

# ESSENTIAL



# ELEMENTS

of 4-H Youth Development Programs

## Curriculum and Training Guide



PEER REVIEWED

01609F



# THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS CURRICULUM WAS DEVELOPED BY THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS NATIONAL 4-H LEARNING PRIORITY TEAM

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS CURRICULUM



This curriculum was designed to help youth development professionals understand the importance of positive development by presenting the 4-H Essential Elements as central to helping young people become competent, contributing adults. It provides a wealth of resources to 1) engage youth development professionals (e.g., 4-H agents/educators) in building the capacity of volunteers, and 2) perpetuate the Essential Elements in programs.

Within youth development education there are various frameworks and lists of elements that researchers have identified and utilized to define and guide the design and structure of youth development programs. The 4-H program nationally has adopted a list of eight essential elements that are often summarized into 4 key concepts: belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. These are considered necessary attributes of youth programs striving to create environments conducive to optimizing youth development. The four concepts were introduced by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2002) as part of the Native American philosophy of rearing children. The findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (Lerner, R. et. al., 2005) tell us that participation in quality youth development programs such as 4-H leads to positive outcomes for youth called the 5 “C’s”-competence, confidence, connection, character and caring. A 6th C, contribution, is the culmination of the first five.

## 8 Elements distilled to 4 Concepts

<b>BELONGING</b> Positive Relationship with a caring adult An inclusive environment A safe environment	<b>MASTERY</b> Engagement in Learning Opportunity for Mastery
<b>INDEPENDENCE</b> Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future Opportunity for self-determination	<b>GENEROSITY</b> Opportunity to value and practice service for others

Source: Kress, C. (2004) Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development. National 4-H Headquarters, CSREES USDA, [www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/Essential\\_Element-Satellite.ppt](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/Essential_Element-Satellite.ppt)

In 1999, a team of evaluators from the National 4-H Impact Design Implementation Team was charged with determining the critical elements in a 4-H experience. The team identified 8 essential elements. These elements were later distilled into the four key concepts by Cathann Kress,

former Director of Youth Development at National 4-H Headquarters, CSREES, USDA.

“In order to develop self-confidence, youth need to feel and believe they are capable, and they must experience success at solving problems and meeting challenges. By exploring 4-H projects and activities, youth master skills to make positive career and life choices. Additionally, youth need to have a safe environment for making mistakes and getting feedback, not just through competition, but also as an ongoing element of participation. Finally, youth need the breadth and depth of topics that allow them to pursue their own interests.” (Kress, 2004)

Each of the eight Essential Elements is vital to the growth and development of youth. It is the combination of the elements that creates a positive environment for youth development. By intentionally including these elements, youth can participate experientially in activities and events, feel nurtured in a safe environment, master new skills and abilities, and be empowered to contribute to their environment and communities in a positive way.

The curriculum was developed using a practitioner-oriented approach, allowing a facilitator to capitalize on the interaction and expertise generated among the participating audience. Through their involvement, participants should, in turn, be able to gain new skills and knowledge that will enhance their program efforts.

Each session of the Essential Elements training includes a description of key concepts, best practices, resources and activities that have been tested successfully among youth development professionals. Hence, a facilitator can use this training not only with 4-H volunteers, but with a host of others working in youth-serving organizations. More important, the curriculum offers multiple opportunities for creativity. In fact, it is encouraged that facilitators of this curriculum share their own personal experiences when presenting ideas and engaging the audience. The curriculum is designed to be used in its entirety but can be presented by sections, if time is limited. The average time to complete the training is 10–12 hours, with each session lasting an hour or more depending on number of participants and length of discussions. If it is not possible to present all sessions, the facilitator should, at a minimum, connect key concepts and essential elements of youth programs with information from Session 1: Key Ingredients.





# INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS CURRICULUM

## Additional guidelines are provided below to assist in a successful training:

1. Most individuals with basic facilitation skills should be able to conduct the sessions of this curriculum effectively.
2. It is suggested that facilitators read the curriculum, including the appendices, to become familiar with each session. This will help her/him make decisions on various issues, such as:
  - How much of the information can be covered by one facilitator?
  - Am I (are we) comfortable with presenting the material?
  - How many additional facilitators will be needed?
  - If time is a factor, which sessions are most pertinent for the audience?
3. It is recommended that facilitators review the connected Web appendices for additional background, research, and in-depth resources.
4. It is possible to complete the training in one day. However, facilitators may also consider spreading the sessions over a two-day period. For example, the first five to six hours could be completed on the first day and the training concluded the next day.
5. Due to the length of the training, it is recommended that at least two people serve as facilitators. This will allow participants to benefit from the expertise and energy of more than one person.
6. The number of participants should not exceed 20-25, as groups much larger may present a challenge, particularly when it comes to managing group activities.
7. This curriculum offers the advantage of creating stimulating dialogue among the audience. With this in mind, the facilitator should attempt to maintain a balance between discussion and instruction, particularly if the audience tends to veer off topic. It may be helpful to refer to the questions in each section to keep the participants focused.

## Evaluating the Curriculum

There are two tools to evaluate the use of the Essential Elements curriculum. The first is a process evaluation tool, "How on Target Was this Session?" which is used after each session to gauge the progress of the training and make suggestions for improvement. This "bulls eye" evaluation is found at the end of this section.

The second tool is a retrospective (post-then pre-) evaluation. This evaluation is completed by participants after each session to measure knowledge, attitudes and intentions of participants. There is a unique evaluation form following each session.

## Adapting the Curriculum

This curriculum may be adapted to be more specific to a particular content area or delivery mode. While some of the language used in the curriculum specifically parallels the 4-H Youth Development Program, the wording may be tailored to incorporate language that is consistent with any youth-serving organization. The activities as well as the suggested experiential reflection/discussion items within the sessions may be customized to target the needs of a particular audience.

We hope that you will find this training to be a valuable resource to enhance the lives of young people, as well as those who serve them.

## References

- Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (2001). *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- CSREES. (2001). *National 4-H Impact Assessment Project*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from [www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/about/4h\\_programs.htm](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/about/4h_programs.htm)
- Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., Almerigi, J., Theokas, C., Phelps, E., Gestsdottir, S., Naudeau, S., Jellic, H., Alberts, A. E., Ma, L., Smith, L. M., Bobek, D. L., Richman-Raphael, D., Simpson, I., Christiansen, E. D., & von Eye, A. (2005). Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25 (1), 17-71.



## HOW ON-TARGET WAS THIS SESSION?

Place a dot on the bulls-eye ring that most closely represents how on- target this session was.



Title of Session: \_\_\_\_\_

I especially liked: \_\_\_\_\_

It might be better if: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_



## HOW ON-TARGET WAS THIS SESSION?

Place a dot on the bulls-eye ring that most closely represents how on- target this session was.



Title of Session: \_\_\_\_\_

I especially liked: \_\_\_\_\_

It might be better if: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_





## OVERVIEW OF EIGHT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

### Concept: Belonging

#### 1. **Essential Element: 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 adult could be called supporter, friend, or advocate.

#### 2. **Essential Element: An Inclusive Environment**

An inclusive environment is one that creates a sense of belonging, and encourages and supports its members with positive and specific feedback. Healthy groups celebrate the success of all members, taking pride in the collective efforts of all participants.

#### 3. **Essential Element: A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment**

Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in a 4-H experience, whether from the learning environment itself or from adults, other participants or spectators.

### Concept: Mastery

#### 4. **Essential Element: Opportunity for Mastery**

Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and the demonstration of the competent use of this knowledge and skill by a proficient practitioner. The level of mastery is dependent on the developmental ability of the individual or youth. The development of mastery is a process over time.

#### 5. **Essential Element: Engagement in Learning**

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

### Concept: Independence

#### 6. **Essential Element: Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future**

The ability to see oneself in the future is to have hope and optimism to shape life choices, which facilitates the transition into participating in the future.

#### 7. **Essential Element: Opportunity for Self-Determination**

Believing that you have impact on life's events rather than passively submitting to the will and whims of others is self-determination. Youth must develop a sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing, autonomous adults.

### Concept: Generosity

#### 8. **Essential Element: Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others**

Finding yourself begins with losing yourself in the service of others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community and, indeed the world itself.





## WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS

As a facilitator, it is important to help the participants in your group feel comfortable and ready to learn. Motivating adults to attend training can be challenging. Adults are motivated for different reasons. Some attend training for social reasons such as making new friends. Others go to fulfill requirements for employment or volunteer service, to learn something new, or just to have a break in routine. Whatever their reasons for attending, adults have special needs and requirements as learners that differ from youth. Malcolm Knowles' research discovered five assumptions about adult learners that will be helpful as you plan your training sessions.

- 1. Self-Concept:** Adults are autonomous and self-directed. Your group of participants may have specific questions about youth development and 4-H. Identify these topics at the start of training and try to include them when possible. This helps the sessions' relevancy to participants' needs and interests. An important role as you begin is to help participants see how the training can aid them in reaching their own goals.
- 2. Experience:** Adults have accumulated many life experiences and knowledge that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education. Your job as facilitator is to help connect new learning about child development, positive relationships, safety, learning, skill development and service to their existing knowledge and experience base. To help do this, make sure you allow time for participants to share relevant experience and knowledge.
- 3. Readiness to Learn:** Adults are goal-oriented. They signed up for the training for a reason. Instructors and facilitators must show participants how this opportunity will help them attain their goals. Discussing and reviewing the lessons at the beginning of the session will help adult learners know the goals and course objectives and how they relate to their personal goals.
- 4. Orientation to Learning:** Adults want to learn relevant information; they must see a reason for learning something. Learning should be applicable to their future work as 4-H youth leaders and volunteers. Therefore, instructors must identify objectives for adult participants before the course begins.
- 5. Motivation to Learn:** Adults are practical. Facilitators should focus on the most useful aspects of a lesson since the participants may not be interested in the knowledge for its own sake, but rather are looking for ways to apply the knowledge. Be sure to use varying examples to illustrate important points.

## References

Knowles, M (1973). *The adult learner: A neglected species*. Madison, WI: Gulf Publishing Co.





## WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS

### Respect for Adult Learners

It is critical to show respect to adult learners who have experience working with youth. The facilitator must acknowledge the wealth of experience that these adult learners bring to the class. Treat adults as equals in experience and knowledge, and encourage them to voice their opinions openly throughout the training.

### Supporting Adult Learners

To support adult learners, it is important to recognize that individuals learn at different speeds and in different ways. Some adults who attend your sessions may be anxious or nervous when faced with a new learning situation. Using a fun ice-breaker is a good way to relax participants. (See *Curriculum Appendix p.100, Ice Breakers.*) Establish a friendly, open tone for the lessons. Get to know the participants' names. Establishing this atmosphere helps to develop rapport, decrease stress, and increase learning. Enhance learning by using positive reinforcement. Use the variety of teaching techniques provided in the curriculum. Some learners need to see printed resources (provide handouts for visual learners) while others need information repeated verbally (use role-play and discussion for auditory learners). Others learn best by making something (include handouts for activities for kinesthetic learners). For some learners, one sense is used more than others to learn or recall information. Through the activities, this curriculum is designed to stimulate as many senses as possible in order to increase learning among all participants.

Your goal as a facilitator is to help participants learn and retain the information. To retain information, learners must see meaning or purpose for the information. Using the discussion questions at the end of each activity and the program checklist found in the curriculum appendix will help participants see how the new information can be useful not only in 4-H youth development programs but in other areas of their lives.

Source: 4-H/Army Child & Youth Services Facilitator Guide: *Training for Adults Who Babysit* © 2007

### Accommodating Learners' Needs

As a teacher and facilitator, it is important to plan for and make accommodations for any participants with special needs. This is best accomplished by including a statement on the registration form asking if the individual has any special needs related to accommodations for accessibility, physical activity or food service. If you are not sure of the appropriate accommodation, contact the individual and ask what would work best. You may also want to ask participants at the beginning of each session (when sessions are conducted independent of each other) if there are any accommodations that would help them feel more comfortable or be more successful in the training.



# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL



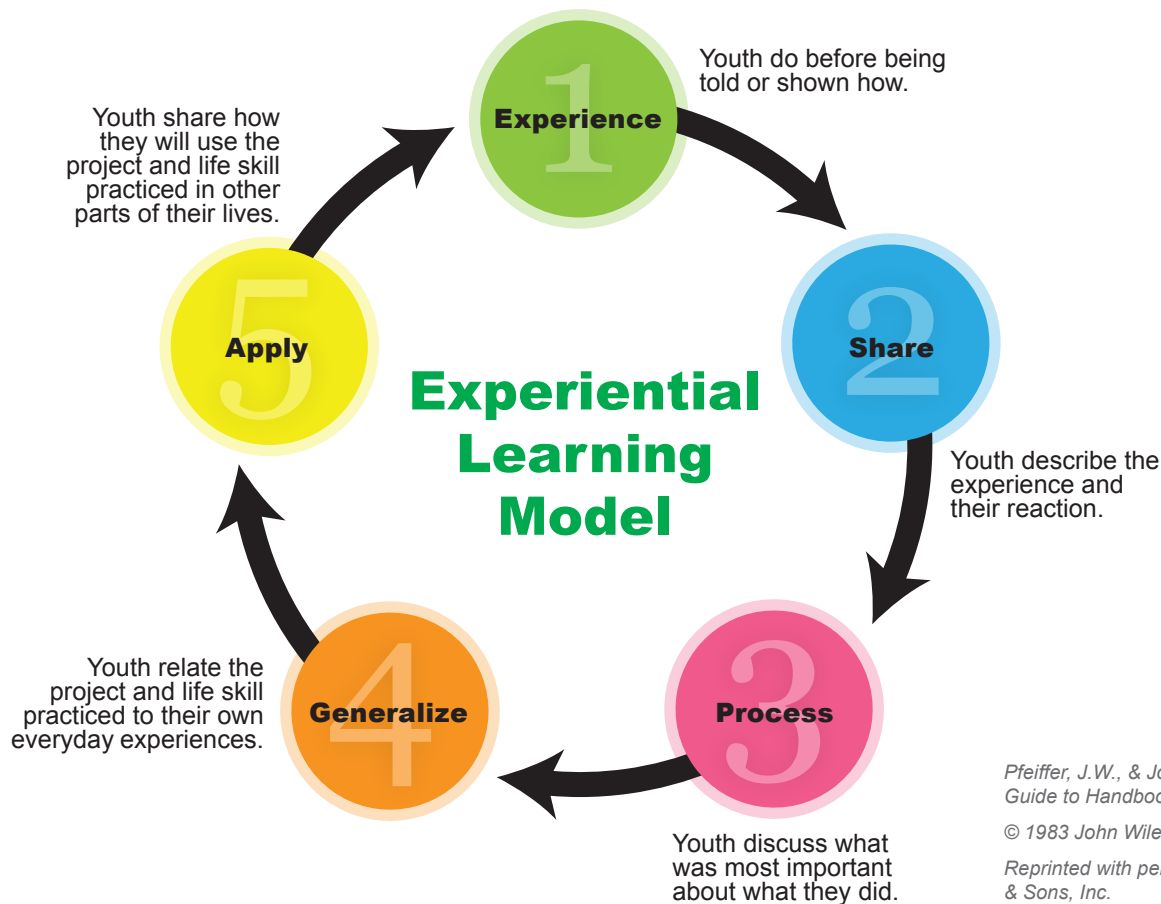
A supportive adult helps youth discover what they are learning as part of their experiences and to pursue deeper understanding to be able to apply what was learned in other life situations. 4-H youth programs promote life skill development through use of a five-step experiential learning model.

Experiential learning can occur when youth are involved in a project or activity in which they:

- ✓ look back at their experience critically
- ✓ determine what was useful or important to remember
- ✓ apply this new information in real life situations
- ✓ are encouraged to think, work harder and ultimately learn more thoroughly than is possible through just showing or telling.

Leaders can facilitate such learning through the Experiential Learning Model by:

- ✓ setting aside enough time for reflecting on the experience
- ✓ asking the right questions
- ✓ planning developmentally appropriate experiences that lead to reflection
- ✓ listening carefully
- ✓ supporting each youth's unique learning style



*Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jones, J.E., "Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals"*  
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## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROCESS QUESTIONS

### 1. **EXPERIENCE—The hands-on action step.**

Youth do their project before they are shown or told how to do it. Remember its important to not rob youth of their discoveries. Youth must experiment with new ideas, interests, projects, etc., first-hand.

The following ideas for questions can help you utilize the whole experiential learning process.

### 2. **SHARE—Describe what was done.**

Promote discussion by asking the following:

- What kinds of hopes and dreams did you have for your 4-H experience this year?
- What did you do? Where did you go? What was your goal for this project/activity when you began?
- What did you do to plan your project/activity? Tell me about your most/least favorite things about working on your project/activity.
- What did you learn while doing this project/activity? How did you feel? What was easiest? What surprised you?
- What did you learn about yourself? How did you share your project/activity with others?

### 3. **PROCESS—Identify common themes and discover what was most important (the life skill) about the project, activity, or service opportunity.**

Use the following process questions:

- What did you learn about yourself by doing this project/activity? How did others help you?
- How did you make your decisions? What steps did you take?
- What did you learn about making decisions?
- What made this a good project/activity?
- What were some of the common themes or thoughts you had?
- What problems came up over and over? How did you handle them?
- What would you do if \_\_\_\_\_?

- What was the most challenging part of your project/activity? Why? How did you solve it? What did you learn from this project/activity that you didn't know before?
- What suggestions would you have for someone else who wanted to do a similar project/activity? Why does it matter (to you or anyone else) that you did this project/activity?
- What life skill(s) were you developing through your project? Why is the life skill important?
- What did you learn through sharing with others?
- What new questions do you have about yourself and others?

### 4. **GENERALIZE—So what?**

Identify how to use what's been learned in real life. These questions transition the experience or "product" itself to the skill being practiced in real life. They explore the nature of the life skill and help participants reflect on how the life skill has been developed through their experiences. Generalizing sets the stage for applying the life skill in new situations.

- What key points have you learned?
- Have you had similar experiences related to this project/activity?
- Where have you faced similar challenges in your life?
- How is this life skill important to you?
- Where might this situation occur in the future?
- Discuss another time when you had fun and learned new things at the same time.
- Why is it important to have plenty of information before making decisions?
- Describe what you learned about your decision-making skills?
- What did you learn about your own skill in communicating with others?
- How would you describe your skills regarding \_\_\_\_\_?
- What advice would you give to someone who wants to learn about this life skill?



## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROCESS QUESTIONS (CONT.)



### • **APPLY—What's next?**

These are the questions the experiential learning process has been building toward. Adults can help youth show that they have gained knowledge and practiced the life skills learned rather than solely focusing on the subject matter.

- How do you think the project/activity relates to your everyday life?
- Why was this project/activity important to you?
- What have you learned about yourself? Others?
- Are there principles or guidelines you can use in real-life situations?
- What similar situations have you experienced?
- How can you use these skills in different situations?
- In what ways do people help each other learn new things?
- How will you act differently as a result of this experience?
- List some ways you can learn new things?
- What are qualities that you think are important in a leader?
- If someone helped or mentored you in this project, what would you tell him/her you learned and what difference it has made in your life? How would you express your appreciation?

Adapted from the 2005 Minnesota 4-H Curriculum Committee: Jim Deidrick, Volunteer Leadership Development Educator; Shirley Doering, Regional 4-H Extension Educator; Donna Geiser, Regional 4-H Extension Educator; Holly Kanengieter, Regional 4-H Extension Educator; Barb Piehl, Regional 4-H Extension Educator; Anne Stevenson, Regional 4-H Extension Educator





## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TRAINING SUPPLY LIST

### General (For Use in All Sessions)

- ☐ Flat working surface
- ☐ Flip chart paper or newsprint (lots of it)
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Sticky notes in a variety of sizes
- ☐ Masking tape (2 or more rolls)
- ☐ 2 or more pairs of scissors
- ☐ 2 or more rolls of Scotch tape
- ☐ Chef's hat and/or apron

### Session 1: Key Ingredients

- ☐ Large visual of pizza (divided into 8 slices) drawn on flip chart paper OR the pizza poster (included in the Essential Elements Training Kit)
- ☐ Props such as a chef's hat or apron (available at 4-HMall.org)
- ☐ Blank pizza handouts (copies of p. 18, one per person)
- ☐ Pizza slice visuals: Copies of pp. 20-27 (8 total, 1 copy of each page)
- ☐ Program Characteristic Cards\* (included in the kit; also included in the curriculum on p.28)
- ☐ Essential Elements Pizza slice handouts (Duplicate p. 19 on card stock; Make one copy of each pizza slice handout per group)
- ☐ Cardstock (1 sheet per participant)

### Session 2: A Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult

- ☐ Playdough (4-6 containers--varied colors)
- ☐ 8.5 x 11 paper (two sheets per person)
- ☐ 20 pipe cleaners-varied colors
- ☐ Glue stick – 1 or 2
- ☐ Construction paper – 8-10 pieces—varied colors
- ☐ Set of Caring Adult Instruction Cards\* (included in the kit; also in the curriculum on p.36)
- ☐ Brads (10-12)
- ☐ 1 large ball of yarn/string

### Session 3: A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment

- ☐ 4 sets of 20 dominoes (or one set for each table)
- ☐ "Davey's Story" (included in curriculum, p. 42)
- ☐ Program Delivery Method Cards\* (included in the kit; also in the curriculum on p.43)

### Session 4: An Inclusive Environment

- ☐ Several decks of common playing cards
- ☐ Copies of "A letter to me" or plain stationary
- ☐ 1 elastic or fabric headband for each group member
- ☐ Plain letter-size envelopes (1 for each participant)
- ☐ Construction paper cut into approximately 1.5 X 8.5 inch strips (6 per participant)
- ☐ One glue stick per table

### Session 5: Engagement in Learning

- ☐ Vanilla pudding, individual servings (1 cup per participant)
- ☐ Liquid food coloring
- ☐ Milk (☐ cup for each participant)
- ☐ 6–8 oz. clear plastic cups (1 per person) NOTE: Cups must be clear.
- ☐ Spoons (1 per person)
- ☐ Serving dishes and spoons for each topping
- ☐ Several different cereals ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup per person)
- ☐ Raisins ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup per person)
- ☐ Chocolate chips ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup per person)
- ☐ One copy of Teaching Strategy Cards\* (included in the kit; also included in curriculum, p.58)
- ☐ Copies of 4-H History Facts (included in curriculum on p. 59)
- ☐ A variety of 4-H project activities with experiential questions removed (optional)

\*Cards in the kit should be cut apart by the facilitator in advance of the training sessions.





### **Session 6: Opportunity for Mastery**

- ☐ Age Group Cards\* (included in the kit; also included in the curriculum on p. 65)
- ☐ Project Area Cards\* (included in the kit; also included in the curriculum on p. 66)
- ☐ Copies of Ages and Stages handouts (included in curriculum Appendix, p. 107 )
- ☐ 4 empty pizza boxes (any size)

### **Session 7: Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future**

- ☐ Large marshmallows, 10 to 15 per group
- ☐ Toothpicks, 10 to 15 per group or spaghetti - 1 handful of uncooked (same amount/group)
- ☐ Paper plates, 1 per group
- ☐ Wrapped candy bars (with ingredient list), 1 per person
- ☐ Candy Bar Job Search handouts (included in curriculum, p. 71)
- ☐ SMART Goal Scenario Cards\* (included in the kit; also included in the curriculum on p. 72)

### **Session 8: Opportunity for Self-Determination**

- ☐ Agreement signs (included in curriculum, p. 79)
- ☐ Scenarios (included in curriculum, pp. 81-86)

### **Session 9: Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others**

- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Service Learning Planning Worksheets (included in curriculum, pp. 92-93)

### **Session 10: Pizza Supreme: Putting it all Together**

- ☐ Flip chart paper with a pizza with delivery methods written on the slices
- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Chef's hat or apron (available for purchase at 4-HMall.org)

\*Cards in the kit should be cut apart by the facilitator in advance of the training sessions.



## SESSION 1—THE KEY INGREDIENTS

(An Overview Lesson)

### Introduction to Session

Each of the eight Essential Elements is vital to the growth and development of youth. It is the combination of the elements that creates a positive environment for youth development to occur. By intentionally including these elements in program design, youth have the ability to participate experientially in activities and events, feel nurtured in a safe environment, master new skills and abilities, and feel that they are contributing to their environment and communities in a positive way.

### Goal of Lesson

To help adults working with youth gain awareness of the eight Essential Elements of positive youth development, as well as their role in intentionally planning, implementing and achieving a balanced youth development program

### Objectives

Participants will:

- List the eight key elements of positive youth development used by 4-H
- Give a definition or an example of each element
- Relate the model to one's own experiences in working with youth

### Materials Needed

- Cardstock (one sheet per participant)
- Markers
- Large visual of pizza (divided into 8 slices) drawn on flip chart paper OR the pizza poster (included in the Essential Elements Training Kit). This poster can be taped to a wall or mounted on flip chart paper.
- Blank pizza handout (copies of p. 18, one per person)
- Pencils
- Sticky notes
- Pizza slice visuals: Copies of pp. 20-27 (8 total, 1 copy of each page)
- Masking tape
- Props such as a chef's hat and/or apron (available at 4-HMall.org)
- Program Characteristic Cards (5 sets of cards are included in the Essential Elements Training Kit. Cards are also included on page 28. Cut cards apart. Use one set of cards per group.)
- Essential Elements pizza slices handouts (Duplicate p. 19 on card stock; Make one copy of each pizza slice handout per group)

*Note to presenter: Copying materials on cardstock and laminating will allow for future reuse of materials.*

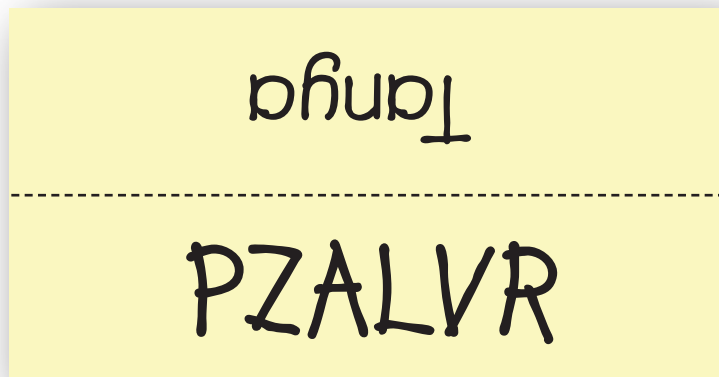


## Getting Acquainted: Design a Personalized Vanity Plate

### Do the Ice Breaker

All participants will fold a sheet of card stock in half lengthwise. On one side of the fold, participants will write their first name on the cardstock. On the other side, they create a vanity license plate that describes something about themselves (likes, hobbies, family, talents, etc.). A vanity plate can be a combination of up to eight letters and numbers.

Example: In this example, we learn that Tanya is a pizza lover.



Once all participants have created a vanity plate, participants will share their vanity plates and their significance.

## Activity One: Sorting the Toppings

### Do the Activity

1. Give a general introduction to the session and its purpose. Ask participants how pizza and youth development are similar.
2. Make an analogy with key ingredients of pizza and positive youth development.
3. Compare what pizza and the essential elements for youth development have in common as suggested below.

*"Just as there are key ingredients needed for making good-tasting pizza, there are key 'ingredients' or elements for quality youth programs. There are many different ways to make a pizza (pepperoni, vegetarian, thick or thin crust, different cheeses, etc.). Even though all pizzas are*

*not alike, we still recognize them as pizza. Just as not all pizzas are alike, not all 4-H (or youth) programs look the same either. We can recognize these different varieties of pizza as PIZZA because they contain some basic ingredients in common, and we can identify certain common, key ingredients that make quality youth programs."*

4. Go around the room and ask individuals to share something about their 4-H background. The participants are the "key ingredients" of this session, so it is important to know some information about them. If the participants are familiar with each other, it is still important to take this step. You can facilitate this sharing by asking them to complete a specific statement,



such as: “The thing I like best about 4-H. . .,”  
“One of my most memorable 4-H moments was. . .,”  
“The reason I am a 4-H adviser is. . .” and so  
forth. If time is limited, you may have to move  
the discussion along more quickly.

4. Distribute the **blank** “pizza” handout. (page 18, one per person) In each “slice” or space, ask participants to write down what they think is one of the key elements or “ingredients” of positive youth programs.
5. After they have filled in the slices, ask each person to pair up with another person and compare notes (or a small group of three, depending on the total group size). Give them several sticky notes. Ask them to agree on several ingredients and write down the word or phrase on the sticky note paper, one idea per paper. Tell them this information will be used in the next part of the discussion.

## Share

- Use the pizza poster included in the kit or draw a large outline of a pizza, divided into 8 slices on chart paper.
- Ask participants to share what they have written.
- As they share, put their sticky note with the word or phrase in one of the large slices of the pizza outline on the chart paper posted in front of the participants.
- Put all similar responses in the same slice. For example, if someone says “role model,” put their sticky note on one of the slices that you have designated as the slice for caring adults; “provides guidance” would go in the same slice. If the individual shares “youth set goals,” this would go in the self-determination slice.
- Continue this process, being sure that all in the group are encouraged to give responses.

## Process

- Using the pizza slice visuals provided, (pp 20-27) begin the discussion of the first element. Each slice of pizza has a key word for each essential element to remind you of the main concept of that element (e.g., “adults” for positive relationship with a caring adult).
- As you talk about each element, tape the corresponding slice to the large pizza outline (circle divided into 8 slices) on the flip chart paper, displayed so all can view. You can put the pizza slices over the sticky notes or assemble a new pizza on chart paper.
- Give a basic description of the element using examples from your own experience as well as the information provided in the participant sharing activity (see the Overview of Essential Elements in the Appetizers section of the curriculum)

It may help to present the elements in the following order:

1. ADULTS
  2. SAFE
  3. INCLUSIVE
  4. LEARNING
  5. MASTERY
  6. FUTURE
  7. SELF-DETERMINATION
  8. SERVICE
- Move on to the next element in a similar manner. Continue until all eight elements have been discussed.

**Note:** *Not all of what participants shared may be represented in this model within the 8 essential elements model (e.g., adequate funding, recruitment, transportation, etc.). If there are items identified that did not fit, add them around the edge of the large pizza model. Mention these briefly and explain why they are important. These are the parts of the program that might be considered more management or administrative, and they usually cut across the elements rather than relate to only one element.*





## Generalize

- Think about another situation where you work with youth or have observed others working with youth. For example, consider a church youth group, a sports team etc.
- To what degree are the essential elements present?
- How would the incorporation of the essential elements impact the youth involved?
- How would the activities be different?

## Apply

- What are some ways that you provide opportunities to develop <ELEMENT> in our county or club 4-H program?
- How could you do a better job with <ELEMENT> in your 4-H program?
- Which element do you consider a strength in your program?
- Which element could you strengthen or improve on?
- How can you implement those improvements?
- Summarize the discussion. Intentional inclusion of the essential elements will help to ensure that high quality youth development experiences are provided for our young people.

# Activity Two: Small, Medium, or Large?

## Do the Activity

1. Divide participants into groups of 4-5.
2. Distribute a set of the Program Characteristic Cards (included in the kit and also on pp. 28-30) and an Essential Elements pizza handout, (see pg.19) with each element written on a slice to each group.
3. Have one group member read each Program Characteristic card aloud to his or her group.
4. Have the group sort the Program Characteristic Cards on to the Essential Element Pizza by the Essential Element (or slice) supported by that program characteristic.
5. Ask each group to discuss the cards and where they should be placed.

## Share

Once all groups have placed the Characteristic Cards, lead a discussion with the large group to compare how each pizza was “topped”. Ask each group to share the cards they have placed on a different essential element.

## Process

In the large group, discuss the differences.

## Generalize

Was it difficult to place the program practices and characteristics on only one essential element? Why or why not?

## Apply

Ask each group to write 2-3 more program or volunteer characteristics that they feel would support one or more of the essential elements. Write these on the blank cards provided.

## Customer Survey

Use the Target evaluation and/or the retrospective evaluation provided to evaluate this session.





## Digging Deeper

The Essential Elements Checklist in the Curriculum Appendix would be a follow-up activity to apply the eight essential elements to a 4-H program. Take one aspect of the 4-H program (e.g., camp) or a specific event and examine it from an essential elements perspective.

### Contribution

Activity 1 is adapted from a lesson written in 2003 by Theresa M. Ferrari, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development, The Ohio State University, [ferrari.8@osu.edu](mailto:ferrari.8@osu.edu).

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