



State of Global Youth?

Based on global demographic shifts, global youth now possess greater potential to drive economic and social progress, and to threaten regional stability and security. Programs that work to promote development, peace, and stability by empowering youth economically, politically, and socially around the world are key to the development of all young people. Engaging people in positive experiences operates under the principle that such action not only advances the livelihoods of young people, but also enhances U.S. national security and prosperity is a fundamental concept in youth development.

What is positive youth development?

Positive youth development (PYD) is defined as an approach that aims to provide opportunities, services, and support for young people to help in their development of belonging, competence, usefulness and empowerment.

Positive youth development strives to help young people develop the inner resources and skills they need to cope with pressures that might lead to unhealthy and antisocial behaviors. It aims to promote and prevent, not to treat or remediate and assist young people in becoming more centered individuals. Prevention of undesirable behaviors is one outcome of positive youth development, but there are others including the production of self-reliant, self confident adults who can become responsible members of society.

This inclusive definition centers on an approach that includes the voices of youth and the presence of caring adults. It addresses the broader development needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models, which tend to focus on youth problems. Strengths based definition provides for a more natural learning process to occur between youth and adults (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins, 1998; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992), takes into account important development constructs (see below) which when incorporated into youth programs have proven successful for both the youth and adults involved.



Youth Development and Agriculture: A Case from Trinidad and Tobago

A series of youth development projects were developed across the island of Trinidad and Tobago to encourage young farmers and entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture. Through a holistic approach, youth were exposed to the agricultural field through hands on projects, educated by mentors such as commercial farmers or value-chain business owners, and engaged in projects that enabled them to increase farming skills and foster application for the agricultural industry.

Essential Elements and Youth Development in Agriculture

Various frameworks have been identified within youth development research to guide the structure and design of programs (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). One framework that has been most widely used and accepted within the youth development field is the essential elements. The elements are categorized into four key concepts which – belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. These are considered necessary attributes of youth programs striving to create environments conducive to optimizing youth development., especially within the field of agriculture.

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 youth program, 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.

References:

- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (1998). November 13). *Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluation of positive youth development programs*. Retrieved from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/PositiveYouthDev99>
- Carnegie Corporation of New York (1995). *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century*. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Roth, J. L. & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). What exactly is a youth development program? Answers from research and practice. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7, 94-111.

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.