

8-1-2003

## Hooks and Anchors in Youth Development Program Delivery

Kathy Wolfe

*Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, kwolfe@larimer.org*

Jan B. Carroll

*Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, jan.carroll@colostate.edu*



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

---

### Recommended Citation

Wolfe, K., & Carroll, J. B. (2003). Hooks and Anchors in Youth Development Program Delivery. *The Journal of Extension*, 41(4), Article 18. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol41/iss4/18>

This Ideas at Work is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Extension by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact [kokeefe@clemson.edu](mailto:kokeefe@clemson.edu).



August 2003 // Volume 41 // Number 4 // Ideas at Work // 4IAW2



PREVIOUS  
ARTICLE



ISSUE  
CONTENTS



NEXT  
ARTICLE

## Hooks and Anchors in Youth Development Program Delivery

### Abstract

Hooks and anchors remind Cooperative Extension educators to engage participants so they will attend programming and learn. The hook brings them in and sets the stage for learning. The anchor is the weight or content of the presentation. Examples refer to Cooperative Extension professionals, volunteers, and youth. Experiential learning is a hook, and life skills are anchors for youth.

### Kathy Wolfe

Larimer County 4-H Youth Development Agent  
Internet Address: [kwolfe@larimer.org](mailto:kwolfe@larimer.org)

### Jan B. Carroll

4-H Youth Development Specialist  
Internet Address: [jan.carroll@colostate.edu](mailto:jan.carroll@colostate.edu)

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension  
Fort Collins, Colorado

As a part of a learner-centered model, Extension educators can think of their lessons in terms of a "hooks and anchors" analogy. The hook is a technique, framework, or model of engagement. It is something that brings people in to an event or into the content. The anchor is the value that makes the learning experience sink in and become relevant for the participant. It may be obvious or deeply embedded in the lesson.

### Hooks Engage Learners

Timpson, Burgoyne, Jones, & Jones (1997) point out that engagement is "somewhat slippery to identify and measure as a researchable construct [but] students can certainly tell you whether or not they were absorbed in a particular lecture. They can describe what gets their attention, what sustains it, what allows them to drift off, and what turns them off completely." (p. 46) The engagement, or hook, overcomes resistance to attendance or a particular subject. The more clever or valuable to the learner the hook is, the more effective it is in engaging the learner.

### Anchors Set the Content

The anchor in 4-H educational experiences is the "weight" of the lesson. Based on learner objectives, the anchor is the knowledge base the learner needs to have. Facts, statistics, vocabulary, and research-based evidence are examples of anchors that help participants learn more about a subject. Anchors can be the preliminary information needed for performing a task or creating a product.

The use of analogies for teaching has been described by experts in the field of literacy as a very powerful teaching tool (Stahl, Duffy-Hester, & Stahl, 1998). Analogy-based approaches have been used in the acquisition and mastery of language skills and focus of anchor words. Students use anchor words to learn the meaning of yet more words.

Youth programs must remember the anchor when planning programming, so that presentations have outcomes that can be measured. Life skills (Hendricks, 1998) are all anchor subjects. Similar to anchor words, they build upon one another.

### Examples of Hooks to Engage Learners and Anchors to Set Learning

## Youth

- For a 4-H foods and nutrition project for youth ages eight to 18, preparing and eating the food studied is the hook. Food in general is an effective hook for all ages and is especially successful with adolescents. Trying new foods is fun and exciting. Wise use of resources, social skills, and/or sharing could be anchors for a 4-H foods and nutrition project exploring new foods.
- For a junior camp counseling train-the-trainer session, a large number of recreational activities are the hook to cover the anchor topics of normal adolescent development and risk management. Extension educators know the importance of a general understanding of adolescent development in order to be effective. (Wolfe, 1997). There are many subject areas that are not necessarily appealing to junior camp counselors but are essential knowledge for them in working with younger youth. When hooked with experiential lessons on camping activities, the necessary content sinks in.

## Adults

- In a Cloverbuds leader program on developmental stages for youth ages five to eight, the hooks are the introduction and the availability of literacy kits containing a book and activities that directly relate to the learning about appropriate developmental tasks. These kits, essentially a lesson in a box, can be checked out and used by 4-H leaders at regular club meetings. Because the kits save the leaders time, energy, and money, they are valuable resources for leaders and can be powerful incentives to attend a lesson on child development.
- Leader and member training on composing a great photograph with the use of digital cameras (hook) provide an opportunity to include the introduction of the need for parental signatures on photo release forms (anchor).
- Access to information or resources is a hook for many adults. Volunteer leaders can be encouraged to attend a 4-H policies and procedures workshop with an organizational leader notebook that provides in-depth descriptions of county activities and events. In addition to the knowledge gained by reviewing such a resource, the leader notebook saves time by having all of the information at the leaders' fingertips.
- 4-H leaders need to have important information on legal aspects of fund raising and tax-exempt status, which is definitely "anchor" material. When the details are presented in the form of a fast-paced quiz show, leaders are more likely to participate in the learning process. Adaptations of *Jeopardy*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* and other television shows have been successful.
- In a lesson on the 4-H name and emblem, a 4-H educator might incorporate a game on the history of the name and emblem as a hook for getting to the less exciting rules and regulations on the use of the 4-H name and emblem. A *Trivial Pursuit* or *Pictionary* question on "hustle" as one of the four H's is certainly a more interesting way of approaching basic information about authorization of use of the clover for club leaders.

Learning is more effective when it is attractive, fun, exciting, and engaging. Incorporating both hooks and anchors into the learning process facilitates mastery of important but potentially dull material in a more palatable learning environment. See Table 1. Specialists, agents, and volunteers can benefit in program planning when they remember to design hooks and anchors into their presentations.

**Table 1.**  
Hooks and Anchors for Youth and Adults

Lesson	Hook	Anchor
<b>Youth</b>		
Exploring Food	Opportunity to Prepare and Try New Foods	Wise use of resources, social skills, sharing
Junior Camp Counselor Train the Trainer	Recreational Activities	Normal adolescent development, risk management
<b>Adults</b>		
	Availability of Kits	

Cloverbuds Leader Training		Child development of 5 - 8 year olds
Volunteer Leader Training	Digital Camera	Necessity of parental signature of photo release forms
	Notebook	Policies and procedures
	Quiz Show	Fund-raising and tax-exempt status
	Fast-Paced Game on History of 4-H Name and Emblem	Authorization for use of the clover

### References

Hendricks, P. A. (1998). *Targeting life skills*. (4-H-137A). Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

Stahl, S., Duffy-Hester, A., & Stahl, K. (1998) Everything you wanted to know about phonics (but were afraid to ask). *Reading Research Quarterly*. 33, (3). 338-352.

Timpson, W. M., Burgoyne, S., Jones, C. S., & Jones, W. (1997). *Teaching and performing: Ideas for energizing your classes*. Madison, WI: Magna Publications.

Wolfe, K. (1997). *Influence of knowledge of adolescent development on self-efficacy of youth educators*. Unpublished master's thesis. Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

*Copyright* © by Extension Journal, Inc. ISSN 1077-5315. Articles appearing in the Journal become the property of the Journal. Single copies of articles may be reproduced in electronic or print form for use in educational or training activities. Inclusion of articles in other publications, electronic sources, or systematic large-scale distribution may be done only with prior electronic or written permission of the *Journal Editorial Office*, [joe-ed@joe.org](mailto:joe-ed@joe.org).

If you have difficulties viewing or printing this page, please contact [JOE Technical Support](#)