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Choose and Tell Cards: A 4-H Cloverbud Resource for Promoting Public Speaking and Life Skills

Abstract

Choose and Tell is a curriculum for 4-H Cloverbud members that introduces them to public speaking and life skill enhancement (communication and social interaction). Choose and Tell consists of activity cards analogous to a deck of cards. Activity card titles include Wash and Comb Your Hair, Plant a Seed, and Floss Your Teeth. The activities are fun and engaging and involve 4-H Cloverbuds practicing demonstrations and illustrated talks in a group setting. The activities are designed as a springboard for advisors to help 4-H Cloverbuds gain confidence in speaking and sharing in front of other youths.

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Introduction

Choose and Tell is a curriculum consisting of activities to provide 4-H Cloverbud members aged 5–8 years old with an introduction to public speaking and life skills development (communication and social skills). The Choose and Tell curriculum is fun and engaging, with the children practicing demonstrations and illustrated talks while learning activities in a group setting.

Choose and Tell consists of 54 cards (five introduction, background, and direction cards and 49 activity cards). Each Choose and Tell activity is printed on one card, resulting in a deck of activity cards. Children select an activity card and practice with a buddy to prepare for providing paired demonstrations to other group members. The paired demonstrations take about 5 min each. Choose and Tell activities are fun and developmentally age appropriate.

The Choose and Tell topics are meant to be relevant and useful for the Cloverbud age group. Participants develop public speaking skills and the life skills of communication and cooperation. The activities are designed as a springboard for advisors and volunteers to assist in helping 4-H Cloverbuds gain confidence in speaking and sharing in front of other youths.

Research Background

The Choose and Tell curriculum provides children in a safe setting the opportunity to speak in front of others while cooperating with their fellow members through paired presentations. Life skills such as communication and cooperation are critical for helping youths become successful, contributing citizens (Ferrari, Hogue, & Scheer, 2004; Hendricks, 1996). Research with 4-H alumni has shown that involvement in 4-H significantly influences the development of abilities such as public speaking, cooperation, and social skills more than involvement in other youth development organizations does (Maass, Wilken, Jordan, Culen, & Place, 2006).

It is not typical for 4-H members of Cloverbud age (5–8 years old) to be engaged in demonstration-type activities until they are in the program for older 4-H members, where the skills needed for public speaking are developed. However, research indicates that greater developmental impacts for long-term outcomes are more likely to occur in childhood than in adolescence (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). As a result, Choose and Tell was designed to help the younger 4-H members in Cloverbuds begin to practice and become involved in demonstration-related activities.

Implementing Choose and Tell

Directions for using the resource are provided on two of the cards. The deck is divided into four sets according to level of difficulty from easy to difficult. Each level has a corresponding symbol: easy (happy face), medium (horseshoes), intermediate (star), and difficult (clover). The specific Choose and Tell activity titles are listed by level in Table 1.

Table 1.

Choose and Tell Activity Titles by Level of Difficulty

Level of difficulty	Activity name
Easy	Fold a Towel
	Make a Coin Bank
	Make Trail Mix
	Make a Snack Wrap
	Make a Turkey Hand Print
	Set a Place at the Table
	Make a Root Beer Float
	Paint with a Straw
	Make Ants on a Log
	Wash Your Hands
	Clean a Pair of Eye Glasses
	Wash and Comb Your Hair
	Medium
Make Nachos	

Paint with a Marble

Make a No-Sew Fleece Scarf

Read a Compass

Plant a Seed

Make a First Aid Kit

Make a Paper Airplane

Paint a Rock Friend

Frost a Cupcake

Make a Plant Watering Jug

Make a Bird Feeder

Make a Paper Bag Puppet

Make a Pancake in a Bowl

Make a Dirt Cup Snack

Intermediate

Make an Ankle Bracelet

Make a CD Case Picture Frame

Make a Clover Bug

Make a Colorful Bracelet

Say the 4-H Pledge

Lead the Pledge of Allegiance

Make a Clay Animal

Make an Origami Dog Card

Make Frozen Fruit Pops

Paint with Glue and Sand

Blow Up a Balloon

Tie a Shoelace

Make a Find It Bottle

Difficult

Make a Button Bracelet

Wrap a Gift

Use a Yo-yo

Make Butter

Tie a Square Knot

Play Stick and Hoop

Make a Flower Pen

Make a Pom-Pom Animal

Make Salt Dough

The directions comprise six steps:

1. Plan on one Choose and Tell card for every two Cloverbud members. Gather the necessary supplies for the activity on each card.
2. Organize members in pairs. Assign an adult or teen to work with the pairs of members.
3. Distribute one Choose and Tell card and the supplies that go with it to each Cloverbud pair. Have the adult/teen assigned to the pair read the card and demonstrate the activity.
4. Have each participant try the activity while the adult/teen reads each step from the card.
5. Once both Cloverbud members master the activity, ask them to work together to explain the process. Encourage the children to use their own words. Practice until they are comfortable giving "paired" demonstrations.
6. Finally, ask the children to take turns giving "paired" demonstrations in front of a small group or the entire club.

The directions are meant to serve as a guideline, and modifications can be made at the discretion of the adult club leader.

Program Evaluation

Initial evaluation findings for Choose and Tell have been positive. 4-H Cloverbud volunteers who have used Choose and Tell completed an observational instrument designed to measure the influence of the curriculum on the children. The observational instrument has been used to evaluate other 4-H Cloverbud program curricula (Scheer, Yeske, & Zimmer, 2011). Content validity was established through the use of a panel of experts (i.e., Ohio 4-H youth development professionals) with specialization in preadolescent education and 4-H Cloverbuds. Quantitative findings from the observations of 43 volunteers indicate that life skills (content learning, social skills) improved for children who completed Choose and Tell activities.

Qualitative results from the adult volunteers who implemented Choose and Tell indicate overwhelmingly supportive feedback. For example, one volunteer described the program as providing "great ideas that can be used with Cloverbuds and also adapted for other groups" and providing opportunities to "have older youth work on teaching skills with younger members." Another volunteer also recognized the program as providing "great ideas" and added, "Anything that makes our advisor's job easier is a great thing!"

We will continue to evaluate Choose and Tell as it is used throughout Ohio to determine its effectiveness.

Conclusions

By using Choose and Tell, 4-H Cloverbuds have the opportunities to enhance positive relationships with caring adult volunteers and to master skills through activities they select. Choose and Tell helps Cloverbud members improve their communication skills, make friends with other members, and build mastery as they experience, share, process, and generalize.

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