

## **Teaching and Assessing Progress**

### **Teaching and Evaluation**

We need to evaluate our teaching effectiveness and what the youth are learning. Although frequently seen as separate activities, non-formal teaching and evaluation can be tightly intertwined. The very best evaluation methods are also effective teaching methods. The best ways to evaluate non-formal educational are also important youth development methods. All the following methods can be used in a range of settings from informal sharing to highly competitive events. Most can also be used with individuals and to build teamwork.

### **Demonstrations**

Communication is a basic leadership and life skill. A demonstration teaches twice. Both the demonstrator and their audience learn from the demonstration. Informal, one-on-one sharing is the most basic form of demonstrating. Encourage participants to share their discoveries with each other. You can assess the learning by listening to the sharing.

Participants can present a prepared demonstration to the group or other audience. Many local programs will plan opportunities for public demonstrations. Working demonstrations and team demonstrations are excellent for youth that are reluctant to talk in front of a group. Working demonstrations do not have a prepared “lesson”. The presenter demonstrates an activity or task and engages the audience in a discussion as the presenter works. A variation is audience to participation in the task or activity. Team demonstrations are very effective at teaching team work skills. Demonstrations can be organized into competitive public speaking type events.

### **Judging**

Another important life skill is decision-making. Judging helps develop skills at evaluating among options. A typical judging activity will present four items that could be used for the same purpose. Participants rank the objects. For example, the students might rank four greeting cards created by a graphics program. Judging is most effective when the young judges give reasons for their rankings.

Identification is another judging activity. About a dozen items are presented for the learner to identify. Identification activities are excellent for teaching about hardware components. Build judging skills informally by asking project participants to compare, choose, and explain why. There will probably be many “personal preference” reasons in informal judging situations. Help the participants define and focus on objective reasons. More formal judging activities will present choices that have objective ranking criteria. Judging can be easily organized into contests.

### **Skillathons**

Skillathons are usually multiple stations with planned activities or challenges. The participants rotate through the stations completing the activities. The event can focus on instruction or competition. The students can participate as individuals or as teams. The activities can be at various levels of difficulty appropriate to the level of the learners. The more advance youth can help plan, setup, and staff stations.

## **Quiz Bowls**

Quiz Bowls test knowledge of facts. They tend to be more formal and are generally team events. They can be just for fun or very competitive. The format is generally similar to the TV quiz show, College Bowl. TV quiz show, Jeopardy, is another popular format. Rapidly changing technology, multiple platforms, and multiple ways to accomplish tasks can make question writing very problematic.

## **Exhibiting**

Most 4-H projects are based on producing a product. The learning is evaluated by exhibiting the product and having it evaluated by a judge. Exhibiting at the fair is one of the most popular images of 4-H. Conference judging is the most effective way to evaluate the learning and add value to exhibiting. In addition to evaluating the product, the judge can ask the youth about the process.

Frequently, computer products are paper products; printouts and listings. When exhibited as notebooks or posters the learner can also explain the product and its significance. Another idea is to have a computer at the fair to run presentations and software developed as projects. Computer components made into an educational display can be an effective exhibit.

There are many ways that 4-H'ers can display their computer talents at the County Fair. Work with your County Fair Board to set up classes that reflect what youth are learning through the 4-H Computer Curriculum.