



**Essential Elements
of 4-H Youth Development**

Cathann Kress
Director, Youth Development
National 4-H Headquarters
CSREES, USDA

Essential

- Of, relating to or constituting essence;
- Basic, indispensable and necessary;
- a foundation without which an entire system or complex whole would collapse
- Implies belonging to the very nature of a thing and incapable of removal without destroying the thing itself or its character
- Something on which an outcome turns or depends

Element

- The simplest principles of a subject;
- The necessary factors determining the outcome of a process.

What is the essence of 4-H Youth Development?

- *To engage young people in the work of the Land-Grant University and USDA*
- *To teach knowledge and life skills which enhance quality of life*
- *To create opportunities which promote positive youth development*



*To engage young people in the work of the
Land-Grant University and USDA*

*A Cooperative Venture
Taking the University to youth*



A Cooperative Venture

- The authority for the 4-H Youth Development program is vested in a cooperative structure between youth, interested adult volunteers, and the professional expertise of the land-grant universities and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Creating opportunities for youth to develop skills and confidence for leadership and self-discipline is a cornerstone of 4-H.

Taking the University to Youth in Communities

- 4-H Youth Development is the only youth program with direct access to technological advances in agriculture and life sciences, home economics, human development, and related areas, which result from land-grant university research.
- The foundation of 4-H Youth Development is in the practical application of the land-grant university knowledge by youth in their communities.

*To teach knowledge and life skills
which enhance quality of life*

Learning by doing...

Constructive Learning Experiences – Learning by Doing

- The 4-H Youth Development program creates opportunities for youth to develop skills, practical knowledge and wisdom through observing, doing and living through experiences.
- The 4-H Youth Development emphasis is on practical application of knowledge or “learning by doing” to develop skills and acquire a sense of responsibility, initiative and self-worth.

*To create opportunities which promote
positive youth development*

*Caring Relationships – Community Spirit
Educating Adults*

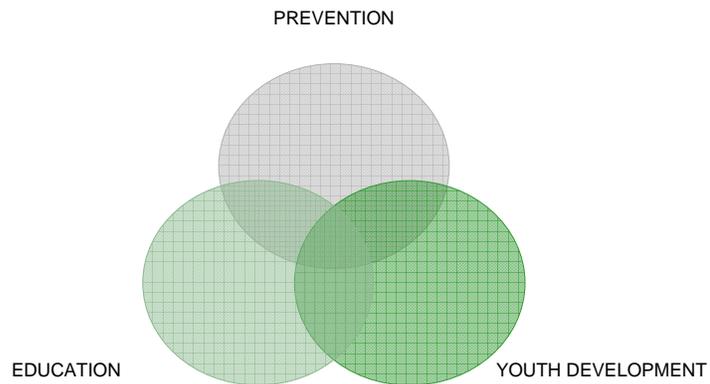
Caring Relationships – Community Spirit

- The traditions of 4-H are organized around the notion of building community spirit and *social capital* –or connections among individuals.
- All youth need caring, supportive relationships in their lives and 4-H Youth Development programs create opportunities for long-term relationships.

Creating Opportunities for Youth by Educating Adults

- 4-H Youth Development professionals create opportunities for young people to build skills, exercise leadership, form relationships with caring adults and help their communities.
- The 4-H Youth Development program believes that “youth development” is not something you do TO youth, but is the result of programming WITH youth and is dependent upon the family and other adults in the community.

Approaches to 4-H Youth Development



4-H Approach: Prevention

- Focus: Risks & Risk Factors
- Target: Social Norms & Communities
- Goal: Eliminating or Reducing Problems
- Service-Based
- Outcomes: Fewer Problems

4-H Approach: Education

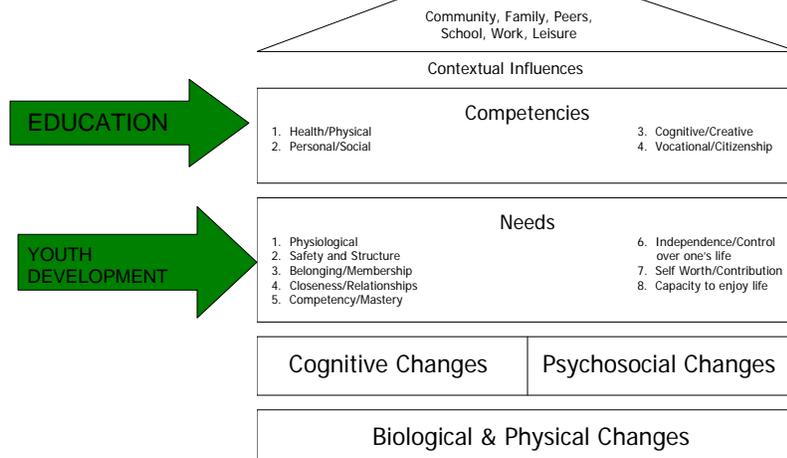
- Focus: Competencies
- Target: Individual Learners
- Goal: Bringing about Change
(Knowledge, Skill, etc.)
- Support-Based
- Outcomes: Life Skills

4-H Approach: Youth Development

- Focus: Needs
- Target: Environmental Conditions –
the contexts for youth
- Goal: Development of Potential, **Maturity**
- Opportunity-Based
- Outcomes: Maturity & Individual Potential

Understanding the Different Approaches

Developed by Cathann A. Kress, Ph.D.



Shifting the focus to a Youth Development Approach

- We must emphasize the importance of environment and creating opportunities.
- Programs must be available to all young people.
- Youth have to be seen as central actors in their own development.

Essential Elements of a Youth Development Approach

- The Youth Development Approach considers the *whole* young person, not just a single characteristic or problem.
- Youth Development is dependent on family and community development as it occurs in the context of the family, community and society.
- Youth Development is designed to focus on the positive outcomes we desire for young people, not the negative outcomes we hope to prevent.

Eight 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.*”

The 8 Elements

1. A positive relationship with a caring adult
2. A safe environment
3. An inclusive environment
4. Engagement in learning
5. Opportunity for Mastery
6. Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future
7. Opportunity for self-determination
8. Opportunity to value and practice service for others

8 Elements distilled to 4 Concepts

<p>Belonging</p> <p>Positive Relationship with a caring adult An inclusive environment A safe environment</p>	<p>Mastery</p> <p>Engagement in Learning Opportunity for Mastery</p>
<p>Independence</p> <p>Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future Opportunity for self-determination</p>	<p>Generosity</p> <p>Opportunity to value and practice service for others</p>

The 4-H Youth Development Ideals

- 4-H Youth Development creates opportunities for youth to experience:
 1. *Independence*
 2. *Belonging*
 3. *Generosity*
 4. *Mastery*

I pledge my head to clearer thinking...

INDEPENDENCE

- 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 heart to greater loyalty...]

BELONGING

- 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.
- Current research emphasizes the importance for youth to have opportunities for long-term consistent relationships with adults other than parents. This research suggests that a sense of belonging may be the single most powerful positive ingredient we can add into the lives of children and youth.

[I pledge my hands to larger service...]

GENEROSITY

- Youth need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose. By participating in 4-H community service and citizenship activities, youth can 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.

I pledge my health to better living...

MASTERY

- In order 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.

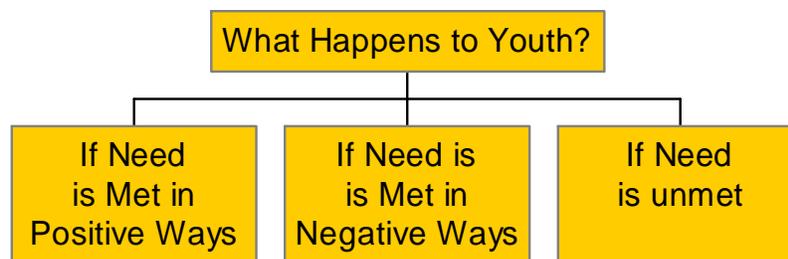
All Youth will find ways to:

- 1) Meet their basic needs
- 2) Build skills and values
- 3) Use their skills, talents, energies and time in ways that make them feel good and powerful.

All Youth need:

- To know they are cared about by others
(Attachment & Belonging)
- To feel and believe they are capable and successful
(Achievement/Mastery)
- To know they are able to influence people and events
(Autonomy/Power)
- To practice helping others through their own generosity
(Altruism/Purpose)
- Fun and Stimulation

Why is Meeting Youth Needs so Important?



If Youth Needs are met in Positive Ways:

Youth develop characteristics most of us relate to character...

Belonging	Mastery	Power	Generosity
Attached	Achieving	Autonomous	Altruistic
Loving	Successful	Confident	Caring
Friendly	Creative	Assertive	Sharing
Intimate	Problem-solver	Responsible	Loyal
Social	Motivated	Inner Control	Empathic
Cooperative	Persistent	Self-Disciplined	Pro-social
Trusting	Competent	Leadership	Supportive

If Youth Needs are met in Negative Ways:

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

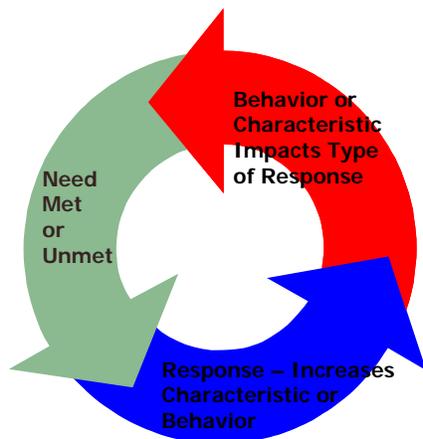
Belonging	Mastery	Power	Generosity
Gang Loyalty	Overachiever	Dictatorial	Overinvolved
Craves	Arrogant	Reckless	Plays Martyr
Affection	Risk-seeker	Bully	Co-dependent
& Acceptance	Cheater	Sexual Prowess	"Noblesse
Promiscuous	Workaholic	Manipulative	Oblige"
Clinging	Perseveres	Rebellious	
Overly-Dependent	Delinquent Skills	Defies Authority	

If Need is Unmet:

Some youth retreat or give up on getting needs met...

Belonging	Mastery	Power	Generosity
Unattached	Nonachiever	Submissive	Selfish
Guarded	Avoids Risk	Lacks	Narcissistic
Rejecting	Fears	Confidence	Hardened
Lonely	Challenges	Irresponsible	Anti-social
Aloof	Unmotivated	Helplessness	Exploitative
Isolated	Gives Up Easily	Undisciplined	
Distrustful		Easily Influenced	

The Circle of Meeting Youth Needs



- Youth characteristics and behaviors impact whether they will get needs met in new situations.
- Adult responses to needs impact development of characteristics and behaviors in youth.