

Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development



4-H has a 100+ year history and is still going strong!

Over the years we have adapted to our changing society and we meet the needs of youth differently today than we did 100+ years ago.

Still, we are showing growth as evidenced by 20% increase in membership over the past 10 years and a ranking of #4 in the nation in membership!

Nationwide, 4-H is focusing on the basic principles that make the 4-H program a positive youth development opportunity for our youth. This presentation will highlight the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development. You'll find that we already incorporate many of these elements into our 4-H programming, but may have the opportunity to enhance certain aspects of our program to more fully meet the needs of our 4-H members.

Discoveries about Youth Development over the Years:

- *Children and youth learn best when they can “do.” – Experiential Education*
- *Youth are early adopters and will change their communities. – Leading by Example*
- *Some things cannot be taught, but must be experienced.*



4-H has always included opportunities for members to “learn by doing” as we provide them with numerous hands-on experiences.

The original 4-H purpose was to share new research technologies with the youth. For example, in the original corn club, research techniques were shared with youth who achieved an average of 65 bushels per acres corn yield as compared to the adults who achieved an average of 17 bushels per acre. This was quite an impressive feat!

Goals of a Youth Development Approach

- Focus on the **positive outcomes** we desire for young people, not the negative outcomes we hope to prevent.
- Provide programs that are available to all young people.
- View youth as “central actors in their own development.”
- Consider the **whole** young person, not just a single characteristic or problem.



We are in the business of developing youth. That's why we do what we do!

Inclusivity: We need to continually review guidelines and policies we have in place. Are they inclusive of all of our audiences? Are we unintentionally excluding certain segments of our population? We all know 4-H is a great program for our youth, but if we don't help them join and encourage their participation, they won't have the opportunities to experience all that 4-H has to offer.

Goals of a Youth Development Approach

- Focus on mastery of competencies, which leads to productive adult life.
- Produce results through programming WITH youth, don't do something TO youth.
- Provide the guidance of caring, knowledgeable adults – family and other adults – in the context of the family, community, and society.
- Offer programs in safe, nurturing, healthy environments.



We are looking to provide members with opportunities to experiment and to try new things. Occasionally, they may fail, but we can provide them the support they need when they do!

As adults we need to work with the members to help them develop the 4-H experience that will best meet their needs; we need to caution ourselves against dictating a 4-H program to our members that we think is best for them.



Balloon Activity (on-site)



Instructions for on-site facilitators: distribute a clear or light-colored balloon to each participant along with a penny or a 1/4-1/2 inch metal hex nut (bolt-type). Ask the volunteers to blow up a balloon and insert either a penny or hex nut inside. Tie off the balloon. Gently spin the balloon until the object starts to roll around inside.

You'll notice that those balloons with the hex nuts have rough edges and take more energy to keep spinning as compared to those balloons that have the pennies with the smooth edges.

Just as water running over rocks will make the rocks smooth and shiny, we as staff and volunteers can also take children who are rough around the edges (like the hex nuts) and make them smooth and shiny (like the pennies) so that they will one day be able to move along on their own without as much assistance from adults.

Following the essential elements of positive youth development as described in this lesson will enable our youth to lose their rough edges and turn into outstanding leaders of their generation.

4-H Youth Development

- A nonformal, youth education program
- Part of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Part of the land-grant university system
- Linked to current knowledge and research
- Located in each county in the nation



Let's look at some of the 4-H Youth Development program characteristics and strengths.

The Land Grant University is also known as the "People's University" (Abraham Lincoln)

-It provides access to knowledge to all!

4-H: 7 million participants annually

4-H Program Strengths

- National recognition
- Strong local, state, and national infrastructure
- Outreach opportunities support community efforts
- Research-based curriculum
- Professionals trained in adult education and youth programming
- Record of successful partnerships with youth-serving organizations



4-H has the flexibility to meet local needs, realizing that each community is different as is each individual youth living in the community. Cookie cutter programs are not what we're seeking. And yet, each of our programs has the same basic components as we'll see in a few moments.

Approaches to 4-H Youth Development

PREVENTION

Focus: Risks & Risk Factors

Target: Social Norms

Goal: Fewer Problems

EDUCATION

Focus: Skills & Knowledge

Target: Individual Learners

Goal: Competency in Knowledge or Skill

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Focus: Developmental Needs

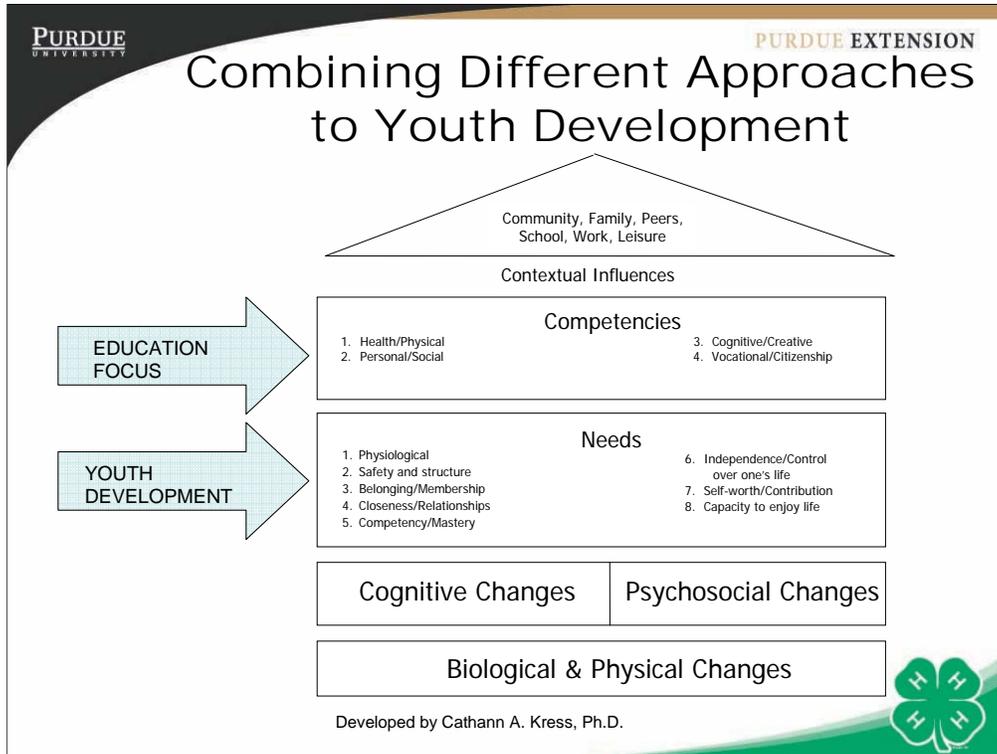
Target: Opportunities for Youth

Goal: Maturity & Potential



Over the years, 4-H Educators and volunteers have used many approaches in their work with youth. Understanding these approaches and how they differ is critical in our effectiveness.

1. Prevention
2. Education
3. Youth Development



Understanding the different approaches may be a little easier if we look at this “House Model.”

1. The foundation of the house includes the changes that happen to the child naturally as he or she develops physically, socially, mentally, etc.
2. On the first floor, we have Youth Development where we can help influence the youth and meet their basic needs in a positive way.
3. It's that first floor that is the focus of youth development work, the concern with developmental needs of youth and what opportunities productively respond to those needs. It should be no surprise that it also forms the Essential Elements of 4-H...
4. Then on the second floor we have the education of the children – where they gain knowledge and develop skills, hopefully while they have their needs met.
5. Outside factors form the roof and include the context in which the member is learning, people around them, etc.

Now that we have an understanding of the various approaches that we can take to youth development, let's explore the Essential Elements for 4-H Youth Development.

Essential Elements for 4-H

- In 1999, a team of evaluators from the National 4-H Impact Design Implementation Team was given the charge of determining the *“critical elements in a 4-H experience.”*



What should every 4-H program have?

Although we may operate our programs very differently county to county or state to state, the Essential Elements are common to each of us.

Essential Elements of 4-H

Belonging

1. A positive relationship with a caring adult
2. An inclusive environment
3. A safe environment

Mastery

4. Engagement in learning
5. Opportunity for mastery

Independence

6. Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future
7. Opportunity for self-determination

Generosity

8. Opportunity to value and practice service for others



Those elements revolve around four central concepts which form the Essential Elements of our program and are woven through all we do-

BELONGING

MASTERY

INDEPENDENCE

GENEROSITY

Some of the characteristics of our program include...

Joining with friends for work, fun and fellowship

Developing talents

Learning to live in a changing world

Producing something of value

Creating better homes and communities

Conserving nature's resources

Building health

Choosing a way to earn a living

Sharing responsibility for community improvement

Serving as citizens in maintaining world peace

I pledge my *Heart* to
greater loyalty...



BELONGING (clubs)

- Current research emphasizes the importance for youth to have opportunities for *long-term consistent relationships* with adults other than parents.
- Belonging may be the single most powerful positive ingredient we can add to the lives of youth.



Let's take a look at how each of these elements relates to the ideals upheld by the four "H"s.

Youth need to know they are cared about by others and feel a sense of connection to others in the group. This "fellowship" has always been an important part of a 4-H experience. 4-H gives youth the opportunity to feel physically and emotionally safe while actively participating in a group.

I pledge my *Health* to better living...

MASTERY (projects)

- To develop self-confidence, youth need to feel and believe they are capable, and they must experience success at solving problems and meeting challenges.



By exploring 4-H projects and activities, youth master skills to make positive career and life choices.

Additionally, youth need to have a safe environment for making mistakes and getting feedback, not just through competition but also as an ongoing element of participation.

Finally, youth need the breadth and depth of topics that allow them to pursue their own interests.

I pledge my *Head* to
clearer thinking...

INDEPENDENCE (leadership)

- To develop responsibility, youth need to know that they are able to influence people and events through decision-making and action.



By exercising independence through 4-H leadership opportunities, youth mature in self-discipline and responsibility, learn to better understand themselves and become independent thinkers.

I pledge my *Hands* to
larger service...

GENEROSITY (serving the community)

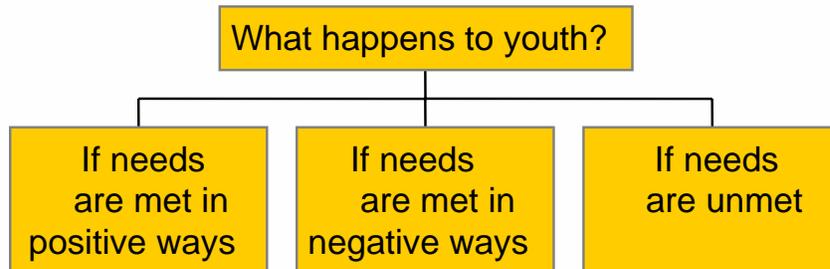


- Youth need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose.
- By participating in 4-H community service and citizenship activities, youth connect to communities and learn to give back to others.



It's clear that these experiences provide the foundation that helps us understand the "big picture" of life and find purpose and meaning.

Why is meeting youth needs so important?



Every action has a consequence...good or bad.

All youth have basic needs. These needs may be met in positive ways, negative ways, or may be unmet. The next slides show what happens to a youth in each of these situations.

If youth needs are met in positive ways...

youth develop characteristics most of us relate to character.

| Belonging | Mastery | Independence | Generosity |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Attached | Achieving | Autonomous | Altruistic |
| Loving | Successful | Confident | Caring |
| Friendly | Creative | Assertive | Sharing |
| Intimate | Problem-solving | Responsible | Loyal |
| Social | Motivated | Self-controlled | Empathic |
| Cooperative | Persistent | Self-disciplined | Pro-social |
| Trusting | Competent | Leadership | Supportive |

From: Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1990). Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future. Bloomington, IN, National Education Service.



When youth have their needs met in positive ways (like we hopefully are able to do in the 4-H Program), then they develop characteristics that we value.

If youth needs are met in negative ways...

then needs can become defining factors in the lives of youth.

| Belonging | Mastery | Independence | Generosity |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Gang loyalty | Overachieving | Dictatorial | Over-involved |
| Craving affection & acceptance | Arrogant | Reckless | Playing martyr |
| Promiscuous | Risk-seeking | Bullying | Co-dependent |
| Clinging | Cheating | Sexual prowess | |
| Acting overly dependent | Workaholic | Manipulative | |
| | Persevering | Rebellious | |
| | Delinquent skills | Defying authority | |

From: Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1990). Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future. Bloomington, IN, National Education Service.



When youth have their needs met in negative ways, they develop many undesirable characteristics.

If youth needs are unmet...

some youth retreat or give up on getting needs met.

| Belonging | Mastery | Independence | Generosity |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Unattached | Non-achieving | Submissive | Selfish |
| Guarded | Avoiding risk | Lacking confidence | Narcissistic |
| Rejecting | Fearful of challenges | Irresponsible | Hardened |
| Lonely | Unmotivated | Helpless | Anti-social |
| Aloof | Giving up easily | Undisciplined | Exploitative |
| Isolated | | Easily influenced | |
| Distrustful | | | |

From: Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1990). Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future. Bloomington, IN, National Education Service.



And then there are some youth who don't have their needs met either positively or negatively. These youth also experience a number of difficulties.

How can we help meet youths' needs in 4-H?



How can we in 4-H help youth to develop positive characteristics through each of the essential elements? Here are some suggestions...

Belonging



Characteristic: Feeling part of a supportive community

Strategies:

- Encourage peer-group cohesion (ice breakers, games, social time)
- Encourage cross-age linkages, adult-youth bonding
- Modify teaching strategies to enhance sense of belonging



We do a number of things to help youth feel like they belong in 4-H. Think about some of the social activities (mixers, icebreakers, etc.); or the times when an older youth mentors a younger member just getting started in the program. What are some other ways that we foster a sense of belonging in 4-H? The next slide offers some suggestions.

Belonging



- Encourage ties with family and community
- Make small-group time available to allow the development of close relationships with peers and staff
- Encourage collaborative and cooperative learning
- Show respect for the value of diverse cultures
- Provide multiple opportunities for youth to develop relationships with adults
- Encourage supportive peer relationships



What is an action step you can take in your 4-H group to help ensure that each of the members has a sense of belonging?

(Allow time for responses.)

Mastery



Characteristics: Opportunities for success – the source of self-esteem

Strategies:

- Mix hands-on activities, projects or exhibitions, applied, contextual or workplace-related challenges with paper and pencil exercises to build job and vocational skills
- Supplement competition with cooperative activities or games to develop interpersonal skills and self management



The process of completing a 4-H project from start to finish is an excellent example of how 4-H teaches mastery. The member selects a project of interest; chooses the exhibit option to pursue; learns the steps required to complete the project; records information on the project record sheet; evaluates the progress of the project (and makes adjustments as necessary); submits the project for evaluation; and receives feedback on how successfully the project has been completed. The member learns from this feedback and starts the process over again the next 4-H year with new or similar projects.

The next slide shows some additional ways that 4-H promotes mastery.

Mastery



- Develop varied teaching approaches that include group investigation, experiential learning and multiple outcomes
- Focus on the long-term goals of learning; provide prompt feedback; model and teach that failure and frustration are learning experiences
- Include communication and basic content skills
- Teach life skills (money management, transportation, etc.)



What are some additional ways that we can help our members learn to master information in 4-H?

(Allow time for responses.)

Independence



Characteristics: Self-sufficiency, responsibility

Strategies:

- Before making decisions, ask if youth could make the decision instead
- Include youth in planning discussions and encourage input
- Ask youth to do something instead of telling them to do it



Providing youth with leadership and decision-making responsibilities is a key to developing their independence. As adults we need to remember to step back and let the members have the opportunity to plan, discuss, and make decisions that affect their 4-H program. We are their to guide and advise as necessary, but we must remember it is their program!

Independence



- Give youth responsibility to carry out with a minimum of reminders
- Provide opportunities for youth to take responsibility for meeting obligations
- Commend youth who recognize the limits of their independence and seek counsel
- Give encouragement to resist peer pressure
- Help youth explore courses of action or appropriate decisions



To help members achieve independence, remember to...

Independence



- Focus on decision-making rather than obedience
- Never deprive youth of the thrill of overcoming an obstacle; don't jump in too quickly to help
- Maintain a close link between independence and responsibility
- Share power with young people through self-governance in significant areas
- Give opportunities for youth to influence others



How can we help youth to have a greater sense of independence in the 4-H program?

(Allow time for responses.)

Generosity



Characteristics: Purpose, usefulness

Strategies:

- Offer mentoring/tutoring programs for cross-age linkages, service projects and community service
- Tie learned skills/abilities to how they can be used in positive ways
- Respect and encourage bonds of friendship among young people and between adults and children



Through projects that involve 4-H members serving their communities, we help to foster a sense of generosity among the members. The youth have a wonderful opportunity to identify needs in the community, contact key community leaders, develop a plan of action, and then enact that plan to help others.

Generosity



- Use multiple opportunities to encourage youth to imagine the feelings of others (discuss feelings or motivations of characters in literature, history or social studies)
- Highlight the effect of a young person's behavior on others (both positive and negative), reinforce gestures of caring and concern, and ask young people to take responsibility



To encourage generosity we can...

What suggestions can we consider to help youth learn to be generous through 4-H?

(Allow time for responses.)

How are we doing???

How does your 4-H group provide youth with the opportunity to experience each of the Essential Elements?

Head (Independence)
Heart (Belonging)
Hands (Generosity)
Health (Mastery)



Divide the group into four smaller groups: ask each smaller group to answer this question for one of the four H's:

Head (Independence)
Heart (Belonging)
Hands (Generosity)
Health (Mastery)

Program Planning Tool

- National 4-H Headquarters has developed an on-line program planning tool to help you rate your program next to each of the 8 Essential Elements.
- This tool is available from:
<http://4htools.cals.arizona.edu/assessmentTool.cfm>



National 4-H Headquarters has developed a program planning tool that can help you to see how well your program stacks up next to the Essential Elements. The tool will verify your program's strong points and will suggest resources that can help to strengthen the weaker areas.

This is a great tool to use with your 4-H members to help them also see the importance of following a positive youth development model such as the Essential Elements.

4-H Studies

Does 4-H participation make a difference in the lives of youth?

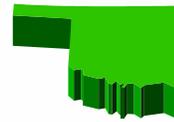


We've discussed the essential elements that are important to the success of the 4-H Youth Development program. Let's take a look at some recent research studies that have measured the impact of the 4-H program. These studies help to confirm that the 4-H program is having an impact on the youth we serve!

A number of studies have been conducted over the past several years that evaluate the effect of 4-H participation in the lives of the youth. Let's take a brief look at a few of those studies.

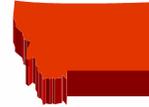
Oklahoma 4-H Alumni Survey Results

- Compared to what they learned in other youth development organizations, alumni reported they learned more from 4-H in the following life skill areas:
 - Record keeping
 - Public speaking
 - Healthy lifestyle choices
 - Learning to learn
 - Leadership



4-H'ers Compared to Non-4-H'ers

- Youth in 4-H ...
 - Are significantly better off than those who did not participate (Montana)
 - Are positively influenced with their competence, coping, and life skills (Ohio)
 - Rate themselves higher on working with groups, understanding self, making decisions, and leadership (Texas)



4-H Alumni Perceptions Regarding the Impact of the Indiana 4-H Program



Primary impact of 4-H participation

- Life skill development
- Educational and career influences
- Enhanced family relations



The individuals in this study had completed at least 8 years of 4-H 10 years ago. So, many of them had begun a career, started a family, and completed their education.

Life Skills Developed by Indiana Alumni through 4-H

- Sense of responsibility
- Self-confidence/worth
- Leadership
- Ability to relate to others
- Personal goal development



Aspects of 4-H Providing Most Impact

- Opportunities to compete in 4-H
- 4-H projects
- Awards and prizes received
- Other members
- Adult 4-H leaders
- 4-H trips
- 4-H club meetings



4-H Made a Difference in My Life.

91% of alumni agreed or strongly agreed!

Because...

- Opportunity to lead others (Independence)
- Opportunity to contribute (Generosity)
- Freedom to develop and use skills (Mastery)
- Involved in planning club activities (Belonging)



Even though this study was conducted before the concept of the Essential Elements was formalized, it's easy to see that these elements have been prevalent in the 4-H program for many, many years!

4-H Member Studies Show...

4-H membership enhances youth development in many ways when membership includes the **essential elements**.



Characteristics of Effective Youth Development Programs

- Youth as resources
- Caring adults and safe environments
- Belonging, with rules
- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Long-term participation
- Real work and real responsibility
- Experiences resulting in product or presentation



As we consider the various aspects of the 4-H program, we can see that 4-H is able to fulfill most of these characteristics quite well!

If you were to design a youth development program intended to assist young people to become healthy, problem-solving, constructive adults...

what would it look like?



What would it look like?

- It would offer opportunities for youth to experience **belonging**.
- It would offer opportunities for youth to experience a **“hands-on”** laboratory.
- It would offer opportunities for young people to **choose**.
- It would offer opportunities to experience what it means to be a **citizen**.



What would it look like?

It would look a lot like...



4-H !!!



Thank you for your involvement in the 4-H program and for contributing to the positive development of our youth!!!

Conclusion and Quiz

Thank you for your
participation!



We've looked at a variety of approaches to 4-H Youth Development, including the Eight Essential Elements. We've seen how 4-H programming can meet the needs of youth and shown examples of how our 4-H programs are currently meeting these needs. We've shown you a tool by which you can measure your 4-H activities and plan future programs. And, we've looked at research that verifies the 4-H program is indeed making a difference in the lives of those who participate.

Briefly review the lesson and allow time for any questions from the volunteers related to the lesson. Then distribute the quiz questions. Allow volunteers time to answer the questions. Provide the correct answers from the key provided in this packet. You may choose to collect the quizzes or allow the volunteers to keep them as a review of the lesson.

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