

Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project Member Self-Evaluation Sheets

Facilitator Information: Ideas for Successful Use in Groups

The ideas behind developing the self-evaluation sheets for 4-H members involved in the horse project are to:

- Provide a format for students to think about how and why they do certain actions and tasks (increase ability to self-analyze)
- Increase the student's knowledge about the procedure and rules for horse show classes by independent and group research (increase ability to use resource material)
- Encourage face to face interaction with peers on a subject of mutual enjoyment and interest (increase ability to verbally communicate and relate to and have respect for others)

These three objectives are important for life skill development. The ability to self-analyze actions helps develop skills in understanding one-self, which increases self-confidence and in turn, abilities that are depend on confidence and motivation.

Secondly, the ability to search and assimilate information is essential for learning and evaluative skill development. These skills in turn, enhance the ability to think rationally thinking which increases the ability to make correct decisions.

Third, current trends in technology and learning methods are moving away from formats that encourage fact to face interaction with peers. Even so, the ability to communicate in a semi-formal manner with peers is a frequently sought after talent for career success. Communication skills affect management and relationship skills.

Group Leaders:

Ideally, group interaction will encourage all members to voice opinions and actively participate in an encouraging, nonjudgmental environment. Expect many of the students to have limited experience with group interaction, and to have experienced negative environments when having done so in the past. Students will have limited experience in self-directed discussion within a group. Experiences may have been more controlled by an instructor, rather than led by a facilitator.

A group of students will require a leader, preferably an adult familiar to the group. The leader should take the role of a facilitator more so than a lecturer. The goal of group interactions is to offer a format that encourages peer to peer discussion. A leader can guide discussion by having a planned course of discussion, and moving the discussion along so a topic doesn't last too long or move toward a negative direction. The self-evaluation sheets provide a planned course of discussion.

The leader should refrain from giving too many personal opinions or providing the majority of the conversation. They should guide conversations so to encourage less vocal members an opportunity to voice their opinions. Leaders should also be perceptive to signs that suggest the discussion is becoming confrontational, negative or judgmental. Member discussions should be led beyond the voicing of their own opinions so that students can develop the ability to listen to others in an accepting, encouraging manner.

A Few Suggestions:

The size of a group will be somewhat directed by past interactions and member familiarity with one another. Group size of 5 to 10 will likely provide a workable environment. Dividing by age is a usually suggested format, but will depend based on familiarity and talents within a particular group. With diverse ages, older youth should be given the additional goal of helping to facilitate the conversation instead of acting only as a participant.

The self-evaluation sheets are intended to allow for a small group to complete discussion within 20 to 30 minutes; however, time will depend on group size and dynamics. A single self-evaluation sheet may require more than one group discussion session.

The goal of the group discussion should be clearly and positively stated by the facilitator at the beginning of a group discussion. Be clear about rules of discussion, i.e. staying positive, not making fun of another's ideas, being accepting of those with less experience, being open to ideas and opinions expressed by others.

The member self-evaluation sheets typically will require students to research the rules of specific classes. As such, the appropriate resource should be available, i.e. a rule book. Multiple copies might better serve the discussion and encourage individual research. Distributing only the specific portions of the resource that apply to the discussion may also encourage student research. The facilitator should prepare by reviewing the portions of the resource that relate to the questions before the meeting, but should allow members time to research answers as part of the group interaction.