



NJ 4-H Cloverbud Program: 4-H for Younger Members (Grades K-3)

4-H can be a valuable experience for youth of many ages. In New Jersey, the earliest 4-H club experience is belonging to a 4-H Cloverbud Club (children in grades K-3).

What is the 4-H Cloverbud Program?

The New Jersey 4-H Cloverbud Program is a club for children in kindergarten through third grades. The purpose of the program is to provide a fun and educational experience which helps children to:

- Learn to get along with others.
- Explore a variety of interests through hands-on activities.
- Build self-confidence through healthy experiences.

Cloverbud Age

The 4-H Cloverbud Program is designed to introduce boys and girls in grades K-3 to a wide variety of 4-H project experiences which are available to them upon reaching 4th grade.

A child can belong to a 4-H Cloverbud club if he or she is in kindergarten through third grade. The September in which the child enters fourth grade, he or she can join a standard 4-H club, usually a project or community club.

The Cloverbud Club

4-H Cloverbud clubs are similar to standard clubs in that they meet regularly and are led by adult volunteer club leaders. Most clubs have approximately five to eight members per leader and meet about twice a month.

4-H Cloverbud clubs are different from standard clubs in that 4-H Cloverbud members do not select one or two specific projects to work on during the year. Instead, they participate in a variety of short-term activities in many different subject areas.

4-H Cloverbud Activity Guide

4-H Cloverbud leaders are very important people. They serve as role models to these youngest 4-H members. They are also responsible for making sure that the child's first 4-H experience is a positive one.

To help 4-H Cloverbud leaders work with their clubs, they are provided with a copy of *New Jersey 4-H Cloverbud Activity Manual*, the official guide for New Jersey 4-H Cloverbud leaders. The volunteer leader for each 4-H Cloverbud club receives a copy of this manual upon registering as a 4-H leader. This guide consists of over 30 activity sheets which cover a variety of subjects. Each sheet has all of the information a leader needs in order to facilitate an activity. Most sheets also include suggestions for field trips, guest speakers and follow-up activities for the member to do at home. By using the *New Jersey 4-H Cloverbud Activity Manual* with flexibility, the 4-H Cloverbud leader can give these younger 4-H'ers many opportunities which will prepare them for participation in a standard club.



Cloverbud Record Books

Keeping a record book can help a 4-H Cloverbud member creatively express his or her experiences. Some counties have special record books for 4-H Cloverbud members, while other 4-H Cloverbud members make their own. Ideas sometimes used for record keeping include drawings, cut-outs from magazines, poems, souvenirs and photos. Another idea to help with keeping records is to use self-closing bags to store items made or collected at meetings or on field trips.

The 4-H Cloverbud Program is Non-Competitive

The 4-H Cloverbud Program is a non-competitive program. There is no judging or evaluation of individual projects or activities for 4-H Cloverbud members. The statewide policy for New Jersey is that no 4-H member in kindergarten through third grade may be given a rating (judged or evaluated) against set standards or against other participants, either for individual projects or for group effort.

This policy is based on research which shows that children of this age need to progress and develop at their own speeds and that they find it especially hard to lose. To help these youth develop self-confidence, they need to have less pressure to “win.” Since success is very important at this age, the success of just having completed an activity helps to increase self-esteem. It’s the process and the fun of participating, not the product, which is important to these children.

Recognition

Although projects of 4-H Cloverbud members are not rated, these younger 4-H’ers are still recognized for their work. The focus of recognition for the 4-H Cloverbud Program is participation. 4-H Cloverbud members may receive participation ribbons, certificates, pins, and other appropriate 4-H recognition that encourages continued involvement. The recognition needs to be in scale with the accomplishment, both within the 4-H Cloverbud Program and compared to recognition received by standard 4-H Club members for their accomplishments.

County Participation

Many counties hold events designed especially for 4-H Cloverbud members. These include special programs, monthly activities, camps, step-up ceremonies, fun nights, and picnics. Often, 4-H Cloverbud members are invited to participate in regular county events. If judging is part of the event, the member may participate given that the judge(s) provide positive feedback and comments of encouragement, but no score or rating is given.

The 4-H Cloverbud Program is Fun!

The 4-H Cloverbud Program sets the stage for a child’s participation in a standard 4-H Club. It is an opportunity for younger children to begin to have hands-on experiences as 4-H members. 4-H Cloverbud activities should promote practice of developmentally appropriate skills and provide an opportunity for social interaction. It is also a chance for adults to serve as role models at this important time in a child’s life. Most importantly, the 4-H Cloverbud Program is educational and fun for all involved.

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For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

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