

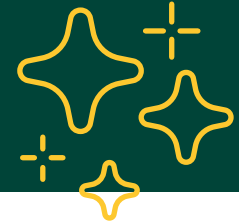


HELPING  YOUTH
THRIVE
4-H THRIVING MODEL

**UNDERSTANDING PROGRAM
QUALITY (BELONGING)**



BACKGROUND INFORMATION



What is needed is a widespread conceptual shift from thinking that youth problems are the principal barrier to youth development to thinking that youth development is the most effective strategy for the prevention of youth problems.

- KAREN PITTMAN

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive Youth Development (PYD) came into focus in the early 1990s as society struggled to address risk behaviors in teens. Among the earliest leaders in PYD is Karen Pittman. She coined the phrase “problem-free isn’t fully prepared” (Pittman & Fleming, 1991). Using research from Dr. Peter Benson (founder of the Search Institute) and others, Pittman began the paradigm shift from fixing behavior deficits to building and nurturing assets and skills. Pittman defined PYD as “an ongoing, inevitable process in which all youth are engaged, and all youth are invested.” She further defined that youth seek “ways to meet their basic physical and social needs and to build the individual assets or competencies (knowledge, skills, relationships, values) they feel are needed to participate successfully and fully in adolescence and adult life” (Pittman, 1993). From this early definition to today, most of those important components are engrained within the Thriving Model and are considered critical aspects of program quality.

The Positive Youth Development approach recognizes that all young people have interests, abilities, and

strengths and when engaged in the context of supportive adults, youth voice and other program quality standards, can grow and thrive, having a positive impact on the whole child. Research continued to advance the field of PYD with Dr. Richard Lerner’s longitudinal study that was completed in the early 2000s. This led to the 5C’s Model of PYD that provided insight on the outcomes youth gain. The Five Cs Outcomes of PYD are: Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, and Caring. These five Cs are based on the adolescent development literature (Lerner, 2004) and represent language used by families, clinicians, and researchers for describing characteristics of thriving. Most recently, the 4-H Thriving Model was developed by Dr. Mary Arnold to provide a framework for understanding the processes that drives outcomes and translates the theory into PYD practices. The foundation of the 4-H Thriving Model is the Developmental Context of Sparks, Program Quality Principles with a focus on belonging, and Developmental Relationships. Youth Programs that incorporate these elements into program delivery set the stage for youth growing, learning, and thriving.



The field of positive youth development focuses on each and every child's unique talents, strengths, interests, and future potential.

- WILLIAM DAMON

PROGRAM QUALITY (BELONGING)

When youth begin exploring their **sparks**, are supported by **developmental relationships**, and feel connected and engaged within **high quality programs**, it creates a rich environment for **developmental outcomes** to emerge. Quality youth programs are developed and continually adapted to bring together the basic needs of youth, such as safety and belonging, with growth needs, such as **pro-social orientation** and **transcendent awareness**. The skills of educators to create this rich, high-quality environment can be developed with intentional practices, the consideration of quality principles, reflection, and evaluation. What happens, where it happens, and how activities are planned, led, and evaluated, promotes quality programs that make a positive difference in the lives of young people.

To have the biggest impact, (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) programs need to adhere to eight critical principles of program quality:

- Physical and psychological safety
- Appropriate structure
- Supportive relationships
- Opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill building
- Integration of family, school, and community

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) defined belonging as the human psychological need to be part of a group, connected, and affiliated to others, friendship, trust, affection and love. Belonging is a critical need before growth needs can be met. As it applies to the 4-H Thriving Model of Positive Youth Development, this would indicate that before youth can develop thriving indicators, their need to belong must first be met.

In a study conducted by Anderson-Butcher & Fink (2005), results showed that feeling a sense of belonging to an organization or group was more important than participation. They also reported a strong correlation to increased protective factors and a decrease in risky or negative behaviors. This is especially important for teen youth as belongingness may counteract negative risk-taking behaviors. This means that caring adults who

work with youth and focus attention on creating a sense of belonging will create the environment for positive youth development outcomes to occur.

Quality programs are also key to helping youth thrive. Thriving is a concept that is commonly described as a trajectory marked by pursuit of a spark, possessing a growth mindset, and effective goal management (Arnold, 2018; Benson, 2008; Dweck, 2006). Furthermore, Search Institute (2014) describes six indicators of youth thriving: Openness to challenge and discovery; hopeful purpose; transcendent awareness; positive emotionality; pro-social orientation; and intentional self-regulation. Relative to 4-H, youth will thrive when programs provide opportunities to explore sparks, focus on youth belonging as the most important aspect of program quality and place an emphasis on developmental relationships. Great educators get to know each youth and provide an atmosphere and opportunity for the youth to express and explore themselves to develop relationships. Furthermore, it is important that 4-H programming includes a range of actions that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (Search Institute, 2020).

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PROGRAM QUALITY, SEE THE REFERENCES AND RESOURCES SECTION.

CURRICULUM DETAILS



Competencies

Professional Research, Knowledge, Competencies (PRKC):
Youth Development Domain: Youth Development Theory, and Access, Equity and Opportunity

Volunteer Research, Knowledge, Competencies (VRKC):
Positive Youth Development Domain: Positive Youth Development Overview and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion



Time Required

Approximately 1.5–2.5 hours

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, participants will be able to:

- 1 Explain the key elements that define youth program quality principles.
- 2 Understand the essential and positive role that a sense of belonging plays in youth development.
- 3 Evaluate their current skills and develop an individual plan to increase youth belonging practices.

Materials Needed

Copies for each participant:

- Program Quality Principles Scenarios (5 copies of each scenario*) (Appendix A1–A4)
- 4-H Thriving Model Tip Sheet: Youth Program Quality Principles (Appendix B)
- 4-H Thriving Model Program Quality (Belonging) Assessment Tool (Appendix C)
- Program Quality Improvement Worksheet (Appendix D)

**Five copies of each scenario to divide the large group into groups of no more than five people. Less copies if you have smaller numbers in each group. If there are more than 20 participants, double up on the scenario groups so that multiple small groups are evaluating the same scenario.*



Facilitator Tip

Think about how to distribute materials if lesson is delivered virtually.

Concepts and Vocabulary

- **8 Principles of Program Quality**
 - **Physical and psychological safety:** youth feel safe in 4-H programs and can interact positively with others.
 - **Appropriate structure:** programs have clear and consistent rules with clear boundaries and age-appropriate monitoring.
 - **Supportive relationships:** youth feel that others care and support them.
 - **Opportunities to belong:** youth feel included in meaningful ways, regardless of their gender, identity, sexual orientation, or ability. Youth have opportunities to share their culture and heritage.
 - **Positive social norms:** youth experience clear rules and expectations including values, morals, and ethical expectations.
 - **Support for efficacy and mattering:** youth are taken seriously and respected for their ideas and contributions.
 - **Opportunities for skill building:** youth have opportunities to develop physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional, and social skills.
 - **Integration of family, school, and community:** the program makes connections to the other environment where youth belong such as family, school, and community groups.
- **4-H Thriving Model:** The 4-H Thriving Model predicts that youth who participate in 4-H programs that provide a high-quality developmental context will thrive, and thriving youth achieve key developmental outcomes.
- **Diversity:** includes our unique identities such as age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual practices, employment status, geographic location, and other characteristics.
- **Equity:** means that everyone receives the unique resources and opportunities that they need to reduce or eliminate barriers to inclusion.
- **Inclusion:** is the act of creating spaces and places where each person has authentic value, respect, and support as part of the environment, group, and community.
- **Thriving:** a forward, purposeful motion towards achieving one's full potential.

Getting Ready

- Review background information and understand main lesson concepts.
- Review the full activity (Opening Questions; Procedure; Reflection; Term/Concept Discovery/Introduction; Application) and its flow.
- Make copies of handouts or distribute electronically in sequence.
- Establish small groups sizes based on number of anticipated participants.
- Adapt the lesson to virtual delivery as needed.

Facilitator Tip

Opening questions/prompts are key to beginning inquiry-based activities. To be effective, these questions/prompts need to be:

- *Open-ended and broad (no single "right" answer).*
- *Encourage learners to focus on their own thinking rather than trying to provide a "textbook definition" (e.g. Explain what you understand about....).*
- *Know your audience. Do you need to use different language (e.g., translated materials, different examples for understanding).*



ACTIVITY



Opening Questions/Prompts

The 4-H Thriving Model (Arnold, 2019) recognizes Youth Program Quality Principles as a key component that creates a developmental context, and when done well, helps youth to thrive. Program Quality Principles work in concert with the concepts of sparks and developmental relationships.

Asking opening questions helps participants frame their thinking, as well as provides educators with some understanding of participants' prior knowledge and experience. Opening questions for this activity include:

- When we say “youth program quality” what comes to mind?
- Based on your understanding of this term, describe a time in your childhood when you felt like you belonged. Explain specific things that were happening that made you feel that way.

Facilitator Tip

Engage the participants! Consider forming small groups and ask them to record their thoughts on flip chart paper or a white board. Subsequently, ask them to share their responses with the larger group to help generate a discussion.

Alternatively, have a full group discussion and record answers to the questions/prompts on the flip chart paper or white board. Have participants compare similarities and differences among the responses. Breakout groups may take less or more time and may also be affected by venue (in-person or virtually). Build timing into your implementation plan!



The next section includes the use of four different scenarios.

- If there are more than 20 participants, double up on the scenario groups so that multiple small groups are evaluating the same scenario.
- It is important for each member of each small group to have a copy of the scenario. Each scenario has many details that different people will pick up on.
- If you are working with educators from one specific delivery mode, all small groups could review the same scenario. (e.g. Camp staff only use the camp scenario).

Procedure

1. Divide the group into smaller groups of no larger than 5 people in each and give each group a different scenario. (Appendix A1-A4) (One copy for each member of each group.)
2. Ask each group to read their scenario and discuss what they notice about the quality of the program. Make note of the types of things that could be considered an element of quality programming. Pay particular attention to program practices that may be lacking or could be strengthened.
3. In the same small groups ask them to then sort their items into larger concepts or buckets of ideas and label them.

Reflection

1. Small groups share out their larger concepts and the kinds of things that are in that category. Depending on the number of small groups, you may want to assign or ask groups to only share one category, giving each group a chance to contribute to the discussion. Record responses on flip chart or whiteboard.
2. Facilitate the discussion, add value, correct any misunderstandings, and help participants make meaning that directs the conversation to the principles of Program Quality as described by Eccles and Gootman (2002).



Facilitator Tip

There are many ways to accomplish reflection, but the key is to ensure all participants can share and learn from one another.

Concept/Term Discovery/Introduction

1. After the reflection discussion has concluded and not before, distribute or share electronically the 4-H Thriving Model Tip Sheet: Youth Program Quality Principles (Appendix B).
2. Facilitate a discussion. Ask participants to explain what they notice about how the larger concepts compare to these principles.
3. Explain that program quality principles as described by Eccles and Gootman (2002) include these eight principles, the related actions, and definitions. As we go forward in the 4-H Thriving Model, this is the language that we will use when we talk about program quality.
4. Return to the small groups and have them discuss: What do you notice about how our labels and characteristics compare to the named principles of youth program quality? In what ways would each of the different scenarios be improved?



Facilitator Tip

The goal is to have participants develop an understanding of the concepts through their exploration and define terms using their own words. If specific terms or concepts are not discovered by the learners on their own, or there are misunderstandings this is the time for the facilitator to help ensure clear understanding.

The following section of the activity can be very robust so be sure to provide adequate time for discussion and exchange of ideas. The Program Quality (Belonging) Assessment Tool has explicit instructions. As a facilitator, please become very familiar with these instructions prior to delivery, so that you can answer and clarify questions participants may have.

Concept Application

Concept application is when learners apply their new knowledge and skills in authentic ways (e.g., service learning; community engagement), understanding is deepened and strengthened.

1. Distribute the 4-H Thriving Model Program Quality (Belonging) Assessment Tool (Appendix C) and the Program Quality Improvement Worksheet (Appendix D).

2. Ask participants to read the instructions of the Assessment Tool. Explain that they will use the tool to first evaluate their own youth activity or program. This tool is designed to measure one project, one event, one club, or one camp at a time. For today, choose one project, activity or program that you lead for which you will complete the assessment. Then they will complete the Program Quality Improvement Worksheet. Ask participants to choose three or four items to improve or be more intentional about practicing over the next two months. They should have no more than four items to work on.
3. Encourage and challenge participants to continue to use this tool to build their skills and practice in program quality principles.



Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

- ETIENNE AND BEVERLY WENGER-TRAYNER

Community of Practice

This curriculum is designed to be used in conjunction with a community of practice of 4-H Youth Development practitioners. The term “community of practice” was coined in the 1990’s by cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger when studying apprenticeships as a learning model (Smith, 2009). The term referred to the community that acts as a living curriculum. Essentially a peer-to-peer professional-development activity organized by a leader, coordinator, or facilitator. Wenger used the following formula to explain key elements within a community of practice:

Competence + Experience + Engagement = a Community of Practice

Characteristics associated with a community of practice includes practitioners:

- Taking responsibility for the knowledge they need collectively.
- Serving as the direct link between learning and intentionally implementing new knowledge and strategies.
- Learning with and from each other.
- Developing a shared repertoire of resources.

INVITE TO COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:

Invite participants to attend a follow-up community of practice. The intention of the CoP will be to share our successes, get support from others and continue to develop actions and applications for practicing developmental relationships. Participants should complete “Relationship Building Practices” tool prior attendance at the follow up meeting.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETING:

1. Ask participants to share what successes they had in implementing their belonging improvement plan.
2. Ask participants what challenges they had while working on their belonging improvement plan.
3. Ask participants to discuss successes and challenges when working on their belonging improvement plan.



REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- Anderson-Butcher, D., & Fink, J. S. (2005). The importance of a sense of belonging to youth service agencies: A risk and protective factor analysis. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work, 20*, 11–21.
- Arnold, M. E. & Gagnon, R. J. (2019). Illuminating the process of youth development: The mediating effect of thriving on youth development program outcomes. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension, 7*(3), 1–23.
- Arnold, M. E. (2018). From Context to outcomes: A thriving model for 4-H Youth Development Programs. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension, 6*(1), 141–160.
- Arnold, M. E. (2019). *Training materials for educators: 4-H Thriving Model*. Retrieved from <https://helping-youth-thrive.extension.org/tip-sheets/>
- Benson, P. L. (2008). *Sparks: How parents can help ignite the hidden strengths of teenagers*. California, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Rayn, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *Prevention & Treatment, 5*, 1–11.
- Damon, W. (2004). Positive Development: Realizing the potential of youth. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 591*, 13–24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4127632>
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Lerner, R. M. (2004). *Liberty: Thriving and civic engagement among America's youth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*, 370–396.
- Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). What exactly is a youth development program? Answers from the research and practice. *Applied Developmental Science, 7*, 94–111.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The Forum for Youth Investment- David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality: <http://forumfyi.org/work/the-weikart-center/>

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE RESOURCES:

Sobrero, P. & Craycraft, C. (2008). Virtual communities of practice: A 21st Century method for learning, programming, and developing professionally. *Journal of Extension (Online), 46*(5) Available at: <https://archives.joe.org/joe/2008october/a1.php>.

Wenger-Trayner, E. & Wegner-Trayner, B. (2015). *Communities of practice a brief introduction*. Retrieved from <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>.

What is a community of practice? (n.d.). Community of Practice. Retrieved from <https://www.communityofpractice.ca/background/what-is-a-community-of-practice/>.

Smith, M. K. (2003, 2009). 'Jean Lave, Etienne Wenger and communities of practice', *The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*. Retrieved from <https://infed.org/mobi/jean-lave-etienne-wenger-and-communities-of-practice/>.

Creating Communities of Practice Long Version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQDY-qdatU>.

4-H Access, Equity and Belonging Committee Resources: <https://access-equity-belonging.extension.org/resources/national-4-h-council-equity-toolkit/>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Developmental Relationships Framework and the conceptualization of Sparks as a feature of thriving were developed by Search Institute and are copyrighted by Search Institute. They are included within this curriculum as part of the 4-H Thriving model, and used with permission. These rights cannot be transferred to third parties or used in other contexts without the expressed permission of Search Institute. We are grateful for this collaboration with Search Institute and invite anyone who is interested in understanding and practicing developmental relationships further to explore additional training materials and opportunities available through Search Institute at: searchinstitute.org.

AUTHORS



The 4-H Thriving Model Curriculum consists of independent activity-based modules designed to introduce each concept of the of the 4-H Thriving Model using guided inquiry and experiential learning as the pedagogy. The purpose of this curriculum is to provide 4-H professionals and volunteers with an in-depth understanding of the concepts of the 4-H Thriving Model. We believe it is important for 4-H educators to understand the model well before they teach it to others. Inherent in all modules is a community of practice design that helps educators and volunteers reflect on their youth development practices as part of a learning community.

This curriculum was developed by the Program Leaders' Working Group (PLWG) Committee on Positive Youth Development.

MODULE AUTHORS:

- Gemma Miner, *University of California - Davis*
- Martin Smith, *University of California - Davis*
- Anissa Jepsen, *Kansas State University*
- Mike Knutz, *University of Idaho*
- Kelly Campbell, *Cornell University*
- Zuri Garcia, *Utah State University*
- Phillip Ealy, *Pennsylvania State University*

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Miner, G., Smith, M. H., Jepsen, A., Knutz, M., Campbell, K., Garcia, Z., & Ealy, P. (2023). *4-H Thriving Model Training Curriculum - Understanding Program Quality (Belonging)*. Washington DC: National 4-H Council.

The production of this curriculum was made possible through generous financial support from National 4-H Council. Council's support of the Helping Youth Thrive project has been instrumental in helping advance the practice of science-based PYD across the 4-H system.

For more information please visit: 4-h.org



NATIONAL 4-H
COUNCIL



PLWG
PROGRAM LEADERS
WORKING GROUP

