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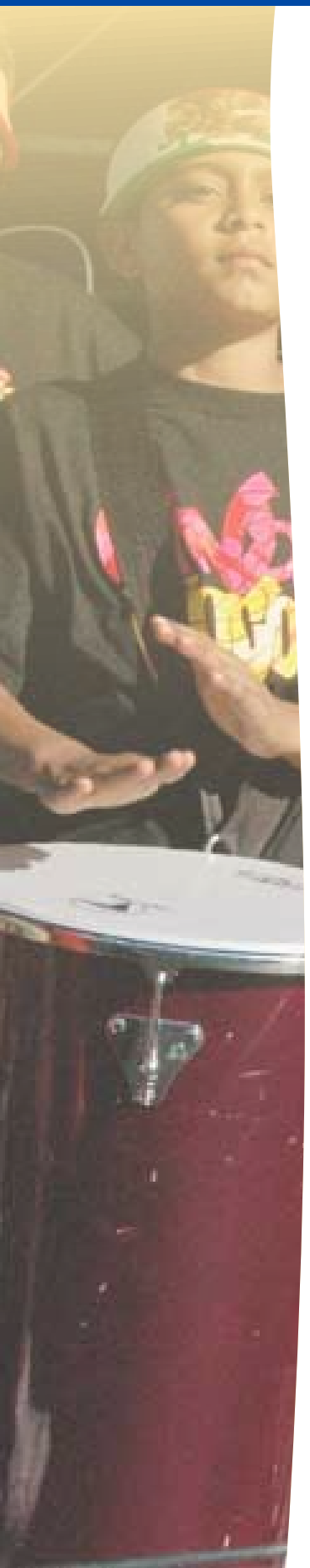

4-H After-School Program: Bloco Drum and Dance!

Part 1: Introduction to 4-H Youth Bloco Drum and Dance

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Curriculum Overview

This is Part 1 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.

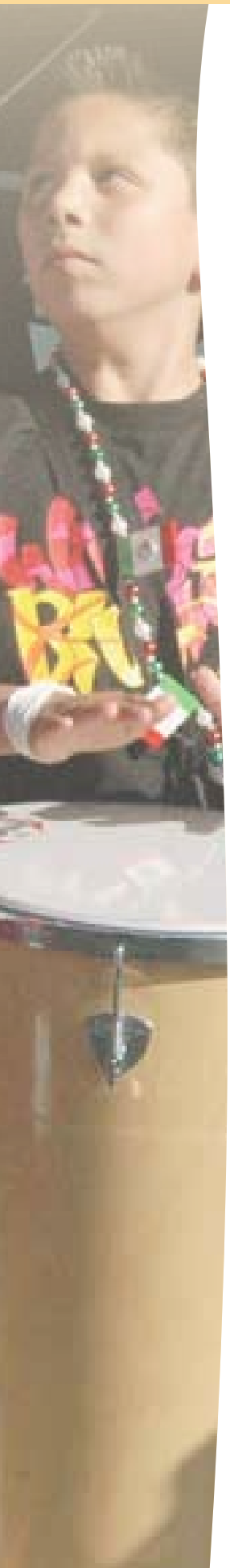
The overall positive experience and sense of belonging also have important side-benefits for participating youth, helping to improve their academic performance, reduce teen pregnancy and high school drop-out rates in the group, and discourage gang participation. The program is open to all youth: both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



Introduction

After-school hours are a critical time for youth, and particularly for youth at risk. These same hours can also be seen as an opportunity for learning and for providing youth with a healthy, safe environment. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the after-school hours between 3:00 and 6:00 pm are the peak time for juvenile crime and risky practices, including gang activities and alcohol and drug abuse.

Studies indicate that few elementary or middle school youth attend after-school programs. Only 14 percent of primary grade children attend formal after-school programs, compared with 27 percent who are cared for by relatives or by family childcare providers after school (Brimhall et al. 1999). Although federal government and private foundation funding for after-school programs has increased recently, research indicates that there still are not enough programs available to meet the need (Alexander 2003). Furthermore, as these youth get older and progress through middle school and high school they tend to be much less involved in organized after-school programs.

According to a 2003 survey, nine out of ten Americans think that all youth should be involved in positive after-school programs, but two-thirds say it is difficult to find programs in their community—especially programs designed with teens in mind. Clearly, there is a significant need for more after-school programs for middle and high school youth. One option is to base an after-school program on engaging, exciting cultural activities that involve performing arts, such as music, dance, and drumming.

Music and Teens

A 2003 Gallup Poll found that Americans were playing musical instruments in the greatest numbers seen since 1978. Ninety-seven percent of poll respondents agreed that playing a musical instrument provides the player with a sense of accomplishment and encourages expression. Eighty-five percent believed that playing music makes you smarter. Research indicates a direct correlation between higher math scores and youth participation in an organized music program.

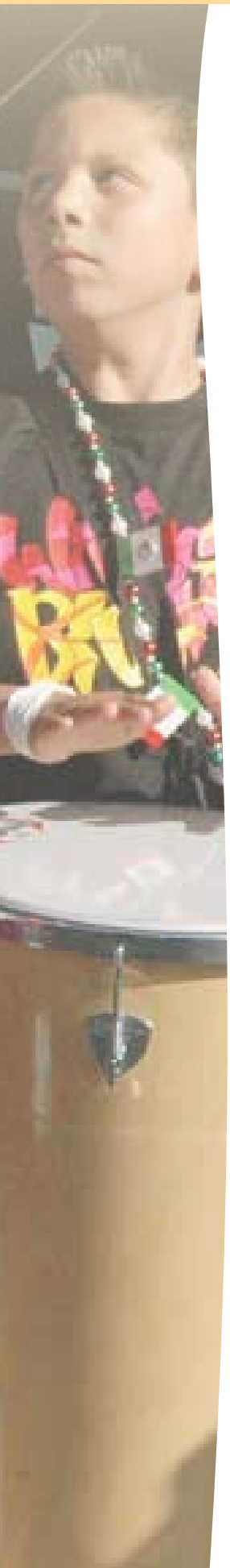
Other survey results showed that 97 percent of surveyed individuals felt that playing an instrument helps them to appreciate arts and culture, 88 percent felt that playing an instrument teaches youth discipline, and 71 percent felt that teenagers who play an instrument or who are involved in music or dance are less likely to have discipline problems (Cushman 2005). Of those completing the survey, 30 percent stated that they themselves had participated in a school band or orchestra program.

The same study also demonstrated that the performing arts appeal to a large and varied segment of the population. Nearly two of every three surveyed individuals reported having attended a live professional performing arts event in the previous 12 months. The study further stated that people who participate in music and the performing arts show more creativity, have a better understanding of themselves and of other cultures, and feel a stronger connection to their community, regardless of age, income level, or ethnic group.

Development of the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program was based on two key elements: (1) teens' need for after-school programs and (2) the understanding that appreciation of music is common to all age and ethnic groups. A core group of community partners in our area came together to make this drum and dance program for teens a reality.

The Mission of 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance

4-H Bloco Drum and Dance is an organization modeled on the Brazilian Carnaval tradition and dedicated to enlivening the community through music, dance, and nutrition education, providing youth the opportunity to raise their academic performance, make better food choices, reduce



high school drop-out rates, discourage gang participation, and build a sense of cultural pride. All of this is accomplished through individuals' building positive self-esteem, embracing personal discipline, developing a commitment to the community, and building musical skills.

What Is the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program?

The 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance after-school program targets middle school and high school students between the ages of 12 and 19. The program has been modeled after San Francisco's Loco Bloco organization and encourages boys and girls of diverse nationalities and ethnic backgrounds to come together and share their love of music and dance in a safe after-school environment.

The program provides lessons in both drumming and dancing three times a week. Teens meet after school on those days for two hours of instruction and practice. The music embraces both cultural expression and physical exercise. Additionally, healthy snacks are served to encourage the teens to adopt healthy eating habits.

Lessons are lead by older high school students and a paid adult staff who serve as mentors and teachers by sharing their drum and dance skills with younger teens.

Program Goal and Objectives

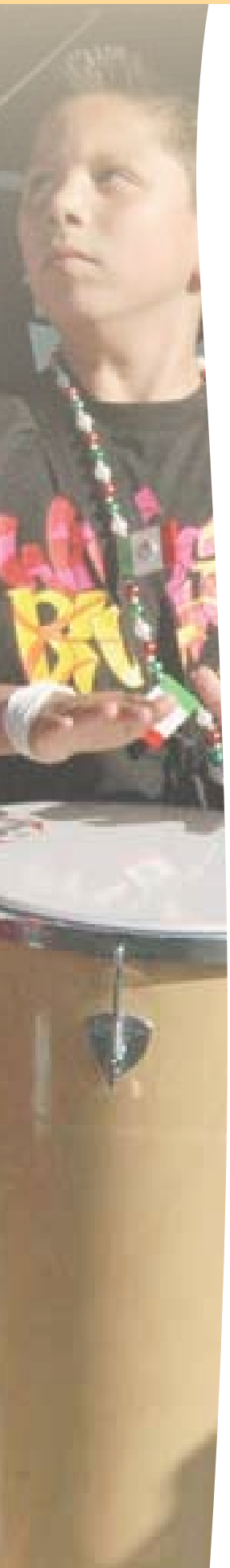
Goal

The goal of the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program is to build a comprehensive, long-term sustainable program using the 4-H Youth Development model of experiential education (see description at end of this publication) and the San Francisco Loco Bloco model of drum and dance training as a way to provide an after-school drum and dance program for middle school and high school students that will improve their lives now and into the future, both as individuals and as members of the larger community.

Objectives

- Through nutritional education and exposure to nutritious, culturally appropriate foods and snacks, program participants will learn to identify and choose healthy, nutritious snacks.
- Through recognition of physical fitness as an activity choice that reaches beyond just sports, participants will reinforce their awareness of the connection between physical fitness and obesity prevention and will integrate physical fitness into their daily life.

- The development and implementation of the program, together with extensive collaboration between youth-serving agencies, schools, and community groups, will lead to the development of combined-use facilities and cultivation of donations and in-kind contributions in support of the program.
- The creation and promotion of intergenerational programming opportunities that include multiple family members will result in enhanced long-term relationships between teens and caring adults, parents, and grandparents.
- By focusing on the whole child and by providing early intervention models of instruction in the form of dance and music, the program will encourage youth, families, and communities to engage in positive lifestyle alternatives.
- After-school programs will be strengthened by incorporating additional training and education in the areas of
    - music and performance
    - costume design and mask making



- creative artistic expression
- percussion and dance

Percussion and Dance

Through the instructional activities of rhythm and dance, this program introduces youth to Afro/Brazilian, Cuban, Hip-Hop, and Reggaeton forms. Students who participate in drumming instruction learn basic concepts as well as a wide variety of techniques while playing conga, surdos, repeniquè, tamborim, shekere, bells, and dejembrè. Dance students learn the basic steps of Brazilian dance and learn how the movements relate to the beat of the drums. Once the youth have mastered the basic steps, they proceed to develop dance routines of their own that tell a story. Both drum and dance students learn about select cultural themes such as Afro-Cuban or Hip Hop, where they learn how to develop appropriate choreography. They also learn how to make costumes.

Performance Skills

Once they master the drum and dance skills, youth share their skills and knowledge by performing for the community. Because of the theme, choreography, and costumes the youth choose, their performances bring smiles to their audience and encourage a greater appreciation for the percussion, dance, and fast-paced rhythms. As they acquire basic music skills and learn to work together as a unit, the youth reap the benefits of team-building experiences and a greater appreciation for the culture. Students gain a sense of ownership and awareness of their abilities as they contribute to the process of creating a successful performance and committing themselves to disciplined rehearsals. These rehearsals enforce the newly learned music skills, routines, and techniques for working effectively with other team members to produce the final product.

Carnaval

Every May, the Sonoma County 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance group joins its parent group, Loco Bloco, to perform in San Francisco as a satellite North Bay troupe for the annual Carnaval parade.

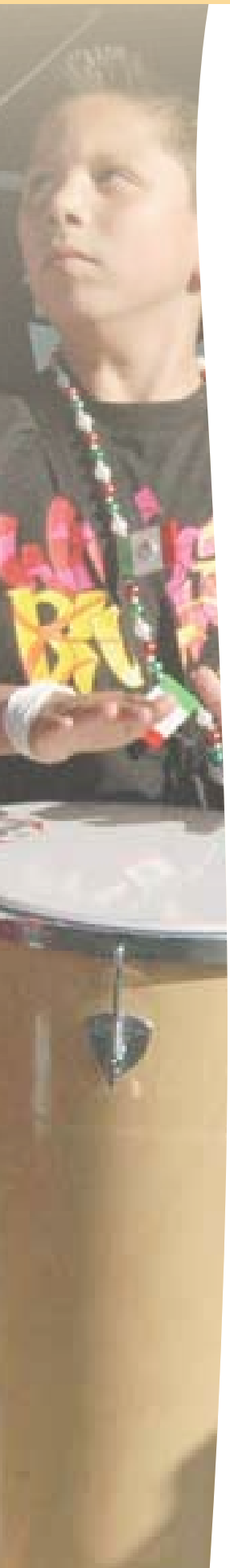
Youth participants from Sonoma County attend additional drumming and dance classes in San Francisco twice a week in April and May in order to learn the drum music and dance steps for the parade. In addition to this parade, youth are also invited to participate in many other Loco Bloco performances throughout the state.

If you are interested in setting up a drum and dance program of your own, though, there is no need for you to work through Loco Bloco in San Francisco. A 4-H drum and dance program can be designed to suit the unique culture of your own area. While the focus of the current curriculum is on African, Cuban, and Brazilian dance, your group can use the same structure to set up other dance and drumming programs based on the ethnic groups that exist within your own community.

How Is Bloco Drum and Dance Related to 4-H?

The 4-H Youth Development Program is based on experiential (hands-on or learn-by-doing) education. Further, through the use of the Targeting Life Skills Model developed by Patricia A. Hendricks of Iowa State University in 1996, Bloco Drum and Dance participants are able to apply their skills and knowledge directly to their daily lives in a highly effectual manner. The 4-H Program also partners with the local school district to provide a safe after-school program for youth. The facilities used for meetings, practices, and other activities are located at the school district's middle school and high school campuses, and several key school staff members serve as liaisons.

Members of the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance program are enrolled in 4-H and participate in the program as an after-school activity. Members are also encouraged to participate in other 4-H activities and events, and 4-H provides necessary medical and liability insurance for participating members.



Funding for the program is based on fees-for-service, fundraising activities, and grants.

Parts of the Curriculum

This publication is Part 1 of the 11-part curriculum. As an introduction to the curriculum, it provides you with a basis for understanding the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance program as a whole as well as the ideas and activities described in the other 10 parts.

Titles and publication numbers for all 11 parts are listed on page 1 of this publication. The materials and techniques used in Parts 2 through 10 of the curriculum have been developed and used in the Sonoma County program and have proven successful there.

Parts 2 through 9 provide detailed information on specific aspects of how to design and implement the program. Part 5 also provides information on how to align the program to meet or exceed the California State Curriculum Standards.

Part 10 gives sample nutrition education demonstrations and snack recipes that you can use in the program.

Part 11 focuses on program evaluations and processes for evaluation. The publication also includes information on the outcomes derived from the Sonoma County program.

Delivery of the Program

Five factors help determine how the program curriculum will be delivered:

1. **Adult direction with teen input.** Unlike younger children, it is important for teens to know they are part of the program development and implementation and that they be included in decision making processes whenever possible.
2. **Multi-level learning.** Participating youth will have the opportunity to learn music, dance, and drumming, but at the same time they will be learning more widely applicable life skills and performance skills.

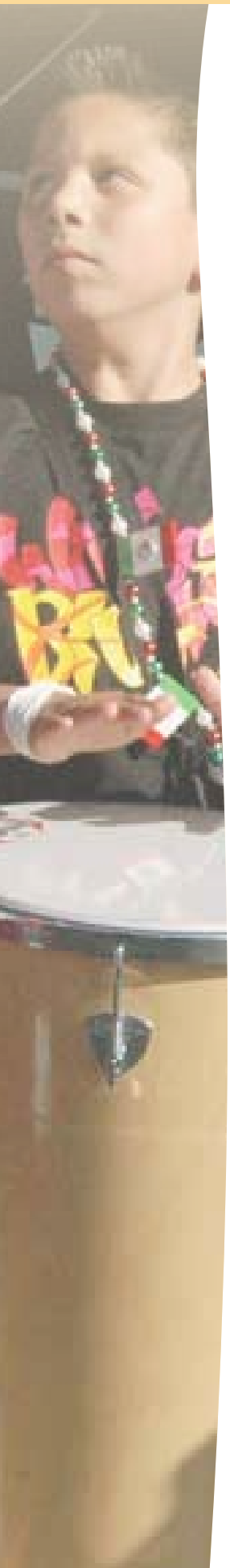
3. **Cooperative, supportive work.** All participants, whether youth, instructors, teen mentors, or other volunteer adults, will need to maximize their cooperative efforts and develop a working understanding of their roles and relationships with other participants.
4. **General atmosphere of the program.** Participation in the program should be fun, educational, and fully oriented toward the established goals and objectives.
5. **Instructional strategies.** The curriculum offers you instructional methods, tools, and techniques that have proven successful in teaching youth the types of skills and knowledge covered here.

Types of Learning

Cooperative Learning

Youth in traditional school settings usually are taught in a way that capitalizes on individualistic and competitive learning. In this teen after-school program, youth are encouraged to practice cooperative learning. Data suggest that this approach has many benefits. Cooperative learning is a much more effective way to encourage achievement, for instance, than is individualistic or competitive learning.

Cooperative learning is much easier to implement in the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance program than in schools because the after-school program does not have to meet state-sanctioned, quantified performance standards, and no quantified evaluation is required. Many of the youth in the program may not perform



well in an academic setting, and some may even view themselves as "failures" in school. With cooperative learning, though, the group works as a team and each youth brings different strengths to complement those of the others. This type of team approach has a history of enhancing teen learning in this type of program as well as beyond, in their personal life skills. (Baker 2008).

Experiential Learning

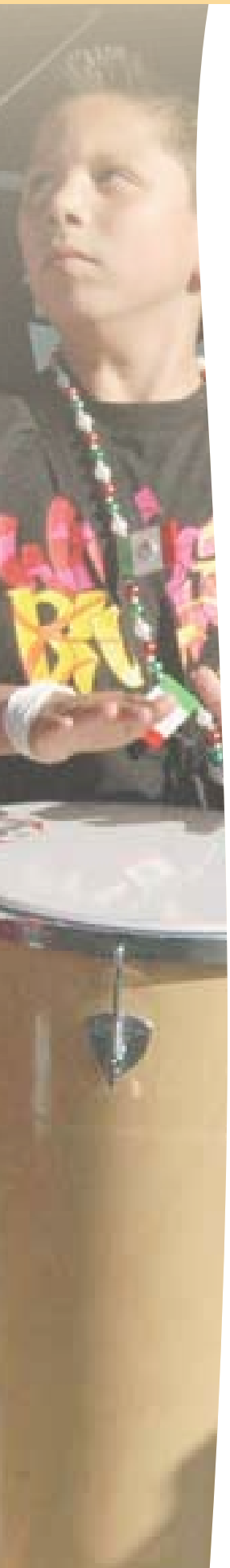
This curriculum includes a series of learning experiences based on participation in real-world activities. In order to be considered an experiential or hands-on learning activity, the activity must involve a person or persons doing something and then taking a critical look back at what they have done. Through this kind of structure, teens can determine for themselves what is and is not important to remember, and then take the important information and apply it to other situations. According to Darlene Z. Baker (2008), there are five key elements in experiential learning:

1. **Experiencing.** Begin with a concrete experience. A music, drum, or dance activity from this curriculum may be completed by an individual or a group, but either way it will involve completion of an activity or participation in the activity. Activities may include demonstration of a new skill, making items, creation of costumes, participation in field trips and events, playing games, or participation in music, dance, and drum performances.
2. **Sharing.** In the next step, groups and individuals talk about the experience, sharing their observations and describing how they feel the activities went. How did the music, dance, or drum experience make them feel? Can they describe the effect of sharing the program or performance with others?
3. **Processing.** Teens process the experience to determine their sense of what the most important and identifiable common themes were. Together with the volunteer leader, they discuss how new questions arise as a result of the activity. The volunteer leader can encourage the processing by asking pertinent questions.

4. **Generalizing.** Find general trends or common lessons in the activity experience. Focus on important points that apply to other real-life experiences, not just to the program activities. Highlight real-world situations where learning gained from the activity might apply.
5. **Applying.** Talk about how the new activity experience might be applied to real life. Experiential learning involves more than just doing program activities. It involves discussion of the activities afterward, developing life lessons from the activity, and applying those lessons to the real world.

Life Skills

In the 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program, the youth focus on developing life skills. While



the performance skills that the youth learn and demonstrate are outwardly visible, the program also has a less-visible, inward effect as the youth participants gain more broadly applicable life skills that relate to thinking, managing, relating, caring, giving, working, and just plain ways to be and to live. Life skills are defined here as non-academic skills. They include the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that people use to master a variety of life situations. These skills are indispensable, and give individuals a frame of reference for perceiving and responding to life situations, enabling them to achieve an inner contentment and feel joy in life (Rubin 1970, Baker, 2008).

Each youth will be involved in learning how to integrate these life skills for him or herself. Development of life skills for teens does not happen immediately. It occurs in the various environments in which teens find themselves: social environments of family, school, church, organized activities, and community. In today's society, the nature of these environments is very important to the teens' development. Helping young people to grow and develop in a positive way requires that they be encouraged to develop an awareness and understanding of who they are intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally, and morally.

By learning life skills, children gain the ability to consciously live with others in a positive way, express feelings safely, enjoy life, and welcome new experiences, at the same time as they develop leadership skills. An unexpected but very positive outcome from learning life skills in this way is that high school teens often become wonderful resources, serving as mentors to younger teens (Todd 1995).

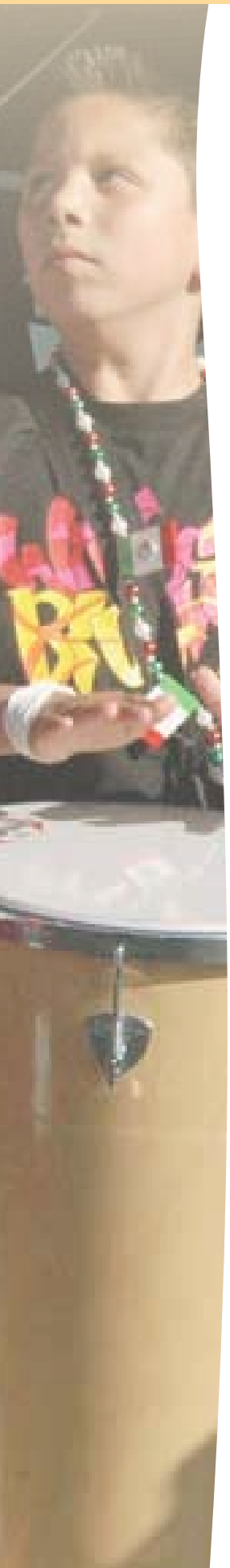
When someone feels competent, he or she feels at least some degree of control over his or her own life. Teens with this sense also feel good about themselves and about others. When they are able to feel competent under most conditions, they are better able to cope with the various demands required of them and can gain a sense of satisfaction

from active participation in the decision making or risk taking involved in meeting those demands.

Teaching the Life Skills

The outcomes from learning life skills are impressive, but it is also important for the leader to know how to teach life skills. Youth participants are so diverse in background and personality that it is difficult to identify any set of traits that are shared by all of the youth. Each individual has different cognitive, physical, communication, and social needs, at minimum. To successfully teach life skills to youth, you need to use the right instructional approach. When teaching life skills, please consider the following:

1. Provide activities and materials that are age appropriate. The program presented in this curriculum has been developed for middle school and high school youth.
2. Encourage immediate feedback and provide multiple opportunities to practice skills. This curriculum is set up as an after-school program and involves group discussions and practice sessions.
3. Recognize and respond to physical, visual, and verbal prompts. Again, the use of group discussions helps to reinforce these skills.
4. Make sure the participants can work with hands-on materials and activities. In this program, the activities involve the use of music, drums, and dancing.
5. Develop and manage a community-based instruction curriculum. This curriculum uses peer-to-peer teaching, and in much later stages the introduction and (hopefully)



successful use of the inquiry method (see description at end of this publication), all while interfacing with a wide variety of individuals and performance locations.

6. Introduction, continued practice, and eventual mastery of life skills. An after-school program based on this curriculum will teach the life skills of independence, self-advocacy, engagement in social interaction, public speaking, access to and engagement with community resources, acquisition of leadership and vocational skills, and enhanced participation in recreation and leisure activities that have a positive outcome.

Working with Teens

The 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance Program focuses on teens. Following implementation of this program in Sonoma County, adult organizers determined that through the experiential learning process a number of teen participants had developed the desire to become leaders in the program in order to do the following:

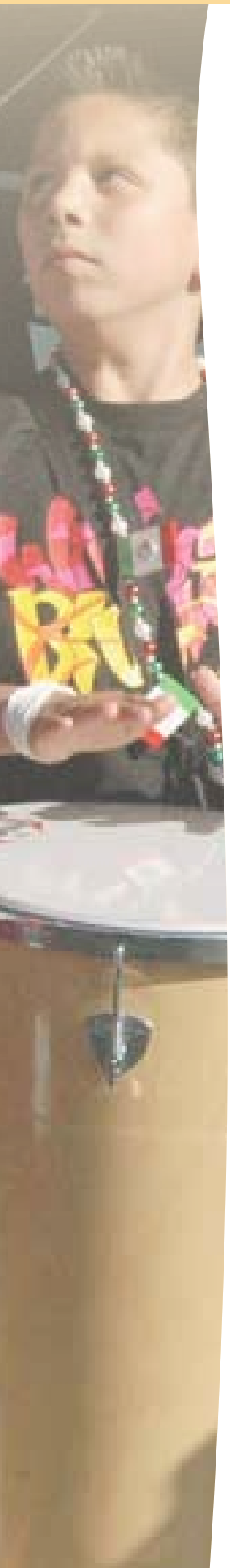
- Share the new skills they had gained.
- Learn new skills that would further expand and challenge their own abilities.
- Assume new roles and responsibilities of leadership.

As an adult staff member or volunteer working with teens, one needs to allow teens to take on as much responsibility and authority as they can comfortably handle.

In the beginning of the program an adult will need to facilitate team building so the teens will have an opportunity to get to know each other, laying the groundwork so they can later build on each other's strengths. The adult should also encourage the teens' growth by sharing responsibility and helping them improve their leadership skills. All of this will help build a strong team approach within the program.

As teens mature, they can take on increased responsibility and independence. Here are some things for adults to consider when working with teens in the program:

- **Determine roles.** Make sure to plan each person's role in the program by writing it down and sharing that written record with the entire leadership group. The teens in the program can grow into strong leaders by learning new skills, testing their limits and abilities, and sharing what they learn with the entire after-school group.
- **Delegate.** Delegation includes two elements: responsibility and authority. Ideally, both elements are delegated to the same person. When delegation is used properly, one person is given the responsibility for completing a task and the authority to implement or direct it.
- **Support each other.** The adult's role is to serve as a mentor to the teens. This includes letting participants know that the delegated teen is the official leader for the particular area or activity and that the participants are expected to listen, follow directions, and cooperate. The teen leader is responsible for generating some of this respect but needs the adult's consistent support (See Part 9 of the curriculum, Planning: Steps to Success [Publication 8435]).
- **New ideas.** Encourage participants to explore new ideas by involving youth in problem solving and program development. This will help the youth acquire leadership skills and increase their self-esteem.



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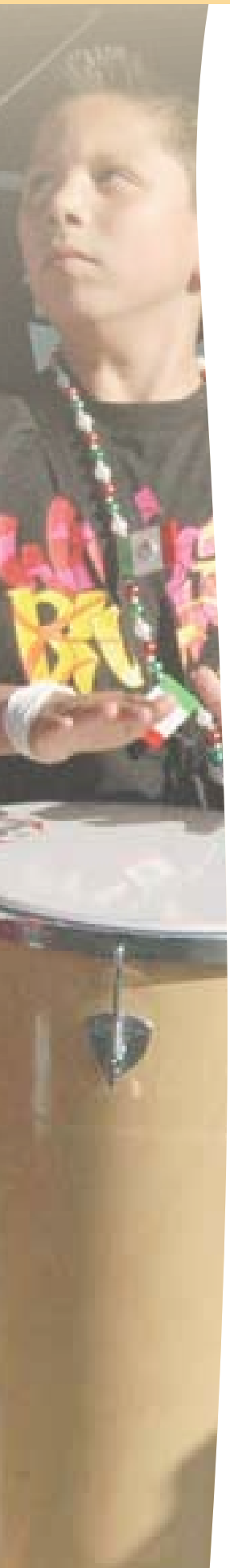
Inquiry and Experiential Learning

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 website, http://www.experientiallearning.ucdavis.edu/.



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