

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Extension professionals deliver 4-H Yoga for Kids improving youth wellness

### AT A GLANCE

4-H yoga training builds strong skills for Extension professionals who then have a positive effect on the well-being of youth.

### The Situation

4-H has a role to play in helping all youth improve their physical health practices. There are no minimum time requirements mandated by the state education standards for physical education (PE) in grades K-8, nor a requirement for active recess time. High school PE graduation requirements are left to each school district to set. Exercise rates and team sport participation rates are not correlated, so it is not clear how many students are doing physical activity (PA) outside of organized sports and PE classes. PA is part of the national 4-H vision for healthy youth. Yoga offers a different arena for children who might not enjoy participating in competitive sports yet have a desire to increase their PA levels. Yoga also can benefit youth athletes as the primary focus is on improving balance, coordination, strength and focus. Yoga is considered a healthy lifestyle activity, as it is an activity that can be performed throughout life.

### Our Response

To address PA needs for Idaho youth, Extension educators implemented 4-H Yoga for Kids (Y4K). The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension (UACE) developed the training, delivery protocol and evaluation process for teaching yoga to youth. UACE trainers



Kids enjoying 4-H yoga in the community park.

engaged 23 Extension professionals in the 4-H Y4K instructor training. The seven-hour 4-H Y4K instructor training used demonstrate-practice model preparing faculty and staff to teach yoga to youth. During the training they learned standing and floor poses, routines, guided relaxation and breathing techniques. They also received the Y4K teaching manual, videos and posters. These youth professionals implemented the program between June and December 2018.

### Program Outcomes

The 4-H Y4K training gave Extension faculty and staff the confidence to teach yoga to youth in their communities. The six-month post survey of the newly trained instructors showed their experience and comfort increased with practice. Before the training, 35%

practiced yoga and six-months post, 48% practiced. All instructors strongly agreed or agreed that they could teach standing and floor poses, lead guided relaxation and breathing exercises, and tailor 4-H Y4K to a variety of ages of youth. After six-months none of the instructors felt inexperienced in teaching and practicing yoga. (Table 1. Six-month post training survey results.)

Extension Professionals Six-Month Post Training		
N=22 Confidence in ability to:	Strongly Agree	Agree
Teach STANDING yoga poses to youth using the Yoga for Kids materials.	43%	57%
Teach FLOOR yoga poses to youth using the Yoga for Kids materials.	48%	52%
Teach GUIDED RELAXATION activities using Yoga for Kids materials.	30%	70%
Teach BREATHING exercises using Yoga for Kids materials.	39%	52%
Explain the health benefits of Yoga for Kids.	52%	43%
Tailor the Yoga for Kids programs to teach youth of different ages.	26%	70%
Observation and Action:	Yes	No
Have observed positive changes among youth after participating in 4-H Y4K.	78%	22%
Regularly include time for physical activity, other than yoga.	78%	22%

These new yoga instructors reported observing positive changes among youth after participating in six classes and that they now regularly include time for PA in their youth programming. The youth also had fun with 89% reporting that exercising is fun, and that yoga helps them to relax. While 58% have shown yoga poses to family members, 69% have done yoga at home.

Youth expressing that “exercise is fun” is an important social well-being indicator. As they share the newly

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learned yoga poses and try new routines at home, they are setting a path to a positive quality of life. Social interaction and feeling good are proven quality of life indicators in adults. When yoga happens at home, both the youth and family members are benefiting. Yoga helps youth improve their physical health practices.

Youth Responses Post Participating in 4-H Y4K			
N=56	Yes	No	
Have you done yoga at home?	69%	31%	
Have you shown yoga poses to your family or friends?	59%	41%	
Does your family do yoga with you?	34%	66%	
Do you think yoga helps you relax?	89%	11%	
Do you think it is fun to exercise?	89%	11%	
Observation and Action:	Yes	Sort Of	No
Have you encouraged others to be active with you?	50%	38%	12%
At 4-H, did you talk about ways to be active? (n=54)	41%	24%	35%

**The Future**

Trained Extension professionals developed skills to teach in a variety of settings and age groups of youth. 4-H Y4K results indicated both instructor and child benefited from practicing yoga. Positive changes in youth were noticed, more nutritious snacks were served, and more time was allotted for PA. Ninety percent of instructors plan to continue 4-H Y4K, indicating a high level of confidence and competence. Ideally, having youth practicing yoga beyond 4-H programs, and at home will benefit all families to live a healthy lifestyle.

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