



# 4-H ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## Concept: Belonging

### 1. Positive Relationships with a Caring Adults

A caring adult acts as an advisor, guide and mentor. The adult helps set boundaries and expectations for young people. The adult could be called a supporter, friend or advocate.

Examples of effective practice:

- Provide a listening ear, follow through on commitments to youth, and get to know a young person through interactions.
- Follow Michigan 4-H guidelines for ratio of adults to youth.
- Adults actively engaged in learning with youth.
- Provide time for informal conversation and learning as well as structured activities to build trust.

### 2. An Inclusive Environment

An inclusive environment is one that creates a sense of belonging and encourages and supports its members with positive and specific feedback for the success of all members, taking pride in the collective efforts of all participants.

Examples of effective practice:

- Provide t-shirts for everyone to feel a sense of group identity and honor special celebrations in young people's lives.
- Conduct get-acquainted and team-building activities.
- Greet each other by name during learning activities.
- Recognize individual members for their actions and/or accomplishments.

### 3. A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment

Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in a 4-H experience, whether from the learning environment itself or from adults, other participants or spectators.

Examples of effective practice:

- Adult and youth model constructive ways for providing feedback and addressing situations, behaviors and emotions.
- Activities and programs are held in environments that maximize the safety and well-being of participants.
- Youth are encouraged to try new experiences through positive risk-taking.
- Rules, expectations and consequences are clear, consistent, developmentally-appropriate and applied fairly.

## Concept: Mastery

### 4. Opportunity for Mastery

Mastery is the building and demonstration of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The development of mastery is a process over time.

Examples of effective practice:

- Adults listen, observe and interact with youth to discover their passions and/or what they want to excel in and assist with opportunities for mastery in area.
- Expose youth to multiple skills, events and learning opportunities to gain a breadth of what is possible.
- Build in opportunities for youth to sharpen or advance their skills and practices beyond the basics.

## 4-H PLEDGE

I pledge...



My HEAD

to clearer thinking,



My HEART

to greater loyalty,



My HANDS

to larger service,



My HEALTH

to better living,  
for my club, my  
community, my  
country and my world.



## 5. Engagement in Learning

Young people are actively engaged in different learning environments and are challenged to pursue their own learning. Through self-reflection, youth have the ability to self-correct and learn from experience.

Examples of effective practice:

- Youth research areas of interest related to their project and present it back to their group.
- Provide different methods for learning to take place, including experiential learning and scientific inquiry.
- Use varying styles of learning when presenting and communicating with young people.
- Opportunities for shared decision-making, planning and program implementation are provided for youth.

## Concept: Independence

### 6. Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future

The ability to see oneself in the future is to have hope and optimism to shape life choices. Youth can look ahead, envision and see themselves doing great things, creating a positive outlook on the future.

Examples of effective practice:

- As a group, envision what your group is doing or has accomplished in one year.
- Have youth brainstorm opportunities the group can be involved in the future.
- Engage youth in visioning opportunities.
- Have youth relate skills they are learning now to future career opportunities.
- Tie skills learned to leadership roles in their future

## 7. Opportunity for Self-Determination

Young people are able to set their own goals, determine how they will get there, and who they want to become as an individual. Youth believe they have impact on life's events.

Examples of effective practice:

- Youth share their goals of learning for the year and adults look for ways to support them in the attainment of their goals.
- Build individual goal setting into educational activities.
- Assist youth in determining the desired goals and outcomes of the educational program or activity, and plan action steps for how to make it happen.

## Concept: Generosity

### 8. Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others

Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community and the world itself. Youth feel included and involved in their communities and develop personal competencies that foster leadership, caring and citizenship.

Examples of effective practice:

- Youth plan and conduct a community service project, assist other members in their groups, and youth share ideas for how to improve their 4-H program.
- Challenge youth to give back to their community as a follow-up to what they have been learning.
- Address an issue in the community through civic service.
- Have youth bring items of value to share with others.