose, they often merge feeling and fact, and the negative feeling of losing becomes related to their self-worth and identity.

- Cloverbuds may enter fair exhibits, but they will not compete or be judged, and all participants should receive equal recognition for their participation. They may, however, be given advice and taught new things to continue to improve.
- Cloverbuds exhibiting lap animals at the fair should be accompanied by adults in the ratio of one adult to one child.
- Cloverbuds should be encouraged to try new things, but no emphasis should be put on the products of their efforts.
- Cloverbuds activities should be cooperative instead of competitive. This will help Cloverbuds develop confidence, creativity and competence.
- Cloverbuds are not eligible to participate in state contests or events.

Adult supervision, teen leadership, and safety

- The program strongly recommends at least two adult volunteers, unrelated to each other, for a group of 5- to 7-year-old children. This is a personal safety precaution for both the children and the adults.
- A ratio of one responsible person for every five or six children is recommended. Overnight activities and activities with more risk should use the 1:5 ratio. There must always be one certified volunteer present. Other responsible people can be either adults or older teen 4-H members.
- An adult or older teen leader will be with the Cloverbuds at all times when they are in the presence of an animal or when they are using equipment that is potentially dangerous, including scissors, saws, knives, needles, rockets, kitchen appliances, and so forth.
- Cloverbuds should not operate power-driven equipment as a part of activities (sewing machines, power drills, small engines, blenders, mixers, clippers, mowers, etc.).
- Cloverbuds should wear appropriate safety helmets or other safety equipment, such as life vests, when engaged in activities such as riding bicycles, skateboarding, and canoeing.

CREATING POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CLOVERBUDS

Cloverbuds is a child-centered program, which means that the interests and needs of the children drive the program. Thus, the developmental and learning characteristics of 5- to 7-year-old children have direct implications for the way programs and activities are designed. In general, positive learning environments can be created for Cloverbuds in these ways:

- Provide at least one responsible person for every five or 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 enough individualized attention to be successful. A parent or older youth may help provide appropriate support.
- Be well organized. Plan activities that have limited steps and can be finished during one meeting. Keep snacks simple and nutritious.
- Give the children options to select from and involve them 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.
- Keep children interested and involved by offering a variety of learning activities, with variation in the pace and range of experiences. Keep them actively "doing things." Have children use all their senses. Alternate "sit-down" and "moving" activities. Avoid talking to the group for longer than 5 to 10 minutes at a time. Stay flexible.
- Encourage children to talk and work with each other. Children learn best when they are engaged in activities that allow them to practice, demonstrate, explain, and apply their learning. Working with peers offers opportunities for these activities and helps foster the ability to interact and work cooperatively.
- Promote cooperation rather than competition. 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 caring and personal feedback.
- 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 allow children at different stages to participate in a way that suits their developmental needs.

- Include adults who are positive behavior models. As children enlarge their circle to include the greater community, adults outside the home have increasing influence in their lives, introducing new information, new skills, and new points of view. Communities provide great resources for guests and others with special interests and skills they can share with Cloverbuds.

Adults also have significant influence in helping children feel good about who they are and what they can do. It is important that all Cloverbuds volunteers understand the importance of their role and represent positive models of the behaviors we wish children to develop. Older teens can also fulfill this role.

- 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 misbehaviors as teaching opportunities to show children how to apply appropriate skills.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

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

There is no one 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 at each meeting.
- Develop positive relationships with the children.
- Plan ahead 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 the adult's 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, the goal is to help children develop self-control. This can be done by modeling appropriate behaviors, by helping them learn needed skills, and by providing opportunities to practice those skills.

IS THE PROGRAM OR ACTIVITY CLOVERBUDS READY?

To make sure a program or activity is appropriate for Cloverbuds, ask the following questions:

1. Is the activity intended for Cloverbuds as opposed to 4-H members who are 8 to 19 years old? Is it developmentally age appropriate?

Differences between activities for cloverbuds and for older youth

	4-H Cloverbuds	Older 4-H youth (8–19 years)
Type of learning	Activity centered	Project centered
Type of instruction	Volunteer directed	Self-study, individual and volunteer directed
Recognition	Participation	Competition, achievement of standards, achievement of goals, participation
Learner resources	Activity manual	Project manual

(Scheer, 1997)

2. Is it activity-based and short-term?
3. Does it involve cooperative learning in which children work with each other, not against each other?
4. Is it non-competitive, and does it recognize children equally?
5. Is the activity safe, both physically and emotionally?
6. Is the activity success oriented? Can the children do the activities successfully?
7. Do activities involving animals follow Cloverbuds goals and guidelines?

8. If Cloverbuds are involved in the fair, is it for exhibit only, without judging?
9. Is the activity fun, positive, and focused on life skills Cloverbuds will learn through the essential elements and the experiential learning cycle?

If you answered “yes” to all these questions, then the program/activity should be excellent for Cloverbuds. If you answered any questions with “no,” then look at modifications and discuss them with Extension professionals.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In the community and program there will also be children with special needs. Welcome them. As Marilyn Rasmussen states: “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 Cloverbuds provides valuable learning opportunities for all involved. 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, volunteers will learn new information and develop new skills as a result of working with children with special needs.”

CONCLUSION

Cloverbuds is a fun and inspiring program that takes a team. Involving volunteers, older youth, families and Extension professionals will increase the success of the program and provide the support Cloverbuds need. Through this program Cloverbuds will gain knowledge and skills that will help them develop into successful positive individuals.

Have FUN!

CLOVERBUDS RESOURCES

North Dakota State University Extension Service

4H Cloverbud Education Activities:

https://www.ndsu.edu/4h/member_information/cloverbuds/cloverbud_lessons/

Ohio State University Extension

4-H 710GPM Ohio 4-H Cloverbud Program Manual, Series I

4-H 711GPM Ohio's 4-H Cloverbud Program, Series II

4-H Cloverbud Volunteer Training Video (2002)

4-H Cloverbud Educational Activities:

<http://www.ohio4h.org/volunteers/cloverbud-leaders/click-it-print-it-do-it-activity-pages>

Ohio Cloverbud Website: <http://www.ohio4h.org/volunteers/cloverbud-leaders>

Ohio 4-H Cloverbud Connections (newsletter):

<http://www.ohio4h.org/families/cloverbuds/ohio-4-h-cloverbud-connections>

University of Minnesota Extension

Cloverbud website:

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/youth/mn4-H/projects/cloverbuds/>

University of Missouri Extension

Cloverbud activities: <http://4h.missouri.edu/clover-kids/main>

Penn State Extension

Cloverbud website:

<http://extension.psu.edu/4-h/projects/cloverbuds/literacy-curriculum>

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Cloverbud website:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/iowa-4-h-clover-kids>

National 4-H Curriculum Resources

To order materials, go to: <http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/curriculum/>

The following workbooks and activities are for grades K–2:

Exploring 4-H (7–9)

Aerospace 1—Pre-Flight

Child Development 1—Kids on the Grow!

Bicycle I—Bicycling for Fun

Entomology—Creepy Crawlies 1

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