



4-H and Youth Development

Strengthening Goal-centered Learning in the Exhibit Experience for Judges

Young people develop life skills from 4-H learning experiences. Goals are at the core of 4-H learning experiences. Among the learning experiences are projects, exhibits, and evaluation of exhibits. The video, *Talk About MY Goals . . . Goal Centered Judging*, available in every county extension office, provides judges an excellent background in goal-centered learning.

Emphasize Goals When Evaluating Exhibits

The 4-H member's goal will serve as the beginning point for judges. The ultimate goal of the judging process is to get 4-H'ers to think about and set standards based on their needs. This will help them develop the life skill of decision making. The skill of goal setting and working to achieve the goal is something we strive to teach and practice in many of our educational programs.

Within an exhibit experience, each youth needs to be an active participant in determining the standards against which her or his exhibit will be evaluated. By sharing the goal, a 4-H'er communicates the standard and is an active participant. When a judge knows the 4-H member's goals, a judge can use the goals to determine the standard and structure a conference or focus on printed information that will provide positive feedback. Knowing a member's goals also allows the judge to identify ways in which the exhibit could be improved.

How the 4-H'er Benefits

As a result of the judging experience, we expect that the 4-H'er will:

- feel good about the experience.



- gain knowledge about the exhibit and himself or herself.
- be empowered to do self evaluation and set new goals.
- receive recognition.

To achieve these outcomes during the exhibit evaluation experience, you will be building rapport, gathering information, encouraging self evaluation and reflection, providing feedback, and guiding the 4-H'er in planning for the future.

As you work with the 4-H'er in the judging process, you will be using the 4-H Exhibit Evaluation Guide (VI-1067-SAS). You will consider three major criteria:

- learning involved,
- workmanship and techniques, and
- general appearance and design.

Criteria is defined as the set of categories that are to be used in the evaluation of a class. These criteria will be used at the state level and are recommended for use at the local and county levels.

Remember, we are not judging the goals; we are judging progress toward the goals. The judge will use the appropriate standards for each of the three criteria that relate to the 4-H'er's goals and exhibit. Listed on the back of the evaluation guide (VI-1067-SAS) will be standards unique to the project for the judge to use if appropriate, depending on the goals. The three criteria follow.

1. Learning Involved
(decision making process used, how problems were solved, new skills developed, how gathered information was used, etc.)
2. Workmanship and Techniques
 - A. If the exhibit is an actual product (construction suitable for intended use, directions/guidelines followed appropriately, suitability of materials, an appropriate finish, etc.)
 - B. If the exhibit is sharing an idea (accurate information, complete, organized, original, creative, practical, clearly communicated, etc.)
3. General Appearance and Design
(neat, attractive, application of design elements and art principles where suitable)

4-H'ers Have Input in Choosing Standards

The preceding information represents a shift in philosophy. In the past, we used the same set of standards for the same type of exhibit—no matter what the goals. Now, the judge uses standards that are appropriate and determines which standards are appropriate based on the 4-H member's exhibit goals. The procedure that was used in the past may have emphasized the exhibit or product. Now we are emphasizing the growth process that occurs as the 4-H'er creates the exhibit and is

involved in the exhibit experience. We are not saying that the judge should forego all standards, but we are saying that the judge should start with the 4-H member's goals, then select the standards that are appropriate. We also believe that the member needs to be an active partner in the process. The ultimate goal is to get 4-H'ers to think about and set standards based on their needs.

How Standards Fit

Some standards are essential. Consider, for example, standards for food preservation that are necessary for food safety reasons or correct wiring procedures for electrical safety. These are standards that are consistent with the fundamental structure of the subject matter.

If standards are used in making evaluations, appropriate questions to ask yourself might be:

- (1) Why is this standard used?
- (2) Whose standard is it?
- (3) What will the use of this standard do to or for the 4-H'er?

Some standards are set by society through an agency of government for the protection of all (e.g., those standards necessary to pass a test for a driver's license), some by professional or trade associations for entrance into the group, some by a particular type of employer, or some by a leader of a 4-H club. Some standards may be set by the 4-H'er. Answering the three questions may help to avoid those standards that are arbitrary and a possible hindrance in the learning process.

Let's take an example. At a food and nutrition project meeting, 4-H'ers may be told that one of the objectives is to develop the skill to make standard biscuits. If they are preparing for employment in a bakery where "standard" biscuits are sold, they need knowledge of the size, shape, texture, color, and flavor of

standard biscuits, and they need the skill to make them. But if the 4-H'ers are preparing to cook only for themselves or their families, the "standard" biscuit may not be their special need. The standard was developed by those who liked biscuits two inches high, light golden brown, etc., but the family may prefer biscuits one inch high, dark, and crusty. They may need to know how to vary the standard recipe and instructions in order to please those for whom they are cooking. If we tell them, even nonverbally, that only the standard biscuit is "good" and that people who like nonstandard biscuits are a bit strange, we can damage self concepts that may already be weak. Our purpose is to build self esteem, not weaken it.

Provide Feedback

As the exhibit is being evaluated against the appropriate standards, the judge provides feedback to the 4-H'er. The judge's feedback indicates how closely the exhibit comes to the appropriate standards. Categories may be excellent, good, fair, poor, okay, needs improvement, etc. The judge also needs to consider the age and experience of the exhibitor, if known. An older, more experienced 4-H'er would be expected to meet more of the standards than a younger, less experienced 4-H'er who has a similar exhibit.

If the evaluation of exhibits is a part of a member's learning experience, he or she should have the opportunity to improve the exhibit before it is exhibited at a higher level. This opportunity supports the 4-H'er in trying to reach or more nearly accomplish her or his goal, thus enhancing the overall learning experience.

How to Conference Judge

The 4-H'ers have been asked to come prepared to answer the following questions:

- What did you want to accomplish by creating this exhibit?

- How did you go about working toward your goals?
- What were the most important things you learned as you worked toward your goals?
- What ideas or plans do you have for the future based on what you have learned or discovered?

As you guide them through the conference judging process, you will need to build a comfortable rapport with the 4-H'er; you will need to ask questions to get the best information needed to evaluate the exhibit; you will need to provide feedback to the 4-H'er, affirming successes and offering comments for improvement; you will help 4-H'ers reflect on their own accomplishments and evaluate themselves; and you will help 4-H'ers use the judging experience to set new goals and do some planning for the future.

Build Rapport

In any conference judging setting, you will want to first build rapport by using the 4-H'er's name, maintaining eye contact, and sitting on the same side of the table if possible. For example,

Judge: Hi Don, I'm Sharon, and I'm going to visit with you about your exhibit and what you learned.

Gather Information

Next, you will want to gather as much information as possible by asking open-ended questions such as: What were your goals? How did you go about working toward your goals? What were the most important things you learned as you worked toward your goals?

Listen carefully to what the 4-H'er says, and let the answers help determine the next questions. This is called "tracking." It demonstrates that you are listening and are sincerely interested in the 4-H'er and gives value to what the 4-H'er chooses to share. Select questions

that will solicit the type of information you want.

"What" questions most often lead to facts.

Judge: What are some of the foods you eat that provide you with calcium?

"Where" questions most often lead to location or source of information.

Judge: Where do you think you could find a list of foods rich in calcium?

"Why" questions often lead to a discussion of reasons.

Judge: Why do you need calcium?

"How" questions often lead to a discussion about processes or sequences or to feelings.

Judge: How did you do that?

"Could" questions may result in a variety of answers and can be used to take the command out of tell me, give me statements.

Judge: Could you tell me what your goal was, Don?

Consider the age and experience level as you ask questions. As you work with young or beginning members, "what" and "where" questions help them express their knowledge and source of knowledge. As members mature in age and experience, "how" and "why" questions become more important in helping members think about more abstract concepts and/or the application of concepts.

Encourage Self Evaluation and Reflection

Self evaluation and reflection help youth develop skills in measuring their own progress. This is a learned skill, and some youth will need more direct guidance than others in the process. As youth measure their own progress, they can take on more responsibility for their own learning. By actively involving the 4-H'ers in

the evaluation process in a way that allows them to identify problems and generate solutions, they are more likely to understand the problem and try solutions. Self evaluation can increase the youth's decision-making skills and encourage new ways to learn.

Here are some tips on how to encourage self evaluation.

- Allow the 4-H'ers to talk about the criteria and their self-imposed standards.
- Encourage 4-H'ers to show you examples of work they are proud of and work they would like to change.
- Allow 4-H'ers to reflect on not only what they learned about the exhibit, but also what they learned about themselves as they completed the exhibit.
- Use questions to guide the 4-H'ers through this process.

As a guide in the process, you can modify additional suggestions about standards the youth may wish to include in the evaluation. However, limit the additional standards to one or two for young members and two to three for older members. For example, Judge: As you made your poster, what things did you consider?

Judge: How did you evaluate your kit?

Provide Specific Feedback

Eventually a judge reaches the point where he or she needs to make specific comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the exhibit. Feedback is often classified as negative or positive. Another way of viewing it is to classify it as supportive or corrective. Supportive feedback reinforces ongoing behavior. Corrective feedback indicates a change in behavior is appropriate. By thinking of feedback in this way, all feedback can be positive. As we think about young people, the purpose of all feedback should be to

assist them in maintaining or enhancing their present levels of effectiveness or appropriate behavior. Consider the following steps in providing feedback.

1. Be attentive. Orient your body toward the 4-H'er and look at him/her.
2. Initiate the interaction pleasantly. Start out with praise, empathy, or pleasant comments.
3. Specifically describe what you wish to discuss. Give the feedback in specific terms without being judgmental, personal, or emotional.
4. Give rationales. Unless the reasons are obvious, tell the 4-H'er why the method/choice is important to merit your feedback.
5. Be open to ideas or suggestions from the 4-H'er, offer constructive alternatives as needed.
6. Thank the 4-H'er for listening.
7. Supply written feedback if requested.

Judge: As you use things, it's good to think about ways to improve an already good idea. I think you have done a nice job of assembling the equipment you need, and you have paid attention to details—right down to the cardboard to check the tattoo before you do it.

Judge: Now, just in case someone else might need to find the kit, I think it would be helpful if you would label it somehow on the outside. What do you think, Katie?

4-H'er: Yeah, I guess that might be better. My little sister could find it easier if she was supposed to go get it.

Judge: How do you think you would label it?

4-H'er: I could write on it with a wide felt tip pen or maybe use paint and draw a picture of a tattooer.

Judge: Those are both good ideas. You will need to think about what will hold up the best, considering where it will be used.

Look to the Future

This can be an opportunity for the youth to look to the future and set new goals that may or may not be used in 4-H project work. The focus for the future should be action (e.g., where else the 4-H'er might use this information or skill, what new information or skill the person might want to learn or develop, or where the 4-H'er might gain a new skill or information).

Older members may be more capable of thinking of an application for the future because they deal in more abstract terms. As you work with younger members, you may need to be more concrete. An effective judge encourages 4-H'ers to reflect on what they have done with their exhibits and how they would like to change them.

An effective judge helps an exhibitor self evaluate by asking questions that will help the 4-H'er describe how he or she feels about the product. Here are some examples.

Judge: Has the kit helped you find the tattoo equipment easier?

Judge: Besides containing all the needed equipment, how else did you evaluate your kit?

Judge: It appears you gave a lot of thought to what you wanted from the container. How happy are you with it now that you've used it?

These are some of the ways to help make conference judging a significant growth experience. It's a contact that may last only a few minutes, but it's an opportunity to make a real difference to a 4-H'er.

References

Talk About MY Goals . . . Goal Centered Judging video #75761

Strengthening Goal-centered Learning in the Exhibit Experience for 4-H'ers, 4H-203C

Strengthening Goal-centered Learning in the Exhibit Experience for Parents, 4H-203B

Strengthening Goal-centered Learning in the Exhibit Experience for Volunteers, 4H-203A

4-H Builds Life Skills, 4H-4A

What We Know About Youth and Competition, VI-1001-IYP

What We Know About Control/ Helplessness, VI-1012-IYP

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