Youth Development

Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Development Series

OSU EXTENSION
4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Youth Development Philosophy

> Young people are not "clients" in the youth development model but partners.

The philosophy of youth development's involves families and communities. It supports healthy development in an environmental context.

Young people are not "clients" in this model but partners. Their families are not incidental to the process, their neighbors are not indifferent bystanders, and other community resources are not ignored. (Youth Development: On the Path Toward Professionalization, National Assembly, 1999)

Youth development programs prepare young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a structured, progressive series of activities and experiences, which help them find social, emotional, ethical, physical and cognitive competencies. They address the broader developmental advantages which all children and youth need (such as caring relationships, safe places

and activities, good physical and mental health, marketable skills, and opportunities for service and civic participation), in contrast to deficit-based models, which focus solely on youth problems. (National Collaboration for Youth Members, March 1998)

Rather than seeking to stop young people from engaging in risky behaviors, positive youth development aims to mobilize communities to create positive goals and outcomes for all youth. It recognizes that being

problem-free is not the same as being fully prepared. Effective programs are youth centered: staff and activities engage young people's diverse talents, skills, and interest, building on their strengths and involving them in planning and decision-making. Programs are also knowledge centered: building a range of life skills; activities show youth that "learning" is a reason to be involved, whether in clubs, sports,

Essential Elements of 4-H

Belonging	Mastery
1. Positive Relationship with a caring adult 2. An inclusive environment 3. A safe environment	4. Engagement in Learning 5. Opportunity for Mastery
Heart	**Health**
Independence	Generosity
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
Head	**Hands**

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arts, or community service; and provide opportunities to connect with a wide array of adult and peer mentors. Youth development programs are also care-centered: they provide family-like environments where youth can feel safe and build trusting relationships. (National Collaboration for Youth Members, March 1998)

Community-based youth development programs apply accepted theory and practical evidence (indicating that such programs are essential to the healthy development of young adolescents) through interventions designed to help youth build personal resiliency. A resilient individual has these attributes:

- Social competence;
- Problem-solving skills;
- Autonomy (sense of self-identity and an ability to act independently and to exert control over his or her environment); and
- Sense of purpose and of a future. (A Matter of Time, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992)

Basic Needs of Youth

Young people have basic needs critical to survival and healthy development. They are a sense of:
- Safety and structure (food and shelter);
- Belonging and membership;
- Self-worth and an ability to contribute;
- Independence and control over one's life;
- Closeness and several supportive and caring relationships;

- Competence (opportunities to grow) and mastery; and
- Self-awareness and the ability to act.

These needs are influenced by the individual's physical, cognitive and social development, personal characteristics and environmental factors such as family, school and community.

(A New Vision: Promoting Youth Development, Testimony of Karen Johnson Pittman, Director, Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, before the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, September 30, 1991 and Youth Development Programs and Outcomes: Final Report for the YMCA of the USA, Search Institute, 1996)

Essential Elements of 4-H

4-H Youth Development Programs focus on creating opportunities for youth to meet developmental needs and to build important life skills.

All Youth Need to BELONG - Opportunities for relationships and to know they are cared about by others. Youth who experience Belonging, tend to be trusting and friendly people.

All Youth Need to Experience MASTERY - Opportunities for meaningful achievement and to develop skills and confidence. Youth with productive opportunities to experience Mastery, tend to become problem-solvers who are motivated and achievement-oriented.

All Youth Need to Experience INDEPENDENCE - Opportunities to be able to

influence people and events and face consequences. Youth who experience opportunities to be Independent become confident and self-disciplined leaders,

All Youth Need to Practice Helping Others Through GENEROSITY - Opportunities to give to others and experience being needed. Youth who experience Generosity become caring and empathetic people.