SECTION 3
POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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4-H IS ABOUT PYD

Employees of Utah State University Extension and Utah 4-H are charged to provide opportunities to youth for positive youth development (PYD). What does PYD look like? Though the terms may differ, there is agreement among youth development practitioners and researchers that youth who experience healthy, positive development exhibit certain attributes, such as:

- Internal Assets, which are among the 40 developmental assets of healthy youth as described by the Search Institute of Minneapolis, MN (search-institute.org).
- The 5 C's—Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring/Compassion—as defined in the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (Lerner & Lerner, 2012). The 5 C's also lead to the sixth C of Contribution.

THE DEFINITION OF PYD

The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, a collaboration of 21 federal departments and agencies, created the following definition of PYD:

Similar to other living things, youth need nourishing, supportive, and protective environments where they can grow to be healthy and contributing adults. Every young person needs to:

> PYD is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

- Know they are cared about by others.
- Feel and believe they are competent.
- Know they are able to influence people and events.
- Practice helping others.

Utah 4-H staff and volunteer leaders must be intentional and skilled about enriching settings with opportunities that lead to positive youth development.

THE THRIVE MODEL

For many years, the 4-H program created positive environments for youth and produced positive outcomes; however, our understanding of how these outcomes were produced was incomplete. There was no process to help ensure that these goals were met. The Thrive Model now helps 4-H professionals implement programs that are beneficial for youth. By following the model, helping youth find or enhance an interest or spark, creating positive environments, and building healthy youth-adult relationships, we can make sure more youth benefit fully from our state 4-H program.
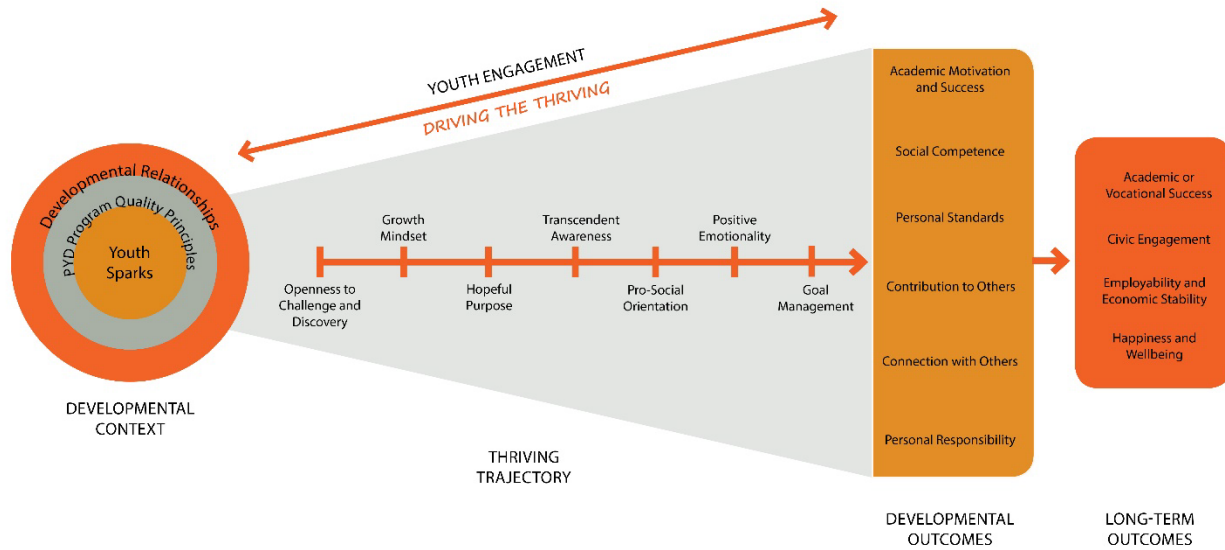
Youth Spark

Dr. Mary Arnold defines youth spark as "a passion for self-identified interest or skill, or a capacity that metaphorically lights a fire in a young person's life, providing energy, joy, purpose, and direction." These sparks are essential to youth thriving. Youth who have a spark(s) have a purpose, sense of direction, and may be better at goal setting. So, what makes something a spark? If a 4-H'er likes to go fly-fishing, is that their spark? Not necessarily. Sparks are separated from hobbies by the following:

- Sparks create actions that contribute to the larger society and to the 4-H'er.
- Sparks provide the intrinsic fuel that encourages youth to grow in knowledge and skill set.
- Sparks enhance a young person's networks through interacting with others who have similar sparks. This could be other youth or adults who can serve as mentors and help with further growth.

As 4-H professionals, we know that all young people have the potential to find things that they are passionate about, or sparks. Utah 4-H is an important part of helping youth find what interests them and what they care about, then turning it into a spark. Our program is youth driven which means that Utah 4-H'ers have the opportunity to explore different areas and then sustain their interest in those areas. When we help to facilitate these sparks, youth are supported to grow and overcome obstacles. Additionally, youth with sparks are more likely to help make their communities a better place and to stay out of trouble.

Back to fly-fishing—can it be a spark? Sure, it can, but not on its own. A young person who goes fly-fishing on the weekends has a hobby. A young person who like to go fishing and is encouraged may start teaching others. This young person may start leading workshops on fly-fishing to teach other 4-H youth or even community members. They may look for more resources or go to events to deepen their understanding. You or a volunteer may work with them to better enhance their skills. This could lead to the 4-H'er having a passion for fishing, stream

and wetland ecology, and pollution control. One day that little kid, who just wanted to fish, may be working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and look back on you and what you did to help them get there. This is a spark, and this is what 4-H and youth development is all about.

PYD PROGRAM QUALITY PRINCIPLES

In 1998, the National 4-H Impact Design Implementation Team formed a task force to study characteristics of effective programs for PYD. The team identified earlier studies (Konopka, G., 1973; Pittman, K., 1991) that revealed eight critical elements that must be present for encouraging effective experiences that benefit youth. The 4-H program nationally has adopted a list of eight essential elements. These elements are considered environmental attributes necessary or conducive to optimizing youth development. These critical components are now known as the Eight Essential Elements:

1. A positive relationship with a caring adult.
2. A safe emotional and physical environment.
3. An inclusive environment.
4. Engagement in learning.
5. Opportunity for mastery.
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.

The Eight Essential Elements are standards for the effective practice of youth development work. These elements are also a framework to design and measure the effectiveness of the program environments as well as the opportunities offered. The opportunities and programs of 4-H that are intentionally designed and thoughtfully executed with the Eight Essential Elements meet the needs of young people, building positive attributes of Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring, commonly known as the 5 C's (Lerner, 2007). Every 4-H experience may not include all eight elements. However, program leaders should try to incorporate as many of the elements as possible.

The eight elements are often summarized into four key concepts: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. In Utah, we often refer to these essential elements as the "BIG M."

BIG M

Belonging	Mastery
Positive relationship with a caring adult	Engagement in learning
A safe and inclusive environment which fosters a sense of belonging in all members	Opportunity for mastery by building knowledge, skills, wisdom, and attitudes, then demonstrating their use
Independence	**Generosity**
Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future	Opportunity to value and practice service for others—finding oneself often begins with losing oneself in the service of others
Opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility and influence over one's choices, as well as the consequences of those choices	

BELONGING

Positive Relationship With a Caring Adult

A caring adult (4-H staff and/or leader) acts as an advisor, guide, and mentor. The adult helps set boundaries and expectations for young people. The caring adult should be viewed as a supporter, friend, and advocate.

A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment

Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in the 4-H experience. A sense of safety should exist from the learning environment itself, from adults, other participants, and spectators.

An Inclusive Environment

An inclusive environment allows a sense of belonging to develop and supports members, offering encouragement with positive and specific feedback. Healthy groups celebrate the success of all members, taking pride in the collective efforts of all.

MASTERY

Engagement in Learning

A youth engaged in learning is one who is mindful of the subject area, building relationships in order to develop greater understanding. Through self-reflection, youth have the ability to self-connect and learn from experience. The engaged learner has a higher degree of self-motivation and an inexhaustible capacity for creativity.

Opportunity for Mastery

Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, or attitudes, and then demonstrating the competent use of knowledge in the manner of a proficient practitioner. The level of mastery is dependent on the developmental ability of the youth. The development of mastery is a process that exists in an evolution over time.
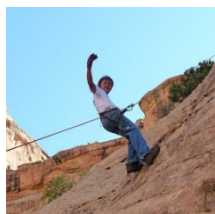
INDEPENDENCE

Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future

The ability to foresee oneself is by possessing hope and optimism that shape life choices to facilitate the transition into future participation.

Opportunity for Self-Determination

Believing that one has an impact over life's events rather than passively submitting to the will or whims of others defines self-determination. Youth must exert a sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing, autonomous adults.

GENEROSITY

Opportunity to Value and Practice Service for Others

Finding oneself begins with losing the self in service to others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community and the world's

entirety. It is necessary to actively practice and uphold service in order to develop a sense of generosity. People understand others and themselves by comprehending how they can make a positive impact throughout the rest of their lives.

DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

From Search Institute: *https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/*

One of the most important aspects of working with youth is the relationships that we build with them. These relationships have a critical impact on young people's lives. In our role as 4-H professionals, we may minimize the importance of these relationships. At times we may push this responsibility off to volunteers or cite that we are too busy to work with time-consuming relationships. What we know is that these relationships need to be part of the foundation for intentional planning, measurement, and learning. The Search Institute has found that these relationships help youth discover who they are, develop abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.

Search Institute has identified five elements needed to make relationships meaningful and positive for youth.

- **Express Care**
  - Show youth that they matter to you—that they are not just part of your job.
  - Be someone that youth can trust. Keep your promises and be dependable.
  - Actively listen to youth. Hear their opinions, their concerns. Be a person that 4-H'ers can come to.
  - Believe in your 4-H members. Show them that they are valued and add to the program. Encourage their work and praise their achievements.
  - Be warm and friendly to youth in your county.
- **Challenge Growth**
  - Challenge youth to do more, be more, and go further.
  - Hold 4-H'ers accountable for their actions.
  - When failures occur, reflect with youth. Help them learn from their mistakes.
  - Expect the best from your youth; after all, 4-H members are the cream of the crop.
- **Provide Support**
  - Help navigate youth through hard situations and processes.
  - Empower youth to take charge of their lives and be confident.
  - Be a voice for your 4-H members when needed. Advocate for them and stand up for youth.
  - Give youth limits that help keep them on track.
- **Share Power**
  - Respect youth, take them seriously, and be fair to them.
  - Involve youth in decisions that affect them.
  - Collaborate with youth to solve problems and reach goals.
  - Give them opportunities to take action and lead.
- **Expand Possibilities**
  - Inspire youth to see possibilities for their future.
  - Give youth opportunities to hear new and different ideas, have experiences, and travel to places.
  - Connect youth to other mentors who can help them grow.

When working with youth to create these relationships, 4-H professionals should remember that developmental relationships are two-way experiences and commitments between you and youth. Each of the above elements of these relationships can be expressed and experienced in different ways. Lastly, while these relationships are very important, they are not all that matter. When working with youth, it is important to remember the context from which they view relationships and their personal qualities that impact how they develop relationships with others.

In the Thrive Model, developmental relationships are part of the developmental context of the model. For youth to start the process of thriving, they must have a spark, a quality youth program, and have these positive relationships. In 4-H, we have a long history of youth-adult partnerships. In Utah 4-H, we must capitalize on our relationships with youth. In 20 years, 4-H'ers may not remember the specific programs you led, but they will remember the relationship they had with you.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT = DOSAGE

The first three components of the Thrive Model (Spark, PYD Program Quality Principles, and Developmental Relationships) do not guarantee positive youth development outcomes. It is acknowledged that youth must spend a sufficient amount of time within a program to achieve PYD. The amount of time required for positive outcomes will vary from youth to youth. In general, more time will equate to better outcomes.

INDICATIONS OF THRIVING

Youth who are thriving will have certain indications of this behavior. For Utah 4-H professionals, it is imperative that we look for these indications in youth to ensure that youth in 4-H are fully receiving the benefits of the program. These indications include:

- **Challenge and Discovery**
  Youth will have an intrinsic desire and willingness to try new challenges and do new things. This could be competing in a new contest, wanting to learn a new skill, going to an event for the first time, or other new things.

- **Growth Mindset**
  Cultivate a growth mindset that emphasizes effort in learning over innate ability. Youth should always be learning and working to develop their skills in what they are passionate about.

- **Hopeful Purpose**
  Believe in hopeful future and purpose in life. Our members should see what they can do in life. This could be in terms of careers, education, or simply what they can do to help others. Life should be viewed as an opportunity to do good.

- **Transcendent Awareness**
  Are connected to something greater than the self that provides meaning and purpose in life and shapes everyday thoughts and action. This could be youth's connection to the 4-H program, a community (local or larger), a religious or spiritual group or organization, a cultural connection, another group, or a combination of these.

- **Pro-Social Orientation**

Demonstrate the pro-social values of respect, honesty, responsibility, empathy, and helping. Youth should respect adults and each other. They should work to build a culture of trust, honesty, and responsibility. Lastly, youth should feel the need to help others.

- **Positive Emotionality**
  Are able to express and manage emotions appropriately. Our 4-H'ers should not experience emotional outbursts, huge amounts of anger, or feelings of unworthiness, depression, or lowliness. Youth should feel positive about themselves. However, some of our youth may struggle with mental illness. It is our responsibility to help youth to the best of our abilities and then find professionals and resources to help youth beyond our capabilities.

- **Goal Management**
  Set and manage goals, with perseverance toward goal achievement. Young people in 4-H should set goals and then work to achieve them. This could be to win a Clover Award, go to National 4-H Congress, win a prize at the state fair, or any number of other goals.

OUTCOMES

In 4-H programs using the Thrive Model, we should see two sets of outcomes from continued engagement in programs. The first set should be the outcomes of using the Thrive Model, while the second set should be the 5 C's of positive youth development. The strongest indication of positive youth development is the production of these outcomes. The Thrive Model includes the following outcomes:

- Academic Achievement and Motivation
- Social Competence
- High Personal Standards
- Contribution to Others
- Connection With Others
- Personal Responsibility

Most experts agree that the goals of positive youth development are the 5 C's, which were introduced in 1990 by Rick Little of the Kellogg Foundation. The 5 C's program was expanded upon by Karen Pittman and Richard Lerner and is now supported by the national 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (Lerner & Lerner, 2012). Dr. Richard Lerner, developmental psychologist and well-known specialist in adolescent development, encourages adults to use the 5 C's as a guide in their positive interactions with youth. The 5 C's are defined as follows:
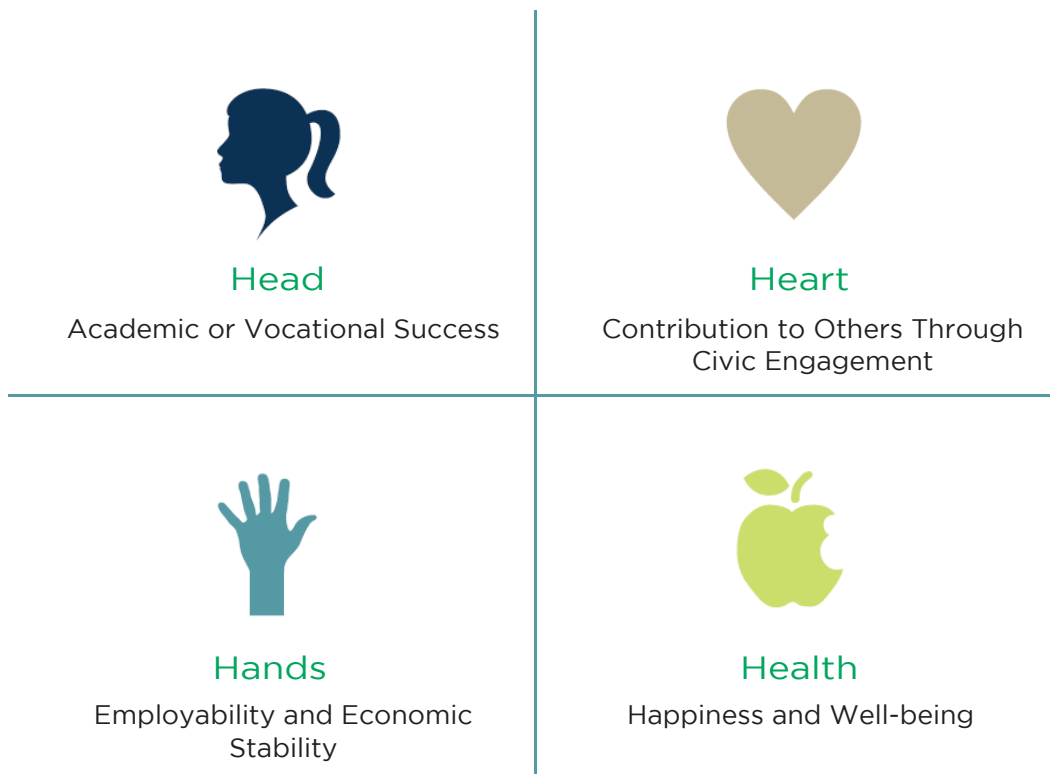
- **Competence**
  The ability to perform adequately in the world; being able to accomplish what is needed so as to have effective interactions with other people and with social institutions.
- **Confidence**
  The perception that one can achieve desired goals through one's actions; confidence is how we feel— what you believe you can do.
- **Connection**
  Understanding relationships and the importance reveals that positive connections to others contribute to our personal well-being and the well-being of others.
- **Character**
  Respect for societal and cultural rules, standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity. Behaving with integrity to support society through moral interactions and acknowledgement of responsibility.
- **Caring**
  Feeling empathy and sympathy and behaving morally based on those emotions.

The culmination of the 5 C's leads to the long-term impact, the sixth C: Contribution (Lerner & Lerner, 2012). Youth who experience positive youth development become adults who contribute to family, work, home, and community.

Lastly, the Thrive Model also provides long-term outcomes for youth that correlate to the 4-H Pledge:

Head
Academic or Vocational Success

Heart
Contribution to Others Through Civic Engagement

Hands
Employability and Economic Stability

Health
Happiness and Well-being

IMPLICATIONS FOR PD WORKERS

For USU Extension professionals, who by necessity are positive youth development professionals, the Thrive Model makes it easier to design programs that benefit youth the most. Current youth programs should be evaluated to ensure they are providing the highest quality experiences possible based on our knowledge of positive youth development, and all future programs should adhere to these principles.

FOCUS ON SPARK

Our 4-H programs should give youth the opportunity to explore their interests and to do things they find intriguing. County 4-H programs should offer a wide range of programs. If you are only offering livestock and horse programs, or you are putting all of your resources there, then you are failing the youth in your county. We must offer livestock, horticulture, outdoor recreation, STEM, performing arts, civic engagement, consumer science, cooking, healthy living, shooting sports, and other programs.

FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENT

Alumni and current 4-H youth talk about 4-H being a family, a place of support, and an organization filled with people who accept you for you. One of the most important things we can do is make sure that young people feel like they belong. At all programs across Utah, youth should feel at home and not be ashamed to be themselves. By fostering a sense of belonging, youth will feel more at ease, may explore different sparks more, create friendships, and be easier to work with.

FOCUS ON TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

In Extension work, it is essential to use volunteers. This is something we all know because no one can do it all. With this being said, 4-H'ers having connections with Extension staff is vitally important. Volunteers can be used in different ways, but no matter the way volunteers

are used, they all need to understand the importance of developmental relationships. County staff should train volunteers in order to provide the best information on connecting with youth from your county and how to build these relationships. It is great to have a shooting sports coach whose team wins every year, but if that coach is not fostering these relationships, then is the program really doing its job? From a positive youth development standpoint, the answer is no.

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