

Selected Youth Development Programs & Community Impact

DEBORAH DELISLE

Representative Examples of Experiential Learning,
Community Engagement & Youth Leadership

MY APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

I believe young people learn best when they are trusted with meaningful work that benefits their community. The strongest educational experiences begin with curiosity, connect to real local needs, and allow youth to work alongside caring adults while developing leadership, confidence, practical skills, and a sense of belonging.

The following projects represent the type of educational programming I would bring to UT Extension and the 4-H Youth Development Program in Unicoi County. While each project addresses different content areas, they all share several core goals:



Develop Youth Leadership & Life Skills



Build Partnerships & Volunteers



Connect Learning to Agriculture & Natural Resources



Encourage Service, Creativity & Problem Solving



Create Authentic Learning with Community Impact



1 GROWING A BUSINESS FROM THE FARM

Essential Question: Could we earn enough money to buy something our school needs?

Students create and operate a real farm-based business while learning entrepreneurship, agriculture, marketing, budgeting, customer service, and teamwork.



YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop products using farm resources
- Create branding and marketing materials
- Manage production schedules
- Track expenses and profits
- Operate a farmers market booth
- Present financial results to the community

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Local farms
- Farmers Markets
- Small business owners
- Graphic designers
- Community mentors

SKILLS DEVELOPED



Leadership



Public Speaking



Financial Literacy



Teamwork



Agriculture



Entrepreneurship

2 COMMUNITY IDEA LAB

Jonesborough Farmers Market

Essential Question: How could we make our community even better?

Families visiting the farmers market were invited to participate in a four-week community design challenge where children identified issues they cared about, imagined improvements, designed possible solutions, and reflected on what they learned.

Rather than adults solving problems for children, youth became community problem-solvers.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Engaged hundreds of children and families.
- Encouraged youth voice and civic engagement.
- Strengthened partnerships between educators, local businesses, and community organizations.
- Demonstrated experiential learning in a public setting.

SKILLS DEVELOPED



Leadership



Civic Responsibility



Communication



Creativity



Collaboration



Design Thinking

3 FARM SAFETY INITIATIVE

Essential Question: How can we help keep our farming community safer?

Students partner with local farmers, emergency responders, and agricultural professionals to identify common farm safety concerns and develop educational resources for younger children and community members.



POSSIBLE STUDENT PROJECTS

- Safety demonstrations
- Educational videos
- Farm safety signage
- Equipment mapping
- Community presentations
- Children's activity books

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Volunteer Fire Departments
- Local Farmers
- Farm Bureau
- Emergency Management
- Agricultural Equipment Dealers

SKILLS DEVELOPED



Community Service



Agricultural Awareness



Leadership



Public Speaking



Research

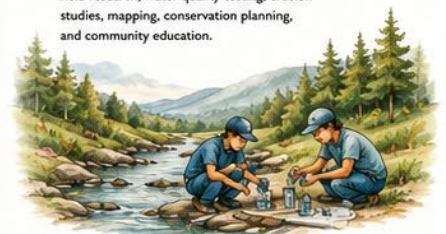


Teamwork

4 WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

Essential Question: Where does our water come from—and how can we protect it?

Students investigate their local watershed through field research, water quality testing, erosion studies, mapping, conservation planning, and community education.



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Youth become environmental stewards by studying local streams and sharing what they learn with their families and community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Conservation organizations
- Parks departments
- Local watershed groups
- Tennessee wildlife professionals
- Community volunteers

SKILLS DEVELOPED



Environmental Stewardship



Scientific Investigation



Data Collection



Public Education



Critical Thinking



Teamwork

5 OUTDOOR KITCHEN DESIGN CHALLENGE

Essential Question: How can we create an outdoor kitchen that brings our community together?

Students design and build a functional outdoor kitchen while integrating engineering, agriculture, nutrition, budgeting, construction, sustainability, and teamwork.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Interview community members
- Develop design concepts
- Create construction plans
- Build garden systems
- Design food preparation areas
- Plan long-term maintenance



COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Builders



Farmers



Master Gardeners



Extension Volunteers



Local Businesses

SKILLS DEVELOPED



Engineering



Agriculture



Leadership



Collaboration



Project Management



Service Learning

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Across my career, I have found that meaningful youth development happens when young people are trusted with real responsibility and supported by caring adults. Whether designing educational programs, leading nonprofit organizations, or building partnerships with local farms and community organizations, my goal has remained the same:

Help young people discover that they are capable of improving the world around them.

These projects represent more than lesson plans—they reflect an educational philosophy grounded in service, leadership, community engagement, and experiential learning. They are the kinds of opportunities I would be excited to develop alongside the youth, volunteers, families, and community partners of Unicoi County through the University of Tennessee Extension 4-H Youth Development Program.