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Publication 8428 | July 2012

4-H After-School Program: Bloco Drum and Dance!

Part 2: Developmental Characteristics of Participating Youth: Age-Based Programs

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Curriculum Overview

This is Part 2 of an 11-part series on planning, developing, and coordinating a 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance after-school program. The series is based on the successes of the Sonoma County 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program, an experiential (hands-on, learn-by-doing) education effort sponsored by Sonoma County 4-H in partnership with the Windsor School District. The program capitalizes on the positive group experiences of Brazilian Bloco drumming and dance to help youth build self-esteem, embrace personal discipline, develop commitment to their community, and build musical skills. Besides attending regular practices and 4-H meetings, the Sonoma County group performs in local and regional parades and cultural festivals.

The overall positive experience and sense of belonging also have important side-benefits for participating youth, helping to improve their academic performance, reduce teen pregnancy and high school drop-out rates in the group, and discourage gang participation. The program is open to all youth: both boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds, economic status, and abilities participate.

Each publication in the series covers an important component of the program, with useful tips and tools to help you put it to work for youth in your area. At the end of each publication (except Part 1) are ready-to-use handouts, forms, and flyers that you can customize for local use.

Publications in the Curriculum:

Part 1. Introduction to 4-H Youth Bloco Drum and Dance (8427)
Part 2. Developmental Characteristics of Participating Youth: Age-Based Programs (8428)
Part 3. Fundraising for Your Program (8429)
Part 4. Developing Positive Relationships (8430)
Part 5. Planning Activities and Performances (8431)
Part 6. Planning a Successful Field Trip (8432)
Part 7. Effective Strategies for Management and Staffing (8433)
Part 8. Developing a Schedule for Group Activities (8434)
Part 9. Planning: Steps to Success (8435)
Part 10. Making Good Nutrition and Exercise Part of the Program (8436)
Part 11. Developing and Implementing an Evaluation Plan (8437)

Visit http://www.windsorbloco.org for a recruitment video and PowerPoint presentation to help promote and start a program of your own.

Age-Based Programs

Humans develop through a series of predictable stages that normally occur within specific age ranges. One area of development that we address in the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance program is leadership. Leadership development is a multi-faceted, complex process that involves personal growth and attainment of leadership knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations. In order to actually develop leadership ability in beyond-the-family settings such as school or 4-H Youth Development programs, youth must be developmentally ready physically, emotionally, cognitively, and socially.

Younger children may exhibit leadership characteristics such as charisma, bossiness, or industriousness. You can successfully teach them rudimentary leadership readiness knowledge and skills, such as cooperation and parliamentary procedure. With adult help, some younger children may successfully perform certain specific basic leadership skills, tasks, and roles, such as giving demonstrations and assisting with committees.

However, it is not until youth (a) are able to think abstractly, (b) develop the meta-cognitive abilities associated with formal operational thinking and post-conventional moral thinking, (c) develop the ability to understand other people's thinking, and (d) begin taking responsibility for their own actions, that they are able to begin developing the complex combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations associated with actual leadership development. For most people, this level of readiness in development occurs in early adolescence, between the ages of eleven and thirteen. The potential to develop leadership capability continues to increase throughout adolescence as youth develop adult physical, emotional, cognitive, and social characteristics.

This publication, Part 2 of the 4-H After-School Program: Bloco Drum and Dance curriculum, deals with understanding the developmental needs of teen youth. As an adult working with the curriculum, it is important that you understand the different characteristics and implications surrounding the stages of teen development. The 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance program is based on the needs and interests of its participants. Following some statements about teen developmental characteristics and their implications, we will give a listing of how you can address these characteristics and implications through the implementation of the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance program.

Characteristics of Young People

Development during adolescence is not the same from one teen to the next, nor is it consistent within developmental stages, even for a single given teen. Teens grow and develop at their own individual rate. Some teens may acquire certain intellectual or emotional capabilities earlier than their peers, while others may physically outpace their classmates but remain behind in other developmental areas. When designing teen programs, staff members need to recognize the different ability levels they will encounter in teens and promote an environment where youth can accept and appreciate these differences in their peers.

6th to 8th Grade: Junior High School

Characteristics:

1. Live in a larger community and have a wider range of loyalties and interests than younger youth.
2. Busy with home, school, and community activities.
3. Want coeducational social activities and are interested in meeting others.
4. Need and accept adult counsel, but not control. These teens are exploring leadership abilities and have a strong desire for independence.

5. Self-conscious, with a strong desire to conform and be accepted by peers in their own age group.
6. Want to explore and try new things.
7. Need to be involved in developing their own individual activity programs.
8. Receptive to citizenship development and building of democratic attitudes and values.
9. Curious about various jobs and vocations.

Implications:

1. They join local groups with ties to wider areas, such as sports, youth groups, etc.
2. Coeducational groups are very important.
3. Groups should be allowed and encouraged to function under their own leadership, but with counsel and guidance provided when needed and desired.
4. Group activities that will make participants feel at ease with others should be emphasized.
5. Advanced projects should be provided for those who are interested in pursuing them. Group education programs, field trips, performances, and tours are good examples.
6. Promote programs where youth determine the program's direction, with adult assistance available when needed.
7. Democratic group procedures and discussion of social and economic problems should be encouraged.
8. Capitalize on their curiosity about various job and vocations. Explore or provide job experiences when possible.

9th to 12th Grade: High School

Characteristics:

1. Establishing independence and moving toward adulthood.
2. Learning social skills and acquiring managerial ability.
3. Reaching an adult level of reasoning.
4. Have strong peer group attachments and many are interested in the opposite sex.
5. Preparing for vocation and career, including college, trade school, and general work force.
6. Preparing for responsible citizenship.
7. Keenly aware of appearance and personality.
8. Developing interest in broader horizons.

Implications:

1. Urge independent activity and added responsibility of leadership, with adult supervision and guidance.
2. Promote participants to develop originality, to take initiative, and to assume more responsibility.
3. Support group activities in community affairs.
4. Encourage positive interaction between teens, adults, and younger youth.
5. Teach more social and managerial skills.
6. Help members get factual information on the effect of diet and exercise on a person's appearance and weight.
7. Help members develop a broader concept and understanding of the world around them through community service, cultural appreciation, and a sense of civic responsibility.

Correlation

The 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program correlates 6th- to 12th-grade characteristics and implications in the following manner:

1. Incorporates a variety of community members and schools to allow for a wider base of interaction.
2. Allows youth to have time for other activities.
3. Is a multi-age, coeducational program.
4. Responds to the need for after-school programs that provide educational experiences giving each participant a sense of importance as well as a sense of being part of an organized group.
5. Sharing of skills learned, through performances for local audiences and also for audiences in the broader community across the state.
6. Develops leadership opportunities that allow youth to have input into the direction of the program, and thus gain a sense of ownership.
7. Encourages discussion groups on current teen issues such as gang violence, drug and alcohol use, and cultural understanding.
8. Teaches tolerance and effective communication skills while also encouraging appreciation of people's differences.
9. Provides opportunities for youth to share what they have learned through voluntary leadership roles or, when appropriate, through paid leadership roles.

Why Teens Become Leaders

Teens become leaders because they want to share what they know, learn new skills, and assume increased responsibility.

Teen leaders can take responsibility for many of the tasks that make this program work, such as

- organizing and conducting a drum or dance class
- leading a performance
- organizing an event (such as fundraising, phoning parents, etc.)
- helping publicize the program

As adult leaders, we want to encourage teens to take on as much responsibility as they can comfortably manage. They still need adult support to help ensure their success.

Teens as Leaders

Many high school teens who participate in the Bloco Drum and Dance Project want to get involved as leaders once they have developed their drumming and dancing skills. Middle school teens are very receptive to leadership from older student members, and they often imitate behaviors and attitudes they see in older high school teens. This mentoring component becomes an important part of the program when older teens mentor younger

teens, providing valuable learning opportunities for both teen groups.

Adult Support

As an adult partner in this leadership experience, you can provide the direction and support that will help the teens reach their goals with a feeling of success. Your role as a leader and mentor of the older teens include letting them make decisions that affect the program.

Staffing arrangements vary according to a program size, management structure, and goals. The After-School 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program needs staff who are qualified and committed, have appropriate experience and realistic expectations, and can interact productively

with teens and with adult school and agency staff.

The after-school program also welcomes adult volunteers in addition to paid staff. Volunteer adults can include parents, grandparents, caring senior citizens, work-study college students, foster parents, and other interested members of the public. The use of adult volunteers can dramatically reduce the cost of the program while reducing the staff-to-teen ratio and creating a community of learners. Volunteers should be given responsibilities that foster meaningful experiences that in turn increase their skills level and interest. Like regular after-school staff, each volunteer should receive orientation on how to work with teens before he or she enters the program.

An adult partner in this leadership-building experience can provide the direction and support that will help the teens reach their goals with a feeling of success. The role of leader and mentor includes letting program participants know that it is the teen who is leading the class and that the participants are expected to listen, follow directions, and be cooperative. You can also give the teens suggestions and help them build enthusiasm for the program, as long as you do it in a supportive manner and not in a way that can be viewed as criticism.

To be successful as a teen mentor, adult volunteers should

1. build getting-to-know-you time into their schedule.
2. welcome new ideas. This requires good listening and response skills.
3. share responsibility. For instance, you can decide jointly who will lead each section of the plan.
4. delegate responsibilities appropriately for all of the tasks that need to be completed.
5. support teen leaders and other adults by helping them to be successful in their tasks.
6. celebrate success. Congratulate each other and take time to enjoy your successes.

How Do the Developmental Life Skills Relate to the 4–H Bloco Drum and Dance Program?

According to Patrick Hendricks, author of the Targeting Life Skills Model, 4-H provides life skills development by means of "ages and stages" tasks. This task approach lets after-school providers determine whether the program is developmentally appropriate and helps them identify the intended outcomes. Through this process, leaders can map life skill development stages sequentially over four age-based groupings of youth to indicate a continuum of growth. This is especially important in programs that serve teens as they begin to take on leadership responsibilities. By assigning developmentally appropriate tasks to specific life skills, teens increase the program's potential of achieving measurable program success.

When designing programs for teens, it is important that they be involved in the program's planning and implementation. Most adults who work with teens realize the benefits of having teens involved as leaders in any after school program. Through this experience, teen leaders can work on their emerging organizational and planning skills, learn teamwork and cooperation techniques, and expand their awareness of the needs of others. A vital aspect of the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program is that it engages youth by including them in the overall program design. As a result, the program becomes teen-lead with adult oversight. Youth at this age strive to be independent and are seeking ways to express themselves as individuals. Developing their leadership skills and sharing their knowledge and skills fit in well with the 4-H program's overall goals for working with various age groups.

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Inquiry and Experiential Learning

The activities in this curriculum were designed around inquiry and experiential learning. Inquiry is a learner-centered approach in which individuals are problem solvers investigating questions through active engagement, observing and manipulating objects and phenomena, and acquiring or discovering knowledge. Experiential learning (EL) is a foundational educational strategy used in 4-H. In it, the learner has an experience phase of engagement in an activity, a reflection phase in which observations and reactions are shared and discussed, and an application phase in which new knowledge and skills are applied to real-life settings. In 4-H, an EL model that uses a five-step learning cycle is most commonly used. These five steps—Experiencing, Sharing, Processing, Generalizing, and Application—are part of a recurring process that helps build learner understanding over time.

For more information on inquiry, EL, and the five-step learning cycle, please visit the University of California Science, Technology, and Environmental Literacy Workgroup's Experiential Learning Web site, http://www.experientiallearning.ucdavis.edu/.

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An electronic copy of this publication can be found at the ANR Communication Services Web site, http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu.

Publication 8428
ISBN-13: 978-1-60107-722-6

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This publication has been anonymously peer reviewed for technical accuracy by University of California scientists and other qualified professionals. This review process was managed by the ANR Associate Editor for Human and Community Development–Youth Development, Lynn Schmitt-McQuitty.
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Appendix

Forms and informational booklets published by the California State 4-H Office are available free of charge at www.ca4h.org/Resources/Publications/. Look for the "Project Leader's Digest" for guidelines on setting up 4-H activities.

Many counties now offer or require online enrollment in 4-H programs. Contact your local UC Cooperative Extension County Office for information.

If your 4-H program is outside of California, please contact your state's 4-H office to obtain correct, current information.

Humans develop through a series of predictable stages that normally occur within specific age ranges. In order for teens to be successful in beyond-the-family settings such as 4-H after-school programs, they need to be ready physically, emotionally, cognitively, and socially. The handouts in this publication's appendix give additional teen "developmental needs" for you to consider when designing an after-school program.

Handouts

- 4-H as an Educational Tool: Developing a Positive Self-Concept
- Valuing Differences, Celebrating Diversity

4-H AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

DEVELOPING A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

One of the major life skills developed through the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program is *Developing a Positive Self-Concept.*

As an adult volunteer, you have many opportunities to make a positive impact on each 4-H member's self-concept. Every important adult in a child's life influences his or her belief in his or her own value to others and to him or herself. This includes parents, teachers, 4-H adult volunteers, grandparents, older brothers and sisters, youth leaders, and religious leaders.

What is a positive self-concept? It is a growing, developing set of beliefs about yourself that helps you to cope successfully with events in your life and to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

How Do I Help Participants Develop a Positive Self-Concept?

As an after-school leader, your attitude of nonjudgmental acceptance toward each teen is essential. This helps each teen feel accepted for his or her inner self, rather than for his or her behavior, clothes, or skills. One way to do this is to show genuine appreciation for each individual. If you aren't genuine, they'll know it right away.

Feedback. Genuine appreciation is also positive feedback. Although we would like to be able to give only positive feedback, part of being an adult role model for youth includes making corrections.

You are probably asking, "How can I make corrections without having youth see it as criticism?" In fact, since each teen is unique and already has a self-concept in the process of development, you cannot guarantee how that teen will accept correction. Experts recommend that all feedback include at least 75 percent positive comments when you make a correction, just to keep things in balance. A ratio of 50:50 for positive comments to criticism doesn't work. Your participant youth will usually feel unworthy unless you use the 75:25 balance.

Expressing acceptance. You can help express acceptance by seeing beyond a behavior to the true self within each teen. Here is one technique that may help your participating youth discover their uniqueness: distribute 3x5 cards at the end of each class and ask the youth to list the things they liked about their performances during the class.

You could also invite the teens to list what they learned and encourage them to discover things that were not part of the "lesson plan."

There are no right or wrong answers for this exercise; rather, you need to accept and encourage every idea so each person can discover for him or herself the variety of learning that takes place in a group.

Nonjudgmental attitude. Your attitude toward each teen will be obvious to the teenagers. Even though adults have learned in many cases to say one thing and do another, teenagers often see right through this. It is important that you to be honest within yourself as you notice your relationship with each youth. Having and expressing a nonjudgmental attitude is an important part of helping youths develop a positive self-concept.

Within the group setting you can help the members reconsider and even discard their judgments about situations by demonstrating your own neutral behavior. When a person in the group shares an experience, feeling, or thought, the leader accepts it as the true expression of that person at that moment.

Caring. Adults and youth who communicate with others their sense of caring and personal worth help to increase each person's positive self-concept. You can do this by creating an environment of mutual support and caring. As the adult club leader, you can gently help make sure every teen has a chance to share his or her thoughts with the group so the most talkative person doesn't overshadow quieter personalities.

You will know you have reached this goal when the teens trust one another and you, the adult leader, enough to be at ease when expressing their feelings openly, knowing they will not be ridiculed. An atmosphere of trust and acceptance will help young people recognize that they are valued and that they can count on receiving genuine affection and support.

Where Does One's Self-Concept Come From?

A person's self-concept or sense of self is learned, beginning at birth, from parents, other caregivers, and other adults. Whoever gives verbal and nonverbal feedback on a youth's behavior contributes to that youth's self-concept. The experiences the youth has with the important people in his or her life help determine whether that youth will feel accepted or not valued.

Some people give teens the message that, although they may at times behave in unacceptable ways, teens are basically okay people. Others may give a negative message, like "You are bad because you do bad things." Either of these messages, given over and over as a person grow up, form the basis for how that person sees him or herself. By the time a child reaches school age, his or her self-concept is quite developed.

Although early influences have a significant impact on a child's self-concept, it is possible to change it. As an adult youth volunteer or teacher, you can be part of the gradual process of helping build a positive self-concept for youth as well as for yourself.

Self-Confidence Expressed

Genuinely confident people know they can handle whatever challenges life brings their way. They are willing to learn and are not afraid of making mistakes. They feel good inside, and they like themselves. They have strong self-respect. They also have respect for the feelings and capabilities of other people. They feel inferior to no one and superior to no one.

There is a source of love and strength within each of us. No matter what problems we have, even if we are physically injured or mentally handicapped, that inner power is still there. It is upon this inner strength that we must build our confidence—not on looks, intelligence, money, popularity, athletic ability, or social status, for any of these things can be taken away from us through accident, mistake, or misfortune.

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VALUING DIFFERENCES, CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

Challenge or Opportunity?

The issue of "diversity" in a community can be a controversial one. Some see it as a problem or an intrusion by others. Some prefer to see it as an opportunity. The wealth of knowledge, experiences, and resources that are available through diversity allows youth to grow in a way that promotes acceptance and understanding of differences.

Having a child grow up in a community where people are generally very much alike can seem like a secure, comfortable way to do things, but it can also promote a narrow mental focus in the child. The more differences that children are exposed to, the more open and accepting they will be as they grow up.

Activities and programs that provide children and teens with opportunities to explore and experience differences are part of a multicultural education. The goals of multicultural education are to increase each individual's self-esteem as well as his or her understanding and appreciation of others in the larger society, and to deepen their concern for the needs of all people.

YOUTH WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Special-needs youth include children and teens with a wide range of disabilities. Examples of disabilities include

Defining Youth with Special Needs

Special needs youth includes children and teens with a wide range of disabilities. Examples of disabilities include:

- **physical disabilities:** visual or hearing impairments, spinal cord injuries, missing limbs.
- **mental disabilities:** below-normal intellectual functioning.
- **developmental disabilities:** learning disabilities, emotional impairments. Developmental disabilities may be caused by other mental or physical disabilities—conditions such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, or muscular dystrophy, for instance.

Mainstreaming Is Rewarding for All

"Mainstreaming" in the 4-H program means to involve youth with special needs in the same clubs, events, and programs as youth who do not have special needs. 4-H educational programs are provided to all youth in a non-segregated, inclusive manner. All 4-H participants are provided with the same opportunities to develop life skills as they complete projects and participate in 4-H events *together.* This results in a rewarding experience for all:

- Members with disabilities develop a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance as they successfully interact with other youth and participate in 4-H activities.
- Members without disabilities learn that youth with special needs are not so different, and begin to see that each individual, disabled or not, has strengths and weaknesses as well as unique abilities.

- Teachers and adult volunteers learn new skills and techniques for working with special-needs youth and become more comfortable with people whom they may perceive to be different.

Involving Youth with Special Needs

Involving special needs youth in your activity may take some special consideration, but can be quite easy if you follow these steps:

- **Learn about the disability.** This can be accomplished by talking to the teen's parents, doing research at the library, contacting local support of advocacy groups (i.e., Muscular Dystrophy Association, Association for Retarded Citizens), or attending local Special Olympics events to see how well-trained volunteers work with a variety of children with special needs.
- **Find out how the disability affects the particular child you are working with.** Remember that each teen with a disability is still a unique individual. This means that different teens with the same disability may display varying ranges of characteristics. Talk with the teen's parents to become familiar with the teen's ability level, special challenges, and other individual needs.
- **Modify the project or activity to match the ability level of the teen.** For example, a teen in a wheel chair could participate in a gardening project by designing a raised garden bed or focusing on container gardening. "Modification" may also mean modifying program requirements. Look at the objectives of the project or activity and help the teen set reachable goals for meeting the objectives. As much as possible, the teen should be involved in setting the goals and adapting the program. Modifications to the program must be designed to meet the teen's ability levels and the goals of the project, while still challenging the teen to consistently improve his or her own personal best.
- **Educate other members of the community about the disability.** You may be able to accomplish this through videos, presentations by adults or older youth who have the same disability, or a discussion with an adult who works with special-needs children. If appropriate, a question and answer session with the teen and his or her parents may help foster better understanding in the community. The important factor here is to focus on common qualities shared by special-needs youth and youth who do not have special needs, and not to focus on the differences. Like most youth, special-needs youth have a basic need to belong and to feel accepted by the group.

Special Needs Guidelines

Here are some guidelines to remember when working with special-needs youth:

- Involve the teen and his or her parents as much as possible in setting goals and modifying the program to meet the teen's needs.
- Treat each teen, special needs or not, as an individual who has certain talents, skills, strengths, and needs.
- Provide plenty of recognition and positive reinforcement. Make sure your expectations for each teen are based on efforts made toward reaching a set goal. Don't be "easier" on a special-needs teen just because of the disability.

- Remember that the 4-H motto, “Making the Best Better,” does not always mean blue ribbons and other awards. Personal growth (including the ability to handle frustration or communicate better) and feelings of accomplishment (succeeding in any new challenge, no matter how small it may seem) are also important.
- Take the time to learn and to teach other 4-H’ers the correct terminology for the teen’s disability, as well as any for equipment that the teen may use. Sometimes the terms commonly used for such things are considered insensitive or rude.
- Many people with physical disabilities would prefer to discuss their disability rather than have everyone ignore it or pretend not to see it. How your group handles this should be determined in consultation with the teen and his or her parents.
- Differentiate the areas where the teen’s abilities are diminished or different and where they are similar to those of other teens in the program. For example, people often shout at visually impaired people as if they also cannot hear. Don’t assume anything about a teen’s disability; remember that each teen is an individual.
- As mainstreaming in schools becomes a more common practice, today’s youth often have a greater awareness, understanding, and comfort zone when they interact with special-needs peers than teens had in the past. Usually the fact that a teen is “different” ceases to be a problem for the other teens in a group long before the adults reach the same comfort level.

Ready for Success

Working with special-needs youth requires some extra attention, time, and flexibility. However, volunteer leaders and 4-H’ers alike will reap many rewards from the effort. The most important reward is the chance to make new friendships, take part in fun and satisfying shared experiences, and learn to value each individual for the unique and special person he or she is.

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