

What Does the 4-H Thriving Model Look Like in Action? Developmental Contexts and Youth Thriving for Programming

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Developmental Contexts (4-H Programs)

Sparks

- Ask the youth what they are interested in.
- Upon learning what the youth's interest is, connect them with adults who have that same interest or work in that field.
- Help them to realize that their interest and passion matters by language, for example: "That is awesome, tell me more about that." Or "I love your passion; do you get to do this often? How do you manage your time so you can do it?"
- Connect the young person to other youth who have a similar spark.
- Connect the young person to opportunities at various levels to practice their spark (local, area, region, state, national and international opportunities) through 4-H.
- Identify career paths and ways to get there based on the youth's spark.

Belonging

- Set ground rules for the group and hold them accountable for their behavior. Have members involved in the process of choosing the rules.
- Set goals for the club and have members involved in the process.
- Use developmentally appropriate language.
- Have a new family orientation for 4-H.
- Introduce new members and assign them a "buddy" or "mentor" based on their interest/age.
- Icebreakers/Get to Know you Activities
- Teach the pledge the first meeting and give them a membership card.
- Have the group identify a club name.
- Provide nametags or a group t-shirt.
- Provide time for individual and group learning.
- Time allotted for networking but be mindful of newcomers and their comfort level.
- Make sure mentors understand their role and how to foster positive relationships. For example, host a mentor education program.
- If your club is already established throughout the year encourage leaders to incorporate icebreakers and teambuilding activities.

Relationships

- Practice the five dimensions of developmental relationships: expressing care, challenging growth, providing support, sharing power, expanding possibilities.
- Include youth in conversations and allow them to practice decision making. For example, include them in making group rules or goals.
- Practice active listening, put phones away and use non-verbal cues to show attention when individuals are speaking.
- Allow for failure and use that as a learning opportunity, use the Danish ribbon system to guide conversations.
- Celebrate success and how to improve or what they were particularly proud of in their work.
- Actively encouraging them in a developmentally appropriate way to identify their path forward, "what's next?"
- Celebrate individuality and connecting youth to others who may have their same passion or interests.
- Provide opportunity for youth to give feedback about their experience. Use that feedback to show them you've actively listened and care about their thoughts.



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Engagement

- Allow youth opportunities for self-determination, let them choose the activities they want to be involved in.
- Age-appropriate curriculum in lessons that foster developmental stages.
- Foster a developmentally appropriate language (avoid use of polarizing vocabulary).
- Use a variety of teaching methods to encourage learning from all.
- Provide opportunities for self-reflection and idea sharing.
- Use open-ended questions to avoid short, fixed responses, this will encourage critical thinking. Don't for example avoid questions that a simple "yes" or "no" can be the answer.
- When youth give feedback use their ideas to show them their ideas and voice matter and make a difference.
- Trust senior level leaders to lead the group without interfering. Just because they didn't do it your way does not mean is it the wrong way.
- Do not go into situations or conversations with a fixed mindset, allow for dialogue and encourage sharing.

Youth Thriving (Social, Emotional, Cognitive Learning)

Growth Mindset

- Use language that encourages youth that they can try new things. For example, "I believe in you. I think you'll learn a lot from this experience."
- Share excitement in trying new things together, foster your own growth mindset to set the example.
- Foster the idea that weaknesses are opportunities for growth and let your language reflect that idea.

Openness to Challenge and Discovery

- Ensure developmentally appropriate ways to scaffold learning. For example, break lessons down into small components to ensure success at each level. Do not move on until the young person has mastered concepts.
- Use language like, "You didn't get the blue ribbon this time, but you will next time." "Today you got further than you did yesterday on the rock wall, tomorrow you'll make it to the top!"
- Explore ways youth can get better at skills through failures.
- Encourage youth to be cheerleaders for one another. Use mentorship as a foundation for supportive learning.

Hopeful Purpose

- Help youth identify their spark and put them into action.
- Offer opportunities for youth to develop within their spark. Connect them to events, activities, experiences.
- Have youth set meaningful goals and how discuss how they will achieve them. Work with youth to create an action plan and use SMART goals to achieve them.
- Encourage youth to find ways to connect their spark to the future. Host guest speakers or conduct field trips to industries that align with their spark.
- Assist youth in creating an independent 4-H project based on their spark.
- Celebrate when goals are achieved.
- Identify strengths through leadership activities and how they contribute to a team. Connect their strengths to future goals.



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Pro Social Orientation

- Civic engagement should be driven by youth fostering youth-adult partnerships, all programs should have an aspect of civic engagement/service learning.
- Increase mentorship and leadership opportunities for youth to model behavior after positive role models.
- Celebrate kindness and generosity.
- Conduct programs that youth can practice critical thinking skills and see through the perspective of others.
- Having youth develop their group's rules or expectations contribute to pro-social development.

Transcendent Awareness

- Start each meeting, activity, or event with the pledge. Make sure you facilitate the connection of the meaning of the pledge to bettering oneself and others.
- Practice mindfulness. For example, take a few moments of self-reflection in each meeting or moments to stop during the day and reflect on events.
- Provide opportunities for self-expression through mediums that they are comfortable with. For example, expressive arts or opportunities to connect with the natural world.
- Provide opportunities to be a part of a group or team.

Positive Emotionality

- Ensure language supports youth emotional development. For example, "I see that this situation hurt your feelings, can you put your feelings into words?"
- Hold youth accountable to their behavior through the rules and expectations the group set.
- Encourage positive expression of feelings. For example, use "I statements."
- Conduct leadership experiences where youth can step into the perspective or life of others to understand their worldview.

Goal Setting and Management

- Complete records books.
- Support the Achievement Program
- Provide leadership positions within delivery modes (counselors at camp, club officers, youth serving on 4-H Council, speaking opportunities in the community).
- Lead activities that help youth remember their goals throughout the year and foster the mindset that achieving their goals is a long-term process, but through hard work they will achieve it. Celebrate successes along the way.
- Set different levels of SMART goals (immediate, intermediate, long-term). This will support the importance of delaying instant gratification for longer term reward.
- Highlight youth success based on their goals so younger members will see role models who delayed instant gratification.
- Assist youth in creating an independent 4-H project based on their spark.

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