



Youth Development Module The Eight Essential Elements

Reflect on the programs offered through 4-H.
Is each essential element present?

Use the following statements to reflect on the programs, events and opportunities that your board provides for local youth:

- 1. A positive relationship with a caring adult.** A caring adult acts as an advisor, guide and mentor. The adult helps set boundaries and expectations for young people. The caring adult could be called a supporter, friend and advocate.
- 2. A safe environment – physically and emotionally.** Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in the program experience, whether from the learning environment itself, adults, other participants or spectators.
- 3. Opportunity for mastery.** Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and then demonstrating the competent use of the knowledge and skills in the manner of the proficient practitioner. The level of mastery is dependent on the developmental ability of the individual child or youth. Development of mastery is a process over time and is increased with repetition.
- 4. Opportunity to value and practice service for others.** Finding one's self begins with losing self in the service to others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community, indeed the world itself.
- 5. Opportunity for self-determination.** Believing that you have impact over life's events rather than passively submitting to the will and whims of others is self-determination.
- 6. An inclusive environment.** An inclusive environment is one that allows a sense of belonging to develop, encourage and support its members; offers encouragement with positive, specific feedback; and honors diversity. Healthy groups celebrate the success of all members – taking pride in the collective efforts of all.
- 7. Opportunity to see one's self as an active participant in the future.** The ability to see one's self in the future is to harness the hope and optimism to shape life choices to facilitate the transition in participating in the perceived future.
- 8. Engagement in learning.** An engaged youth is one who is mindful of the subject area, building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding.

(The Critical Elements are from the National 4-H Impact Study Critical Elements Work Group, 1998.)