

It is clear that schools alone cannot prepare youth for their life work. To instill the capabilities of work/life skills in young people, public agencies, organizations, employers, communities, parents, and the school system must work together.

The 4-H Involvement in Workforce Preparation

Michelle Sims

The dramatic increase in the need for a skilled, knowledgeable workforce requires preparing youth for meaningful employment. The Center for 4-H Youth Development's involvement in work and life skills gives youth more opportunities to develop attitudes and values that prepare them to enter adulthood. Students encouraged and trained from a young age to pursue knowledge in a format they find interesting and challenging are ready to successfully face the world.

While deficiencies in reading, writing, and math are the first to appear in the workplace, skills such as problem solving, listening, negotiation, and knowing how to learn, as well as teamwork, self-esteem, leadership, motiva-

tion/goal-setting, organizational effectiveness, employability/career development, speaking and listening skills, and creative thinking are also viewed as essential.

The 4-H Youth Development program includes curriculum and experiences to help youth explore career options. The University of Minnesota Extension Service has a successful history of teaching youth in nonformal educational settings.

According to the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning (1997), "Students are learning both to learn and to work. Learning and working are becoming synonyms. Both require practice, guidance, and support." The Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning defines work as a productive effort that includes both paid employment and unpaid work such as being a student, parenting, homemaking, pursuing a hobby, or volunteering service. Life work refers to work over a lifetime and how that work is fostered and accomplished through planned and unplanned learning experiences.

It is clear that schools alone cannot prepare youth for their life work. To instill the capabilities of work/life skills in young people, public agencies, organizations, employers, communities, parents, and the school system must work together.



4-H programs give young people opportunities to develop attitudes and values that prepare them for adult life.

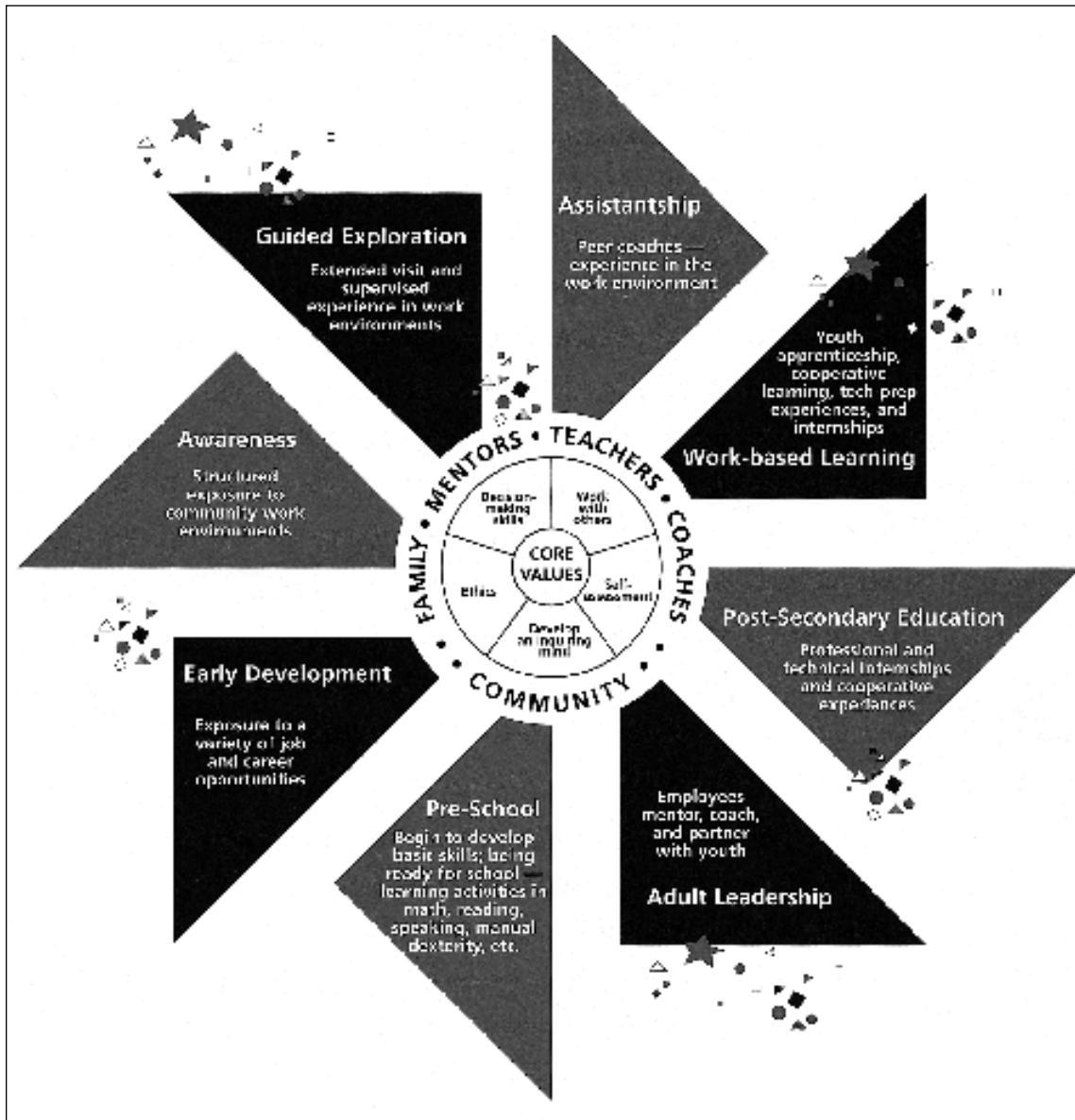


Figure 1 - Workforce Preparation: A Model for Youth Experience
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Workforce Preparation

The National 4-H Council has developed *Workforce Preparation: A Model for Youth Experiences* (Figure 1) to foster collaboration among those involved in workplace skills for youth. The model is described below.

- **Preschool.** In the Preschool phase, children learn about work through play and start to develop basic skills. For instance, an adult might lead a game in which children identify various work-related objects, describing who might use them and how.
- **Early Development.** During Early Development, children ages 5 to 8 explore work environments. They might use blocks and toys to create a model of an actual workplace.
- **Awareness.** In the Awareness phase, children ages 8 to 12 participate in limited exposure to actual work environments and entrepreneurial ventures. In this phase a group of children might open a booth that sells school supplies or used books to their peers.

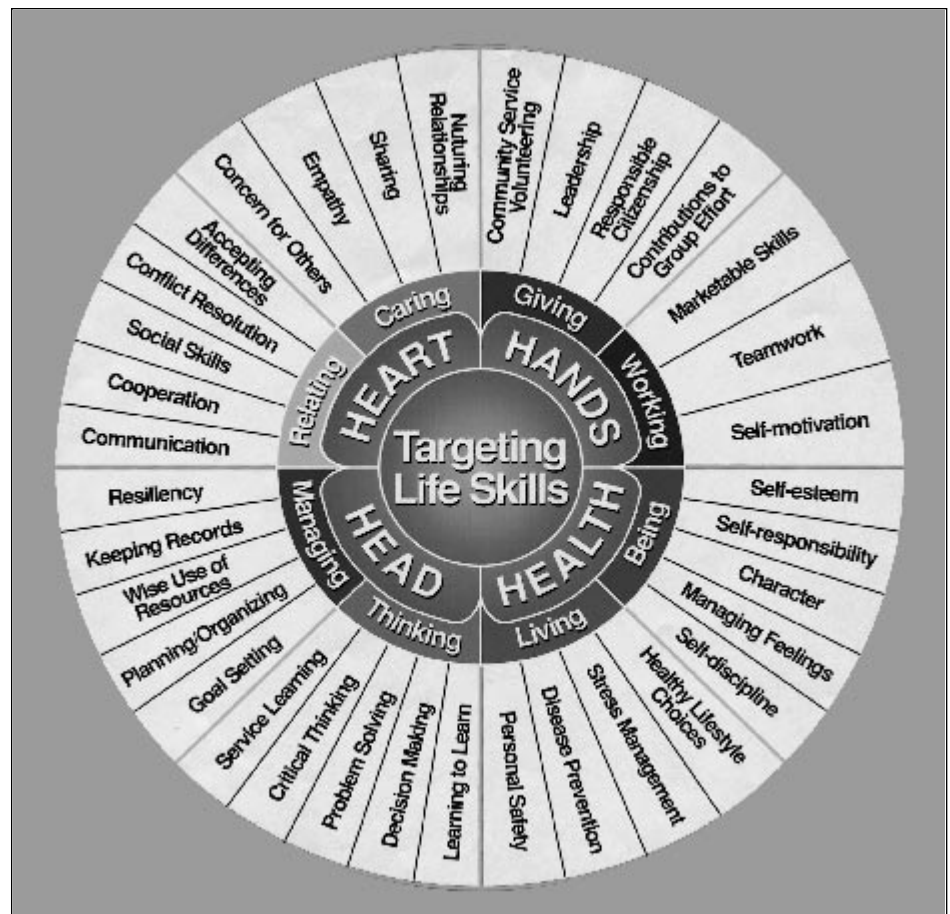
- **Guided Exploration.** Youth ages 12 to 16 gain extended, supervised experience in a work situation during the Guided Exploration phase. They might spend prolonged periods assisting adults at work and learning specific skills, such as filing or data entry.
- **Assistantship.** The Assistantship phase allows middle-school and high-school youth to experience a work environment while mentoring younger children. They might help adults teach skills to children or help orient youngsters to a workplace.
- **Work-based Learning.** Young people ages 16 to 20 can participate in the Work-based Learning phase. These full-fledged work

experiences are supervised, salaried, and structured to integrate work with academic instruction. They might include a position in a hospital, a manufacturing plant, a band, or many other workplace settings.

The model also includes two additional phases for ongoing education.

- **Post-secondary.** The Post-secondary phase allows for student internships.
- **Adult Leadership.** The Adult Leadership phase includes mentoring and volunteering.

Figure 2 - Targeting Life Skills Model
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Life Skills

According to Hendricks (1996), youth development is a process of mental, physical, and social growth during which young people prepare to live a productive and satisfying life within the customs and regulations of society. Hendricks defines life skills as skills that help an individual to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life. Hendricks developed the Targeting Life Skills (TLS) model (Figure 2).

In the TLS model, life skills categories are divided on the basis of the four Hs from the 4-H clover: Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. There are two general categories of skills included for each of the four headings. The purpose of this model is to provide a simple way of coordinating life skill development with ages and tasks so programs will be developmentally appropriate and more effective in achieving identified outcomes. With the TLS model, program planners can:

- help youth reach their full potential through a positive approach to life skill development,
- deliver information and skill practice at the appropriate developmental level for the target audience,

- write specific, measurable learning objectives for life skill development,
- complete an instructional plan that creates experiences based on experiential learning theory to achieve life skill development and identifying observable indicators of change, and
- use these indicators to effectively evaluate program impact.

Conclusion

The workforce preparation and life skills models presented here illustrate 4-H and Extension responses to the need to prepare youth for whatever profession they choose later in life. 4-H is dedicated to educating youth in future work/life skills to prepare them to choose and follow their desired careers. 4-H is also dedicated to helping schools, businesses, and families give youth the foundation they need to succeed.

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