

College and Career Readiness: Today's Youth and 4-H

Master's Project

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	3
Introduction	4
Literature Review	5
Every Student Succeeds Act	5
The Role of 4-H	8
Review of Previous Work within Ohio 4-H.....	9
Georgia 4-H response to ESSA	10
Project Goals	10
Information Gathering	11
Theories and Frameworks	15
Contextual Learning Theory	15
4-H Thriving Model	16
Experiential Model	17
Lesson Development	18
Book Review	18
From Telling to Teaching.....	19
Making it, What Today’s Kids Need for Tomorrow’s World	20
Developing My Target Skills	21
Pilot Test	25
Reflections and Recommendations	28
Consideration for Working with Schools	28
School Counselor Concerns	28
Partnership- SNAP-Ed Experience to Inform Future Ohio 4-H CCR Partnerships with Local Schools .	29
Student Engagement	30
Future Research	30
References	32
Appendix	36
Appendix 1: Interview Chart	36
Appendix 2: My Target Skills Lesson	39

List of Figures

Page 5	Figure 1: Ohio Department of Education ESSA Transition Timeline
Page 16	Figure 2: REACT
Page 17	Figure 3: 4-H Thriving Model
Page 18	Figure 4: Experiential Learning Model
Page 20	Figure 5: 4 A Learning Model
Page 21	Figure 6: 10 Competencies
Page 22	Figure 7: Target Lesson Anchor
Page 23	Figure 8: Target Lesson Add
Page 24	Figure 9: Target Lesson Apply
Page 25	Figure 10: Target Lesson Away

Introduction

Education plays an essential role in preparing youth for life after high school. The term college and career readiness are used broadly and there are varying views on what it entails as well as what factors impact it. Today, it seems that the focus for college and career readiness (CCR) is centered on ensuring students' are academically prepared to attend a 4-year institution of higher education. However, skills that are needed to be successful in both their personal and professional aspects of their lives are not learned completely through their academic experiences. What's more, the world is changing at a rapid pace. Youth today are growing up in an environment that places a premium on immediacy—instant messaging, viral social media posts, group texts, entertainment on demand, and “binging” an entire series of show. The question youth development professionals need to consider is how these changes are impacting youth today and how it will affect them in their future, particularly as it relates to decisions and experiences that will impact their educational and career trajectories.

This project: 1) identifies changes in educational policy requirements that affect youth college and career development in academic settings; 2) Reviews Ohio and other states' 4-H workforce development efforts and how the Ohio 4-H workforce development team addressed the issue; 3) interviews key informants to gather insights into CCR; and 4) pilot tests a CCR lesson in two different 4-H settings. Recommendations and examples of how workforce development can bridge the gap between where youth are today, and how 4-H programming can prepare them for the future are addressed.

Literature Review

Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized the previous Elementary and Secondary Education Act to create policy that allows states flexibility and encourages innovation, but also holds them accountable for achieving educational results (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). Every Student Succeeds Act, signed into law in 2015, set a timeline for states to transition and create new state plans to be developed with their stakeholders (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) | U.S. Dept of Ed).

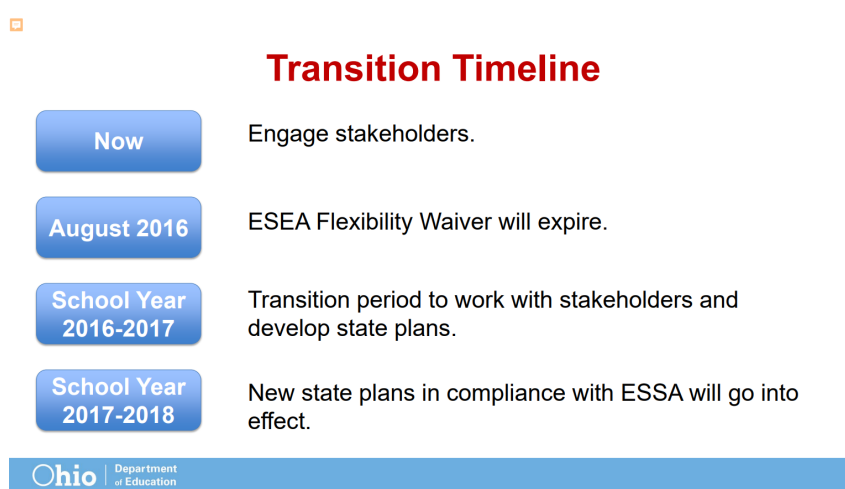


Figure 1: Ohio Department of Education ESSA Transition Timeline

Note. ESSA Transition Timeline. From Ohio Department of Education, by education.ohio.gov, n.d. (education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-ESSA/ESSA-Overview.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US)).

As can be seen in figure 1, the state of Ohio launched their new plan just a year after development began. The policy changes have shifted and the “authority in the current, push for local control” places pressure on local school districts throughout Ohio to create their own localized implementation plans (Desimone et al., 2019, p. 176). District administrators are being held accountable to develop new CCR curriculum, either through finding resources already available or creating their own from scratch. Results from a study that focused on three individual states, including Ohio, showed that

local school district officials were trending more toward the creation of their own material, “because resources were difficult to find on the state website, or the state provided only a few model units, or the states avoided endorsing specific materials for fear of being too prescriptive” (Desimone et al., 2019, p.170). With the lack of resources provided from the state level and decisions delegated to local school officials, consistency among districts throughout the state of Ohio is a concern.

As a result of the quick turnaround forced through the ESSA, “many schools were not prepared or equipped to provide the required career exploration lessons and activities” (Murrah-Hanson et al., 2019, p. 2). Policy changes can also have a ladder effect which is seen in the pressure placed on school districts themselves. “And while business associations, state regulations, and other forms of economic governance can help solve the problem, they also create opportunities for corporations to pursue new collective forms of opportunistic or predatory behavior...” (Cambell, 2007, p. 947). This quote is from a study done specifically on corporations but is included to show that regulations and standards impacting businesses can be aligned with how school officials are feeling themselves. School districts are being pressured to meet standards and, in the end, to meet those standards, the best interests of the students may not always be at the forefront of decision-making.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the United States had an average of 86% graduation rate among high school students in 2018-19. Ohio had the same average 86% (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This percentage shows that school districts across the United States are focused on seeing students’ success throughout their youth to high school graduation. When focusing on college graduation rates, “the overall 6-year graduation rate was 60 percent for males and 66 percent for females” (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The college graduation rates in comparison to the high school graduation rate represent a potential lack in college preparation at the high school level. A study focused on CCR emphasis in state plans found that “the extent to which submitted plans address CCR varies greatly, from states electing to integrate aims and components

comprehensively throughout their plans to states that do not offer any statements about preparing students for college and careers” (Hackmann et al., 2019, p. 9).

In addition to the high school and college graduation rates, the 2021 Bureau of Labor and Statistics show (*Table 1. Labor Force...Ethnicity, 2021*):

- 33% of 2020-2021 high-school dropouts are employed through the civilian labor force, while 15.6% are not. The other 51.4% are not in the labor force.
- 52% of 2021 high-school graduates that did not enroll in college are employed through the workforce, while 21.6% are unemployed, and 26.4% did not join the labor force.
- 38.9% of recent high school graduates enrolled in college entered the labor force while attending school.
 - From these statistics, we notice that there is a large group of recent high-school dropouts who have not even joined the workforce. We also notice that a portion of recent high-school graduates did not enter the labor force or are not employed. This data is important, because they show that there is a visible need in encouraging students across the board to enter the labor force.

Looking deeper into the lack of CCR awareness in youth, “schools are not the only influence on young people’s careers, but they can and do exert an influence on young people’s approach to their career” (Hooley et al., 2011, p. 3). In addition to schools, students’ involvement in youth programs offer influence on youth’s career path. Resnick (1987), focused on learning in and out of school. As Resnick states, “the packages of knowledge and skill that schools provide seem unlikely to map directly onto clusters of knowledge people use in their work or personal lives” (Resnick, 1987, p. 15). Unless high-school students are choosing the career technical path and, in a career, focused program, the education

seems to be too general. Knowing this, young people's affiliations outside of school often are focused more on a specific path in relation to their work and or personal lives.

The Role of 4-H

Identifying the need for college and career preparation from sources outside of the local school system provides youth development programs an opportunity to help bring focus to and make a difference in the lives of youth. The 4-H program believes in “developing young people who are empowered, confident, hard-working, determined, responsible and compassionate—seeing the world beyond themselves so that they have the life-long skills to succeed in college and career” (What Is 4-H?, n.d.). With this mission in place, 4-H is positioned to help alleviate some stress local school districts are feeling related to providing CCR programming by providing what 4-H has been focused on for many years.

The Ohio 4-H Workforce Development Plan, 2019, identifies broad goals of a CCR program. “In 2018, CFAES Vice President Cathann Kress included a specific charge for Ohio 4-H to better connect with workforce development, specifically making connections with those programs and careers supported by the college” (Arnett, 2019, p. 1). Support from the leadership within Extension is recognized and new work is being encouraged. The plan identifies two finding that are notable regarding the work of this Master's project: First, “since 2012 there has been little focused effort in Ohio 4-H related to workforce development. The Teen Leadership Design Team has incorporated some of the workforce development language emphasis in their plans” (Arnett, 2019, p. 2). This finding indicates that the new efforts can build on work that was completed previously. Secondly, “there are currently many local 4-H efforts focused on workforce development..., but not much consistency or coordination beyond the local level” (Arnett, 2019, p. 2). As previously stated, it seems the inconsistency in college and career readiness implementation in state plans that are further complicated by the varying efforts at the district level is also present throughout the state in Ohio 4-H as well.

Review of Previous Work within Ohio 4-H

In 2010, Ohio extension professional Graham R. Cochran and a team of other extension professionals published *Extension's Role in Preparing Youth for the Workforce: A Challenge to Extension Professionals*. As those authors state, "In order to prepare youth to not only compete, but to lead in the 21st century workforce, we believe extension professionals must take a critical look at the way they have traditionally approached positive youth development and ask some tough questions" (Cochran et. al., 2010, p.2). Two of the five questions addressed are influential to my thought process for this Master's project:

- "How can we add value without adding more "stuff" (Cochran et. al., 2010, p. 3).

They identify limited funds available for extension professionals and recognize that a new program does not have to be created to focus more on workforce development. Perhaps a direct focus on workforce preparation throughout the programs already being implemented could add value.

- "How do we ensure that youth make the connection" (Cochran et. al., 2010, p.3).

They recognize that through youth development life skills are being learned, however they are not always addressed and therefore overlooked. It is critical that youth can make the connection between how their current experiences are preparing them for the future.

These two questions may seem simple but are important for identifying how Ohio 4-H can implement workforce development in meaningful ways in order to positively impact college and career readiness of youth today.

Following Cochran's work in 2010, in 2014 Cochran, Ferrari and Arnett released a case study on *Using an Initiative to Focus Programming Efforts: A Case Study of the Ohio 4-H Workforce Preparation Initiative*. The authors state, "it seemed that a more intentional approach would add value to our existing programs, as well as stimulate more innovative approaches...intentionally link our work with young people to specific workforce preparation content and outcomes" (Graham et. al., 2014, p.4). The

results of identifying the use of an initiative to increase the implementation of workforce development into Ohio 4-H had a positive response. “From our experience, an initiative approach is a way to generate focused efforts around a change process that leads to addressing important issues” (Graham et. al., 2014, p.7). In addition to the Ohio findings, information from other states can also be useful in crafting next steps to address CCR among Ohio 4-H youth participants.

Georgia 4-H response to ESSA

In the state of Georgia 4-H Extension professionals have a working partnership with local schools. They capitalized on the opportunity available to them in response to the new ESSA requirements of CCR for schools (Murrah-Hanson et al., 2019). Georgia 4-H immediately put together a team of Extension 4-H agents and others to develop career awareness components. The team designed lessons that aligned with the new standards that would be taught by Extension professionals in the schools, which in return reduced the stress of local educators having to learn new material to teach. “These outcomes demonstrate that 4-H career curriculum provides a valuable experiential learning experience for youths in the classroom” (Murrah-Hanson et al., 2019, p. 4). Research findings from Georgia 4-H’s implementation of teaching CCR curriculum in classrooms shows that youth organizations can have a positive impact on alleviating stress felt by school districts, as well as provide a positive learning environment for students. The actions made by Georgia 4-H can be instructional for other states.

Project Goals

What I learned through the literature review helped guide the direction of my project. Because the flexibility that is given to states through the Every Student Succeeds Act seems to result in inconsistency of college and career readiness concepts being included in state education plans, and also creates stressors for school district personnel, there is an opportunity for youth development programs, such as 4-H, to provide needed college and career readiness curriculum and programming. What’s more,

schools are pressured by academic requirements that place a premium on college preparation and may disadvantage a larger emphasis on including topics that can help prepare students for life after college.

The Ohio 4-H program has been focused on developing youth and equipping them with the skills and knowledge to be successful, caring, competent, capable, contributing citizens. Kress's charge for a focus on workforce development in extension presents support for new actions to be taken in Ohio Extension. The world that youth are surrounded by today is changing and growing at a rapid pace. The previous work that has been done in Extension will be used as a foundation in this project.

Information Gathering

When discussing finding an area of need where my project could be beneficial, college and career readiness implementation in workforce development was suggested by my advisor, Kirk Bloir. An introduction to Shelby Brawner, University of Tennessee Extension Program Specialist, led to a personal interview with her to discuss what the state of Tennessee had recently launched and learn from their experience.

At the time, the governor of Tennessee was promoting the "drive 55 initiative to equip 55 percent of Tennesseans with a college degree or certificate by 2025" ("The Alliance," 2014). The Dean of Tennessee Extension saw an opportunity with this initiative and asked Brawner and her co-workers to develop a program that could help meet the governor's challenge. They developed a program called *The Next Chapter*, which "is a unique college and career readiness program developed in partnership with Tennessee 4-H and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, that connects students statewide with college and career resources at Tennessee's state flagship, land-grant university" (Brawner, 2020).

Tennessee 4-H holds a strong working partnership with local schools and the educators work closely with the teachers and guidance counselors. Through their partnership, they identify areas where 4-H can cover required subject matter. This eased the launch of the Next Chapter Pilot. In Tennessee a curriculum developed directly for in-school use was ideal as the educators already have a working

partnership with the schools. In Ohio, most county educators are not directly involved in the school systems. Through discussions with Brawner and understanding the work that was being done in Tennessee, I wanted to identify how the model could be adapted to work for the Ohio 4-H program.

Following conversations with Brawner, I conducted interviews with four local school district employees to better understand the need for CCR curriculum and where the work could be implemented into their district. I chose local school district employees as key informants because of the control districts have on identifying what curriculum to use. I informally interviewed:

- School guidance counselor
- Middle school educator
- Career technical center educator
- Afterschool program director

I asked four specific open-ended questions during the interviews to gather information about what, how, when, and why a CCR program is needed. I summarized these interviews in Appendix 1.

Throughout the interviews a few common themes were identified.

1. A program that sets a foundational path could benefit the student as well as the school district. Current implementation into core classes with the occasional nine-week careers class does not provide support in all aspects needed. As the guidance counselor mentioned, the school was able to purchase Naviance, which is a college and career readiness program. Even though the program is in the hands of the school, they do not have the time to train the educators how to use the program and therefore have not been able to utilize it. This shows that school districts are in fact having to put college and career specific development on the back burner to cover the basics first.
2. As far as the implementation and an ideal partnership, there is concern about when the best time to fit it into the schedule would be. The educators were honest about having the pressure

to complete a certain amount of work and find it difficult to give up much time in their day. The guidance counselor identified offering flexibility. Rather than having a set program with specific amount of time for lessons, number of lessons in series and how often teaching would occur, being able to set up what is best for each district was suggested.

3. Additionally, it was advised to target the interest of students. As the educator mentioned there will be the group of students who are interested no matter the circumstances, however the majority of the students will require a catch.

From the interviews, I gathered that the initial idea of an in-school program may not be ideal for the Ohio. Knowing that there is an interest and that the school officials identify a need, there is support from the schools to offer the opportunity to students.

To help me gain insights from Ohio 4-H professionals, I had several informal conversations which provided additional information for my project. I had several conversations with the Clinton County 4-H educator, Tracie Montague, about the work the work a 4-H educator would be responsible for completing. Throughout each conversation, Montague mentioned the need for helping students identify why the experiences they are currently facing are important was mentioned. As a 4-H educator who engages with youth over many years, she witnesses first-hand how youth develop and grow. Montague sees a tendency for 4-H programming to focus on camp counselors and junior fair board as the major leadership roles and these two groups represent prime experiences where the youth really develop. These experiences are beneficial and provide additional opportunities for youth to learn, practice and identify their skills, but each project a 4-H member completes does as well. Each project requires the member to complete a project book and complete an interview or present the project at the fair. Many important college and career preparation is being completed that is not directly identified. As a county educator, she was excited to hear about new resources being thought of and opportunities that it will bring to the county.

From my conversations with Montague, I noted a couple key take-aways. First was her suggestion of think about rather than recreating the work, that lesson objectives, topics and skills be pulled together to create a more consistent and intentional CCR lesson. Ohio 4-H has resources already available, but a set resource could provide ready-to-use lessons that are pulling together those resources and providing the opportunity for educators to help members identify impactful outcomes of their 4-H project work.

I also spoke at length with Margo Long, the Ohio 4-H program manager for workforce development and the newly launched 4-H pathways effort. Long was influential in the development of this project. In the beginning, she and I brainstormed ideas about skills and knowledge that students need to be successful. Through those discussions, we struggled to identify how we know what it is that today's kids need to know to be successful. One of the key questions we kept returning to is: Are the traditional methods of college and career preparation going to be as valued in today's climate given ever-evolving technologies when the youth we are working with as middle schoolers will be entering the professional world in 5-plus years? Additional observations we made included:

- there seems to be a lack of preparing youth for life as a single person following graduation, given the trends in delaying marriage and less cohabitation;
- there is more to college and career readiness than how to find and apply for a job and attend college;
- there are critical life skills needed to live, such as caring for yourself, that should be included in positive youth development-focused programming.

In my discussions with Long, she recommended I read the book *Making it, What Today's Kids Need for Tomorrow's World* by Stephanie Krauss (2021). I present a summary of the book, in the next section.

The information gathering process provided me with key details that were then able to be used throughout the project development. The personal interviews with school employees provided guidance on creating flexible curriculum that can be used with a variety of student levels in various settings. Conversation with Montague helped identify combining work that fits what is needed rather than recreating. Conversation with Long pulled this all together and directed the focus of identifying what it is that students need to know today.

Theories and Frameworks

The theories and frameworks for the project were identified following the literature review and information gathered from key informants.

Contextual Learning Theory

Through the contextual learning theory, “learning occurs only when students (learners) process new information or knowledge in such a way that it makes sense to them in their own frames of reference— (their own inner worlds of memory, experience, and response) (*What Is Contextual Teaching and Learning?*, 2007). Contextual curriculum follows a model of relating, experiencing, applying, cooperating, and transferring (REACT), which states the essential elements in learning. The REACT Model is important for contextual learning as each of the essential elements are providing guidance for teacher and learner to connect with personal interests. The following figure provided by Johnny (2008) shows a summary of the strategy.

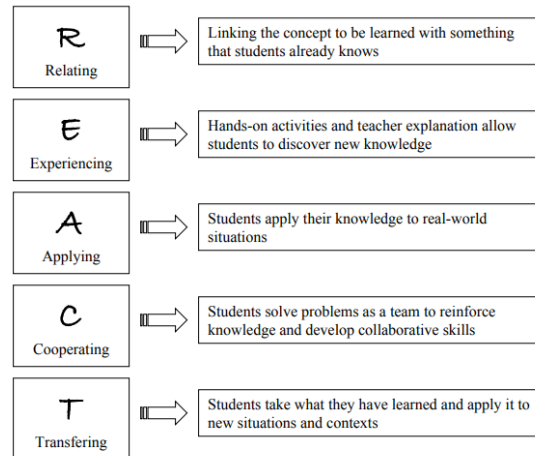


Figure 2: REACT

Note: From Contextual Learning: A Model for Learning & Instruction in Math, by Johnny, J., 2008., p. 9 (DOI:10.13140/2.1.4672.8965).

Contextual learning serves as the basis of this study because career development as contextual learning, “not only helps the students see the relationship of academics to the real world but it also helps them to understand where their own strengths and interests lie” (Contextual Learning?, 2004, p.2). As core part of contextual learning, cross-curriculum integration helps to form strong connections among academic and extracurricular sources. As mentioned by Kalchik and Oertle (2010), an example of this “is when academic teachers, CTE [career technical education] teachers, and representatives of business and industry forms teams to create projects involving intersection between academic content and career-technical workforce competencies” (Kalchik & Oertle, 2010, p. 1). Through the project I identify how Ohio 4-H can bridge the gap in connection between college and career development of youth in school and youth organization involvement.

4-H Thriving Model

In addition to the REACT model, it is important to identify the 4-H Thriving Model, which represents the positive change and growth of youth through development in 4-H (4-H Thriving Model of PYD – Informed by Science – Grounded in Practice, n.d.). This model is important for aligning the developed curriculum with the 4-H pathway. As you can see in the following figure, the growth of

members throughout the program are revolved around using their experiences to shape them into the flower that's going to bloom with skills academically, civically, employability as well as personal wellbeing. The work of this project will be helping youth identify their bloom.

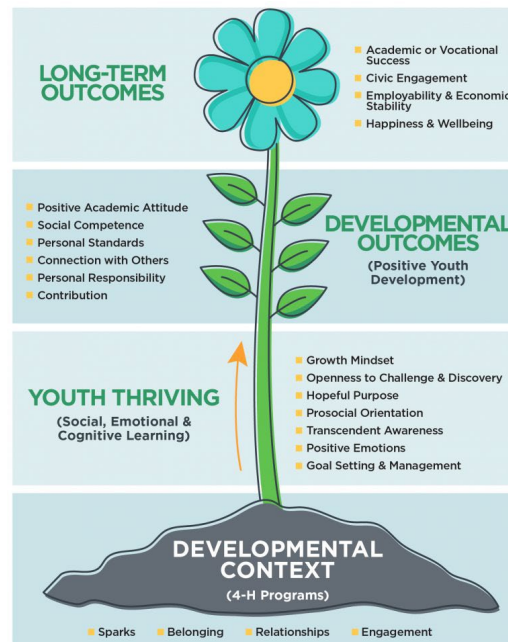


Figure 3: 4-H Thriving Model

Note: 4-H Thriving Model Graphic. From *About the 4-H Thriving Model*, by helping-youth-thrive.extension.org, n.d. (About the 4-H Thriving Model – 4-H Thriving Model of PYD (extension.org)).

Experiential Model

The contextual learning theory provides understanding that students learn best when information that is new is directly applied to either experiences they are currently facing, recently have, or will in the near future. We identified the thriving model to understand where the work can align with the overall model of a member through their 4-H experience. An experiential model is beneficial to the specific curriculum development that will be done. The experiential learning model helps tie together “both experience and process the activity” (Norman & Jordan, 2006, p.1). The model follows a five-step process where students will experience, process, share, generalize, and apply the experience. The benefit of this model is that participants will learn faster, knowing the objective ahead of time and

intended to make the experience more enjoyable (*Experiential Learning Model*, n.d.). Additionally, it allows for the students to take responsibility for their own learning. Below is the figure where the flow of the model can be seen.

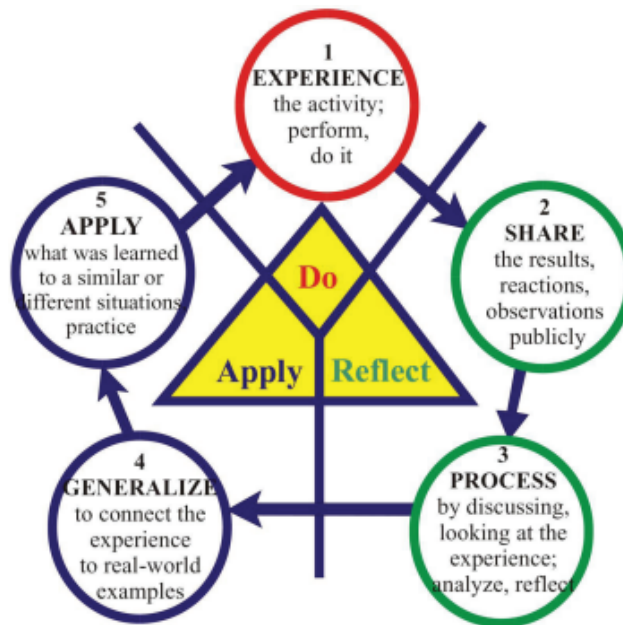


Figure 4: Experiential Learning Model

Note. Experiential Learning Model. From “Using an Experiential Model in 4-H: 4H SFS101.1/4H243,

5/2006”, by Norman, M.M. & Jordan, J.C., 2006, EDIS, Vol. 2006 No. 9, P. 1

(<https://doi.org/10.32473/edis-4h243-2006>).

Lesson Development

Book Review

With the theories and frameworks in mind, knowledge from the literature review and the information gathered through key informant and other personal interviews, I started the lesson planning process. At the forefront, I kept the recurring theme that students learn best when the content is relatable and useful, as well as the importance of what it is that students need to know today to be successful. As I worked on developing the lessons, I chose two books for independent study to assist me:

From Telling to Teaching by Joye A. Norris (2003) and *Making it, What Today's Kids Need for Tomorrow's World* by Stephanie Krauss (2021).

From Telling to Teaching

As Joye Norris states, “the fact remains that your learners learn best by getting engaged with new information, by talking about it, using it, making sense of it, and filing it in handy places for the future” (Norris, 2003, p. 11). Throughout the book she focuses on various teaching techniques, models and styles that can help the educator move from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach (Norris, 2003, p. 69). The first step in creating a lesson should always be planning, using the simplest terms to identify, who, why, when, and where. “When you walk yourself through these steps and record your decisions, you are giving yourself focus and thoroughness” (Norris, 2003, p.71). Once the lesson is thought out and key concepts are identified, the four A step Learning Task Model can be used to assure that the lesson is designed with a student-centered approach. Following is a figure from Norris that introduces the model followed by an analysis of how I used the model in my lessons. How the 4 A model was used is described in further detail in developing target skills lesson.

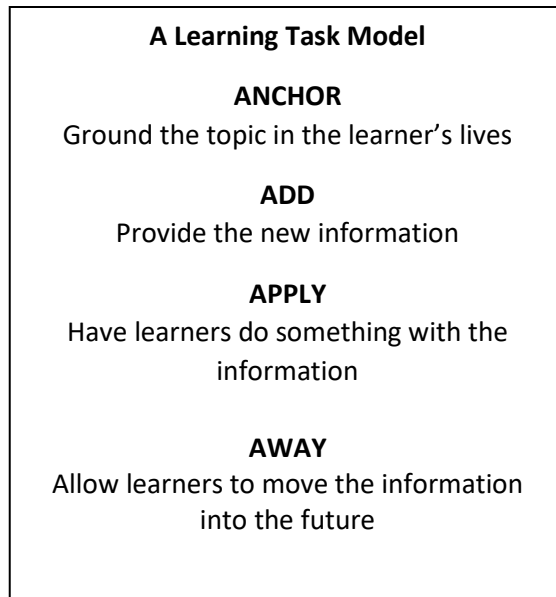


Figure 5: 4 A Learning Model

Note. A Learning task Model. From *From Telling to Teaching* (p.86), by Norris, J.A., 2003, *Learning by Dialogue*.

Making it, What Today's Kids Need for Tomorrow's World

This book written by Stephanie Krauss, published in 2021 explores the world of changes that kids today are facing and what they mean for young people as they prepare for adulthood (Krauss, 2021, p. xxvii). Youth today are living in a fast-paced world, where immediacy is expected, whether this be a quick google search for help on homework or the use of transportation apps to avoid waiting for parents or the bus (Krauss, 2021, p. 12). Krauss states that “today's kids are growing up in a rapidly changing world, full of historic firsts. As a result, they don't just seem different, they are different. Their childhood ever-evolving environments are wiring them to learn, work, and operate in new ways” (Krauss, 2021, p. 16).

A recurring theme throughout the book was the changes that the global COVID-19 pandemic made on education. The immediate need for remote education left educators with no option, but to figure out how to teach using technology to connect with students. As a result, students had to learn to take responsibility for their own learning and do what needed to be done to succeed. Not only was

education impacted, but workforce was as well. Non-critical businesses had to rely on employees to complete work on their own remotely. New opportunities are available as a change was forced and new skills were learned by many.

Krauss identified ten readiness competencies that today's youth need for success in tomorrow's world. "Preparing kids for tomorrow's world requires us to focus on all 10 competencies. Every learning opportunity—inside or outside of the classroom—should be viewed as a chance to learn, use, develop, or strengthen them" (Krauss, 2021. P.54). These ten competencies, shown in figure 6, are used in the development process and can be used for future lesson development.

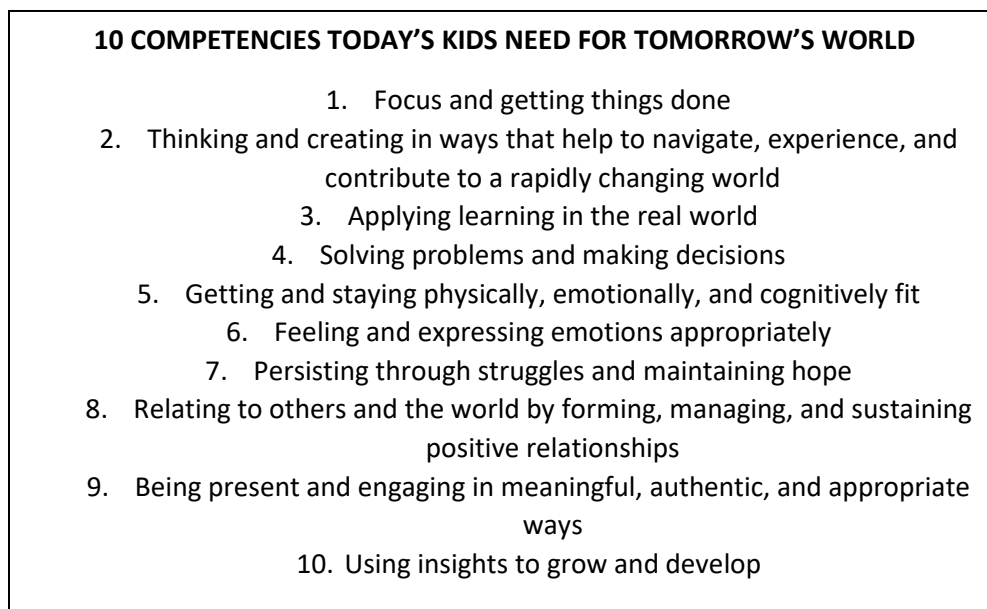


Figure 6: 10 Competencies

Note. 10 Competencies Today's Kids Need for Tomorrow's World. From Making it, What Today's Kids Need for Tomorrow's World (p.54), by Stephanie Krauss, 2021, Jossey-Bass

Developing My Target Skills

Through the working partnership with Margo Long, I designed the Target Skills lesson to help youth identify how the skills and traits they are learning in their current experiences will transfer and help them in the "real-world" following graduation. Each step of the lesson development was thought

out in detail in relation to information gathered. The “4 A” learning task model served as the template for developing the lesson.

My Target Skills

ANCHOR

- **Introduction:** Take a few minutes at the beginning of the lesson and have the students mingle. (Suggested 3 Minutes)
"Take the first few minutes of class to Introduce yourself to each other. Share how being a teen leader is helping prepare you for adulthood."
- Gather the group back together and discuss
"Who would like to share what they learned about their peers?"
(Allow all students who would like to share the opportunity)
- Discuss further as a group
1-Common themes we heard from our peers
2-Gestures made when peers Introduced themselves
"Being able to define our own skills can help in knowing where we fit in learning, a career and life in general. Target skills are what we can do and are learned through a classroom environment and life experiences."

Figure 7: Target Skills Lesson Anchor

Anchor

As part of the contextual learning theory, relating and experiencing are immediately addressed. I chose an activity that gets the students up and moving allowing them the opportunity to communicate and think briefly about the lesson topic with a partner. By utilizing partnerships, the learner benefits in three ways: 1) getting to know each other, 2) testing out their ideas with another individual as opposed to individually in front the group, and 3) receiving positive feedback from the spark of energy throughout the room (Norris, 2003, p. 44). Following the activity, the students are brought back together and asked to share what they learned from the other students. By doing this activity, the

students are being introduced to the topic of the lesson and their initial thoughts are expressed. The learner should feel connected and safe.

ADD

- "A 2019 *Global Talent Trends* study found 92 percent rated employability skills as more important than technical skills, while 89 percent said poor hires typically lack soft (employability) skills. "
 - According to Ottawa University (2022), learning soft skills are needed to succeed in almost any role.
- "Soft skills are abilities of an individual that impacts their personality and how they act and interact with others. Ottawa University (2022), provided the top 10 employability skills as follows:"
 1. **Adaptability** - Ability to be flexible and manage change.
 2. **Communication** - Active listening, proper body language, verbal and written interactions, and ability to ask clear questions.
 3. **Time Management** - Being able to devote yourself when needed and give realistic deadlines.
 4. **Emotional Intelligence** - Understanding yourself and how you handle conflict, stress, confrontation.
 5. **Leadership** - Influencing others by expressing ideas and mentoring.
 6. **Critical Thinking** - Looking at the "big picture". Identify and solve problems.
 7. **Professionalism** - How you present yourself with business etiquette, both physical and emotional.
 8. **Respect for Diversity** - Identifying and respecting differences.
 9. **Willingness to Continue Learning** - Lifelong learning is essential as changes are constantly being made.
 10. **Strong Work Ethic**- Strong motive and drive to complete tasks. An intangible value and skill sought out desperately.

Figure 8: Target Skills Lesson Add

Add

Following the activity to grasp the learner's interest, they are introduced to the main content of the lesson. The credibility of the content it expresses and a brief description of why this is important is given. As Norris explains, when the information is important for all to understand the information needs to be provided to them directly (Norris, 2003, p. 40). That is why I chose for the educator to introduce

and describe the 10 skills identified from Ottawa University (2021). Giving background on the information and explaining why these are important to know helps the learner process the information.

APPLY

Variation A:

- Divide group into groups of 2-4 depending on class size. Assign each group with at least one of the labeled Flip Chart Papers to start. Ask the group members to discuss and write down ways that being a teen leader positively impacts the labeled soft skill. Give each group about 2-4 minutes at each station and rotate them from each chart until they have all had the chance to add something to all 10 charts.
- Bring the group back together discuss as a group what was mentioned.

Examples as follows using the Ohio 4-H Counselor Roles and Responsibilities that you can share in addition to group findings:

Variation B:

- *"As we mentioned earlier, the idea that being able to define our own skills can help in knowing where we fit in learning, career, and life. We are going to find ourselves a partner. Once you have your partner, take a few minutes to discuss how you would describe yourself on a resume. Once you are finished practice taking turns role playing Interviewer and Interviewee. Ask each other to Identify their strengths and weaknesses"* (Suggested time: 5-7 Minutes)
- Bring the group back together. Discuss if knowing these soft skills made it easier for them to identify strengths that are important to be successful in a career or college. |

Apply

Figure 9: Target Skills Lesson Apply

The application activity chosen for this lesson was a group project, to encourage cooperation. The wording of the question they are responding to was selected specifically to follow Norris's idea of an open-ended question (Norris, 2003, p.39). There is no right or wrong answer in this case, it simply gets the learners to apply the information to their personal experiences. As part of the experiential learning

model, this application is having the learner discuss, analyze, and reflect how the skills are related to their personal experience.

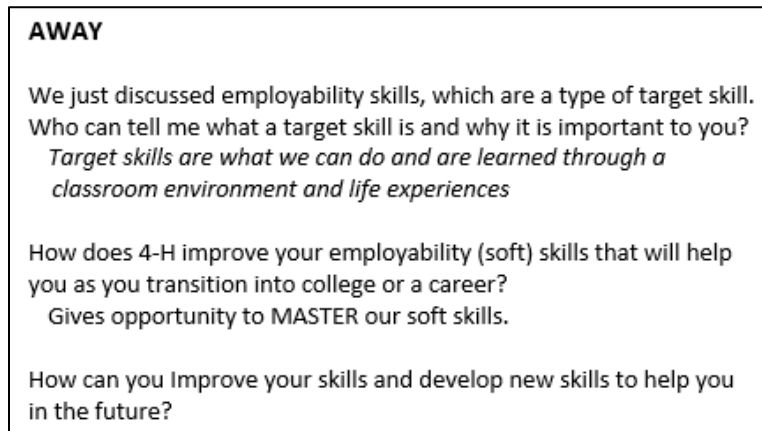


Figure 10: Target Skills Lesson Away

Away

The away section is providing reinforcement, which is important to avoid the information being quickly lost by the learner. When Norris thinks “of reinforcement the learning so that folks are more likely to remember it and use it, think about reinforcing the language” (Norris, 2003, p.49). When coming up with the away questions, the learner is asked to identify what they learned, how it affects them and how they will use it moving forward.

Pilot Test

I had the opportunity to pilot test the “Target Skills” lesson with Long at a state camp counselor training event held at Camp Ohio. Four groups of camp counselors from surrounding counties totaling, 90 participants, participated in the lesson throughout the day, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. Throughout the pilot testing, formative observations were made of the delivery of the lesson as originally envisioned and the responses of the teens vis-à-vis segment and activity. Additionally, at the end of the session, the teens were given a note card to gather feedback. Two groups were asked to

identify on one side what they learned and on the flip side what they enjoyed about the session. The other two groups were also asked to identify what they learned and, on the flip side one thing they would have changed about the session.

The idea of reinforced learning was done and suggested by Long throughout the lesson. During the first sessions following our personal introductions, I gave the directions for the anchor activity. Long noticed the confusion on some of the counselors faces and immediately jumped in and asked the counselors to repeat the instructions. By having the counselor do this in the beginning, I then noticed in subsequent groups the counselors knew to expect that throughout the lesson and were thus more attentive to the instructions. During each group session, the lesson seemed to slightly morph each time. This was due to:

- 1) Long and I became more familiar with how to teach the content.
- 2) As the day went on the attention and interest of the counselors seemed to dwindle down. In the morning sessions, the counselors had energy and were talkative. It was the beginning of the day and many of the counselors were with new people and through the sessions were getting to know each other. By the end of the day, the counselors had spent the entire day together and we noticed less side conversation and energy in general. Long and I had to adjust the lesson and add additional activities to the afternoon sessions, as their minimal conversations resulted in the lesson ending early.
- 3) The time allowance given for the students to complete both the anchor and the add. Each group was different and even though a timer was set, required a different amount of time. From this, the time allowance that is provided in the lesson is suggested, however may need to be altered to fit the individual group of learners.

After reviewing the teens' feedback on the note cards, I identified items that needed to be changed to improve the lesson. The counselors suggested that for the apply activity, rather than

assigning one or two of the terms to a specific group, have groups rotate around the room to each paper so that everyone can apply each skill. When having the students present their findings for their skill, we asked if anyone had anything to add. Asking counselors this immediately following the groups presentation does not provide enough time for others to process what was presented and additionally think about other ideas. This edit has been made in the final copy of the lesson.

In addition to the pilot run that I completed with Long, I did a second pilot with Montague and her group of county junior fair board members during one of their regularly scheduled meetings. There was a total of 22 in attendance at the meeting. Because there was not enough time to gather information following the lesson directly from the youth that evening, I talked with Montague to gather our collective observation on how the lesson went.

The anchor worked differently with this group of junior fair board members, compared to the camp counselors, because they had all known each other previously. Rather than observing students' hesitation to introduce themselves to new people, there was more of a focus on identifying how their experiences are shaping them in the future. With this group, the lesson was focused primarily on the skills they are gaining through being a junior fair board member. The group was divided into partners, and I noticed that some of the partners struggled to identify exactly how they related to a few of the 10 skills. As a result, when gathered back together as a group to discuss their findings, we made it more of a conversation and allowed for the other students to think and add to each skill. This helped to limit the stress on students who were struggling and allowed the entire group to think together. An additional observation from this trial run was the set up of the learning environment. The meeting took place in a large room, where students were set in a large circle. Having the students in a circle everyone was able to see each other and talk as a group rather than directing the conversation to me standing in the front of the room.

Reflections and Recommendations

Reflecting on what I learned throughout the project, my primary take-away is that it is imperative to seek a full understanding of the experiences, knowledge, and skills of today's youth to prepare and deliver relevant CCR programming through Ohio 4-H. Building on Krauss (2021) 10 skills is one way to ensure time is well-spent and focused on helping to equip and empower youth for success in their eventual future careers.

Consideration for Working with Schools

From looking at the ESSA policy, I have learned that there is a recognizable need for college and career readiness implementation into schools. Ohio 4-H has been dedicated to preparing youth for life for years. There is opportunity for Ohio 4-H to continue with that key and partner with local schools to provide their high-quality CCR programming experience and reach more youth. Through key informant interviews and reflecting on my personal experience working with SNAP-Ed I was able to identify some key points to help in creating this partnership.

School Counselor Concerns

Gathered from the interview with the guidance counselor, it seems to me that school personnel are seeking resources regarding college and career readiness. With the recent policy shift due to ESSA, the counselor identified a push from district leaders to implement more college and career readiness using CCR-specific material. With this push, she was able to receive funding to purchase Navions, a college and career focused program, for use in the high school. However, after purchasing the program they are not able to implement due to lack of time and other resources to train their educators to use the program. Through a partnership with Ohio 4-H, lessons could be taught by Ohio 4-H professionals and alleviate stress of counselors having to find more training time for educators. It is important to note that the key informant information is from one school district, and as the key informant expressed, the other school districts she connects with have their own set program. Knowing this, when trying to

partner with schools throughout the state her recommendation is being flexible in the program offering. Flexibility would mean offering educational sessions at the time that is convenient for the school whether that be during lunch, afterschool or during class. Additionally, flexibility in the timeframe and sequence of educational lessons would be important factors to consider. Rather than a strict program, being available for schools reach out when they need further information on a specific topic. In addition to flexibility, she expressed the following concerns of the partnership itself with Ohio 4-H:

- Will there be a cost for the schools to receive the resource?
- Will students be required to join Ohio 4-H if they attend the classes?
- Will there be educational material for students interested who were not able to attend?

Partnership- SNAP-Ed Experience to Inform Future Ohio 4-H CCR Partnerships with Local Schools

Reflecting on my personal experience with Ohio SNAP-Ed, my job requires me to build working relationships with the community. I focus primarily on partnerships with schools. When building new relationships, I have found most success through presence. I ask to attend meetings with principals and in some cases districts administration meetings. At these meetings I have a brief presentation prepared on what Ohio SNAP-Ed is along with the resources that I can provide the district along with sample lessons for direct in-person programming. By being transparent and willing to take the time to introduce myself and the program to the school administrators, I have more success as opposed to reaching out to the teacher directly and them having to explain to the administrators to receive approval.

With schools I teach direct educational programs both in-class during the school day and afterschool. I give the following recommendation to Ohio 4-H professionals who are planning programming with schools:

- Talk with the teachers and identify what they feel the students need to know prior to teaching.
- Build a working relationship with the students to gain their trust. Will help motivate them to engage in lesson.

Student Engagement

Through the key informant interviews and research, it is important to draw back on a few key points we have learned to encourage student engagement. Through the interview with the school educators, one mentioned that he could identify a group of students who would be very interested in college and career readiness material, however the educator would need to find a way to encourage the other students to participate. When speaking with key informant, she recommended starting with the youth in middle school to get their interest and dedication prior to getting into high school. She has found through her work that in middle school the students have less distractions and are more apt to apply themselves to a program of this nature. Once the educator has the students on board, there needs to be a process to continue to keep the students engaged. As Kraus identifies, “applying learning to the real world” (Krauss, 2021, p.54). Through the research I have learned that college and career readiness is a very broad term and covers a wide array of information and skills. With this I think that the first step in helping youth grow is by educating them on how the skills and knowledge they are gaining are going to transform them into adults. This strategy can be carried out and built upon through the duration of time that educators work with the students. Focusing on gathering the interest of the youth at a younger age as well as the continued review of helping the students understand how the knowledge will benefit them are tips to help the educator prepare youth for life after high school.

Future Research

From this project I have identified a need for college and career readiness in Ohio. The school setting is not solely responsible for preparing youth for life after high school, there are many factors that play a role in youths’ decisions. Along with identifying the need and where it comes from, we recognize that the world around us is changing at a rapid pace, and it is important to identify what kids need to know to be successful. For future research, continuing to study the skills and knowledge that youth need to have. Additionally, the lesson that was developed is an example of how 4-H educators can help youth

identify the life skills that their current experiences are giving them. The 4A lesson model helps to focus the lesson and provides opportunity for students to learn and apply the content in multiple ways. This can serve as a model for future lesson development.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Chart

Interviewee Title	School Guidance Counselor, Local School District	Middle School Teacher, Local School District	Career Technical Center Educator, Tolles Technical	Afterschool Director, Clinton County Youth Council
Interview Modality	Zoom Video Chat	Zoom Video Chat	Phone Call	In-Person
What CCR Education is currently implemented into your school?	Students experience CCR first as a 9-week career class in 8 th grade, where exploration of careers occurs. Ohio Means Jobs Resources 9 th – 10 th Grade: ELA courses touch on some career exploration 11 th Grade: CCR is hit the hardest. College interest test given (Now optional). ELA covers resumes and applications. 12 th : Finalizing resume and applications. One-on-one meetings with Counselor to identify plans following graduation. The in school Agriculture	Students are required to take a 9-week careers course, where they explore careers and identify interests. As far as the gen ed courses, CCR skills are implemented into some of the coursework, however there is no direct guidance on skills to implement.	At the CTE schools, each program is career specific. In our program we offer professional development opportunities for the youth to participate in organized competitive events, where their knowledge and skills are scored. Skills that are required are the ability to present the information and demonstrate it, as well as going through an interview.	The schools that students attend the center from have a variety of experience.

	(FFA) program does			
How prepared are school faculty/staff to implement CCR standards	CCR is expected to be covered by a variety of teachers and through different classes. The only specific CCR course is the 8 th grade exploration course. The school district has paid for Navions Curriculum, however, has not had the opportunity to implement it as they lack the time to train educators to use the program.	Limited Professional development opportunities are offered. CCR has started to creep into trainings, however no specific trainings have been provided.	As a program specific educator, preparing students for life after high school is a priority. We are teaching career specific skills that will help them to enter the workforce. The gen-ed teachers may however feel less prepared. I am not sure how much CCR is implemented into those courses.	N/A
Where do you see a gap/need for CCR curriculum?	A consistent program throughout would be beneficial. The limited amount of time that is able to be dedicated directly toward preparing the students and teaching skills is a barrier.	There is a gap in knowing what skills students need. The coursework provides opportunities for students to learn academically, interactions in school provide a social aspect, however there is no educational piece that is	There is a gap in the foundational skills that are needed	There is a gap in the hands-on skills that are needed. Throughout the summer program we partner with local agencies and put on a two-week career development camp. Participation has been low, but could be advertised more.

		explaining to them why these are important.		
How could a partnership with local 4-H agents teaching CCR help and be implemented into your school?	<p>It will be a challenge getting in-person class time. Suggested having the program offered as a special, lunch program, or even a summer program. Could be very beneficial to students and would be interested in working to form a partnership. Recommended starting the program in 8th grade to gather the interest of students and allow them additional resources to think about their future.</p>	<p>Could be beneficial in relieving stress off educator. Thinks that some of his middle school students would be interested and could benefit all of them.</p>	<p>The students who have participated in my program that attend their home high school for gen-ed courses in addition to our lab, have mentioned that they do not feel as prepared for graduating and becoming an adult. A partnership with 4-H could be beneficial by getting students to get them on the right path thinking about where and how they will go.</p>	<p>A partnership with 4-H throughout the summer would be beneficial. The center is open throughout the days in the summer. Lessons could be taught weekly, or a week at a time.</p>

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My Target Skills

Intended Audience:

- This activity is suitable for teen leaders.

Lesson Objectives:
Learners will:

- Define target skills.
- Identify the Top 10 employability skills in 2022
- Explore how 4-H experiences can directly impact developing and improving their own skills.

Time: 30-45 minutes (depending on group age and size)

Equipment and Supplies:

- Post-It Flip Chart Paper
- Markers
- Pencils/Pens


Lesson Prep:


- Assemble supplies.
- Review activity instructions.
- Label Flip Chart Paper with 10 employability skills

LESSON PREPARATION

This lesson is designed to help youth identify what target skills are. The top 10 employability skills are introduced. To help the students identify the purpose of these skills, the students are asked to think and identify current and previous experiences. Real-world application and group work is incorporated to encourage students' participation. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to identify employability skills and explain how their current experience is shaping that skill for each of them individually.

- Please see Equipment and Supply List needed
- Review the lesson before each class to identify which variation best fits the group of students.
- If using the apply variation A, label the Flip Chart pages prior to beginning the lesson

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My Target Skills

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ANCHOR

- **Introduction:** Take a few minutes at the beginning of the lesson and have the students mingle. (Suggested 3 Minutes)

"Take the first few minutes of class to Introduce yourself to each other. Share how being a teen leader is helping prepare you for adulthood."

- Gather the group back together and discuss

"Who would like to share what they learned about their peers?"
(Allow all students who would like to share the opportunity)

- Discuss further as a group

1-Common themes we heard from our peers
2-Gestures made when peers Introduced themselves

"Being able to define our own skills can help in knowing where we fit in learning, a career and life in general. Target skills are what we can do and are learned through a classroom environment and life experiences."

ADD

- "A 2019 Global Talent Trends study found 92 percent rated employability skills as more Important than technical skills, while 89 percent said poor hires typically lack soft (employability) skills. "
 - According to Ottawa University (2022), learning soft skills are needed to succeed in almost any role.
- "Soft skills are abilities of an Individual that Impacts their personality and how they act and interact with others. Ottawa University (2022), provided the top 10 employability skills as follows:"
 1. **Adaptability** - Ability to be flexible and manage change.
 2. **Communication** - Active listening, proper body language, verbal and written interactions, and ability to ask clear questions.
 3. **Time Management** - Being able to devote yourself when needed and give realistic deadlines.



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4. **Emotional Intelligence** - Understanding yourself and how you handle conflict, stress, confrontation.
5. **Leadership** - Influencing others by expressing ideas and mentoring.
6. **Critical Thinking** - Looking at the "big picture". Identify and solve problems.
7. **Professionalism** - How you present yourself with business etiquette, both physical and emotional.
8. **Respect for Diversity** - Identifying and respecting differences.
9. **Willingness to Continue Learning** - Lifelong learning is essential as changes are constantly being made.
10. **Strong Work Ethic** - Strong motive and drive to complete tasks. An intangible value and skill sought out desperately.

APPLY**Variation A:**

- Divide group into groups of 2-4 depending on class size. Assign each group with at least one of the labeled Flip Chart Papers to start. Ask the group members to discuss and write down ways that being a teen leader positively impacts the labeled soft skill. Give each group about 2-4 minutes at each station and rotate them from each chart until they have all had the chance to add something to all 10 charts.
- Bring the group back together discuss as a group what was mentioned.

Examples as follows using the Ohio 4-H Counselor Roles and Responsibilities that you can share in addition to group findings:

Adaptability - Working with large groups of youth, things do not always go as planned. Being able to identify and address when new directions need to be made to assure all are on the same page.

Communication: Speaking on the mic clearly!

Time Management: Sticking to responsibilities and ~~delines~~.

Emotional Intelligence: Be aware of child protection regulations and report any signs.

Leadership: Leading by example. Little ones look up to you!



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30%-Research to support activity

Created: April 2022

Critical Thinking: Identify and respond to Issues.

Professionalism: Conduct self in appropriate manner when representing the board.

Respect for Diversity: Treat and guide everyone fairly. Identify and respond to behavior.

Variation B:

• "As we mentioned earlier, the idea that being able to define our own skills can help in knowing where we fit in learning, career, and life. We are going to find ourselves a partner. Once you have your partner, take a few minutes to discuss how you would describe yourself on a resume. Once you are finished practice taking turns role playing Interviewer and Interviewee. Ask each other to identify their strengths and weaknesses"

- Bring the group back together. Discuss if knowing these soft skills made it easier for them to identify strengths that are important to be successful in a career or college.

AWAY

We just discussed employability skills, which are a type of target skill. Who can tell me what a target skill is and why it is important to you?

Target skills are what we can do and are learned through a classroom environment and life experiences

How does 4-H improve your employability (soft) skills that will help you as you transition into college or a career?

Gives opportunity to MASTER our soft skills.

How can you improve your skills and develop new skills to help you in the future?



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