



# Introducing 4-H Clubs to the Four Essential Elements

## Activity Plan Calumet County 4-H Club Training & Needs Assessment

**Intended Audience:**

- Adults and youths attending 4-H club meetings

**Learning Objectives:**

- Youth and adult participants will:
- Understand the Four Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development
  - Assess how well 4-H provides opportunities to meet each of the Essential Elements.

**Life Skills:** Decision-making and Critical Thinking

**Time:** 20-25 minutes

**Supplies Needed:**

- Essential Elements Signs
- Tape
- Youth and Adult Essential Elements Feedback Tool
- 2 Clip boards
- 2 Pens/Pencils

**Do Ahead:**

- Post the Essential Element signs
- Recruit a youth and an adult to record the voting results and discussion to use as an evaluation.

**BACKGROUND:**

For 4-H clubs to be successful and to meet the needs of youth, clubs need to be based on knowledge and research of positive youth development as presented by Dr. Cathann Kress, Director of Youth Development for the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service and National 4-H Headquarters:

- Belonging
- Mastery
- Independence
- Generosity

This activity will help 4-H club members, family, and leaders learn and better understand the Four Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development, and provide feedback on program strengths and weaknesses.

**WHAT TO DO:**

Explain the Four Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development, including the features that comprise each element, starting with Belonging. Provide possible club and project level examples that may help members better understand each of the elements.

- Belonging – A positive relationship with a caring adult; Feeling liked and accepted by your fellow club members; Don't fear being picked on or criticized by others in 4-H
- Mastery – Opportunities to learn new skills and improve your skills over time; Being an active learner and learning from your own mistakes.
- Independence – Opportunities for leadership and decision making
- Generosity – Opportunities to serve other and value service

In order to make this portion of the presentation more interactive and engage the kinesthetic and oral learners, consider assigning body motions and crowd participation to each element: Belonging – Give a self hug and in a soothing voice say "Belonging"; Mastery – Throw arms into the air and yell "Mastery!"; Independence – Stand up proud and in a deep voice say "Independence"; and Generosity – Place hands out in front of you with palms up and kindly say, Generosity."

**Sources:**

- *Learn More about the 4! Overview of the Four Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development.*
- Adapted from: Deb Ivey, 4-H Youth Development Agent/Department Head, Iowa County UW-Extension, 2006. *Introduction to the Four Essential Elements.*
- Prepared by: Ellen Andrews, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Calumet County UW-Extension, January 2008.

**Instructions:**

Now that you have heard all about these 4-H Essential Elements that we try to provide through 4-H, I would like to learn from you about 4-H experiences. First we will start with the youth. As 4-H members, I would like you to think about all the things you do in 4-H and about all the things you have done with your club, as well maybe at project meetings and county 4-H events. I want you to vote on which of the Four Essential Elements you think 4-H does the best at providing, but instead of voting with you hands, you are going to vote with your feet, by getting up and standing by the 4-H Essential Element Puzzle Piece that you are voting for.

After the members have voted, ask them to remain in their groups, discuss why they picked that essential element, and appoint a group spokesman who will share with the entire group 1-2 reasons why their group picked that element.

*Does anyone know what the 4-H motto is? (To Make the Best Better.) This means that even when 4-H is doing really great things, there are always ways that we can make this great 4-H program even better. We are going to vote again, but this time I want you to vote for the Essential Element that you would like to see 4-H do even better at providing.*

After the members have voted with their feet, ask them to again discuss in their groups why they picked that essential element and then share with the entire group 1-2 reasons why their group picked that element.

Once the youth have finished reporting, repeat the processes with all the adults in the room, while an older youth records the results and discussion.

**TALK IT OVER:****Reflect:**

- What element did most of your 4-H club feel 4-H was doing the best at providing?
- Which element did your club feel that 4-H could do even better at providing?
- Why do you think improving this element is important?

**Apply:**

- What could your club do to improve this element in your 4-H club?
- What type of help might you need from 4-H youth and adult leaders to make these improvements happen?