



Cloverbuds

Four-H for 5 – 8 year olds

The 4-H Cloverbud program is a distinct component of the total Alabama 4-H youth development program. It is designed as a non-formal approach to developing the confidence, social skills, decision making abilities, subject matter knowledge, and physical skills of 5-8 year olds. In the 4-H Cloverbud experience, young people take part in a unique blend of activities and opportunities specially designed for their age level.

How Are Groups Organized?

Cloverbud Clubs

Members meet separately from any other group or club. Cloverbud clubs may meet in community centers, schools, libraries, childcare settings, churches or in the homes of interested parents or trained adults.

In the Classroom

Cloverbud materials are ideal for kindergartners and early elementary students. Teachers trained in their use receive support and resources from their county extension office.

As part of an Existing Community 4-H Club

Cloverbud members can be part of a community 4-H club, but meet separately from the 9-19 year-old members while doing Cloverbud activities.

What Is the Difference Between Cloverbuds and Older 4-H Members?

How Kids Learn:

Cloverbud learning is activity centered.
Older member learning is often project based.

How Instruction is Given:

Cloverbud instruction is leader directed.
Older members receive instruction from a leader and through self-study.

How Kids are Recognized:

Cloverbuds are recognized for their participation only.
Older members are recognized for participation, goal achievement, achievement of standards, and through competitive events and activities.

Learning Resources:

Cloverbud activities may come from approved statewide curriculum, or may use materials that follow the Cloverbud program guidelines and are approved by their county agent.
Older members use project manuals or other materials designed for their age group.



How Do Cloverbuds Participate?

The Cloverbud program is geared toward activity-based learning. Curriculum is based on age appropriate research and involves cooperative, experiential, and noncompetitive activities.

Cloverbud lessons address such subjects as character, expressive arts, the environment, personal development, and plant and animal science – or other 4-H topics. Each lesson includes a background information section followed by a recommended teaching plan.

May Cloverbuds Have a Camp?

The answer is yes! County partnerships often develop camps that are designed to meet Cloverbuds' developmental characteristics and needs. A Cloverbud day camp could involve youth for one day or for series of days, in a "camp like" setting where educational, hands-on activities occur. A summer environmental day camp or spring gardening camp is a perfect example of a Cloverbud camp.

Counties may also develop Cloverbuds special overnight camps especially designed for that age level.

Who Teaches Cloverbuds?

Much of the Cloverbud program is guided by an adult volunteer, whether in a club-like setting, a school, or a special emphasis group. Adult and teen volunteers guiding the Cloverbud program receive educational instruction on how to work with this particular age group.

What Is Expected of a Cloverbud Volunteer?

Specific responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- being committed to young people;
- following the guidelines and policies of the Alabama 4-H Cloverbud program;
- assisting members in all 4-H learning experiences;
- maintaining open communications with other volunteers and the Extension office;
- helping the members select appropriate activities;
- encouraging parents and other guardians to support their child's involvement and activities while in the program;
- participating in appropriate volunteer development opportunities.



An individual serving as a 4-H Cloverbud volunteer must have:

- a sincere interest in working with youth;
- the ability to teach and motivate youth;
- organizational skills;
- the ability to work with minimal supervision;
- willingness to become familiar with and work with the philosophy and guidelines of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Alabama 4-H program, and the county 4-H program.

Minimum Requirements for a Risk Management Plan in 4-H Cloverbud Activities

All activities involve an element of risk. As a professional or volunteer leader, you will need to manage that risk for the safety of youth and the good of the program. If, in your best judgment, you perceive that the risk is too great, then Cloverbuds should not be permitted to participate in an activity.

Assess the risk which is presented by the activity, the environment, the developmental skills, and stages of the children involved and the experience of those presenting and supervising the activity. If you are uncertain, you should confer with the county 4-H staff. If the county 4-H staff has questions, they should be discussed with the state 4-H office.

- A parent or **responsible person** (defined as adult leaders, teen leaders, parents or other adults who may appropriately assist with the group) should be with or very near the Cloverbuds at all times.
- A parent/responsible person will be with the Cloverbud when in the presence of an animal.
- A parent/responsible person will be with the Cloverbud when equipment or tools such as scissors, saws, knives, needles, rockets, or kitchen appliances are being used.
- Cloverbuds should not operate power driven equipment as a part of activities (sewing machines, power drills, small engines, clippers, etc.).
- Cloverbuds will wear appropriate safety helmets when riding horses or bicycles.
- The ratio of adults/responsible persons to children will be adjusted relative to the risk of the activity. At times one-to-one supervision may be required.
- When animals and Cloverbuds are together at 4-H activities, such as fairs and shows, an adult/responsible person will be in control of the animal (control means to handle and/or lead the animal).

A local assessment may lead counties to be more restrictive than indicated here.

An emergency plan will be developed and shared with all adults present. The plan will identify the location of phones, basic first aid supplies, phone numbers and addresses for hospitals, as well as parent contact information if not present. The Extension educator or designee should intervene when safety becomes a concern.



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Developmental Characteristics of Children in Grades K-3

Children in grades K-3 develop and learn in ways that differ from those of younger children and from older youth and adults. Understanding the developmental and learning characteristics of K-3 children provides a foundation for developing effective programs.

The remainder of this section presents an overview of the developmental and learning characteristics of children in grades K-3. Remember that these are generalizations and that children develop at varying rates. For example, a physically advanced child may be slow to develop language. Such uneven development also is evident when comparing children within a group. Just think of the different heights you find among 6-year-olds! Development and learning are complex processes not yet thoroughly understood. Generalizations can serve as guideposts for planning activities, choosing materials, etc., but in the end, getting to know the children is the best way to plan.

Physical Development

Major task: Refine gross (large) and fine motor skills

- Gross motor skills are largely mastered. Children continue to practice these skills and use them to release energy (running, jumping, skipping, etc.).
- Fine motor skills are developing. More practice is needed to refine these skills and achieve control (cutting with scissors, using a pencil, manipulating small objects, etc.).
- Children need to have frequent opportunities for physical activity. For these youngsters, sitting still is more demanding than being physically active.

Social Development

Major task: Develop social competence

- Having friends becomes increasingly important. While parents remain the primary influence in a child's life, friendship with peers outside the family begins to develop.
- Friendships often change for younger children, but friendships are more stable by age eight.
- Preference for friends moves from mixed gender to same-gender children.
- Children increasingly enjoy working in pairs or small groups. Group work fosters social development as children learn how to interact.



Emotional Development

Major task: Develop a positive self-concept

- Perceptions of self are forming. Children need opportunities to experience success and receive positive feedback from adults and peers.
- Pleasing adults is important. Children seek adult praise and support.
- Self-control is developing. Children need positive adult guidance to help them learn self-control.
- Children are self-critical and sensitive to criticism from others. Accepting failure is very difficult.
- Children are becoming more knowledgeable about their own feelings and those of others. Emotional ups and downs occur, but usually don't last long.

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Cognitive Development

Major task: Acquire the ability to think about and solve problems mentally

- Thinking ability remains tied to experiences in the real world. Children construct knowledge from physical experience, social interaction, and reflection.
- The ability to see things from another's perspective is developing.
- Verbal skills become more sophisticated. As children become able to understand others' perspectives, their ability to communicate is greatly expanded.
- Reasoning becomes more logical.
- Great gains are made in the ability to read, write, and use numbers.



Learning Characteristics

Major task: Make sense of the world and master the skills necessary to function successfully

- Children have an innate curiosity about the world around them. Their interest motivates them to explore and learn about it.
- They enjoy intellectual challenges. Riddles, word games, and lots of conversation allow them to show off new thinking skills.
- Learning is tied to concrete experiences. Children need to manipulate objects and interact with adults and peers in a meaningful context.
- Children learn best when their physical needs are met.
- The learning process usually is more important than the product of learning. Finishing a project is often irrelevant. However, as children approach 8 years of age, having a product to show for their efforts begins to take on significance.
- Attention spans tend to be short. Interest is maintained anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes.
- Unstructured play is important. It permits children to explore, test, experiment, imagine, and create in a non-threatening environment.



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Creating Positive Learning Environments

The Cloverbud Program is a child-centered program. That means the interests and needs of the children drive the program. Thus, knowledge of the developmental and learning characteristics of K-3 children has direct implications for the way we design activities. In general, positive learning environments are created for children when programs:

Provide one responsible person for every 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 the individualized attention needed to be successful. A parent or older youth may help to provide appropriate support.

Involve the children 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. Leaders should help children select from identified options.

Change activities often according to the needs of the children. Keep children interested and involved by offering a variety of learning activities, with variation in the pace and range of experiences. Keep youth actively “doing things.” Have children use all their senses. Alternate “sit-down” and “moving” activities. Avoid talking to the group for longer than 5-10 minutes at a time.

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.

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. Adults also have significant influence in helping children feel good about who they are and what they can do. It is important that 4-H Cloverbud leaders understand the importance of their role, and represent positive models of the behavior we wish children to develop.

Promote cooperation rather than competition. It is inappropriate for children in grades K-3 to participate in contests where they're judged. Developmentally, K-3 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.

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 misbehavior as a teaching opportunity to show children how to apply appropriate skills.

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 may be used to allow children at different stages to participate in a way that suits their developmental needs.

Family Involvement

The world of the young child revolves around his or her family even as he or she seeks greater involvement with peers and other adults. The interest and involvement of family members in 4-H Cloverbuds is an important support for the program. Family members should be encouraged to participate in the program in any way they can. Invite them to help with field trips or special projects, share leadership of the group, or simply take time to talk with their child about activities.

Scheduling activities that are family-focused is another way to encourage family involvement. If you make families aware of their importance to 4-H Cloverbuds, they are more likely to participate.

Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs are found in every community. 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 these children in the 4-H Cloverbud Program provides valuable learning opportunities for all involved.

The 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, you, as a leader, will learn new information and develop new skills as a result of working with children with special needs. The 4-H program historically has included youth with special needs and 4-H Cloverbud leaders are encouraged to continue the tradition. By working closely with parents, you can make the necessary accommodations to ensure a successful experience for all members.



Guidance and Discipline

All children misbehave from time to time. It is a natural consequence of growing, exploring, and testing. Your response to inappropriate behavior will depend on the specifics of the situation, the personality of the youngster, and your own 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 each time you meet
- 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 behavior does occur, it becomes your 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, your goal is to help children develop self-control. You can do this by modeling appropriate behaviors, by helping them learn needed skills, and by providing opportunities to practice those skills.



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Planning Events and Activities

Cloverbuds will involve children in a variety of settings. Whatever the delivery mode, here are some suggestions for planning an activity.

Planning Your Own Lessons

Leaders are encouraged to use the curriculum materials provided for the Cloverbud Program. These materials have been developed specifically for children in grades K-3. 4-H materials developed for older youth (grades 4 and above) are not appropriate for younger children because they do not meet their developmental needs.

On occasion, you may feel the need to create your own lesson. When designing a lesson, it is recommended that you include the components established by the National 5-8 Curriculum Task Force. These guidelines will help ensure that your lesson is meaningful and focused, and that you are prepared to carry it through.

Lesson Title - This should reflect the concept or major activity of the lesson.

Objective - State what you want to accomplish.

Time Required - Estimate the amount of time the lesson will require.

Suggested Group Size - Identify how many children will be involved and how many leaders/older youth will be required to supervise the lesson.

Materials Needed - List all materials and equipment needed for the lesson.

Background Information - Think about and list information you and/or the children must have before beginning the lesson.

Additional Resources - Identify resources in the community that could contribute information and experiences to the lesson. Field trips, community members with special skills, and the public library are a few possibilities.

Preparing the Learner - Plan one or more introductory activities to provide the children with needed background information.

Plan ahead to insure that activities are well organized.

Maintain a ratio of one adult/older youth for every four to six children.

Limit meeting times to 1 to 1 1/2 hours using a variety of activities from 10 to 15 minutes in length.

Welcome each child personally to the activity.

Consider using songs or games to open and close the session.

Tell the children at the beginning of the meeting what activities have been planned. Before shifting from one activity to another, give the children 5 minutes notice of the impending change.

Keep snacks simple and nutritious.

Plan activities that have a limited number of steps and can be finished in a single meeting.

Maintain flexibility. Outcomes are not always what you expect. Be prepared for children finishing early or losing interest and for any “minor disasters” that may occur.

Take a few minutes after each meeting to reflect on what worked well and what didn't. Use this information to help ensure success in future meetings.



Learning Activity - Plan the lesson as a series of logically sequenced steps and write out each step. Try to visualize the steps as you plan them, and think about how the children may respond. Most lessons, or a series of related lessons, will incorporate the following five steps:

1. the “doing” activity,
2. a time for children to “share” their reactions or observations,
3. discussion of what happened during the activity,
4. a chance to think about how the activity has meaning for their daily life, and
5. discussion of how they might use their new knowledge in the future.

Evaluation - Decide beforehand how you will determine whether or not you have achieved the objective of the lesson. Possible ways to evaluate the success are observation of children’s behaviors during the activity (and any products they create) and asking the children questions about the lesson.

Follow-up - Think about ways the children might extend their learning by engaging in related activities that provide additional information or a chance to practice new skills. Plan such activities for future meetings or provide parents with suggestions for following up on the lesson.

Positive Reinforcement - Provide each child with recognition for effort or accomplishment during the lesson time. Positive reinforcement may be a positive comment from the leader or from other children, an opportunity for the child to talk with others about his or her own work, or a sticker or certificate.



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Your Role as a Volunteer Leader

As a volunteer leader, you have accepted a role of great responsibility. Children will look to you to help them affirm their own competence and worth. They also will look to you for guidance on how they should behave and for assistance in developing self-control. Your caring, enthusiasm, and support will make a difference in the life of each child.

Be sure to reinforce children for their successes, support and encourage them when they are less than successful, present a welcoming attitude, and allow yourself to share their joy and wonder. In addition to direct involvement with 4-H Cloverbud children, volunteer leaders also have responsibility to communicate regularly with families, explaining the program and encouraging their involvement. Look for opportunities to attend training and workshops offered in your community to help improve skills in working with children and in managing activities.

Community Supports

The greater community provides a rich resource base from which you may draw. Often citizens with special skills or interests are eager to share their knowledge with children, if invited to do so. Field trips bring added relevancy to topics you are exploring with the group. There are also opportunities available that allow children to participate in and contribute to their community. These community service activities give children a chance to connect with their communities and take pride in their accomplishments.

Conclusion

A successful Cloverbud program is the result of teamwork. Team members include volunteer leaders, older youth who serve as assistants, 4-H members and families, and the 4-H Extension staff. Team members' cooperative efforts create experiences that help children gain knowledge, develop skills, and form attitudes that contribute to a successful childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.