KEY DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

Key Developmental Outcomes of 4-H Youth Development

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There are a variety of ways to participate in the 4-H program, but all programming should have the goal of skill development (Arnold, 2017). The 4-H Thrive model deliberately showcases how a youth progresses from ignition of a spark through a trajectory of competencies. Through this process youth develop key developmental outcomes (Arnold, 2018). These outcomes are all a sign of positive youth development, which is what 4-H is all about.

Introduction

For more than 100 years, the 4-H Program has played a role in counties across the country. While project areas change from place to place, the architecture of the program remains the same. The goal is to provide educational opportunities for young people so that they can acquire interpersonal and professional skills. Whether you are familiar with the 4-H Essential Elements framework (Gressley et al., 2009), that all 4-H clubs should have Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Belonging framework or the 5 C's of Positive Youth Development framework (Lerner, 2007) which include Connection, Confidence, Character, Caring, Competence, Contribution the goals are the same. The 4-H thrive model predicts that youth who participate in a high quality 4-H programs will achieve these key developmental outcomes (Arnold, 2018; Figure 1).
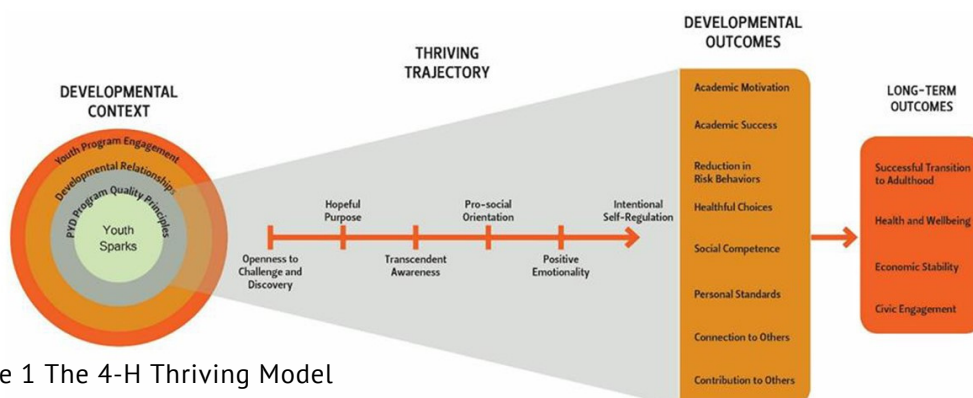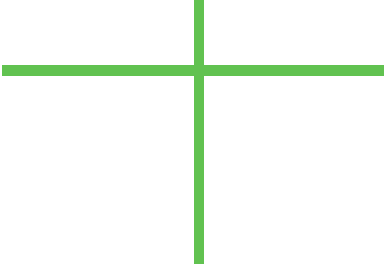

Figure 1 The 4-H Thriving Model

The 4-H thrive model predicts that youth who participate in high quality 4-H programming will achieve the following developmental outcomes:

- Academic Motivation

- Academic Success
- Reduction in Risk Behaviors
- Healthful Choices
- Social Competence
- Personal Standards
- Connection to Others
- Contribution to Others

The positive youth development framework we use in 4-H believes that all young people, as members of families and communities and citizens of a global society, should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. In order to create the best environment for young people for success, 4-H programs are intentionally planned to ignite a young person's spark for them to thrive (Arnold, 2018). A key factor in determining if our 4-H members are working towards long terms success are six key developmental outcomes. The eight developmental outcomes together indicate a 4-H member will be able to become contributing members of a global society.

<p align="center">**Key Developmental Outcomes**</p>

The 4-H Thrive model uses outcomes that align closely with previous language we used (including Essential Elements and 5C's of Positive Youth Development).

One of the key factors in positive youth development is **Academic Success and Motivation.** Motivation is what drives someone to achieve as we know it's a major factor in a students' desire to acquire skills, this motivation is called a Spark. When young people try something new and master a skill, those skills are easily translated to academic ability (Lippman et al., 2014). Once the achievement is met, it is usually met with a motivation to continue or step outside of their comfort zone to experience that success again in something new or at a higher level. For the sake of our 4-H programs, as a young person experiences success they move from one project level to the next.

Healthful Choices and Reduction of Risk Behaviors are developmental outcomes that result from strong peer-to-peer and youth-to-adult support. Risk behaviors can include a wide array of behaviors (e.g. poor health choices, substance use,

and other behaviors that contribute to unintentional injury and violence). Positive youth development environments, like 4-H clubs, provide opportunity for youth to develop positive pro-social norms. 4-H volunteers and peers can establish expectations. In healthy environments, where healthful choices are valued and modeled youth will end up policing and supporting their peers towards these outcomes.

The foundation with regards to how young people interact with each other, today and into the future, is Social Competence. **Social Competence** plainly stated, is can a person get along with others? It isn't referring to their social and emotional competence and how they perceive their own behavior (Kipping et al, 2012). Arguably, social competence is one of the most important outcomes as we help our young people navigate their way to adulthood. This is what allows a young person to be able to reflect on their own behavior and see a situation from other perspectives than their own (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). If young people are never taught, and shown, how to interact with peers and adults they will experience struggles when it comes to communicating with their peers now and in their future.

An area that is often underrated but plays an integral part in the development of a young person is **Personal Standards**. This is the persons sense of right and wrong and their own commitment to making fair and ethical decisions (Michell, 2003; Nott & Vuchinich, 2016).Much of this can be tied to their character including their concept of trustworthiness and personal responsibility. Perhaps Zig Ziglar said it best when he said "success is a personal standard, reaching for the highest that is in us, becoming all that we can be."

The ability and interest of a young person giving back to others is described as **Contribution to Others**. In a 4-H context, this can be manifest by a young person participating in meaningful service learning opportunities, being actively involved in the 4-H community/project club as an officer or junior leader, and engaged in leadership or programs at the local, state, regional or national level Richard Lerner's book, The Good Teen, cites many examples of teens contributing to others by giving something back to the 4-H club or community where they live. There is an interdependence and linkage where a young person is contributing to helping and supporting others.

Connection with Others is more than just talking to others or sharing common interests. Connecting with others is a sense of being available, open and honest with another person, even as they are available, open and honest with you. Two important ingredients of human connection are empathy and compassion. A couple of examples of connecting with others is taking the time to listen to someone else, helping someone else without expecting something in return, and offering sincere gratitude.

Implications

Developmental outcomes are key indicators for how effective 4-H programming is at helping youth develop into contributing members of society (Lerner & Lerner, 2013). For youth to achieve these developmental outcomes, the 4-H Youth Development Program must have qualified and trained leaders who provide intentional programming where young people are engaged in the process and can grow and thrive in a safe and structured environment.
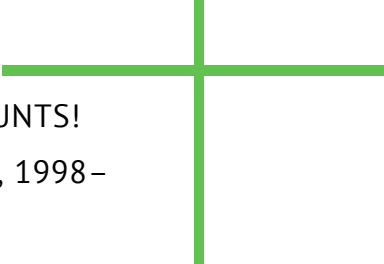
Acknowledgement

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