



SCHOOL-BASED 4-H PROGRAMMING

Getting Started

What is a school-based program?

A school-based program can be any of the following:

- **4-H School Enrichment:** Offered to groups of youth, taught by Extension staff or trained volunteers (can be a trained classroom teacher), and designed to support the school curriculum. According to the UF/IFAS Florida 4-H website, “School Enrichment is a partnership between the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service and a school district to provide educational content in various subject areas. Extension values its relationship with the schools and welcomes the opportunity to provide research-based curricula for classroom use.” A key goal of 4-H School Enrichment is also to expose youth to other 4-H experiences, such as the 4-H Club. Enrichment programs may not offer all the elements of Positive Youth Development (PYD) as they are condensed programs that focus on specific core learning objectives. Examples include 4-H Embryology and Florida 4-H Public Speaking. For more detailed information on School Enrichment, refer to EDIS document 4H324, *4-H School Enrichment: A Guide for 4-H Faculty and Staff* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h324>).
- **In-school Club:** Follows a more traditional club approach but occurs during school hours.
- **After-school Club:** Follows a more traditional club approach but operates directly after school hours (between 2:00 and 6:00 PM); can be at a school, community center, etc.



How is school-based programming different from traditional club programming?

- **Volunteers:** Some volunteers in 4-H school-based programs may be teachers in the classroom or paid staff at sites. Although they may have experience teaching youth, they may not be familiar with the principles or practices of Positive Youth Development (PYD) that all 4-H volunteers should understand (i.e., Experiential Learning Model, Targeting Life Skills, and Essential Elements of 4-H). For more information refer to EDIS document 4HFFS101.2, *Introducing 4-H Youth Development* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H235>).
- **Audience:** Depending on the school club site, youth may be able to choose to participate in 4-H or they may be automatically enrolled. If youth don't have a choice, then it will be important to increase their desire to participate by getting them excited to be a 4-H member.
- **Parental Involvement:** School-based programs are helpful for parents, guardians, families, etc. who are working. Knowing up front that parents will

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. 4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization. Over 230,000 members in the State of Florida help to make up the community of more than 6.5 million young people across America. 4-H is a non-formal, practical educational program for youth. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of Florida Cooperative Extension, a part of the University of Florida/IFAS.

be working is important, as the level of parental involvement may be different than that of traditional community club members' parents. Some youth may not be as likely to attend events outside their club or have the opportunity to participate in countywide activities in the 4-H program (such as County Events, Fair, camps, etc.). That doesn't mean these opportunities shouldn't be presented, or guardians should not be given opportunities to assist; however, it does mean extra effort may be necessary. For example, you may have to transport County Fair entries from a site to the County Fair and back if you would like youth to participate.



Why may school-based programming be a fit for your county?

- School-based programs provide an opportunity to youth who would not be able to participate in traditional 4-H club offerings otherwise. If you want to expand your 4-H program to new audiences, in subject matter, and/or number of youth reached, school-based programming may be the solution for you.
- Most members of the target audience for 4-H programs attend school. Working with school audiences provides an opportunity to bring 4-H

youth development programs to a large number of youth living in a particular community, or perhaps even the entire county.

- Parents/guardians tend to trust programs that their local school or community center supports and/or offers. If the school or community center offers a 4-H program, it can help increase confidence that it is a quality opportunity for their child to participate in.

Before You Start

Before embarking on school-based programming, it is important to recognize the capacity your county Extension program has to offer this type of programming. Below are some helpful tools to help you evaluate the local situation.

- **Time Commitment:** How much time is available to devote to a school-based program? Forming in-school or after-school clubs is time-intensive because most of the training takes place onsite, one-on-one. Coordinators, staff, or teachers act as volunteers; because they are paid employees, they may be less able or willing to attend trainings outside of work time. Be honest as to how much time you can devote to training. Can you commit to going out once a month to help lead that club for the first year, eventually weaning the volunteers off your help? If the answer is no, then perhaps a School Enrichment program is a better fit. It is best to err on the side of caution to develop a quality program. Starting with one new club a year may be the best route.
- **Program Offerings:** What can you offer in terms of programming? You cannot offer every program available through 4-H. Determine the needs of your community, offerings that may fit with the teacher's curriculum, sites that are interested in starting a program, your area of professional expertise, and resources you currently have to develop a program. Keep it simple. One or two enrichment programs and one type of project club can be offered for the first year. You can dictate what is available. Refer to the Florida State Standards (<http://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/>) to make sure your program

will address the needs of the classroom or site you're working with.

- **Community Gaps:** Assess gaps in your program. Your Expansion and Review Committee is a great way to help you evaluate the gaps in your county program in terms of programming locations and needs. Target those areas to diversify your program and reach new audiences. Refer to the guidelines on Expansion and Review Committees (http://ded.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/affirm_4h_comm.shtml).
- **Your Resources:** Assess your available resources. Do not create a program from scratch if you don't have the materials or funds to purchase supplies. Keep your programs realistic, affordable, and simple at first. Look to other Extension agents in your office who may be able to assist if you are developing a program in their subject area. Regional Specialized Agents may also be able to assist in the development of your programs.
- **Partnerships in the Office:** Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Family Nutrition Program (FNP) are excellent examples of Extension programs that may be able to provide resources for a healthy living club or project (whether it be nutrition, culinary, or gardening). Working with Master Gardeners or Master Naturalists can also help you develop environmentally based programming.

Designing Your Program: Items to Consider Ahead of Time

- How will volunteers be trained? Teachers and afterschool coordinators/staff will not necessarily have time to attend the same volunteer trainings as more traditional community volunteers. Be creative in how you train school-based volunteers. More one-on-one trainings may be necessary to accommodate their schedules.
- Online enrollment will be difficult to achieve with children in school. Sometimes, the best option is to have youth fill out paper forms that your office will have to input. It may be best to complete a group enrollment to collect numbers. In some cases, you may even enroll some youth as individuals and others through a group enrollment form. Individual enrollments allow youth and their families to get plugged into the County 4-H Program, which is the ideal situation. This should be encouraged as much as possible.
- A traditional 4-H meeting may not be possible, depending on time restrictions and overall group dynamics. Consider alternatives such as SPIN (Special Interest) Clubs to help meet the needs of the site.
- Consider the age of the club participants. Elementary, middle school, and high school clubs may work better as either morning or afternoon clubs while some may function more effectively as year-round or SPIN clubs. It will depend on the audience. Middle school and high school youth tend to have more commitments with sports, volunteering, and employment, so make sure to assess your population before you commit to a club time frame.
- What is the sustainability of the program? School gardens are particularly difficult because they require upkeep and maintenance. Sometimes, sites expect that to be Extension's responsibility. In addition, materials such as incubators or brooders for embryology break down over time.
- What funding will be necessary for the program to succeed? Consider funding sources, such as Ag in the Classroom grants, 21st Century Partnerships, Farm Bureau, parent-teacher organizations, etc.
- What is your time commitment? Enrichment programs such as embryology sound easier than they actually are. While the teachers may be able to teach the material easily, how are they securing materials, being trained to use them, and obtaining fertile eggs? Where do those chicks go when the project is over? Are you available to help sites troubleshoot a broken incubator?
- If you are short on time, educational kits may be a great way to engage youth in 4-H. These can be funded through grants. A teacher training guide can be included with lesson plans. Remember that kits can have a timeline of usefulness, as items will get broken, lost, used up, or outdated.

- School-based programs may have differing levels of parental involvement than traditional 4-H community clubs. Think of ways to engage parents and guardians, such as family engagement nights, when the youth are being picked up from school.

School Sites: Starting with Administration

For programs that will take place at a school site, here are some tools to use when approaching administration utilizing a top-down approach. For more detailed information, refer to *4-H School Enrichment: A Guide for 4-H Faculty and Staff* (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h324>).

- Select the curriculum that you would like to use in the schools that will provide a minimum of 6 hours of instruction in order to capture numbers for 4-H online.
- Check with Florida State Standards to see which grade level is teaching the standards that your curriculum provides: <http://www.cpalms.org/Public/>
- Set up a meeting with the school principal(s) to explain the curriculum and ways it will benefit the students. Identify which standards would be met by using the curriculum.
- Ask the principal if you can speak to the grade level lead teachers at a teachers' meeting or individually.
- Meet with the lead teacher(s) and explain how the 4-H curriculum helps them achieve the State Standards for their grade level.
- Schedule a time to give the teacher(s) the curriculum or set dates for the 4-H agent to present the curriculum to the class or grade level.
- Remember to have each classroom teacher fill out a "4-H School Enrichment Enrollment" form to enter into the ES237.
- Utilize an evaluation tool to capture data.
- Follow up with the teacher(s) to see if they have suggestions for improving the curriculum and/or a need for a different curriculum.

School Sites: When You Can't Secure a Site Through Administration

Here are some suggestions to get a school-based program started when a top-down approach has not been successful.

- Find schools that would be willing to work with Extension and 4-H through networking. If EFNEP, FNP, Master Gardeners, or another Extension entity already has a relationship with a school, they can help to be an "in." They will often be able to tell you if that school is willing to work with Extension. If they have already created a positive relationship, this will make it easier to start another Extension program at that site. This can also help you learn which schools may be more difficult to form initial partnerships with, as they may not be easy to work with and may have more restrictions.
- Be realistic about partnerships you embark on: <https://healthy-food-choices-in-schools.extension.org/together-we-can-achieving-successful-partnerships/>. This document highlights how to work successfully with partners. It emphasizes the importance of being realistic about what you can offer, as well as your expectations before the partnership starts.
- Market 4-H as a resource to your local schools. If a school calls for help on a program, such as gardening, you may offer some initial help. If they want your help, expertise, or resources over a longer period of time, then forming a 4-H club may be a way for them to gain your guaranteed help. By positioning yourself as such a resource, you may find sites more willing to work with you.
- Seek out teachers that have more flexibility in their programs. For example: a physical education teacher may be looking for activities to incorporate healthy living by doing a gardening program with youth whereas a science teacher may be too overwhelmed to work with a school garden.

- Elementary schools tend to be a common target audience, but middle and high schools are frequently looking for opportunities for their youth.
- Consider how you can add value to an existing school program. For instance, the school's Student Government Advisor might be a teacher with little to no formal leadership training. You can be a resource by providing officer and/or leadership training.
- Find a champion. Look for a current 4-H volunteer with a child who attends a school you want to work with. The volunteer can put in a good word and help start the conversation on how 4-H could benefit the school.
- Attend school fairs and host a booth. Back to school nights, science nights, and similar events are a great way to engage with school faculty and staff.
- Create opportunities to connect with teachers and build relationships. Teacher trainings are a great way to do this. They can be program- or topic-driven and offered at times when teachers are not in school. You can gain their interest and show the ways you can help them, making them more likely to look to you as a resource.
- Include private schools and homeschool co-ops—they tend to have fewer restrictions on programming and may help you reach a broader population.
- We frequently identify teachers as potential 4-H program initiators—what about afterschool program coordinators? Go directly to them. Some afterschool programs are grant-funded (such as 21st Century Schools) and require enrichment activities for youth. 4-H is a perfect tie-in that can help them create sustainability for their programs.
- Send the online data enrollment information home to families. Specify which club they need to enroll their child in.
- Does the site have a computer lab? If so, can there be a parent night when parents come in and you help them enroll their child online?
- Send home paper-based enrollment forms and plan to input them into 4-H online yourself.
- Use a group enrollment form. You can collect the data yourself or ask for a printout of the demographics. Sites can often provide this for you.
- Use both enrollment methods. If some families are able to enroll by computer or paper, enter information for those youth into 4-H online. Fill out a group enrollment form for those who cannot.

Additional Resources

School-based programming can be a rewarding and excellent way to reach new audiences in the community. For more information, consult the following resources.

- Penn State Extension: <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/4-h/get-involved/teachers>
- Iowa State University Extension and Outreach: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/iowa-4-h-afterschool>
- University of Illinois Extension: <https://4h.extension.illinois.edu/participate/clubs>
- UF/IFAS Extension School Enrichment Blog: <http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/4hn/category/4-h-school-enrichment/>
- UF/IFAS Extension (School Enrichment, embryology): <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h367>
- UF/IFAS Extension (School Enrichment, gardening): <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h356>
- UF/IFAS Extension: 4-H Afterschool Resource Guide: Starting 4-H Clubs in After-School Programs: 4H439, <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H439>

How to Enroll School-Based Program Youth

Enrollment into the 4-H online system is necessary. Try the following methods to record participant information. Youth can enroll individually, or the entire group can be entered into the system through group enrollment. Individual enrollment information is easier to update and can be plugged into the rest of the county 4-H program. This can be hard to do for school-based clubs.

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