

Clover Kids Toolbox

Section A

GENERAL INFORMATION



Clover Kids

Where children experience the joy of learning
in a supportive, creative, challenging and fun environment.



WELCOME TO CLOVER KIDS! A 4-H Youth Development Program

Clover Kids is an exciting 4-H program for children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Clover Kids was specifically developed to bring the life skill building and experiential learning benefits of traditional 4-H to children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Its goal is to promote children's positive development through cooperative learning and developmentally appropriate activities.

Children participating in 4-H Clover Kids program will:

- Meet new friends, learn and practice social skills by working and playing in small groups.
- Gain self-confidence and learn about themselves in a non-competitive learning environment.
- Experience the joy and fun of learning.
- Master physical skills through hands-on or experiential learning (learning by doing).

The key to a great Clover Kids program is providing a variety of HANDS-ON learning experiences and helping children apply those experiences to their own lives using EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PRACTICES. As leaders, we encourage the group members to share what they are doing to help them process the information they are getting in the activity. Then, we help them apply information, knowledge or skill to what they already know. (DO the activity, REFLECT on what they did, and APPLY it in an area of their lives.) Clover Kids leaders should try to incorporate different types of activities from crafts and art exploration experiences, to science experiments, to music and cooperative games.

Social skills and working with others are important parts of the Clover Kids program. It is important that each child feel like an important part of the group, so Clover Kids work cooperatively together rather than competing. Competition is not appropriate for children 3rd grade and younger and this includes the games played by the group. Games in which someone "gets out" or a definite winner and loser is chosen should be avoided.

Clover Kids relies heavily on volunteers. Volunteers must comply with all aspects of Iowa State University's Child Protection and Safety Policy and Iowa State University's mandate to be non-discriminatory. Volunteers have included senior citizens, retired and current educators, 4-H club members and leaders, college students, neighborhood moms and dads, child care personnel, and others interested in working with children.

For more information, contact Brenda Welch, Regional 4-H Youth Program Specialist; phone 712-546-7835 or email bwelch@iastate.edu.

Clover Kids website: <http://extension.iastate.edu/4h/clover>

Clover Kids Contacts

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Philosophy and Guidelines

About the Iowa 4-H Clover Kids Program

Iowa 4-H Clover Kids is a FUN 4-H program for children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade that meets children's four basic development needs of belonging, independence, mastery, and generosity. The program offers a variety of cooperative hands-on experiences uniquely suited for Kindergarten through 3rd grade audiences to assist children in becoming competent, confident, connected, contributing, and caring citizens with character.

Philosophical Base and Structure

Children enrolled in the Clover Kids program, due to age appropriateness concerns, will not be eligible for any activities or projects designed for 4th - 12th grade 4-H members. While many of its members will go on to other 4-H experiences after 3rd grade, this program is designed with specific educational objectives that focus on children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. It is not the intent or the objective of Iowa 4-H Clover Kids program to duplicate the 4th - 12th grade 4-H program, nor to create mini-4-H.

Consequently, guidelines for the Clover Kids program differ from those of the 4th - 12th grade 4-H program. One important difference is that cooperative events rather than competitive events are emphasized in the Kindergarten through 3rd grade program. Studies of children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade indicate the best way to build children's self-confidence is to build learning opportunities into activities that emphasize self- understanding and positive social interactions with other children and adults. Competition with self and others is not developmentally appropriate for this age group. Therefore, children enrolled in this program are not eligible for any competitive 4-H events. Noncompetitive cooperative educational opportunities are win-win learning experiences where all children benefit and grow.

Since the life skills for Kindergarten through 3rd grade and the win-win approach may be different for staff and volunteers who are more familiar with the 4th - 12th grade 4-H program, it is especially important that those planning to deliver Clover Kids programming receive training in the Clover Kids program's philosophy and guidelines.

Clover Kids activities are designed according to the experiential, hands-on learning model in cooperative settings. Experiential learning is based on the belief that learning is more effective, and lasts longer, when people are involved in an activity, reflect on what they learned through the activity, and can apply learned knowledge and skills to other situations.

Many Clover Kids activities are designed for children interacting with other children in small groups. Children involved in these cooperative groups learn from one another and develop the ability to share, work, and learn together. Development of social skills is emphasized as learning takes place.

The Clover Kids program:

- ◆ Views Kindergarten through 3rd grade children in the context of family and community
- ◆ Values ongoing relationships among Kindergarten through 3rd grade children and caring adults, among children and older youth, and among the children themselves
- ◆ Provides dynamic, flexible, open, and accessible educational activities to all Kindergarten through 3rd grade children
- ◆ Emphasizes cooperative learning, as opposed to competitive activities, and focuses on children's strengths
- ◆ Integrates active, hands-on learning opportunities designed to develop children's physical, mental, and social skills through varied activities that focus on developing a skill or concept necessary to complete the activity
- ◆ Offers programming based on research in the areas of child development, educational theory, and relevant subject matter
- ◆ Provides training on child development, educational methods, and subject matter content for people who work with Kindergarten through 3rd grade children.

Program Objectives

The overall program objective of the Iowa 4-H Clover Kids program is to create fun, supportive, cooperative, and developmentally appropriate learning environments for culturally diverse children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. The Clover Kids program also strives for active family engagement within Clover Kids programming and the development of strong partnerships with caring adults from the community who enjoy providing developmentally appropriate learning experiences to youth.

Children who participate in the Iowa 4-H Clover Kids program will:

- ♦ Develop self-understanding and self-confidence through working with others in positive, cooperation-based learning environments.
- ♦ Experience achievement through participation in a hands-on, age-appropriate and success-oriented curricula based on the experiential learning model.
- ♦ Develop positive attitudes toward self, family, and community through cooperative learning, positive social interactions, and immediate feedback reinforcement in a wide variety of short-term learning experiences.
- ♦ Develop decision making skills through making age-appropriate choices and judgments.
- ♦ Experience the joy of learning by participating in learning environments that are supportive, creative, challenging, and fun.
- ♦ Engage in active learning situations that encourage mastery of age-appropriate physical/motor skills.

Program Components and Requirements

As part of the Iowa 4-H Youth Development program, Iowa 4-H Clover Kids programming must address the following guidelines:

- Complete volunteer group leader background checks; volunteers approved by the local Extension Council. [The recommendation is one (1) adult for every six (6) Kindergarten through 3rd grade members.]
- Create ongoing, regular group meetings for a minimum of six hours over the course of the 4-H year (September through August).
- Provide research based age-appropriate, hands-on, cooperative activities that build life skills and are uniquely suited for the Kindergarten through 3rd grade developmental age group.
- Develop supportive, creative, challenging and fun environments in which children experience the joy of learning.
- Foster cooperative opportunities that foster children's self-understanding and self-confidence.
- Provide active, hands-on learning opportunities designed to develop children's physical, mental, and social skills.
- Emphasize opportunities for positive social interactions with other children and caring adults.
- Enroll Clover Kids members through the county 4-H program.
- Ready Clover Kids members for the next stage in their 4-H educational adventure: 4-H club membership.

We recommend one adult for every six (6) children in Clover Kids for several reasons:

1. A high adult to child ratio helps children gain more from educational activities because they are more likely to have an adult directly involved with them during activities to help direct the activity, process learning gained by participating in the activity, and applying what has been learned to other settings.
2. Children are more likely to be in an atmosphere conducive to practicing and developing social skills with both adults and other children.
3. A high adult to child ratio makes using quality group management practices more effective and consistent.
4. A high adult to child ratio alleviates some of the stress of leading a Clover Kids group because it creates a shared, supportive atmosphere for adult group leaders.

Format

4-H Clover Kids Groups can be organized in many different ways as long as the program components and requirements are met. Some possible formats are:

Before or After School Groups - Clover Kids groups can meet before or after school at a school or other location where children are already gathered. Possible scenarios are:

- Clover Kids is a weekly/bi-weekly/monthly meeting that is held at the school as part of the school district sponsored afterschool program and led by afterschool program staff, Extension staff, and/or volunteer group leaders.
- Clover Kids is a weekly/bi-weekly/monthly meeting that is held at the school and led by Extension staff and/or volunteer group leaders. The program is not sponsored by the school district.
- Clover Kids is a weekly/bi-weekly/monthly meeting held at a convenient location and is led by a local organization(s) sponsoring afterschool activities for children and youth. It is led by afterschool program staff, Extension staff, and/or volunteer group leaders.

4-H Club Sponsored Groups - Clover Kids groups can be held in combination with 4-H club meetings; the Clover Kids group can meet at the same time and location (or nearby location) as the 4th-12th grade 4-H club. Clover Kids members will participate in age-appropriate activities separate from the 4-H club meetings. Clover Kids members, however, may be included in age-appropriate 4-H club activities and 'fun' events. Clover Kids groups are led by volunteer group leaders and/or Extension staff.

Home School Groups - Clover Kids groups can be held in conjunction with home-school association meetings. These groups can meet weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly and can be led by volunteer group leaders and/or Extension staff members.

Community/Neighborhood Groups - Clover Kids groups can be sponsored by a community or neighborhood group. Meetings can be held at a time (evenings, weekends, etc.) and location (home, community center, church, etc.) convenient for the leaders and members. These groups can be led by volunteer group leaders and/or Extension staff.

Summer Groups - Clover Kids groups can be sponsored by a summer recreation program. These groups might meet daily, twice a week, or weekly throughout the summer at a convenient location. These groups can be led by summer recreation program staff members, volunteer group leaders, and/or Extension staff.

Staff and Volunteer Training

Iowa State University Extension staff and volunteers who work with Clover Kids groups will be trained in:

- ◆ Implementing the principles and practices of positive youth development when working with Clover Kids group members.
- ◆ Articulating the Clover Kids program philosophy.
- ◆ Learning the ages, stages, and learning characteristics of Kindergarten through 3rd grade children.
- ◆ Engaging families in providing quality learning environments and support for children in the Clover Kids program.
- ◆ Using 4-H Clover Kids curricula and evaluating additional developmentally appropriate curricula resources.
- ◆ Implementing the Iowa State University Extension Child Protection and Safety Policy with particular sensitivity to working with children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade.
- ◆ Working with children from diverse backgrounds.
- ◆ Understanding barriers to and motivation of children's participation.
- ◆ Integrating the experiential learning model within Clover Kids programming.
- ◆ Utilizing universal precautions for addressing emergencies.
- ◆ Using appropriate methods to recognize a child's accomplishments.
- ◆ Implementing positive discipline strategies.
- ◆ Managing groups effectively.