

Experiential Learning: A Holistic Approach to Learning

Experiential Learning is youth-centered. It is an active learning process which first involves youth in an activity, asks them to reflect on the activity to determine what was useful or important to remember, and then tasks youth with understanding how the information they learned applies to their lives now and in the future. This learning process is holistic and allows youth to consume, apply, and build upon life experiences.

Pfeiffer and Jones' experiential learning model is commonly used in 4-H. However, other pioneers such as Kolb provide a wealth of research that emphasizes the importance of the adult facilitator. According to Kolb, the experiential learning model allows the learner to actively participate in what is learned. The facilitator's role is to connect with the youth to spark their interest and intrinsic motivation so that the youth can gain, revise, or enhance their life skills. The facilitator plays multiple roles during this process: balancing the attention of the learner, engaging with the subject matter, and creating a safe and holistic learning environment.

Tips to think about when creating a welcoming environment for learning:

- Patience is a virtue. When waiting for youth to respond fully, having patience and allowing time for them to think is important.
- You are not the judge. Accept all responses.
- Experiential questions are open-ended to allow for expression. Make sure that you acknowledge youth who respond to you. Failing to acknowledge all youth can stop the flow of answers and make youth less likely to respond in the future.
- You are not the young person. Don't answer the question.
- Encourage deep conversation. If a young person gives a short response, provide follow up questions to allow for deeper conversation. Examples could be: "Would you provide an example of what you mean? Can you tell me more about your thoughts?"
- Avoid yes or no questions. These are not open-ended and stop the flow of conversation.
- Don't lead the youth to answers you want to hear.
- Allow the youth to share their responses in pairs rather than with the entire group.



1. **Experience: Let's Do It!!!**

Key Reminders to Leader:

- "Sit on Your Hands"
- Observe
- Facilitate to the "bigger picture"

Key Objectives for Discovery:

- To Explore
- To Examine
- To Construct
- To Arrange

2. **Share**

Key Concept: Respond

Key Question: "What Happened?"

3. **Reflect**

Key Concept: Analyze Patterns

Key Question: "What's Important?"

Leader Role

- Allow adequate processing time for sharing.
- Use open-ended questions to stimulate thinking and feeling.
- Encourage "pair share" and large group share.

4. **Generalize**

Key Concept: Inference

Key Question: "So What?"

5. **Apply**

Key Concept: Application

Key Question: "Now What?"

Leader Role

- Facilitate youth finding ways to use what they have learned in new situations.
- Guide youth in making connections between the inner meaning of the activity and the broader world.

Share Questions (What Happened?)

What did you like about this activity?

What part of the activity was the hardest to do?

How did you decide what to choose?

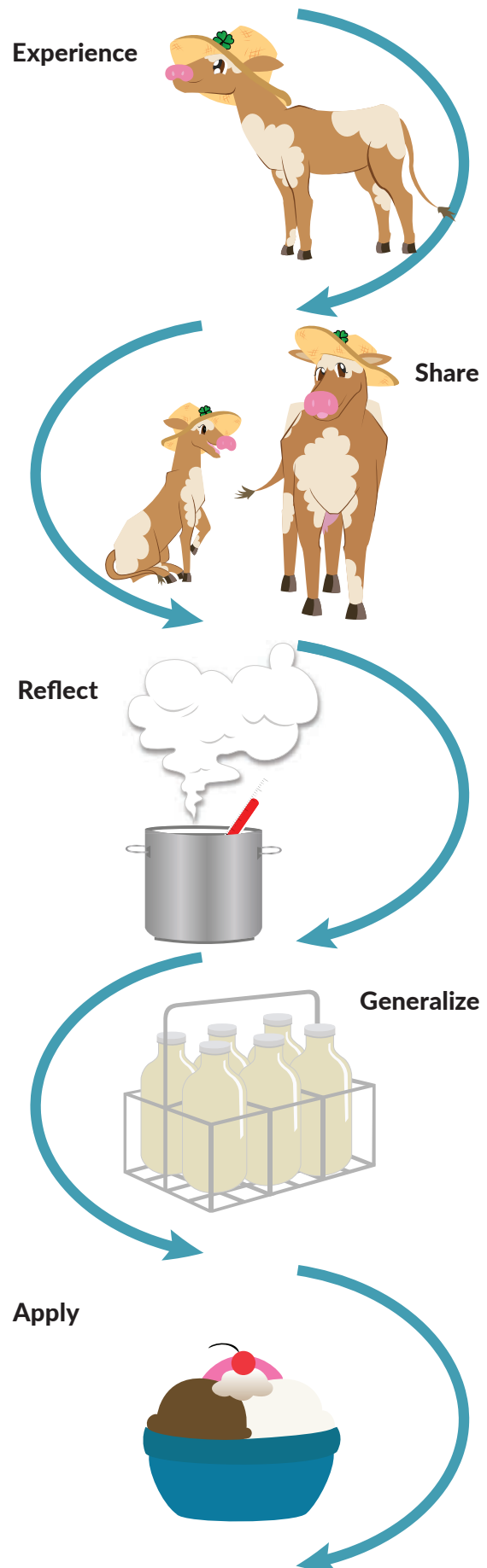
What was the most fun about doing the activity?

How did your group work together?

How did you feel about successfully being able to ____ ?

What are some decisions you had to make to carry out this activity?

What steps did you go through before you made your decision?



Why do you think everyone in your group didn't agree about everything?
What was it like to have to make quick decisions?
How did you keep track of everyone's ideas?
Do you think you get more ideas working alone or in a group? Why?
What kind of feelings did you have when group members argued?
What did you observe about the way the groups disagreed (or agreed)?
How did you use your various senses to ___ ?
What new words did you learn?
Why do you think people have different ideas about what is correct?

Reflect Questions (What's Important?)

What did you learn about yourself by doing this activity?
Why is it important to know ___ ?
How did your group decide ___ ?
What did you learn as a group that you might not have learned alone?
What were some common themes or thoughts you heard?
How were each person's viewpoints the same? How were they different?
What problems came up over and over?
What would you do if ___ were to happen?
What was easy or difficult about working with a group to ___ ?
What did you do if everyone in the group didn't agree on ___ ?
How did this differ from the way you are usually taught in school?
Give an example of a challenge you had and what you did to solve it.
What works best to get people involved and excited about doing this type of activity?
Why is learning with others sometimes more fun than learning alone?
What suggestions would you have for someone who wanted to ___ ?

Generalize Questions (So What?)

What other situations like this have you experienced?
Why is it important that each person has his/her own view?
When have you had to ___ before?
Where can you find resources to help you make some of your decisions about ___ ?
When else have you had fun and learned new things at the same time?
Why is it important to have plenty of information before making decisions?
When do you make decisions that require everyone in the group to agree?
What do you do when you don't agree with the group?
What did you learn about your own skill in making decisions?
What did you learn about your own skill in communicating with others?
Describe five ways in which new ideas can be communicated to you.
In what ways do people help each other learn new things?
What are some ways you like to learn?
What did you learn?

Apply (What was Learned?)

How would you teach someone about this activity or concept?
What did you learn today that you will be able to use in school....at home?
What did you learn by participating in this process that will help you in the future?
Describe a time when you might need the skills/knowledge you learned today.
What are some other situations when you will need to use the skills you learned today?
What would you do differently if you conducted this activity again?