

Purdue Extension Does...Experiential Learning.

Learn by Doing through 4-H

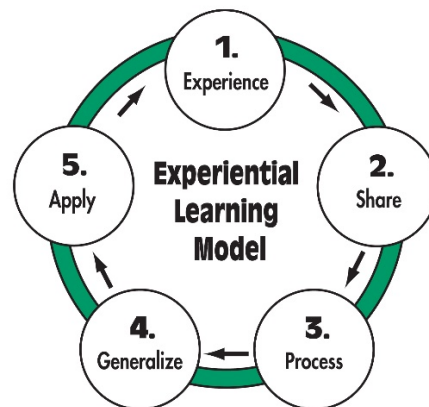
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In 4-H, learning through experiences is what we do. Whether it be showing animals at the fair, building onto an EV3 robot at a club meeting, painting a picture at Super Saturday, or doing a demonstration at your club, we are always creating opportunities for hands-on learning. Experiential learning is so ingrained in 4-H that we even have a motto: “learn by doing”.

According to Chloe Chen article about the benefits of hands-on learning, “Well-designed, hands-on activities ... foster connections to real-world situations and increase learner engagement.” The mission of the Indiana 4-H program is to provide real-life educational opportunities that develop young people who will have a positive impact in their communities and the world. Hands-on learning or experiential learning fits right with our mission. With all of our activities, we strive to follow the Experiential Learning Model. Volunteers and staff are trained to follow the five steps of the learning model which are as follows: 1. Experience, 2. Share, 3. Process, 4. Generalize, 5. Apply. As you can see, experience is the first thing you do! That is the key. Richard Branson, the founder of the Virgin Group, states it well, “You don’t learn to walk by following rules. You learn by doing and falling over.” In 4-H, we feel the best way to learn about something new is to experience it.



Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jones, J.E., "Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals"
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There are a variety of things that we do in 4-H that utilize experiential learning including State 4-H Trips, 4-H Camp, Project Based Clubs like robotics or shooting sports, and our annual project workshop event better known as Super Saturday. Members who attend state 4-H Trips such as 4-H Academy have the opportunity to engage in hands-on workshops about different careers. Some examples include an electric workshop, animal science workshop, exploring healthy careers workshops, and a citizenship workshop. The trip also takes place on a college campus, so high school students get a chance to see what life on a college campus is really like. With 4-H camp, 4-H members are able to engage in different class sessions such as tie dye, makers, archery, and drones that are all hands-on workshops. It’s also a great opportunity for youth to learn how to interact with their peers appropriately. Camp is often the first time some

kids have spent the night away from home. You can't really teach a kid how to handle that. They just have to go and experience it for themselves.

The experiential learning model isn't always the go to model for teaching kids. It's easy to explain everything first and then have the kids to the activity. However, having the experience piece first can teach youth how to problem solve and what to do when they get frustrated. Both skills are important to have in their future lives and careers. The experiential learning model is also a great way to get kids interested in a topic from the beginning. By starting with the activity or the experience, it can be much easier to keep their attention. Plus, the kids will have an experience to pull from when answering questions throughout the discussion.

The experiential learning model is also a model that would appeal to youth with a variety learning styles especially those who are kinesthetic learners. Kinesthetic learners desire hands-on learning and tend to struggle more in traditional school environments. In 4-H, we try to provide youth with experiences that they don't often get in the traditional learning environment. We want to excite kids about learning, and we also want to allow our youth to take control of their learning.

If you'd like more information about the 4-H program and all the experiences we can provide, please contact me by phone: 812-482-1782 or by email at jmonarch@purdue.edu. We'd be happy to share with you all the opportunities that we can provide to youth.