Informational Paper

TRANSITION - 4-H MODEL

Paul Brings  
Associate Professor  
University of Wisconsin - Extension  
Milwaukee County

Bonnie Herrmann  
Associate Professor  
University of Wisconsin - Extension  
Milwaukee County

Carl Smith  
Professor  
University of Wisconsin - Extension  
Milwaukee County

Mary Thiry  
Associate Professor  
University of Wisconsin - Extension  
Milwaukee County

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UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX requirements.
Situation

Historically, a large percentage of the people in Milwaukee County have not participated in 4-H. Parents do not relate to 4-H because it has never been a part of their lives. Consequently, they do not know what 4-H has to offer and how 4-H can fit into their urban/suburban life styles. There is hesitation on the part of families to make any long term commitments to an unfamiliar organization.

If 4-H is to be successful in programming with this hard-to-reach segment of our population, then parents must first become familiar with 4-H, recognize its value and thus learn to identify with the program.

In Milwaukee County, considerable effort has been expended in developing awareness and special interest programs aimed at hard-to-reach audiences. It can now be shown that a transition into longer term learning situations does occur once 4-H has been identified with previous positive short term events. Four-H participation in long term programs has also greatly expanded since 1973, when the multiple approach concept was first developed in Milwaukee County.

In 1973, the total participation in Milwaukee County 4-H program was 2,780 boys and girls. In 1984, participation in 4-H reached 51,592 youth.

Two primary factors for this large growth in 4-H were: (1) an increase in the number of the 4-H staff and, (2) the development of a model providing short term experiences which led to participation in long term experiences.
In 1973, five full time equivalent (F.T.E.) 4-H paraprofessionals were employed in Milwaukee County. Funds were received from Milwaukee County and Federal Urban 4-H funds.

In 1974, with a joint agreement with the Milwaukee County Parks, a Nature Education Agent was employed and assigned to the Wehr Nature Center.

In 1977, a Zoo Education Agent was employed jointly with funds from Cooperative Extension and the Milwaukee County Zoo, where this staff person is located.

In 1980, a youth component was added to the federally funded Urban Garden Program. A youth staff member is housed at the Urban Garden office located in downtown Milwaukee.

Objectives

The purpose of the Milwaukee County 4-H and youth program is to provide learning experiences which assist youth in acquiring life skills.

The program objective is to provide educational opportunities for the development of youth and adults through interaction in areas of mutual interest.

Specific objectives of the multi-purpose approach program are to:

1) Explore methods of involving more youth in 4-H
2) Increase the visibility of 4-H, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension and Milwaukee County in all youth programs
3) Extend university based research information to the people in an urban community.
Methods

The first step in expanding the 4-H program was the development of curriculum materials and programs designed to meet the needs of urban/suburban youth. Next, school administrators, teachers and directors of youth organizations were informed about the educational benefits of the 4-H program. No particular emphasis was placed on identifying these short term learning experiences with the 4-H program. Materials were labeled 4-H or University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension youth programs, but in most cases, this meant little to the participating clientele.

Emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of each group visiting the site (Wehr Nature Center, Zoo or Urban Garden). Gradually, the teachers, leaders, and parents began to identify each location with quality educational experiences for youth and requested materials to continue similar experiences. To meet this need, the Milwaukee County 4-H faculty developed additional materials for use by individuals and small groups. These became known as "Backyard Club Activities." These activities involve youth and adults interacting in areas of common interest. Nine different units of Backyard Club materials have been developed. Units include Arts & Crafts I & II, Zoo and Nature I & II, Energy, Health, Nutrition, Gardening and Exploring 4-H.

At this point, all 4-H participants understand that they are enrolled in a 4-H club program and that 4-H is sponsored by the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service.
The next phase of the 4-H program involved responding to requests from school teachers who visited the satellite extension sites. They requested similar learning experiences to use with students in their classes.

When designing "4-H Goes to School", 4-H faculty felt existing 4-H literature could meet the needs of youth, teachers, teacher aides and classroom volunteers. Again, students, teachers, teacher aides and classroom volunteers know they are participating in 4-H, and know they are welcome to participate in all 4-H activities, events and programs.

Another need identified was that urban youth lack hands-on-experiences with animals. Therefore, 4-H animal science project clubs were organized. These programs were designed as long term 4-H learning experiences.

Upon completion of a "Backyard Club" unit, "4-H Goes to School" or a project club activity, participants receive a letter explaining the benefits of a community 4-H club. They are then invited to join a 4-H club in their neighborhood. Four-H staff assist youth and adults in joining a neighborhood club or in organizing a new 4-H club. The 4-H club experience provides opportunities to influence the growth and development of youth over a longer period of time.
Results

The 4-H transition model, (see exhibit A) from a special interest program, to a short term club experience, to an even longer experience in a community 4-H club, has resulted in a large increase in the total participation in 4-H. Enrollment in community 4-H clubs has grown from 1,364 members in 1973 to 5,072 members in 1984. Total 4-H participation has grown from 2,780 youth in 1973 to 51,592 4-H'ers in 1984.

People are becoming aware of 4-H through special interest, short term clubs, and community 4-H clubs. Each phase in the transition is a valid learning experience, involving research based curriculum materials which foster interaction between youth and volunteer adults in areas of common interests. Therefore, each phase of the transition is a valid 4-H learning experience and can stand by itself.

While this model was originally designed to move youth from short term to long term experiences, it has been found that the transition occurs in both directions. There are members in community 4-H clubs joining project clubs and some members who participate in short term learning experiences at one or more of our extension education sites (Zoo, Nature Center, Urban Gardens).

Four-H has become known for its quality educational programs. Through involvement in these programs, members, leaders and parents are more aware of 4-H and that 4-H is a part of the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service. It has been demonstrated that the 4-H program can be adapted to meet the needs of urban youth.
Implications

1. Implementation of this model has shown that 4-H is a viable urban youth program.

2. Through multiple approaches, 4-H is more visible in hard-to-reach urban communities. Increased participation in the Milwaukee County 4-H program indicates an urban need for university research based information.

3. While the community club is the best known 4-H program, special interest and short term clubs are also valid 4-H experiences.

4. Curriculum materials must continually be developed to meet the present as well as the ever changing needs of urban youth.
4-H TRANSITION MODEL FOR MILWAUKEE COUNTY

4-H SPECIAL INTEREST PROGRAMS

- NATURE EDUCATION Thru Wehr Nature Center
- ANIMAL SCIENCES Thru Milwaukee Co. Zoo
- URBAN GARDENING Thru Shoots 'N Roots

SHORT TERM CLUBS

- Backyard 4-H Clubs
- Project Clubs
- 4-H Goes to School

4-H COMMUNITY CLUBS