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DO YOUR OWN THING

A
SELF-DETERMINED
PROJECT
Agricultural Extension Service
University of Minnesota
Phyllis Worden

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The self-determined project is not a totally new idea in 4-H. Some of you may already have researched and developed an area within a project in the traditional 4-H program. What we are suggesting now is that you: select a project that is different from any regular 4-H project, or expand a traditional project; determine your own goals; plan how you will accomplish these goals; and determine how you will evaluate your project. A self-determined project can be an individual or group project. You may wish to use a copy of the planning form on the last page. One blank copy of the form is included with each bulletin. If you'd like additional copies of the form, call your county extension office. Your leader may ask you some questions about your project before he or she approves it. Here are a few questions you can ask yourself as you develop your plan. The categories correspond to those on the planning form.

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WHAT DO I WANT TO LEARN?

Why do I want to study this area? What do I really want to accomplish? What can I learn from this project? Will my past experiences help me? Will this project help me become a better person? Can I learn and accomplish what I want to in this project in terms of time, money, and energy? What other things, such as school activities, will affect this project in terms of time, money, and energy? Can I do this project alone or should it be a group project?

WHERE CAN I LOCATE INFORMATION?

What resource people are available? What other resources, such as libraries, are available for this project? Are resource people willing to help me on this project?

HOW WILL I DO IT?

Have I outlined what I plan to do? Will I be able to do all these things or should I cut out some items? How much will it cost? Can I afford to do this project? After checking my resources, can I still do this project as it is? Or can it be revised? Or should I drop this project entirely? Will this project interest me enough so that I won't become bored and want to drop it half way through?

WHEN WILL I DO IT?

Have I allowed enough time? Too much time? Have I gotten my leader's suggestions on time requirements? Have I asked my parents to consider the time requirements I must follow for this project?

HOW WILL I DETERMINE MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

Have I chosen methods to measure my results? Can I easily evaluate my project with the evaluation method I have chosen? Will I be able to write this project clearly enough for other people to know exactly what I did? How will this project help me personally? Will it help others? Can this project help me in making future career decisions?

After answering the above questions, ask yourself: Do I still think my project is worthwhile? If your answer is yes, proceed by checking your project out with your parents and leader. If your answer is no, you should either revise your plans or choose another topic.

Determine Your Own Evaluation Methods

Determining your own evaluation methods may mean looking at traditional projects and evaluating yours accordingly. It could even mean asking your friends or teachers or other adults how they view your project and your accomplishments. Or it may mean that you go back and ask some of the same questions you asked when deciding on a project and determining your objectives. The main point is that you need to have some meaningful evaluation method that you can use to help you see how much you did on this project.

You probably have concerns about yourself: why you are what you are, why you think and act as you do, how you are different from others, and how you are like them. You might want to know how you can get along better with others, how you can develop a better personality, how you can build a

happy useful life. Hopefully, by planning, developing, carrying out, and evaluating a self-determined project, you will better understand yourself and your capabilities.

Perhaps you are accustomed to having a project leader. You will still have a project leader in a self-determined project, but for the most part, your leader will be an advisor, possibly a program consultant. Your leader may be your regular 4-H leader or another resource person such as your high school counselor, high school teacher, your minister, parents, or friends who are qualified in your subject area. You can choose a leader in consultation with your local 4-H leader and/or extension agent. When you explain what you are doing, you will find that most people will be cooperative and interested in your project. Here are some ideas that might help you in gathering information and background material for your project.

- Be aware of speakers in your community or county who have information on your topic. For example, if you are concerned about a project on pollution, watch the media for mention of speakers who might be speaking on this topic.
- Determine what kind of questions you want to answer. You might just sit down and write them out for yourself, or you might want to question friends or relatives about what they would like to know about your topic.
- Include other 4-H'ers on your project if you think it would be worthwhile. You may need to set up a planning committee to determine what you can do as a group.

- Set up a questionnaire or quiz and give it to some of your friends to determine how much they know about your topic.
- Visit your local library. If the library does not have the resources you need, ask the librarian how you can obtain them.

Self-Evaluation

To help you evaluate yourself as you progress in your project, you might try completing this checksheet. You may want to visit with your leader after you have completed it, or you may want to keep it for your own evaluation.

Have I set up goals that are possible to achieve?

- Yes No Could use help

Do I follow or consider ideas? Yes No

- Could use help

Am I shy about admitting that I don't understand something? Yes No Could use help

Do I ask questions of my leader, parents, friends, and others who might be able to clarify points I don't understand? Yes No

- Could use help

Do I keep my knowledge to myself? Yes No

- Could use help

Do I share information when it may be helpful to others? Yes No Could use help

Have I concentrated on the details of my project?

- Yes No Could use help

Do I try to summarize and relate my project to other activities in which I am involved?

Yes No Could use help

Do I get off the track easily? Yes No

Could use help

Do I really understand my goals and try to work toward them? Yes No Could use help

Am I aware of the efforts of others in the same or similar project? Yes No Could use help

Can we evaluate each other's projects?

Yes No Could use help

Am I satisfied with a mediocre project? Yes

No Could use help

Do I stimulate myself to plan and carry out a worthwhile project? Yes No Could use help

Am I inflexible about this project? Yes No

Could use help

Am I willing to compromise and take suggestions from leaders and others? Yes No

Could use help

Do I accept criticism from other 4-H'ers with a sense of understanding? Yes No

Could use help

Have I talked to qualified people who can make contributions toward my project? Yes No

Could use help

Do I know what resources are available and am I using them to best advantage? Yes No

Could use help

Am I making use of libraries, museums, public agencies, civic organizations, newspapers, magazines, and other resources? Yes No

Could use help

Am I collecting pictures, newsclippings, and other resource material that is useful to me?

Yes No Could use help

Am I using some of my resource material to help me modify or reach some of my goals?

Yes No Could use help

Have I sought evaluation help? Yes No

Could use help

Have I been willing to look at my total project and determine whether I really am meeting my objectives? Yes No Could use help

Have I grown personally in carrying out this project?

Yes No Could use help

Have I shared this material so it will help others in my club or community? Yes No

Could use help

Description and Evaluation of Project

Now that you have planned and explored this project, you will want to write a report of what you hope to accomplish. Then, as you proceed, describe how you did the project, where and from whom you received information, and how you evaluated your accomplishments. Perhaps you will want to insert this description into your regular 4-H report book. You may want to explore ways of sharing your project through a regular 4-H meeting, newspaper releases, school reports, or a radio program.



Self-Determined Project

Name Jane Jones
 Address Route 2 County Cheshire
 Club Star Struck Date 6-11-71
 Subject Home Ec Careers

Planning Form

What do I want to learn?	Where can I locate information?		How will I do it?	When will I do it?	How will I determine my accomplishments?
	Resource persons	Other sources			
Various Career Opportunities for Home Economists	Mrs. Sue Brown Mrs. Jane Johns Co. Ext. Home Ec. Mrs. Green Guidance Counselor	American Home Ec. Assoc. 1600 20th St. NW Washington, D.C. 20009	Talk to Home Econ Read info about Home Ec. Careers List various career opportunities available for Home Econ See college requirements for Home Ec. grade. Obtain material from Dept. Manpower Services Look for summer job opportunities at library	July-Aug. Aug.-Sept. Sept.-Dec.	Look at information I collect. See if I can list general requirements for becoming a home economist. By the list of summer jobs I accumulate.

Beginning date July 1, 1971 Approved by Janet Jones
 Approximate completion date January 1, 1972 Approved by Sue
 4-H project leader

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