Cloverbuds (K-2) project resource guide

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What is this guide?

A Cloverbud is a 4-H member who is in kindergarten through second grade. Cloverbuds explore and learn by doing fun activities guided by adult or older youth volunteers. This project resource guide provides step-by-step suggestions on how youth can get started with learning by doing a project.

What is project learning?

We believe young people learn best by doing. In our program, youth have the opportunity to choose something they're interested in and then do a project about it. We then offer opportunities for positive learning environments and guidance from adult mentors. We also encourage youth to take leadership roles and learn independently.

What is a cloverbud project?

A cloverbud project can be any kind of project that youth in grades kindergarten through 2nd grade want to do. They could put together a Lego® creation, make a cardboard car, build a birdhouse, paint a picture, sculpt something in clay, research an animal, take a photograph, share a science experiment, or anything else they may want to do (provided it's safe for the child). Coming from the child's interests, a cloverbud project should get them excited about project learning and wanting to do more.

Getting started with a cloverbud project

Help the child figure out what they want to learn

First, help them think about what they want to learn or do and then narrow it down. This can be challenging with this age-group, as they tend to want to do everything! Here are some ideas on ways you can brainstorm with them.

- Talk about school or other programs they're in: Talk with them about their other learning opportunities they're in. Sometimes they may be doing something in school or another program that they want to explore more.
- Storytime and discussion: Begin by reading a short story or book to the children. Then talk about the story, asking what they liked most or what they would change about the story. Use their responses as a springboard to explore related topics or activities.
- Drawing, artwork, or a "favorite things" collage: Provide them with art supplies to draw or create something. As they're creating, ask them about their artwork and what inspired their choices. This can lead to discussions about their interests and preferences.
- Role-playing and pretend play: Set up a pretend play area with different themes (e.g., doctor's office, space station, jungle expedition). Take note of the scenarios they naturally gravitate towards and talk about their roles and interests.
- Question and answer session: Have a casual Q&A session where you take turns asking and answering questions. Encourage open-ended questions like, "If you could have any superpower, what would it be?" or "What is your favorite thing to do on weekends?"
- Nature walks: Take them on a nature walk and observe their reactions to different elements (plants, animals, rocks, etc.). Ask questions about what they find interesting or exciting in nature.
- Show and tell: Invite them to bring in an item from home and share why it's special to them. This can provide insight into their personal interests and hobbies.

Remember to be attentive, ask open-ended questions, and be open to exploring a variety of topics. Children's interests can evolve, so staying flexible and encouraging their curiosity is key.

Try some projects with your help

Next, get the youth to try some projects based on some of the interests they mentioned, or even some they didn't mention! Below are a few resources you may find useful. As you're looking for ideas, keep in mind that every child will have a different challenge level. If a project is too hard, look for something easier. If it's too easy, look for something more challenging.

- Cloverbud lessons and resources in the MN 4-H Curriculum Library
- Cloverbud activities from Wisconsin 4-H
- Ohio 4-H Cloverbud Click-it Print-it Do-it activities

Help youth identify their own project

Once they've explored with your help, encourage them to try a project more independently. Remember to focus on the process rather than the end result, allowing them to express their creativity and enjoy the experience of making something unique. Always prioritize safety by choosing age-appropriate materials and providing supervision as needed. Following are some examples of things they could try.

- Do another version of a project they did with you—with different materials, a different topic, or a different method.
- Paper plate animals
- Nature collage from things collected on a nature walk
- Sock puppets—encourage them to invent their own characters and stories.
- DIY storybooks—have them create and illustrate their own short stories and then bind the pages together to make a book. If they are too young to write, have them dictate to you their story, writing down exactly what they.
- Seed planting and observing plant growth over time. Have them take pictures along the way.
- Homemade playdough, or oobleck
- Rock painting
- Paper picture crafts—have them tear colorful construction paper into strips to make a picture of something, like a rainbow.
- Cardboard box creations—provide empty cardboard boxes, tubes, tape, markers, etc and have them transform the boxes into cars, castles, or any they like.
- Miniature gardens—use small containers or trays and provide soil, small plants, and miniature decorations to let them create their own miniature gardens.
- DIY musical instruments using recycled materials like empty containers, rubber bands, and rice
- Bubble painting—mix liquid dish soap with paint and water and have them blow bubbles into the mixture, letting them land on paper to create unique bubble prints.
- Tissue paper flowers
- Magnet exploration—offer various household items and magnets and let them discover which items are attracted to magnets.

Reflect

The most important part of doing a project is the learning that happens as a result. As youth are doing their project, get them to think about:

- What am I learning from this project that I didn't know before? OR What was the most challenging part of this project? Why?
- Did you have fun doing the project? What would you do differently?

Record their answers to these questions so they (and their parents/caregivers) have a record.

Have them share their work

After youth finish their project, it's time for them to share it! Sharing new skills and getting others excited about their project is a great way for them to continue learning and can be a valuable way for them to serve their community!
Here are some ideas for how youth can showcase their learning:

- Share with their 4-H club, other out-of-school time program, or your local library or community center.
- Develop an exhibit to take to their local county fair through the 4-H program. Head back to the cloverbud project page for more information about how youth can showcase their project at a county fair.

Take the learning further

They've tried one project...what's next? If they don't finish a project, that's OK! What questions did this project spark for them? What are they inspired to learn more about? You can help youth dig into those questions with another cloverbud project, or if they're ready, you can help them explore another 4-H project area.

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