



4-H 365.19



The Work World Is Calling ... Are You Ready?

by Nate Arnett, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development
 Graham Cochran, Assistant Professor, Extension Human Resources
 and Department of Human and Community Resource Development
 Lisa Sotak-Bateson, State 4-H Staff, 4-H Youth Development

Thinking about what you want to do when you grow up? Would you like to learn about different careers? Are you ready to get started with your first job or do more in a current position? Do you want to make the most of your volunteer experiences? Are you interested in learning about and growing the skills that employers want? This self-determined project will get you moving in the right direction!

The world of work has changed a lot since your mom and dad were your age. For example, good paying jobs in factories, where you learned how to do a specific task, were commonplace. Now, more jobs require thinking and problem solving. Technology also has changed the nature of work. Ask your parents how much they used a computer when they were in school, or how they used a cell phone to talk and send text messages.

People in business talk a lot about how unprepared high school and college graduates are for the real world. Have you heard these kinds of comments? They say young people do not have strong enough skills in areas like communication, work ethic, and leadership. Through your school experiences, you gain knowledge and skills in areas like reading, writing, math, and science. You also learn skills like problem solving and teamwork.

Plan Your Project

Use this idea starter AND publication 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide* as the starting place for your 4-H self-determined project. The *Self-Determined Project Guide* is available from your county OSU Extension office or on the web at www.ohio4h.org/selfdetermined. You may choose to do a little or a lot depending on your level of interest. Be sure to register your project with your county OSU Extension office.

Working hard in school and taking advantage of all the opportunities available is very important, but it is not enough. By stepping up and doing more outside of school, you give yourself a head start. You can be better prepared for college, for work, and for life!

What Skills Do I Need to Succeed? 21st Century Skills

Skills such as thinking skills; communication; teamwork and leadership; lifelong learning and self-direction; technology adoption and application; and professionalism and ethics are called 21st century skills. These skills have not replaced the technical skills of doing a specific job. Rather, they are the skills necessary for almost all jobs and they are becoming more important every day.

The great news is that through your 4-H experiences you are on the right path to these skills that employers want. The challenge is to make sure that you get the most from your skills and experiences through the pre-employment process. Only then can you show an employer what you know.

Workforce Preparation

Workforce preparation is about what you can do to prepare yourself for college, work, and life. Ohio 4-H suggests you think about experiences in the areas of career awareness and exploration, work readiness and skill development, and work-based learning. No matter where you are, there are exciting ways you can learn about the world of work and develop the skills necessary for success.

21st Century Skills for Success

Thinking Skills

You probably have to make decisions and think through problems all the time. Did you know that being able to do those things well makes you someone employers want? Thinking skills include . . .

- Using information to solve problems.
- Thinking creatively and coming up with new ideas and solutions.
- Understanding how groups work and how to function within them.

Communication

Often people think of public speaking when they think about communicating to others, but that is just one part of communication. In the workforce and in everyday tasks, you need to have the ability to communicate effectively using the range of methods and tools available in today's environment. Communication skills include . . .

- Listening to, understanding, and sharing information.
- Sharing thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively while speaking and writing.

Teamwork and Leadership

Through school and 4-H you may be a member of many teams and groups. The interpersonal skills you need to work effectively are just like the teamwork and leadership skills you need in the workforce. The skills to work in a team and provide leadership include . . .

- Working with others and contributing to a group effort.
- Building relationships, working with diverse teams, and managing conflict.
- Bringing out the best in those around them.

Lifelong Learning and Self-Direction

In order to succeed in the workforce, you need to take responsibility for continually improving your capabilities and skills. You can do this by . . .

- Setting goals and improving skills through mentoring, training, formal education, or other learning activities.
- Seeking and receiving feedback, and learning from one's mistakes.

Technology Adoption and Application

You use computers and other technologies every day. Did you realize by doing so you are increasing your value to future employers? Employers need people who are comfortable using technologies and who know what technologies are best for completing certain tasks. A firm foundation of technology skills includes . . .

- Being comfortable using technology.
- Selecting and using the right technology to do a task.
- Identifying and solving problems with technology.

Professionalism and Ethics

Critical to your success in the workforce is the ability to demonstrate personal accountability, effective work habits, and responsibility. Professionalism and ethical behavior are demonstrated through . . .

- Being respectful of others.
- Having a positive attitude.
- Dressing appropriately for the job.
- Having good work habits.

Areas of Interest and Things to Do

Every self-determined project can be broken down into areas of interest. These are specific things members want to address during their project adventure. Using 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide*, identify at least three (3) areas of interest with at least three (3) activities per area to explore. Take your ideas from the list below or make up your own.

Career Awareness and Exploration

- Read a book or do online research on six different career areas that interest you. Try <http://www.careervoyages.gov/> or <http://www.bls.gov/k12/index.htm>.
- Develop a job journal where you keep notes on different jobs.
- Interview someone you know about their career.
- Contribute to a blog about a workforce career or skill.
- Take an aptitude assessment to see what types of careers might fit with your interests.
- Coordinate a field trip for your club to a business or organization.

21st Century Skill Development

- Conduct a talk or demonstration on a career of interest.
- Volunteer for a leadership role on a committee, club, etc.
- Teach an adult co-worker, family member, teacher, or club leader how to apply or use a technology to improve what they are trying to do.
- Ask your teacher, parent, boss, or club leader once a week or whenever you meet what you can do to help out.
- Ask at least one question each day at school, home, and work.
- Attend a presentation on a workforce skill or topic.

- Identify a skill area and write two goals and specific action items for improving your skill in that area over the next six months.

Preparing for the Work World

- Write a resume including project and work experiences and have an employer, educator, or parent review it.
- Take an application scavenger hunt. Pick up or view multiple applications online to determine what kinds of things are required for most applications and what the process includes.
- Interview a human resources professional to learn about the employment process and tips they suggest for improving your chance for success in the process.
- Ask a friend, family member, or adult leader to give you a practice interview.
- Apply for a job, trip, office, or volunteer experience that requires you to go through an application and interview process. Don't forget you can always turn down an offer.
- Participate in the Workforce Prep Day contest at the Ohio State Fair.

Work-Based Learning (Employment or Service)

- Serve as a camp counselor, on Junior Fair Board, CARTEENS, or 4-H Ambassadors.

- Ask your parent for feedback on your performance with a household task or chore.
- Serve as a volunteer at a business or organization.
- Discuss with your current employer other career opportunities.
- Mentor a younger youth.

Building Your Network

- Ask an adult to be your mentor. Meet once a month.
- Develop a system for organizing the people and contacts you make. Shoot for at least fifteen contacts to start.
- Talk with your friends' parents about what they do and share your interests with them.
- Take a tour of a business or organization.
- Use online collaborative networking to develop job contacts.



Ohio 4-H Workforce Preparation

Career Awareness and Exploration—When you were younger, you were involved in learning about careers by reading books, seeing jobs on television, going to your parent's workplace, and role playing. Did you ever pretend to own a store or restaurant as a child? Now that you are older, you can get involved in more in-depth exploration such as interviewing someone you know about a career that interests you or investigating what types of careers might fit with your interests. You may even want to take an aptitude assessment.

Skill Development—In many of your everyday activities—school, chores, sports, clubs, and 4-H—you are building the skills you need for the world of work. Look over the Skills for Success section. Now is the time to think about the skills you have and how to improve them. Part of your skill development is assessing the skills you currently have and writing them down in a resume. Now is also a great time to learn how to prepare for a job interview and showcase your skills to a possible employer.

Work-Based Learning—A great way to learn about the world of work is to get involved in work-based learning activities and programs. These types of

experiences get you involved in real work that is structured, supervised, and evaluated. You may or may not get paid for these experiences, but they are a great way to learn about work, improve your skills, and discover your career interests. These activities also look great on a college application or job resume! Examples of work-based learning programs include camp counseling, summer employment, CARTEENS, 4-H Ambassadors, and Junior Fair Board, just to name a few! You may be involved in some of these work-based learning programs already. The key is to think about what you are doing in those activities in terms of the skills you are learning and how they can be applied in a future job. Were you a camp counselor last summer? Well, great! Did you have to work with others to plan activities? Were you in charge of teaching a lesson to younger youth? What skills in the 21st Century Skills for Success did you use to complete those tasks? Leadership? Teamwork? Communication? If you think about it, you probably used a lot of them!

More details can be found on the Ohio 4-H Workforce Preparation Model at <http://youthsuccess.osu.edu/>.

Related Resources

Youth Success Web Site — Ohio State University Extension
<http://youthsuccess.osu.edu/>

CareerOneStop — U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Exploring Career Information — Bureau of Labor Statistics
<http://www.bls.gov/k12/index.htm>

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills
<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/>

SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) — U.S. Department of Labor
<http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/>

Job Experience and Training Program Package — Adventure Central
<http://www.metroparks.org/Parks/WesleyanAdventure/documents/JETPackage2009.pdf>

Workplace Development Fact Sheets — Alabama Cooperative Extension
<http://www.aces.edu/crd/workforce/pubs.html>

www.ohio4h.org/selfdetermined



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Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension

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