



AKH-00017

# Just for Leaders

## Working with 4-H Cloverbuds five to seven years old



## Welcome to 4-H

4-H is the youth development program of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service and is available to all districts. Support and access to resources are available through your district Cooperative Extension office.

The mission of 4-H is to help young people acquire knowledge, develop life skills and form positive attitudes that enable them to become self-reliant, contributing members of society.

4-H reaches youths in ages 5 to 18 as of August 15 of the current school year. Cloverbuds are 5 to 7 years old. The Cloverbud program enhances children's development through fun, hands-on activities. The program is noncompetitive, participatory and multi-subject. It is process oriented, not result oriented. The program's goal is to teach children life skills — such as decision making, communication, and positive self-esteem — through a variety of new experiences.

While helping children grow and develop, you — as a volunteer — will enjoy new challenges and have fun.

## Policies

### Ages

Cloverbuds are 5 to 7 years old.

### Competition

Cloverbuds may not be judged in competitive situations.

### Events, Activities and Exhibits

Cloverbuds are encouraged to participate in 4-H events, activities and exhibits and are recognized for their participation. You provide the child with information and encouragement about his or her project or activity. (*Note: Cloverbuds are not allowed to work with large livestock.*)

### Leaders and Members Guides

Resources are available to help leaders and members with projects.

## Characteristics of Cloverbuds

(Adapted from *Ages and Stages of Child and Youth Development: A Guide for 4-H Leaders*, North Central Regional Extension Publication No. 292).

### Physical Growth

Early elementary-age children's growth is slow and steady.

Five- to 7-year-olds learn how to use their bodies by mastering physical skills. This includes everything from small-muscle skills (printing with a pencil) to large-muscle skills (catching a ball). Because these skills are not yet polished, craft projects often end up messy, with crooked nails and too much glue. Yet, active projects are necessary for learning. Provide opportunities to practice skills, but use projects that beginners can complete successfully.

### Growth in Thinking

Children's thinking is very concrete. If they have never seen, heard, felt, tasted or smelled it, they have a hard time thinking it. Capture the children's interest by demonstrating the activity, rather than simply giving instructions verbally. Doing is important for both the children and the leader.

During this stage of development, children are more interested in working on a project than completing a project. Eventually, finishing a project will become as important.

Another thinking skill early elementary children develop is learning to sort things into categories. This skill makes collecting things important and fun at this age. Collecting-type activities can be good for both group meetings and individual projects.

### Social Growth

School-age activities take children — some for the first time — away from home and parents and put them in environments where they face new responsibilities and demands. As children move away from dependence on parents, they need to transfer that dependence to another adult, so the leader may become a central figure to the child.

Children are just learning how to be friends and may have several "best friends" at a time. Boys and girls sometimes enjoy playing together at this age, although by the end of this period the separation of the sexes will occur during most play. Fights, although occurring often, seldom have lasting effects.

The opinion of peers becomes very important. Often, 5- to 7-year-olds care more about being successful when their peers, rather than adults, are watching. Small group activities are effective, but the children need an adult to share approval.

### **Emotional Growth**

Early elementary-age children are wrapped up in themselves. They cannot yet image clearly what other people think and feel. “Dramatic play” — making believe they are someone else — is the way children at this age begin to empathize. Five- to 7-year-olds need and seek the approval of adults because they are not yet confident enough to set their own standards.

Children at this stage like to play games. Rules and rituals become fascinating, but the children are not yet ready to accept losing. Success in any degree needs to be emphasized. Cooperative games in which every child wins can be especially enjoyable. Failures should be minimized, and some measure of success should be found in every experience to ease the blows to young egos.

When an activity fails, you can help the children interpret the reasons behind the failure. This helps them learn how to cope with problems. The usual 4-H practice of awarding competitive ribbons is not acceptable with this age group.

### **Ways to Involve Cloverbuds in 4-H**

For the benefit of members and leaders, an adult leader, or a teen leader under adult supervision, should work directly with Cloverbuds.

Kindergartners, first graders and second graders can participate in 4-H in the following ways:

1. Short-term projects
2. Their own clubs of 5 to 7 year olds
3. Clubs for ages 5 to 18, if the needs of all the youths are being met
4. School-age child care programs
5. School enrichment programs
6. Parent-child home learning
7. Other ways that fit within the 4-H philosophy statement

### **Program Planning Suggestions**

(This section is adapted from material by Christine Nelson, Ph.D., Michigan State University.)

As a 4-H leader, you must consider the development of 5 to 7 year olds as you plan your program. You need to contrast what is generally known about children this age with the specific behaviors you observe in your group.

In general, 4-H meetings involving kindergartners, first graders and second graders will be better experience for the children (and for you) if you consider the following when planning your program:

1. Have one adult or older youth for every six children. Some activities will require fewer children to every adult.
2. Keep in mind how important you are, as an adult, to children this age. Find something positive to say to each child at each meeting.
3. Involve the children in selecting and planning the activities. They are more likely to maintain interest in activities when they have helped plan them. Consider several short-term projects rather than one long-term project. (*Note: Cloverbuds are not allowed to work with large livestock.*)
4. Change activities often according to the needs of your group. Get a sense of the group’s attention span; children become “antsy” when they are having difficulty sticking with an activity. Change to a new activity when you first notice children shuffling their feet, looking around and being “busy bodies.” Children have a short attention span and a tremendous amount of energy. They need to be active most of the time. Try not to talk to them as a group for more than 5 to 10 minutes at a time.
5. Allow and encourage the children to talk and work with each other.
6. Keep an eye out for children who may feel left out and who need help to be part of the group. One way to do this is to pair such a child with another and tell them they are each other’s helper.
7. Occasionally, you will observe behavior that is harmful to the group or individuals in the group, such as teasing or bickering. Avoid this

behavior by establishing limits and guidelines at the first meeting and gently, firmly and consistently enforcing them. Knowing the characteristics of this age group will help you understand what you can expect. Remember to enjoy and appreciate their individuality.

8. Sharing your group's work can be fun. Display their work and give participation awards. Use the children's art and crafts, drawings, experiments or other activities when you have the opportunity to share their projects with others. These opportunities might include bulletin boards, window displays or community events. Please remember, 5 to 7 year olds should not participate in situations where they are judged. Their self-esteem is too vulnerable for competition at this age.

## Parent and Family Involvement

Parents and families are strongly encouraged to be active participants in the Cloverbud program. Parents can become 4-H leaders or support the Cloverbuds by sharing hobbies, offering homes for meetings, assisting with projects, providing snacks, helping with transportation, contacting members and other parents, and a variety of other ways. Remember, in order to get participation, you must ask people to get involved.

Offer and encourage family involvement activities. The most important group for the 5- to 7-year-old child is the family. Communication is the key to family and parental involvement. Some ways to accomplish this are through parent letters, parent meetings, group newsletters or 4-H family events

Parents and families who get involved in the 4-H program often stay involved.

[www.uaf.edu/ces](http://www.uaf.edu/ces) or 1-877-520-5211

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