

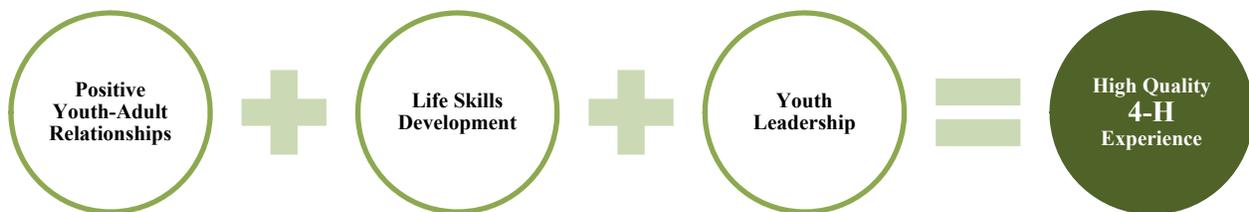
October 2016

From the 4-H Youth Development Advisor, Steven Worker



The 4-H Formula for High Quality Experiences

What is the formula to ensure youth have a high quality learning experience in 4-H? Based on research from Richard Lerner at Tufts University, National 4-H promotes the “Big 3” program elements that need to be present together in every 4-H meeting and activity.



1. **Positive Youth-Adult Relationships** are sustained over time between a young people and adults who are competent, caring, and continually available, for at least a year (such as a mentor, coach, teacher, or 4-H leader). Interactions between youth and adults must be respectful, encouraging, promote a sense of trust and belonging, and be focused on the growth and development of the child.
2. **Life Skills Development** through educational activities that target knowledge, applied skills, interpersonal attributes (self-esteem, confidence, empathy, character), and social skills (teamwork, public speaking). In 4-H, we say that our programs help youth build citizenship, leadership, and life skills!
3. **Youth Leadership** opportunities for youth participation in and leadership of valued family, school, and community activities. In 4-H, members are encouraged to serve in Officer positions, as Junior and Teen Leaders, Committee Chairs, and other informal leadership roles. This also includes youth voice in decision-making at every level: project, Club, and county 4-H activities.

By focusing on these three ingredients in every 4-H activity, youth will be growing their competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring, helping them on a pathway towards thriving and contributing to themselves, their families, and communities.

Further Reading: Richard Lerner’s 2007 book, *The Good Teen: Rescuing Adolescence from the Myths of the Storm and Stress Years*.

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