

IMPACT



Ada County, 5880 Glenwood St., Boise, ID 83714; 208-377-2107; Fax: 208-208-375-8715

4-H Interviews Impact Youth and Brings 4-H to the Community

The Situation

The dramatic increase in the need for a skilled, knowledgeable workforce requires preparing youth for meaningful employment. While deficiencies in reading, writing, and math are the first to appear in the workplace, skills such as problem solving, listening, negotiation, and knowing how to learn, as well as teamwork, self-esteem leadership are important. Motivation/goal setting, organizational effectiveness, employability/career development, speaking and listening skills, and creative thinking are also viewed as essential.

The 4-H Youth Development program includes curriculum and experiences to help youth explore career options. Idaho Extension has a successful history of teaching youth using non-formal, informal, and experiential methods.

Schools cannot prepare youth for their life work alone. To instill the capabilities of work/life skills in young people, public agencies, organizations, employers, communities, parents, and the school system must work together.

4-H uses Workforce Preparation and Life Skills models to prepare youth for whatever profession they choose later in life. 4-H is also dedicated to helping families give youth the foundation they need to succeed.

The competitive nature of the job market today lends itself to youth becoming comfortable with the interview process. To strengthen life skills many Idaho

county 4-H programs help youth complete their 4-H projects through interviews at county fairs with outside evaluators.

Our Response

In Ada County, the 4-H program is interviewing all 4-H youth completing and exhibiting their projects at the Western Idaho Fair. Cooperators and co-sponsors include Ada County Extension Office, Ada County 4-H Leaders Association, Western Idaho Fair Junior Division Supervisors, the Western Idaho Fair, and Volunteer Judges from the community.

In 2003 they represented the University of Idaho Boise Center, the State Department of Education, 4-H Leaders, Extension Faculty Staff from neighboring counties, County Commissioners, and the Idaho Secretary of State. The Junior League of Boise and RSVP volunteers also helped with project entry and judging as a service to the community. This approach was put into place in stages. Interviews began with leadership, upper division, and horse projects in the early 1990's. By 1995 all Family and Consumer Science and Miscellaneous projects were interviewed. The last area to adopt the interview evaluation process were the large and small animal projects by 1999.

A standardized interview form was developed and is used by evaluators (judges) to help youth examine their progress toward self-set goals and the overall standard of excellence. The form is based on the National 4-H Recognition Model.

All interview forms are collected and tabulated to measure outcomes. Youth and families receive the written comments back to improve on next year's goals. The extension office uses the summary data to look for trends to train leaders and youth.

Volunteer judges used interview forms to check the youth's goals, subject matter knowledge, and completed a member self-evaluation. This judging process encompasses the strengths of each child; the judge is given the opportunity to see how much the youth learned by having both written and verbal communication available to them.

Program Outcomes

In 2003, thirteen hundred and twenty three 4-Hers entered 2,091 exhibits in the Western Idaho Fair. Exhibits were judged by 60 judges from the community. Each evaluator was oriented and trained before they began judging. Training sessions were at the end of July, and multiple times at the Western Idaho Fair.

County 4-H Interview data tabulated in 2001 and 2003 suggests that the interview process accomplishes the following for youth and adults.

Youth Outcomes:

- 4-H members in Ada county are doing a better job meeting or accomplishing the goals they have set for their projects.
- 4-H members were better at explaining and articulating their goals to the interview judges.
- 4-H members were reaching the goals they set.
- 4-H members could document changes in their own learning, knowledge and behavior as a result of completing 4-H projects.
- Changes in behavior by 4-H members in preparation for interviews including dress, communication, and poise.
- Cloverbuds that have increasingly participated in this optional activity.

Adult Outcomes:

- Judges suggest 4-H members need to work on setting more "specific," detailed, defined, measurable, and "articulate" goals for their 4-H projects.

- Judges suggest the 4-H members need to set NEW goals each year, as some were using the same ones year after year.
- Judges indicated that many members could explain their goals but did not write them down in the CCS curriculum or convey them in their involvement reports.
- Changes in attitude by 4-H volunteers, parents and supporters toward "record book judging" for the child vs. conference/interview judging with each child.
- Increased outreach to the community as new judges are recruited to evaluate 4-H projects with members.
- There is an increase in judges knowledge about purpose and function of the present day 4-H program in Ada county.

Summary: Ada County 4-Hers are learning to set goals, know the subject matter of their project and are successfully interacting with adults in their interviews. Through this process each Ada county 4-H member will average between 9 – 12 interviews during their 4-H career. This skill lasts a lifetime and empowers each youth!

A news article written by one of the interview judges in 2003 specifically lists the life skills 4-H offers to youth. "While judging at the fair this year, I had the opportunity to work with five young ladies and their 16 projects. The life lessons I was reminded of include: goal setting, record keeping, money management, demonstrating progress and learning new things, and being on time with project submissions for the fair. Do these five lessons sound familiar to your workday, personal, and life goals?" (*Jana Kemp Idaho Press Tribune*)

4-H youth fortunate enough to complete their projects with an interview have many more opportunities to hone their interview skills for the competitive job market. The next step is to offer 4-H members completing projects outside the fair the opportunity to use a variation on this process. Interview judging will continue with greater participation by community leaders in 2004 and 2005. Selected Judges and 4-H volunteers will then be surveyed in 2005 concerning this method of life skill education.

For More Information

Barbara Abo, Extension Educator

Ada County

5880 Glenwood Ave.

Boise, ID 83714

208-377-2107

Fax: 208-375-8715

Email: babo@uidaho.edu

Kevin Laughlin, Extension Educator

Ada County

5880 Glenwood Ave.

Boise, ID 83714

208-377-2107

Fax: 208-375-8715

Email: laughlin@uidaho.edu

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