

# 4-H School Enrichment: A Guide for 4-H Faculty and Staff<sup>1</sup>

Andrew Toelle<sup>2</sup>

## About 4-H School Enrichment

School Enrichment is a partnership between the UF/IFAS Extension service and a school district to provide educational content in various subject areas. Extension values its relationship with schools and welcomes the opportunity to provide research-based curricula for classroom use. This delivery mode provides opportunities to educate youth who may never be a part of a 4-H club and may also serve as an entry point into the world of 4-H. An agent interested in offering school enrichment programs should consider both the benefits as well as the commitment required.

A key goal of 4-H School Enrichment is to expose youth to other 4-H experiences, such as the 4-H Club. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of UF/IFAS Extension, part of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Research shows that:

- 4-H'ers in Grades 7–12 are nearly 4 times more likely to contribute to their communities.
- 4-H'ers in Grades 8–12 are about 2 times more likely to be civically active.
- 4-H'ers in Grade 10–12 are nearly 2 times more likely to participate in science programs during out-of-school time.

- 4-H girls are 2 times more likely (Grade 10) and nearly 3 times more likely (Grade 12) to take part in science programs compared to girls in other out-of-school-time activities.
- Grade 7 4-H'ers are nearly 2 times more likely to make healthier choices (Learner et al., 2013).

4-H School Enrichment can give youth and parents a picture of the benefits of a longer commitment to 4-H. The purpose of this publication is to support 4-H agents as they plan, develop, and evaluate school enrichment programs.

## Definition of 4-H School Enrichment

The national definition of school enrichment is “groups of youth receiving a sequence of learning experiences in cooperation with school officials during school hours, to support the school curriculum. It involves direct teaching by Extension staff or trained volunteers, including teachers” (Diem, 2001). School-aged youth receive:

- A well-planned sequence of learning experiences during regular school hours.
- A series of lessons (minimum of six hours of educational content) that broaden or supplement the regular curriculum.

1. This document is 4H324, one of a series of the 4-H Youth Development Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date September 2012. Revised April 2015, July 2018, April 2023. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication. This publication was adapted by Tracy A. Tesdall from *4-H School Enrichment: A Guide for South Dakota Extension Educators* (2008), developed by Marilyn Rasmussen, Youth Development/4-H Specialist, Cooperative Extension Service and College of Family and Consumer Sciences, South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD.

2. Andrew Toelle, Extension agent IV, 4-H regional specialized agent, Northeast District UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

- Lessons conducted by Extension personnel, trained volunteers, or the regular classroom teachers.

A school can be public, private, or homeschool.

The success of School Enrichment depends on effective programming that meets the academic needs of youth and satisfies the current State of Florida standards. The goal of 4-H School Enrichment is to provide educational programming to enrich and supplement the formal school curriculum. Students will be able to relate their academic preparation to real-world experiences through this linkage to Extension and community educators. Extension provides research-based curricula and teaching methods within the context of school settings.

## Benefits of 4-H School Enrichment

1. Increases the capacity of schools by

- providing teachers and students with trustworthy, balanced educational experiences supported by UF/IFAS and other land-grant university research;
- delivering learning experiences using current theories on educational attainment (e.g., experiential learning cycles, active learning strategies, youth development best practices, etc.); and
- offering students a way to extend their learning by offering after-school experiences with 4-H through clubs, summer residential and day camps, contest and events, and workshops.

2. Increases the reach of Extension to youth, makes 4-H available to all youth, increases the public image of 4-H, and can increase the support base for 4-H.

3. Acts as an introduction to 4-H for youth.

4. Provides research-based curricula that are unbiased and evaluated for effectiveness by UF/IFAS Extension, other land-grant universities, or a national jury of 4-H National Headquarters.

5. Provides an opportunity to develop or extend a cooperative relationship between schools and Extension.

## Procedures for Initiating School Enrichment Programs

A partnership with the schools extends the 4-H program to more youth through a unique delivery mode. School Enrichment may be a new experience for some Extension agents; therefore, this guide presents some strategies,

both for developing a partnership with the schools, and for programming. Also, see the appendix, “Working with Schools” (Table 2), to familiarize yourself with many education definitions.

## Get to Know Your School District

Before introducing yourself to a school principal on behalf of the 4-H program, do your homework by researching how many schools are in your county and where they are located. Go to the Florida Department of Education website and review the “[District Data](#),” which includes Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores and other assessment scores, so you can view the strengths of your school district and what their needs are. They also publish each school district’s accountability [report](#). This valuable information will help you market the value of incorporating 4-H School Enrichment in the classroom. In addition, determine if any of your 4-H volunteers or parents are currently teachers in the school district. They could be strong advocates for your program.

## Steps for Initiating School Enrichment Programs

1. Determine the person responsible for curriculum at the school. If you do not know, begin with the school principal or the superintendent of schools. For private schools, the school principal is a good place to start. Parents within homeschool groups can point you to the proper person. Large school districts usually have a curriculum director, education director, or specific staff for curriculum management and delivery; smaller districts may not. It is important to start at the top of the organizational structure: ask for the proper channel of communication and contact the specified person. In a large school district, curriculum staff may be responsible for specific grades and/or subject matter. Contact the appropriate representative based on the curriculum that you are capable of delivering (for example, grades K–3).
2. Identify yourself and the purpose of your call. Ask permission to contact the staff person in charge of curriculum management/delivery. Many school officials do not recommend contacting individual classroom teachers directly, while private schools may suggest teachers to contact. Homeschool groups may want you to set a meeting with the entire homeschool group. Arrange for a meeting to explain 4-H School Enrichment to the appropriate school official.
3. Schools have local and state mandates to meet through their curriculum. 4-H curricula and methods should

“enrich” the program of instruction offered by the schools. The curriculum director or teachers can give Extension staff advice on how programs can be integrated as part of the established curriculum. The curriculum director or teachers can also suggest how to distribute the information to teachers.

4. If the school district is interested, decide how to make the information available to teachers. Ask for guidance in determining the best approach. One good approach is for the Extension agent or other 4-H staff to present program offerings directly to staff. To obtain time during fall’s teacher in-service dates requires asking early (February or March of the preceding school year). Other alternatives include scheduling an optional in-service sometime during the year or distributing brochures with program descriptions to teachers.
5. When contacting teachers, consider schedules for both the school day and the school calendar. Inquire about each school’s “clock time.” Principals may or may not be willing to share faculty-meeting times. Some school systems have faculty meetings by grade level (elementary, middle school, high school). Avoid busy times (such as report-card time and assessment testing periods) in the school calendar. The start of the second semester, when teachers are looking for some fresh ideas, may be a good time to make a presentation.
6. Be creative in connecting teachers with 4-H Extension curricula. Provide information about the intended youth audience (i.e., grade level), but realize that creative teachers may wish to adopt and adapt the curriculum for other grades. The advantage of meeting with teachers is that it provides the opportunity to explain the process and instructional methods used by 4-H, such as experiential and inquiry learning approaches.
7. Remember, immediately usable and highly adaptable programs are the most appealing. Usable means that the program does not require a lot of work on the teacher’s part. Adaptable means that the program can have many uses in the classroom or learning center, including displays, science fairs, PowerPoint presentations, web-sites, and individual or team projects.

## **Presenting School Enrichment to School Personnel**

Initially, Extension agents need to present School Enrichment offerings to school personnel. Agents may wish to identify a volunteer school-enrichment coordinator as a part of their volunteer middle-management system.

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATION WHEN ENTERING A SCHOOL**

Schools make a strong effort to control who is allowed onto campus. Many have a sign-in/out process. Others may require that any nonschool employee be background screened. Make sure that you abide by all rules and regulations surrounding accessing schools.

### **SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR GAINING ACCEPTANCE IN THE SCHOOLS**

- Be sure teachers understand you are not asking them to add something extra to their already busy schedule.
- Share that many of our curricula resources are correlated with current standards. Ask if there is a particular standard that we could help address with our curriculum.
- 4-H Extension programming is offered to enrich what they are currently doing. Make this critical linkage by answering this question: “How does or can this material fit into the classroom curriculum?”
- Enlist 4-H leaders/members or members of previous enrichment programs/special-interest groups to help with the presentation.
- Gain support of one of the key teachers. Identify an enthusiastic teacher or contact person within the system that the other teachers can talk to.
- Visit with interested teachers on a one-on-one basis.
- Check to see if there are countywide teacher trainings where you might secure a table to promote your 4-H School Enrichment opportunities.
- Use special events like career fairs, African or Hispanic heritage month, or reading events to get into a new school to introduce the program. STEM- or science-fair-type events are also good options.
- Offer to do a sample program of 15–30 minutes rotating to all classes for an entire grade level. This provides an opportunity to show hands-on demonstrations using equipment a teacher may not have—examples include a black-light handwashing demonstration or a seed-planting activity—then provide curriculum materials for the teacher to do additional lessons.

- Share previous School Enrichment successes (either your own or those of other UF/IFAS Extension agents).

## Scheduling School Enrichment Programs

Scheduling School Enrichment programs can be handled in a variety of ways. Larger schools may have an office (volunteer services) to coordinate schedules for or with you. With smaller schools, make the schedule arrangements with individual teachers.

Consider the following when scheduling programs:

1. Will the program be delivered to one large group of students or to individual classrooms? 4-H Staff need to be conscious of the time and travel to be invested.
2. Will schools be charged for School Enrichment programs? In many cases, the programs can be offered without cost or at-cost to schools. Schools may wish to purchase individual student manuals, but 4-H staff should provide leader/teacher guides. Most materials for the delivery of School Enrichment programs can be loaned to teachers, volunteers, or instructors, and those materials can then be reused. However, some items are consumables and will need to be replaced. Be sure to budget time for the return and replenishment process.
3. Reserve the appropriate audiovisual equipment needed for the program. Determine whether county Extension equipment or the school's equipment will be used. Delivery, scheduling, and sharing of printed materials must also be considered.
4. Develop an appropriate orientation and training plan. Face-to-face meetings are preferable. However, other modes, such as phone conferencing or other distance education platforms, may be necessary. Videos may also be developed to support training.

## 4-H School Enrichment Curricula Resources

Florida's foundation for School Enrichment is usually a subject-matter-driven curricula focused on knowledge and skills not addressed by typical school curricula. Curricula packages are usually designed for either a particular subject area or as a cross-curricula approach for a particular grade range. Any 4-H "project" or curriculum package can be used in a school setting; however, specific curricula have been designed to be used for this delivery system. The two

most popular projects are 4-H Embryology and Florida 4-H Public Speaking powered by Florida Power and Light.

## Involving School Enrichment Members in a County 4-H Program

School enrichment programs do not have to end in a classroom. At some point during the 4-H School Enrichment experience, encourage the participants to continue their 4-H experience by joining an existing 4-H club, recruit a parent to start their own 4-H club, or invite them to participate in other programs outside of class, such as the fair. Share a listing of the current 4-H clubs open to membership, the steps involved in joining one, or how to become a club volunteer.

A take-home 4-H newsletter/welcome letter can be used to let the youth's parents know that they have participated in a 4-H program and to introduce them to other 4-H opportunities.

### Establish an In-School Club

Florida 4-H also allows 4-H clubs to function during class time. The teacher is the organizational club leader, the students elect officers, and each month has a business meeting and an educational program. This allows the students to continue their 4-H experience throughout the school year. Vanessa Spero, RSA, UF/IFAS Extension developed an excellent series of publications on developing school-based programming that can be found [here](#).

### Involvement in County 4-H Programming

If the school enrichment members are unable to join a 4-H club, review your county's 4-H program. How could 4-H School Enrichment members participate? Not all county 4-H activities are adaptable for School Enrichment members. Examine each county program or activity to see how it could support members of School Enrichment programs. Listed below are some suggestions for involving School Enrichment members in county 4-H programming.

The key is planning ahead and informing classroom 4-H members about their eligibility to participate in county events.

### COUNTY FAIR

Some School Enrichment projects lend themselves to exhibits or displays. For example, in a horticulture class, terrariums made in the classroom could be exhibited at a fair. Inform school members of this opportunity during the classroom experience so they can plan for it. Other



school-related 4-H programs lend themselves to poster or notebook exhibits. Energy conservation or embryology are good examples of poster or exhibit subjects. In addition, look for opportunities to “extend” projects. For example, a project on bicycle safety could involve events such as a bike unit in a parade, a bike drill performance for grandstand entertainment, or competition in a bicycle rodeo.

## AWARDS PROGRAMS AND RECOGNITION

4-H School Enrichment members should have the opportunity to be considered for award programs in a project area that has awards available. The 4-H School Enrichment member must complete the same requirements as any other 4-H member. Recognition of 4-H School Enrichment members can be achieved in inexpensive ways. The [4H Mall.org](#) offers 4-H pins, certificates, or 4-H branded supplies (such as pencils and pens). If 4-H School Enrichment projects are part of a school’s science fair, ribbons might be appropriate. The 4-H Public Speaking program powered by Florida Power and Light has resources that are readily available to [teachers](#).

A feature story on the 4-H School Enrichment members for the school or local newspaper provides another type of recognition. Public speaking winners could be invited to speak to county commissioners or other community groups. Be creative when finding ways for 4-H’ers to share their sparks!

## COUNTY EVENTS

School Enrichment members may wish to participate in a public presentation contest. The teacher/leader can encourage members to participate when appropriate. Demonstrations and illustrated talks can be prepared in almost any subject area that is covered in a School Enrichment module.

## CAMPS—DAY AND OVERNIGHT CAMPS

Include 4-H School Enrichment members on mailing lists to make them aware of 4-H camping opportunities. Prepare an information sheet listing the various types of summer day or overnight camps available. Provide dates, costs, and contact information for the county Extension office.

## DISTRICT AND STATE EVENTS

Publicize 4-H district and state events to appropriate youth audiences in School Enrichment. Some examples are Teen Leadership Conference/Junior Congress, camps, performing arts opportunities (Share-the-Fun), or other community 4-H clubs.

## Who is considered a 4-H member?

A 4-H member is a youth who participates in any educational program or activity delivered by UF/IFAS Extension or receives UF/IFAS Extension-based curriculum. The term “4-H member” includes a youth who is “individually enrolled” or “group enrolled,” regardless of the type of 4-H engagement/delivery method in which they are participating (ECOP, 2019). There is no minimum time requirement to be a 4-H’er.

4-H’er is an all-inclusive term referring to youth in 4-H programs (that is, community clubs, 4-H after-school clubs, special-interest clubs, short-term programs, camps, and school enrichment programs). School Enrichment members are counted on the annual federal statistical report derived from the 4-H Online enrollment system.

For School Enrichment participants, often referred to as “group enrollments,” the enrollment system does not require the detailed information on each participant as it would for an individually enrolled 4-H member. For reporting purposes, particular information is requested for these groups of individuals. A sample 4-H Online group enrollment worksheet can be found in the Appendix. Youth that wish to participate in programs off school grounds will need to enroll in the [4-H Online](#) system and pay the appropriate enrollment fee as required.

## Evaluating 4-H School Enrichment Programs

School Enrichment programs contain specific content designed for delivery over a specific length of time; as such, they provide a unique opportunity for pre/post evaluation. Evaluation is an essential part of the total program; therefore, it should be planned at the same time program objectives are being identified. Good program planning includes planning for evaluation. Florida 4-H provides faculty with evaluation tools to support some statewide school enrichment programs in order to document change and impact from these programs. Faculty should consult with the state curricula and evaluation SSA or their local RSA for access to evaluation resources.

Evaluation should also include your presentation to teachers and school administrators. Use a standard evaluation tool or devise a simple evaluation form specific to your presentation. If possible, try to get names and contact information of participants for future mailing lists.



Figure 1. 4-H School Enrichment increases the capacity of Extension to reach more youth in the community.

Credits: Judy Baxter / CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 / <http://flic.kr/p/5uEDi3>

## References

Diem, K. (2001). National 4-H school enrichment survey. *Journal of Extension*, 39(5), 5RIB6. <https://archives.joe.org/joe/2001october/rb6.php>

Freeman, D. (2020). *A report: ECOP 4-H systems of change*. Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP). [https://cyfar.org/sites/default/files/cyfar\\_research\\_docs/Day%203%204-H%20Systems%20Change.pdf](https://cyfar.org/sites/default/files/cyfar_research_docs/Day%203%204-H%20Systems%20Change.pdf)

Lerner, R., Lerner, J., et al. (2013). *The positive development of youth: Comprehensive findings from the 4-H study of positive youth development*. National 4-H Council. <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/broward/docs/pdfs/4h/bulk/Tufts-4-H-Study-of-Positive-Youth-Development.pdf>

## Appendix

Table 1. Checklist for Success of Youth Development/4-H School Enrichment Programs.

	Determine what School Enrichment projects you can support within your county program.
	Work as a team. School and community partnerships are important to schools, so approach this venture as a cooperative relationship between Extension and the school. Be open to various options and let the school district decide how 4-H School Enrichment fits its program.
	Conduct program and complete group enrollment into 4-H Online.
	Keep scheduling simple: weekly or monthly sessions, the same day of the week, the same time of day.
	Be sure teachers and students know they are participating in a 4-H program. Include the official Clover Emblem, UF/IFAS logo, and your identifying information on all printed information.
	Make student recognition a part of the program. At a minimum, recognize youth with completion certificates with the proper 4-H Emblem.
	Evaluate outcomes.
	Report outcomes and impacts to participating schools and other constituencies.

Table 2. 4-H School Enrichment: Working With Schools.

4-H PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS					
The UF/IFAS Extension program and 4-H Youth Development should work to be partners with local school systems in the education of youth, because both have the successful development of youth as a priority. Because of Extension's position with the land-grant university system, Extension can provide resources to teachers that no other group can provide.					
EDUCATIONAL DEFINITIONS					
PUBLIC SCHOOL	CHARTER SCHOOL	MAGNET SCHOOL	MONTESSORI SCHOOL	PRIVATE SCHOOL	HOMESCHOOL
Mainly local governments provide public school education, with control and funding coming from three levels: federal, state, and local. Curricula, funding, teaching, and other policies are set through locally elected school boards.	Although exempted from certain operating procedures required for regular public schools, charter schools, like all public schools, must be nonreligious and nondiscriminatory. Often focused on a particular approach to educating students, a charter school is authorized to function once it has received a charter, a statutorily defined performance contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure success. They operate as autonomous public schools and make use of innovative teaching strategies.	Holding a particular academic discipline as the core focus (e.g., science, technology, arts) in order to attract students from schools in and out of the traditionally zoned boundaries, magnet schools remain part of the public school system and operate under the public school system administration. Additional monies may be available that are not available to a typical "public school" in order to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. deliver a distinctive curriculum or instructional approach,</li> <li>2. attract students from outside an assigned neighborhood or attendance zone, and</li> <li>3. have diversity as an explicit purpose</li> </ol>	A Montessori school is one whose instructional emphasis is on creating a stimulating environment for children that includes an abundance of hands-on materials with which students interact. These schools follow the philosophy of Maria Montessori, an educator who believed that children learn best when they have the opportunity to discover and learn in their own ways.	Private schools are not administered by local, state, or national government and retain the right to select their student body. They are funded in whole or in part by charging their students tuition rather than with public (state) funds. Religiously affiliated or denominational schools form a distinct category of private schools. Private schools often avoid some state regulations.	Homeschooling is the education of children at home, typically by parents or guardians, rather than in a public or private school. Currently, the majority of children in developed nations receive their formal education at a public institution. Homeschooling is an option for parents who wish to provide a different learning environment for their children than they believe is attainable in public schools. It is also an alternative for those families who are unable, for practical or personal reasons, to comply with the regulations of a public school. Homeschooling may refer to instruction in the home under the supervision of correspondence schools or umbrella schools.
					<b>TITLE ONE—IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED</b> <p>Title I, the cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, is the largest federal education program. Students served by Title I funds include migrant children and youth; children and youth with limited English proficiency; children and youth who are homeless; children and youth who have disabilities; children and youth who are neglected, delinquent or at-risk; children in preschool activities; and any child or youth who is in academic need. Through Title I, the federal government disburses money to school districts based on the number of low-income families in each district as determined by census data. Each district uses its Title I money to supplement and improve regular education programs offered to help students meet state standards.</p>