



Youth Program Quality Principles

Dedicated volunteers and staff spend many hours working directly with youth in 4-H programs. From exploring topics in a Cloverbuds program, to learning science skills by building a robot, to attending National 4-H Congress, 4-H provides many different types of programs to meet the needs of youth as they grow and develop. What happens in 4-H programs, how they are planned and led, makes a huge difference in the impact of the program on youth! In order to have the biggest impact, programs need to adhere to eight critical principles of program quality:



- 1. Physical and psychological safety** — Youth need to feel safe in 4-H programs and be able to interact positively with others.
- 2. Appropriate structure** — Whether it is a club meeting or leadership camp, 4-H programs must have clear and consistent rules and expectations, with clear boundaries and age-appropriate monitoring.
- 3. Supportive relationships** — All youth need to feel warmth from and closeness to others in 4-H. Youth need to feel others care about and support them. They also need to receive clear guidance and communication from 4-H volunteers and staff.
- 4. Opportunities to belong** — All youth need to feel included in a meaningful way in 4-H, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientations, or ability. Youth should have opportunities to share their culture and heritage with others and to forge a positive identify.
- 5. Positive social norms** — Youth should experience clear rules and expectations for participating in 4-H, including the values, morals, and ethical expectations of being a 4-H member.
- 6. Support for efficacy and mattering** — Youth in 4-H should be taken seriously and respected for their ideas and contributions. Youth should be

given opportunities to develop responsibility and be challenged to set and achieve goals.

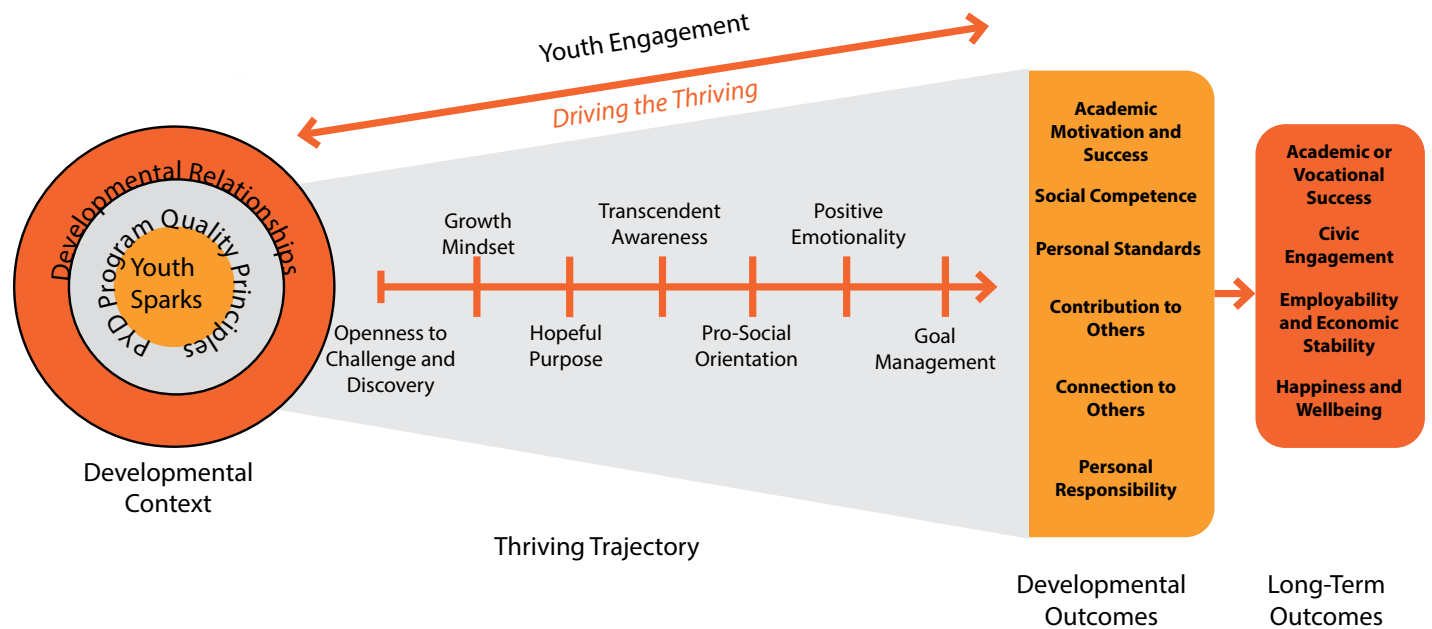
- 7. Opportunities for skill building** — Youth need to develop physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional and social skills as they grow and develop. 4-H provides opportunities for youth to develop these skills, skills that support a young person into adulthood and the workplace.
- 8. Integration of family, school and community** — Youth in 4-H do best when there is a connection to their 4-H experience with their family, school, and community. This is why 4-H programs begin at the local level, in the community where youth can practice their emerging leadership skills as they grow and develop.

Reference

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4-H is Positive Youth Development

4-H is based on a positive youth development (PYD) approach that recognizes all youth have interests, abilities, and strengths that can be enhanced by participation in 4-H programs. Research shows that participation in high quality 4-H programs increases thriving in youth, and thriving youth achieve important developmental outcomes, such as academic motivation and achievement.



References

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