



4-H ARTS PROGRAM

4-H Youth Development Programs

Revised May 2006

The 4-H arts program offers opportunities for kids to get involved in the visual arts, drama, music, photography and communications. Arts have been an important part of the 4-H program since its beginnings in Wisconsin. In the 1930s, College of Agriculture Dean Chris Christensen said he wanted to “put the culture back in agriculture” and created a rural arts program, with Extension specialists offering workshops and exhibitions.

Today, the 4-H program offers a great variety of artistic endeavors for youth of all ages from individual projects and club activities to state-level arts camps and arts “teams.” State Arts Camp and the Arts Leadership Lab provide opportunities for older youth to gain leadership skills by planning and teaching arts activities. The state Art Team, Drama Team, Press (photography) team and the Showcase Singers teams -- including art, drama, photography - and a show choir, give talented high school artists and performers opportunities to work at the “almost professional” level and to be models and teachers for their peers.

The Arts are Good for Kids

Most kids enjoy art. It’s fun, satisfying and challenging. But, from a child development perspective, the arts are much more than just fun. When children experience arts, they grow and learn. They develop communications skills. They learn to relate to others. They develop appreciation for differences in cultures and individuals. They gain mental skills. They learn to express and manage emotions. They learn self-discipline and confidence.

Research shows that students enrolled in arts courses score higher on the SAT college entrance exam, get better grades, have better attendance records and are more active in their communities than other students. Other studies have shown that poor and at-risk kids do better in school and improve their self-confidence, communication and conflict resolution skills when they get involved in the arts.

In 2005, Wisconsin youth participated in 49,000 4-H arts projects and programs including nearly 11,000 4-H members.



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