

Expanding Global Mindedness Through a 4-H International Village

Abstract

With expanding global interdependence, it is vital that 4-H youths learn more about the ever-increasing diverse cultures in their own communities as well as expand their global mindedness and understanding of globalization. The 4-H International Village (a) offers a comfortable yet engaging avenue for youths to expand their knowledge of and interest in foreign cultures and (b) increases their interest in participating in student exchange or study abroad programs. In this article, we provide the outline for conducting a 4-H International Village and describe the initial impact of the program.

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Introduction

In 1973, with the addition of the words "and my world," the 4-H pledge was changed for the first and only time since its adoption in 1927 (National 4-H History Preservation Program, 2015). This signified a youth organization with a vision for affecting the world in a positive manner. Today, 4-H reaches over 7 million young people in over 50 countries and has a strategy that includes a vision of a sustainable and innovative global network that will empower youths to reach their full potential (National 4-H Council, 2015).

Program Need

Global mindedness is defined as a world view in which one sees oneself as connected to the world community and feels a sense of responsibility for its members (Hett, 1993). Over the years, various international exchange programs and other travel abroad opportunities have been developed. However, many youths do not view participating in a study abroad program as a possibility (Ludwig, 2002), and there are few opportunities within local, state, and national 4-H projects for youths to expand their global mindedness.

A team of Mississippi State University faculty developed and implemented an International Village at the State 4-

H Congress to build interest in a statewide international 4-H program and, ultimately, in international experiences and global issues. Suarez-Orozco (2007) stated, "Student learning about globalization should include more than the acquisition of knowledge about world history and cultures" (p. 48). Therefore, the 4-H International Village was designed to excite, encourage, and engage young people relative to their world and cultures different from their own.

Purpose

The 4-H International Village replicated visiting three foreign countries and being immersed in those cultures. The goals were

- to develop an understanding of globalization,
- to expand youths' knowledge of and interest in traveling abroad,
- to cultivate an interest in foreign cultures, and
- to increase youths' knowledge of specific countries.

Planning

In planning and preparing for the 4-H International Village, we

- assembled a team that included faculty native to each country highlighted in the village (India, Japan, and Kenya) to provide youths with an authentic experience;
- determined that tea, food, and fashion were common topics that could be highlighted relative to each country and used for comparisons;
- developed country-specific learning objectives and cultural experiences;
- developed a pretest/posttest comprised of "Culture" items from the 4-H Common Measures Citizenship tool for students in grades 8–12 and additional questions for assessing country-specific knowledge;
- developed general introductory and closing sessions, secured rooms, and designed materials (e.g., replica passports and handbooks); and
- staged rooms the day prior to the 4-H International Village event.

Implementation

The 4-H International Village began with the participants entering through "passport control" where "officers" provided them with a replica passport created for the event with simulated visa stamps for India, Japan, and Kenya.

The participants were also given a "handbook" (notebook) that included the following items:

- pretest;

- world map;
- information sheets on India, Japan, Kenya, and the United States;
- recipes (15) from India, Japan, and Kenya (including recipes for foods provided in the village);
- information sheets on 4-H around the world and 4-H programs in Africa;
- safety and security information for U.S. students traveling abroad;
- links to various resources related to India, Japan, Kenya, international travel, international organizations, and study abroad programs;
- contact information; and
- posttest.

Participants began the 4-H International Village experience in an introductory session. After finishing the pretest, participants learned about their passports and received tips for traveling abroad. The youths were then organized in groups and began touring the three countries. As participants entered each room, they experienced the sights, sounds, and aromas of the country represented. They also engaged in activities such as henna art, tea ceremonies, origami, and games while enjoying a variety of foods and teas from each country and learning about other customs and traditions. After 25 min, participants received their departure stamps and moved to the next country. After each group had visited all three countries, everyone returned to the general session room to complete the posttest, share and reflect on their experiences, and ask questions. Participants were encouraged to increase global mindedness in their home counties by presenting internationally related programs in their local 4-H clubs using the information in their handbooks as a guide.

Impact

Thirty-seven participants completed the pretest and posttest. Participants ranged in age from 14–18 years. Nearly two thirds (65%) were female, and 68% indicated their race as White. Participants were nearly equally distributed in residence location, with 35% living on a farm, 27% living in a rural community (nonfarm residence) with a population of less than 10,000, and 38% living in a town or city with a population of 10,000–50,000.

The pretest consisted of four culture-related Likert-type questions from the 4-H Common Measures Citizenship tool for students in grades 8–12; 10 content-related, open-ended questions for assessing knowledge of the countries visited, and five personal demographic questions. The posttest contained the same questions as the pretest, with the exception of the demographic questions. Table 1 shows the differences in pretest and posttest results for the culture-related 4-H Common Measure questions.

Table 1.
Culture-Related 4-H Common Measures Pretest/Posttest Differences

Pretest	Posttest
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Item	Agree or strongly agree	Agree or strongly agree	Z	p
Like to explore cultural differences	86%	94%	-2.840	.005
Value learning about other cultures	83%	100%	-2.972	.003
Respect people from different cultures	86%	100%	-2.810	.005
Like to learn about people who are different from me	86%	94%	-2.486	.013

Wilcoxon signed-rank tests indicated that the changes in culture-related attitudes from pretest to posttest were statistically significant ($p < .05$).

At pretest, overall participants answered only 26% of the content-related country questions correctly. However, at posttest, participants answered 81% of the questions correctly. Table 2 shows the percentage of correct responses for each item at pretest and posttest.

Table 2.
Content-Related Country Knowledge Pretest/Posttest Differences

Country/item	Pretest Correct response	Posttest Correct response
India		
What is the name of the Indian currency?	43%	79%
What is Indian tattoo called?	32%	70%
What is the most common dress worn by women in India?	19%	55%
Japan		
What type of tea is used most in Japanese tea ceremonies?	43%	94%
When are kimonos worn?	19%	82%
What is the most popular type of fabric used to make kimonos?	30%	82%
Kenya		
In which continent is Kenya located?	95%	97%
What is the capital city of Kenya?	49%	76%

What does that name mean?	11%	94%
What type of material is used most in Kenyan fabrics?	16%	82%

Data in Tables 1 and 2 show that participants in the 4-H International Village improved their culture-related attitudes and content knowledge of specific topics addressed in the program. Additionally, requests were made by 4-H staff and multiple agents to repeat and expand the program in subsequent years. Follow-up research will involve determining whether participants implemented programs in their counties as encouraged at the closing session.

Conclusion

Many students interested in careers in agricultural and Extension education have little international experience (Lockett, Moore, & Wingenbach, 2014). Providing cultural experiences in their home states can improve cultural knowledge and culture-related attitudes and may be a catalyst for increased interest in other internationally related programs.

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