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# SPECIAL 4-H PROGRAM HELPS RETARDED CHILDREN

UNIVERSITY of MINNESOTA - AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE



4-H was introduced to the special education classes for retarded children, when a young boy at New Hope School, asked his teacher if they could organize a 4-H club in his class. The foresighted teacher recognized the adaptability of such a program to class needs, and contacted the Hennepin County Extension office. Thus the program was launched.

The success with New Hope School prompted the extension staff to expand the program in 1966-67. The directors of special education in the Minneapolis and Robbinsdale school districts gave the extension staff permission to discuss the value of the 4-H program with the teachers. 4-H was approved for use in conjunction with the class curriculum on the basis of being an educational learning experience.

4-H clubs have now been established in fifteen special education classes for upper elementary and junior high students. There are 186 boys and girls, with a boy-girl ratio of 2 to 1, between the ages of 8 and 15 in the newly established clubs. The children are in the educable classes and have a reading level range of from pre-first through sixth grade, with third grade as the mean.

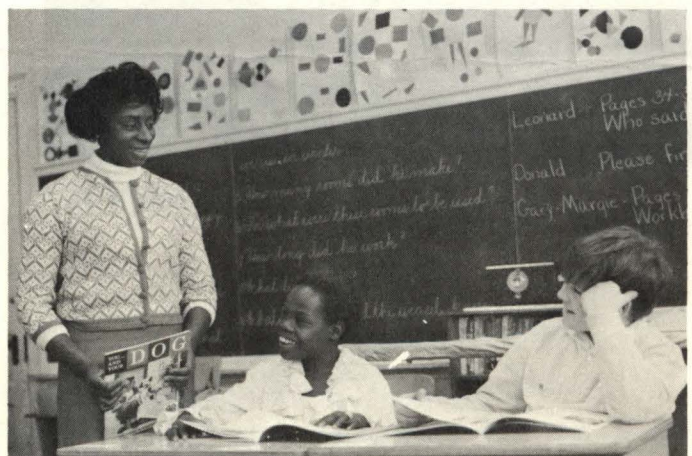
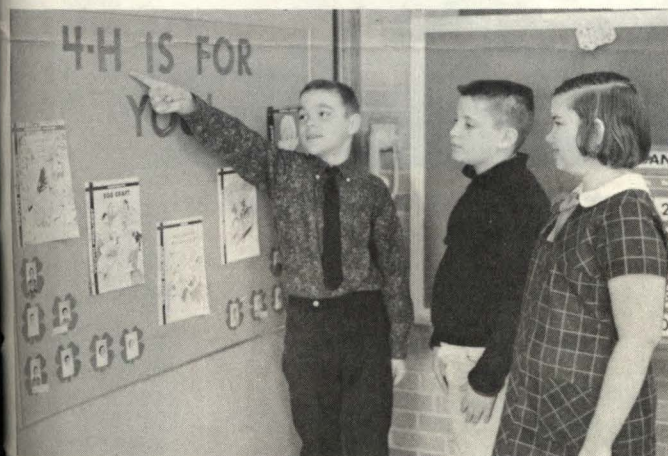
The special education teacher supervises 4-H in her classroom each week during class time. She oversees the business and projects meetings,

which include programs on foods, health, clothing, woodworking, crafts, etc. Some of the teachers enlist the aid of parents or resource persons to help her with the projects. Each teacher is encouraged to help her pupils choose the projects they will enjoy.

Besides the 4-H clubs for younger girls and boys, a 4-H project club was established at the Washington School Rehabilitation Center. The informally structured club includes thirty young men from ages 16 to 21. They participate in at-home projects in woodworking, upholstery, auto repair, finance, etc. A period is set aside every other week for exchange of ideas on the various projects.

4-H has an education impact on the young people. Through their 4-H projects, the boys and girls learn personal and vocational skills necessary for an independent life, such as sewing on a button, washing dishes, or preparing food. Learning simple skills requires a deliberate effort for retarded children, and 4-H projects are an excellent indirect way to teach necessary skills.

4-H provides an opportunity to meet the basic psychological needs of the children. The organized club gives them a sense of belonging, independence, and recognition. These were children who had never belonged to anything before, and they express



Teacher at Blaine School shows 4-H project books to students.

Special education students look at 4-H project literature. They are proud to be a part of the 4-H program.



4-H'ers learn to make a snack with the Pilgrim Lane teacher serving as a 4-H leader.

great pride in the knowledge that a large organization like 4-H welcomes their membership. The retarded children can now satisfy their strong desire to belong to a club like "other" boys and girls.

The initiation of 4-H programs has produced many interesting additional benefits. One teacher

noted that the 4-H clubs helped parents become more interested and involved in their own youngster. As the child became stimulated by his 4-H activities, the child talked about them and showed a sincere interest that he relayed to his parents, creating a common ground for communication.

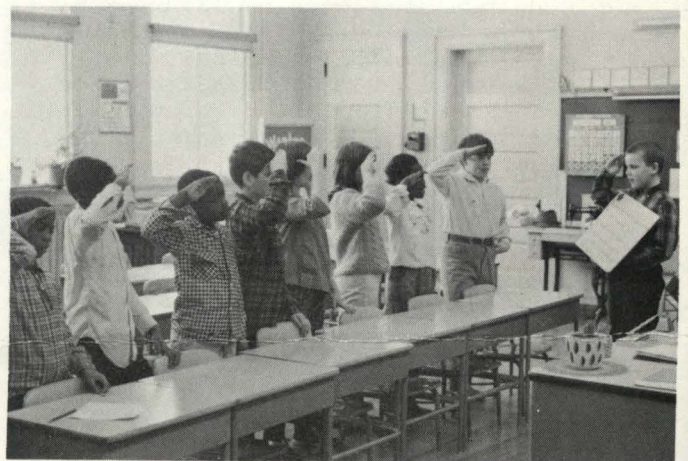
Hopefully, each child will attain a sense of accomplishment through constructive projects which have been geared to his needs. Project goals are designed so as to not only make them meaningful, but also attainable to the special child. In addition, the opportunity to learn to cooperate and work with others, made possible from club activity, is tremendous and is an important element in the special class curriculum.

It is important to note the motivation that is provided by the manuals, membership pins, ribbons, etc. This is of unmeasurable benefit to the teacher who would, in all likelihood, be attempting to teach the same ideas, concepts, values, or specific materials without the aid of 4-H. And often, such learning is more palatable if it stems from the children's own club.

A special education teacher at Pilgrim Lane School had this to say about 4-H in the special education classes: "In an overall view, I see 4-H as a means of making a special child more a part of his everyday world."



Special education students look at some 4-H county fair prize ribbons.



New 4-H members at the Blaine School learn the 4-H Pledge.

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