



# SCHOOL-BASED 4-H PROGRAMMING SERIES

## Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)—How They Complement Each Other

### What is Positive Youth Development (PYD)?

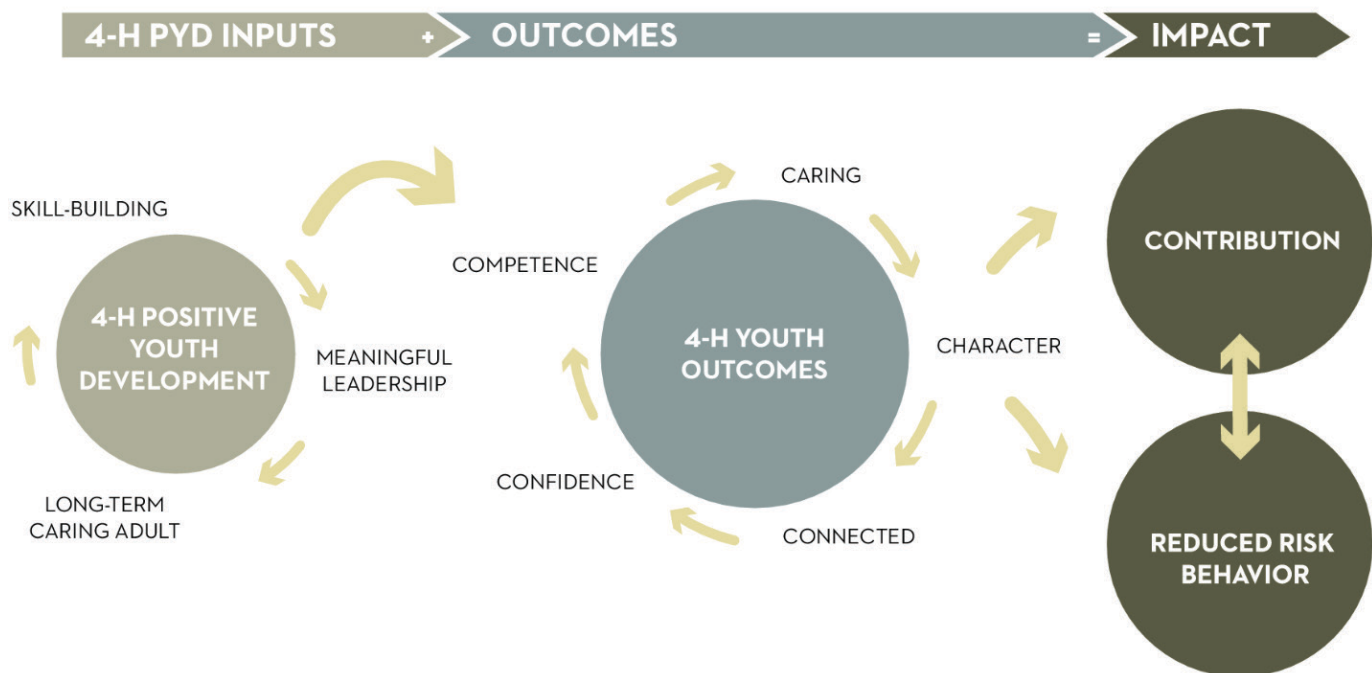
Positive Youth Development, according to Youth.gov (2019) is “an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.”

In short, PYD provides the following three features (Blum, 2003; Lerner, 2003; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003):

- Positive, sustained relationships between youth and adults
- Activities that build important life skills
- Opportunities for youth to use these life skills as both participants in and leaders of valued community activities

The following illustration of *the 4-H Formula for Success* sums up PYD in terms of inputs, outcomes (utilizing the 5Cs of Connection, Caring, Competence, Character, and Confidence), and impacts in a logic-model format.

### 4-H FORMULA FOR SUCCESS



Reprinted from “The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development” (Lerner et al., 2003) with permission of National 4-H Council.

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. 4-H is the nation’s largest youth development organization. Over 230,000 members in the State of Florida help to make up the community of more than 6.5 million young people across America. 4-H is a non-formal, practical educational program for youth. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of Florida Cooperative Extension, a part of the University of Florida/IFAS.

For more information on how 4-H utilizes PYD, refer to Norman & Jordan (2006, 2018 reprint), *Introducing 4-H Youth Development* (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h235>) and *Reviewing 4-H Youth Development Principles* (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h237>).

## What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, otherwise known as CASEL (2019), “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

Some of the features that SEL promotes, according to “Research Brief of Schools: Social and Emotional Learning: The Foundation of Student Success in School, Work and Life” from the University of Illinois (2008) include:

- Providing a safe, caring, participatory environment
- Emphasizing relationships and emotion as part of SEL
- Addressing the needs of the whole child

SEL builds on five competency areas as defined by CASEL (2019):

- **Self-awareness:** recognizing strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”

- **Self-management:** managing stress effectively, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself to set and achieve goals.
- **Social awareness:** understanding the perspectives of others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and empathizing with them.
- **Relationship skills:** Communicating clearly, listening well, cooperating with others, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible decision-making:** Making constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety, and social norms.

## Bringing PYD and SEL Together: How They Overlap

Just as 4-H uses PYD as a framework, schools use SEL as a framework. According to Elias et al. (1997), “when schools attend systematically to students’ social and emotional skills, the academic achievement of children increases, the incidence of problem behaviors decreases, and the quality of the relationships surrounding each child improves. And, [sic] students become the productive, responsible, contributing members of society that we all want.” A whole-program approach with an appropriate curriculum provides the skills necessary for youth to succeed.

The overlaps in PYD and SEL are summarized in the below graphic.



Characteristic	Overlap of PYD and SEL practices	PYD practices supporting SEL practices
<b>Fosters positive developmental relationships with adults</b>	Having a caring adult other than a parent or family member invest in youth allows them to grow developmentally and feel supported. This allows youth to build life skills in regulating emotions in a healthy, safe, supportive setting in order to gain independence.	4-H screens and trains volunteers in support of PYD practices. Opportunities for 4-H to assist school-based sites through PYD youth-development training will help to ensure employees understand the importance of their role as a mentor, role model, and caring adult.
<b>Includes developmentally appropriate practices</b>	At certain ages, youth are developing certain skills; by addressing these needs, youth are able to benefit in their learning styles, competencies, and interests.  4-H follows a common Ages and Stages (Arnold and Gifford, 2014) philosophy of youth in creating lessons that will address the skill attainment based on a youth member’s age and stage of development. SEL uses principles such as Erikson’s eight psychological principles (Child Development Institute, 2018) to address development in youth.	4-H uses appropriate curriculum to teach youth and trains volunteers with the knowledge necessary to effectively utilize the materials.
<b>Encourages goal attainment</b>	Goal setting encourages youth to plan, solve problems, manage time, become independent, and gain further self-directed life skills.	4-H utilizes resources to help youth set goals through curriculum, project books, project reports, etc. These help youth organize their thoughts and reflect upon the progress they have made over the course of their 4-H experience.
<b>Promotes social interactions with peers</b>	Acting appropriately with peers is a learned skill. Providing opportunities for youth to interact reciprocally with peers in a positive environment are essential to teach youth how to react, feel emotions, exhibit respect, resolve conflicts, and develop a concern for others.	4-H clubs and programs emphasize the essential elements (belonging, mastery, independence, generosity). In working with peers and mentors, youth are able to develop interpersonal skills in a supportive setting. To ensure social interactions in school-based settings, youth should be encouraged to participate in business meetings, group projects, community service, and service-learning projects.
<b>Initiates character development</b>	Ethics, morals, and values are inherent to character development. Youth learn through family interactions, peer interactions, and adult interactions on how to behave in an ethically moral manner. Providing opportunities for youth to practice these characteristics is important for youth to learn how to behave responsibly, avoid risky behaviors, and develop.	4-H clubs and programs emphasize the essential elements (belonging, mastery, independence, generosity). Youth learn how to work both independently and cooperatively. Youth are encouraged to abide by policies, rules, and regulations to develop positive characteristics. Community service and service-learning projects assist to develop character.
<b>Takes place in supportive contexts</b>	Allowing youth to gain skills such as confidence, in a supportive setting, is essential to growth development in youth.	4-H is a safe place for youth to fail and provides an open, cooperative, supportive setting. This is done through appropriate training on youth development principles.

Social Emotional Learning promotes knowledge, responsibility, and caring. PYD promotes building life skills, leadership, and relationships. Both philosophies take a whole child approach to working with youth to not only foster learning but also gain independence and life skills that will benefit youth through their childhood years and into adulthood. Some practitioners feel all SEL is PYD but not all PYD is SEL. Either way, they are both youth-development practices. Understanding how PYD and SEL work together while framing it in a context that works toward intentional youth development allows professionals to envision successful partnerships in school-based settings, which is the goal.

For more resources on SEL, refer to:

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University of Illinois Extension. (2008). Research brief of schools: Social and emotional learning: The foundation of student success in school, work and life. Retrieved from: [https://extension.illinois.edu/sel/pdf/sel\\_research\\_brief\\_for\\_schools\\_2008-04-15.pdf](https://extension.illinois.edu/sel/pdf/sel_research_brief_for_schools_2008-04-15.pdf). Accessed 23 May 2019.

Youth.gov. (2019). Positive youth development. Retrieved from <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>. Accessed 23 May 2019.