

Around the World with 4-H: A Virtual Field Trip Club

Eidt, S., 4-H Youth Development, Clemson University, seidt@clemson.edu
 Phillips, A., 4-H Youth Development, Clemson University, atimmon@clemson.edu
 West, A.W., 4-H Youth Development, Clemson University, awillin@clemson.edu

Program Overview

Learning about cultures around the world helps youth develop their capacity to be informed and responsible citizens who are responsive to the diverse perspectives of others. Around the World with 4-H: A Virtual Field Trip Club allows youth to experience life outside their own community and broaden their understanding and respect of other cultures.

While originally offered through Chester 4-H, currently, Around the World is a partnership between Chester, Fairfield, and Newberry Counties. Each month, 4-H staff lead a 1-hour meeting held via Zoom to introduce a country through an interactive presentation. The presentation provides information on cultures, holidays, food, language, currency, geography, and wildlife using maps, recipes, hands-on activities, interviews, and virtual tours. Following the meeting, youth are provided with a related recipe and hands-on activity to complete at home. This club is open to any youth aged 5-12, virtually, membership not required, as well as is delivered through an in-person club tuning in together in Newberry, where membership is required. The program started in December 2021 and is ongoing, currently boasting 95 registered participants from 22 South Carolina counties, 4 other states, and Canada. The intended goals are to help youth understand the importance of knowing about other cultures, explore and respect diversity, and develop skills in cross-cultural communication and travel. Current evaluation results show positive results in cultural learning and respect, as well as ease of participation.

Program Objectives

The objective of this program was to offer opportunities for South Carolina youth to be exposed to various and diverse world cultures. To accomplish this, we set out to highlight a different country at each monthly meeting. Each meeting was to offer exposure through virtual tours, recipes, vocabulary, facts, and more.

Delivery Mode

Around the World with 4-H is a virtual, synchronous club designed by Clemson Extension 4-H agents to reach students (ages 5-12) throughout the state (and beyond).

Registrants receive a reminder email a day before the monthly meeting. During each meeting, the club "visits" a different country via PowerPoint slides supplemented with videos, personal travel anecdotes, maps, recipes, and occasional guest speakers. Each one-hour session ends with a culturally themed craft such as egg carton tulips from the Netherlands or spoon maracas from Cuba.

Participants receive a follow-up email with the date for the next meeting, as well as two extension activities: a recipe from the country and an additional STEM or art activity to be completed at home.

Target Audience

Originally, we targeted an audience of South Carolina youth ages 5-12, 4-H membership not necessary. However, as virtual programs often do, this program did not stop at the state line. Using social media to advertise and Eventbrite as a registration platform led to participants from South Carolina, Florida, Connecticut, California, North Carolina, and the Canadian province of Newfoundland.

Outcomes

Using Qualtrics as an evaluation tool, respondents have noted that the program is "fun, engaging, and easy to connect" and that their family enjoys "learning about the different countries and their cultures, as well as the hands-on activity with each meeting." 100% of evaluation respondents agree or strongly agree that the virtual and at-home activities were useful for their families, encouraged respect for other cultures, were age-appropriate, utilizes an easy-to-navigate platform (Zoom), and that they would be interested in attending other virtual 4-H programs.

While the original program goals did not include setting out to offer this program through different delivery modes, this was an unintended outcome of a joint county program. Additionally, the program is helping us reach a new audience as 43% of youth registered are new to the 4-H program. As a result of participating in this program, 93% of youth feel that learning about other cultures is important, 96% indicate they have learned something new, and 100% of youth would like to continue learning about other cultures.

Conclusion

Around the World with 4-H allows students to learn about different traditions and cultures and expand their worldviews. In addition, this program has highlighted the pros and cons of joint county virtual programming:

Benefits:

- ideal for county collaboration by dividing workload and providing multiple agent perspectives
- reach new audiences who can "try out" 4-H
- convenient for families to attend using the virtual option
- low input (monetary and time) of agents
- has no borders- participants can come from across the state and beyond; potential learning from peers' regional perspectives
- can be attended by a county's existing club

However, the program does not come without its challenges. Hurdles to be acknowledged (and potentially addressed) include:

- attendance is under-represented compared to registration
- potential participants may not have access to a computer and/or internet
- students may be less engaged than with in-person programming; encourage discussion and activity participation

