

Lesson 16: **Recognizing 4-H'ers Accomplishments**

Recognition is an important component of the 4-H experience. Youth need feedback on their efforts to contribute to the group or to master skills. Recognition of these efforts provides this feedback. Youth development professionals must be skilled in providing recognition that supports growth and in training staff to understand and use recognition appropriately.

While appropriate recognition takes many forms, recognition for 4-H youth is based on the following beliefs:

- Recognition is a basic human need.
- Recognition must be designed to build positive self-esteem.
- A balance between intrinsic (an intangible) and extrinsic (a tangible) recognition is essential.
- Adult support is essential.
- All 4-H'ers need to experience recognition for their efforts.
- Recognition is more meaningful when it occurs soon after it is earned.
- Appropriate recognition for individual 4-H'ers varies with their stage of development, past experiences, family lifestyle, community and cultural heritage.
- Opportunities for self-assessment and reflection within the recognition process allow youth to learn and grow.
- 4-H'ers should be permitted to exercise individual choices in learning and participation and be recognized accordingly.

The National 4-H Recognition Model

The National 4-H Recognition Model is a comprehensive plan that acknowledges positive learning behaviors in young people. The model identifies recognition appropriate for individuals and groups participating in a variety of educational experiences and is designed to meet the needs, interests, and aspirations of young people from different backgrounds and life experiences.

The 4-H recognition program includes five types of accomplishments. Each is unique in the way it motivates young people and recognizes their achievements. The five types of accomplishments 4-H measures for recognition are:

1. Participation in educational experiences
2. Progress toward self-set goals
3. Achieving standards of excellence

4. Excelling in peer competition
5. Excelling in cooperation

Participation in Educational Experiences

Participation recognition acknowledges attending, participating and successfully completing an experience or activity. Participation has simple requirements that are well publicized and known. Participation recognition can be earned many times. It demonstrates that a young person was “there” and can take the form of names in the paper, event T-shirts, participation ribbons, etc. Participation recognition usually comes from someone the young person cares about such as project leaders, camp counselors, teachers, etc.

Progress Toward Self-Set goals

This form of recognition is not limited to the outcome at the end of the project or effort. It can occur within the action process and can be stimulated with questions like “how are you coming along?” or “how is it going?” This form is particularly useful when several steps are involved in reaching a goal. Recognizing accomplishment of steps along the way can provide motivation to continue the effort.

Adults need to help youth set realistic goals that are likely to result in successful outcomes. But self-set goals are just that, and youth will have the final decision as to what they will be. Here are some keys to understanding recognition of progress toward self-set goals.

1. It is used with all ages
2. Goals must be realistic and reachable
3. Progress is evaluated by both the youth and adult
4. Progress is measured using the young persons own goals and plans

Achieving Standards of Excellence

Recognizing accomplishments as they compare to a predetermined standard, is a more extrinsic form of recognition.

1. The standard used to measure success is established by an outside source or specialist and serves as a measuring stick. Recognition is determined by how closely performance matches that measuring stick.

2. To use this form of recognition, adults must assure that the standards are clearly defined and that youth are well informed about them. Young people must know what they are working toward.

3. Standards measurement involves a judging system and rating categories are often used. 4-H uses a ribbon placement system in recognizing the achieving of a standard of performance. A blue ribbon indicates excellent accomplishment. A red ribbon indicates a rank of “very good” and a white ribbon indicates a “good” ranking.

4. Recognition based on a set of standards, measures quality of work and not a comparison to the performance of others. Judges



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must be well informed of the standards. They must be impartial and be diligent about not comparing work to that of other youth.

Excelling in Peer Competition

There are some qualifications that must be discussed with this form of recognition as it supports positive youth development. The quest to be a champion can be a strong motivator for some youth. It is not a motivator for all youth.

1. For youth under the age of 12-14 who are not yet skilled abstract thinkers, the ability to deal with the ambiguities that may accompany competitive judgment calls are not in place. In addition, because they are maturing at very different rates, comparison to peers can negatively influence their concept of their own potential. Recognition based upon competition with peers is not recommended for youth under the age of 12.

2. The desire to win may overpower the desire to learn from the experience. It is easy to confuse the means with the ends when striving for recognition through competition. Youth development professionals must help youth remain focused on the experience rather than the competition and prepare youth for both winning and not winning.

3. Rules and procedures must be clearly spelled out, so that everyone knows exactly what will be judged and how that judging will take place. Competition can be high risk and can bring with it stress, conflict, hard feelings, and disagreement. Negative stress and conflict can be reduced or eliminated by making sure that everyone involved understands exactly what is going to be expected.

4. Competition may generate publicity for your group. It may result in trophies, scholarships plaques etc. It is important that the adults helping youth remember that this form of recognition is designed to promote the development of youth rather than the success of their program.

5. As these factors would indicate, competition should be optional. It is a good avenue of recognition for some youth but does not serve as a positive motivator for all youth.

Excelling in Cooperation

Cooperation skills are increasing in importance in today's inter-dependent society. Recognition of cooperation relies on the following guidelines.

1. Cooperation involves all the youth in your group and provides opportunities to be involved in group-identity issues and attempt to find solutions with the group.

2. Cooperation is measured against mutually agreed upon goals and supports looking at a variety of ideas.

3. Recognition for cooperation gives attention to the way a

group works. Leadership skills that promote the involvement of everyone in the group are supported.

4. The ultimate goal of cooperation is not recognition. Conflict that occurs around recognition for cooperation will be around the procedures for working together rather than over who has done the best work.

5. Everyone in the group is recognized when measuring cooperative efforts.

Recognition of Accomplishments in Project Work

Because project work is a key delivery method in 4-H for teaching skill development, quite a lot of material has been created to assist leaders in providing recognition for project accomplishments. Some evaluations are paired with tangible awards. Many of these awards can be purchased through National 4-H Council – (<http://www.4-Hmall.org> or call 310-961-2934 for information)

Young people need and want specific feedback on their projects and exhibits. They want to know what was done well and what needs to be improved. The recognition of their efforts in their project work gives immediate feedback and has reinforcement value.

For short-term efforts, some sort of a verbal recognition may be sufficient. However, youth may desire that achievements gained through the more in depth efforts of project work be recognized and reinforced through a structured evaluation. When recognition is paired with learning, the reinforcement is increased. Evaluation is an important part of the educational process and is appropriate at all levels in a program. The most effective learning takes place when the evaluation is done on a one-to-one basis, and based on realistic goals that have been set by the exhibitor.

Project Judging

Interview judging is an educational evaluation technique that helps youth learn to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. Identifying what was learned and analyzing the methods used to reach goals is an important part of the educational process. Young people need and want specific feedback on their projects and exhibits. They want to know what they did well and what measures, if any, would improve their work. They need to understand the educational experience, and how they may benefit from it and from the judging experience.

There are several names for interview judging depending upon state and/or county preferences. You may see it referred to as



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“conference judging”, “face-to-face judging”, or “one-to-one judging”. Interview judging brings the judge and the exhibitor together to discuss and evaluate the project experience. Judging is done in an informal setting. The discussion should center on the goals established by the youth, the learning experiences associated with the project or exhibit, and the standards set for evaluating the finished item.

For interview judging to be effective, the judge must be someone who interacts well with youth and is familiar with the project or exhibit. The discussion between the two (judge and exhibitor) must focus on the learning experience associated with the project or exhibit. Both the interview and the set standards for the exhibit need to be considered in determining the judging results.

Consideration needs to be given to:

- age of the youth
- skill level
- special circumstances
- opportunity for future growth

Judging is done in an informal setting. The discussion should center on the goals established by the youth, the learning experiences associated with the project or exhibit, and the standards set for evaluating the finished item.

Interview judging is the most desired method of helping youth evaluate their experiences and growth. Interview judging gives exhibitors a sense of personal involvement and makes project work more educational and fun.

Preparing Judges:

It is important to assure that volunteers who serve as judges are adequately prepared to provide effective evaluation and feedback on the project efforts of 4-H youth. Judges need to know what to do to get ready for the judging experience and what to do during the judging. The following points should be covered with all volunteers before they engage in a judging experience with youth.

Getting Ready

Judges Must Know:

The standards and requirements for the projects and exhibits to be judged.

Any additional judging standards or adjustments to the standards in place for this contest.

The capabilities and levels of understanding appropriate to the age of the youth being judged.



The preferred procedures for getting answers from the superintendent regarding questions of clarification or problems that might arise. Remind them that it is best not to guess if not sure about a rule or requirement. No one is expected to have all of the answers all the time.

Judging the Project or Exhibit

Judges must:

- Be prepared to give full concentration to the judging task - get ample rest the night before.
- Be on time, check in with the appropriate person.
- Be willing to judge longer than they may have been asked. Unavoidable delays may occur.
- Keep a positive attitude, and avoid becoming upset over delays and schedule changes.
- Keep a sense of humor. This is a serious event for the exhibitor, but humor that is appropriate to the situation often helps relieve stress.
- Be tactful and concerned about the feeling of the exhibitor.
- Offer constructive criticism, keeping the educational value of the experience in mind.
- Keep personal likes and dislikes out of the picture.
- Make decisions quickly and with confidence.
- Base decisions on clear, factual statements, not on “opinions”.
- Keep judging consistent among all youth exhibitors.
- Give the exhibitor the benefit of the doubt.
- Personalize remarks about the project or exhibit. Exhibitors compare remarks made by the judge, so do not use the same statements with each exhibitor.
- Be prepared to take criticisms. It is not unusual to have an exhibitor challenge the evaluation of the judge, or be critical of a remark.
- Share suggestion regarding improvements in the judging process or repeated problem with exhibits with the superintendent.

Provide volunteers with the following procedure to follow.



Suggested Interview Procedure:

Ask Questions:

The questions asked should test the understanding of the “why’s” as well as the “how’s” of the exhibited work. By asking questions and encouraging active participation in the interview discussion, a better understanding of the exhibitors, their skills, and levels of ability is gained. Asking about strengths, weaknesses and areas of extreme difficulty gives the exhibitor an opportunity for self-evaluation.

Be Positive:

Talk about something that stands out favorably at first glance. It is easier to hear suggestions for improvement in the context of what has been done well. Praise should be sincere and in line with the achievement.

Help the Exhibitor Feel At Ease:

Choose a pleasant site with as little noise or potential interruption as possible for the interview. Help the exhibitor feel at ease by extending a warm greeting and talking in a friendly manner.

Talk with, and not at, the exhibitor. A two-way conversation will add to the exhibitor’s learning experiences. Lead the exhibitor to discovering the positive aspects of the learning experience as well as to recognize the problems. Ask a little about the exhibitor and things he or she likes to do. Ask, “What new things did you learn?”

Find out how the exhibitor feels about the project; the ways the project has seemed successful or unsuccessful. Ask, “What do you like best about the project?”, “What do you like least about the project?” “Were you able to get help with your project?” “How were you helped?” Remember to be a good listener and to be genuinely interested in what the exhibitor did and why. Often something unexpected was learned. Allow time for the exhibitor to ask questions too.

Focus on the Individual:

Evaluate each item and exhibitor as an individual. The exhibitor’s efforts are not to be judged against other exhibitors. Use the growth of the individual and the set standards for the project to evaluate the skills and abilities of the exhibitor. Judges’ personal preference or taste should not influence the evaluation.



Be Consistent:

Evaluation of techniques or methods must be consistent.

Explain why certain techniques are or are not appropriate for the item. If non-standard approaches have been taken, explore the reason for taking a different approach and consider the effectiveness of that decision. It is important to keep an open mind and encourage creativity.

Facilitate Analysis:

Help exhibitors analyze their work, so that each successive venture will be a more successful one. Focus on the complete project and avoid becoming overly concerned with small details of the project.

Learning occurs when an exhibitor knows, understands and recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of the work presented for evaluation. Interview judges help the exhibitor reach this learning point. If an exhibit has not met standards, it is important to help the exhibitor learn what could be done in the future to assure success and why these changes are important. Just indicating that something was poorly done does not give the feedback necessary to correct future efforts, nor does it encourage the youth to try again.

End on a Positive Note:

Begin and end each evaluation with a positive approach. Find something about the exhibit that is successful, and compliment the exhibitor. Help the exhibitor to discover what could be done to improve the exhibit. Try to inspire future work.

If interview judging is done well, exhibitors will leave with a sense of accomplishment, even when the project has not met their own or the judges' expectations. It is important to remember that the goal of project work is the development and growth of the youth involved. With proper support from adults, growth from working with a project can occur at all levels of project success.

Sample Questions for Interviews**Introduction**

1. What did you enjoy about working with this project?
2. Have you taken this project before? What did you learn during those years?
3. What were your goals for this project?



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Detailed Learning

4. What did you learn as you worked with this project?
5. How did you go about making or assembling this exhibit?
6. Did someone help you with your project? Who? How?
7. What were some of the difficulties or problems you had?
8. What would you do differently if you did it again?
9. Approximately how much did this project cost?
10. What are some characteristics of a good exhibit?
11. What do you believe contributed to the success of this project?

Continued Learning

12. What other things would you like to do with this project?
13. What are some new things you could learn?
14. Have you helped someone else learn these skills?
15. How do you see applying what was learned as helpful in the future?

Written Critique

Judges written comments are very beneficial for the exhibitor. The written critique gives valuable information to the exhibitor about the qualities desired and standards used for judging. It serves as a reminder for those who may not remember all that was said during the judging experience and is a guide for future project work. This reference is valuable as the exhibitor continues to grow in project work.

Final Note:

There are variations in counties and states in judging procedures. Always check rules and regulations with the person handling the judging. It is always best to ask—then you can be sure of the requirements.

Sources used:

Parsons, Jerry, Ph.D. *Helping Volunteers Recognize 4-Hers and Introduction to Model for Recognizing 4-Hers*, USDA, National 4-H Council, 1996

Reference:

Payne, Claudia. *Maryland Judging of 4-H Exhibits*, University of MD, College Park, 1996



The following definitions will help judges who are involved in evaluations using a

RIBBON SYSTEM

DANISH SYSTEM:

There is no special formula about the number of blue, red or white ribbons to be given. Quality, measured against product standards, and fulfillment of exhibit requirements determine the ranking. An accepted standard for ribbons are as follows:

Blue	means the exhibit meets or exceeds product standards and meet exhibit requirements; overall, the work is of high quality. Excellent.
Red	means the exhibit meets minimum product standards and exhibit requirements; overall the work is of average quality. Very Good.
White	indicates serious or considerable deficiencies in meeting product standards and/or exhibit requirements. Good.

AMERICAN SYSTEM:

This is a rank order system in which exhibits are placed from first to infinity. There may also be special categories such as top of class, best of show, grand champion, etc. While the American system uses product standards and fulfillment of exhibit requirements, it also uses the idea of competition among exhibitors to establish the ranking. Check with the county prior to judging to clarify their interpretation of this system, as well as all place awards to be made.

PARTICIPATION SYSTEM:

This system recognizes the exhibitor's participation in a category, usually without regard to the quality of the exhibit or competition among the exhibitors. This is often used with youth who are 5-7 years old.

Combinations and modifications of these systems are used often. If there are questions or something is not clear, always check with the department superintendent.

Reference: Payne, Claudia. Maryland Judging of 4-H Exhibits, University of MD, College Park, 1996



Opportunities Beyond the Club

In addition to the actual Club experience, members and leaders are encouraged to participate in local, state and national events as well. As a youth development professional it is your job to maintain contact with state and national programs that are providing developmental experiences for youth and to connect the youth in your program to these opportunities.

Listed here are some of the national 4-H opportunities available annually:

National 4-H Week is celebrated the first full week in October. Over 6 million 4-H'ers nationwide celebrate with special activities including window displays, community projects, attending a church service as a group, field trips, outings and more. National 4-H Council provides a packet of ideas for celebrating National 4-H Week that includes sample news releases, radio spots, clip art and more. Visit your 4-H Office and ask to see the 4-H Week packet that usually arrives in early summer.

National 4-H Conference - This event is held at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland near Washington, D.C. in the spring and is planned and conducted by teens. At the National 4-H Conference, teen delegates take the lead by serving on consulting groups to make recommendations for future directions for 4-H and by accepting responsibility on one of the operations committees to help conduct the events and functions of the Conference. Activities include a visit to Capitol Hill and meetings with senators and/or representatives. This event is sponsored and conducted by National 4-H Council and CSREES. Contact your county 4-H Agent for more information.

The National 4-H Youth Technology Leadership Team - The N4HYTLT consists of 4-H teens from across the U.S.A. who share a commitment to using their technological skills to help integrate more technology into all 4-H programs and to close the Digital Divide that separates the technology haves and have-nots in America. For more information, go to www.4-h.org/tech.

National 4-H Technology Conference – The National 4-H Technology Conference was created on the idea that State 4-H Programs need to increase their technology projects and programs and also that states need to be more proactive when

dealing with teaching technology to youth. Youth take leadership in planning and conducting the conference. It is held in the summer, and is sponsored by CYFERnet (Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network)/CSREES. More information about the National 4-H Technology Conference can be found at <http://fourh.ucdavis.edu/4hntc>.

National 4-H Congress - National 4-H Congress is the flagship event of the 4-H program. The program is built upon the Cooperative Extension System's belief that young people can be significant partners in addressing the issues that face our nation especially those affecting youth. Each year a National Design Team of Extension educators, 4-H youth, and 4-H adult volunteers analyze current youth issues and determine the most effective ways to address them. The program combines plenary sessions, seminars, discussion groups, and a service learning experience. The nation's most outstanding community leaders, speakers, and educators present the most current and timely information available. More information can be found at www.national4-hcongress.com.

Citizenship Washington Focus is a national 4-H event held at the National 4-H Center during June and July. There are seven different sessions offered at a cost of under \$500. This excellent week-long event is open to high school age youth, not just 4-H'ers. Those attending CWF will increase their leadership skills, gain a much broader understanding of citizenship, learn a great deal about their nation's capitol and the federal government and have fun. Call 1-800-368-7432 to learn more about CWF or visit 4-H Council's Web Page at <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu>.

Exchange Programs supplement the world citizenship programming that occurs within a 4-H club. One or more of the following opportunities may be available beyond the club.

IFYE - The International Four-H Youth Exchange (the "F" originally stood for farm) provides an opportunity for 4-H'ers from around the world to visit another country to learn about other lifestyles and cultures and to spread goodwill and understanding. There are several different options and various lengths of stay with six weeks to six months being common. IFYE's are older 4-H'ers that have, depending on the exchange, completed high school or graduated from college.

4-H Japanese Exchange provides an opportunity for youth ages 12-18 from the U.S. to visit Japan and for Japanese youth to visit America. Participants live with a host family in this fully chaperoned program. They share everyday life activities with many new people. State 4-H specialists and local 4-H agents handle the logistics of this program for youth in their communities.

State Sponsored Exchanged Programs are available for youth in



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many states in which relationships with youth development professionals in countries around the world have been developed. State 4-H specialists and local 4-H agents handle the logistics of these exchange opportunities for youth in their communities.

State to State Exchange Programs between individual counties in different states who are interested in learning more about one another's area of the United States are available as interest arises. Many states participate in this program. Local 4-H agents make the connections and arrangements for these exchange opportunities for the youth in their communities.

Wonders of Washington (WOW) - National 4-H Council provides this "ultimate Washington experience" for youth groups (students in grades 6 - 12) of 25 or more. Two and six day programs are available. Lodging is provided at the National 4-H Center. WOW includes field trips and workshops that highlight the historical, political and cultural attractions of Washington, DC. Call National 4-H Council at 1 800 368-7432 for more information.

There are also a variety of national 4-H contests in various project areas. These are for individuals and teams that have won at the county and state levels. Your county 4-H staff can explain more about these opportunities.

Opportunities for professional development are available regionally and nationally for both adult and youth leaders and for youth development professionals.

Regional 4-H Volunteer Leader Forums – Adult and teen leaders from multi-state regions can attend these annual meetings to learn new information, gain new skills, and share ideas with other 4-H leaders. Contact your local 4-H Agent to find out when the next Regional Leader Forum is scheduled in your area.

4-H Professional Development Opportunities for Youth Development Professionals include NAE4-HA (National Association of Extension/4-H Agents) – affiliate membership in the professional association of 4-H Agents is open to the staff of partnering organizations. This internationally recognized and inclusive network focuses on the needs of the youth development profession and sponsors a national conference for youth development professionals each year. See www.nae4ha.org for more information.



