



## Using the Danish System to cultivate youth who THRIVE!

### Empower Youth to THRIVE!

“To Make the Best Better,” our well-known 4-H motto, implies that we need to know what our best is before we can make it better. Our motto asks how well we’re doing now, and encourages us to consider how and where we can improve.

A 4-H project is not an end in itself and does not illustrate all the learning that takes place before and after the project is complete; it displays a portion of what the 4-H member is capable of doing and shows what they have accomplished and created.

The TOTAL development of the 4-H member is the most important. Creating, sharing, exhibiting and judging can help 4-H’ers develop various life skills in positive and healthy ways. These 4-H projects help young people gain technical and soft skills as they move through each project, contributing to academic and vocational success.

### What is the Danish System?

In 4-H, we target the learning process as a way to help young people build essential life skills to thrive. The Danish system is a method to evaluate a participant’s project relative to the standards developed for that class or contest. This system is not used to evaluate participants against other participants or other items. The Danish system highlights areas of success and topics that may need improvement to encourage youth to challenge themselves, set goals and receive constructive criticism. The participant’s hard work is recognized as each participant learns to improve their skills “to make the best better.” While no evaluation system is perfect, the Danish system helps 4-H develop top quality youth instead of focusing on blue ribbon projects.

### 4-H is Positive Youth Development

Research shows that participation in high quality 4-H programs increases thriving in youth, and thriving youth achieve important developmental outcomes, such as academic motivation and important skills needed to enter the workforce.



**BLUE – Excellent.** The exhibitor meets the standard developed. This does not indicate perfection; rather, it rewards average or above average work. Minor faults are corrected immediately when possible.

#### Potential THRIVE message:

- Challenge your 4-H’er by asking what steps they might change to build on this project to foster the growth mindset.
- Empower youth voice. Identify their unique gifts and talents and help them identify how they could help someone else with the skills they used or this project.



**RED – Good.** The exhibitor didn’t meet all of the standards developed but is making great progress. Major and minor faults occurred.

#### Potential THRIVE message:

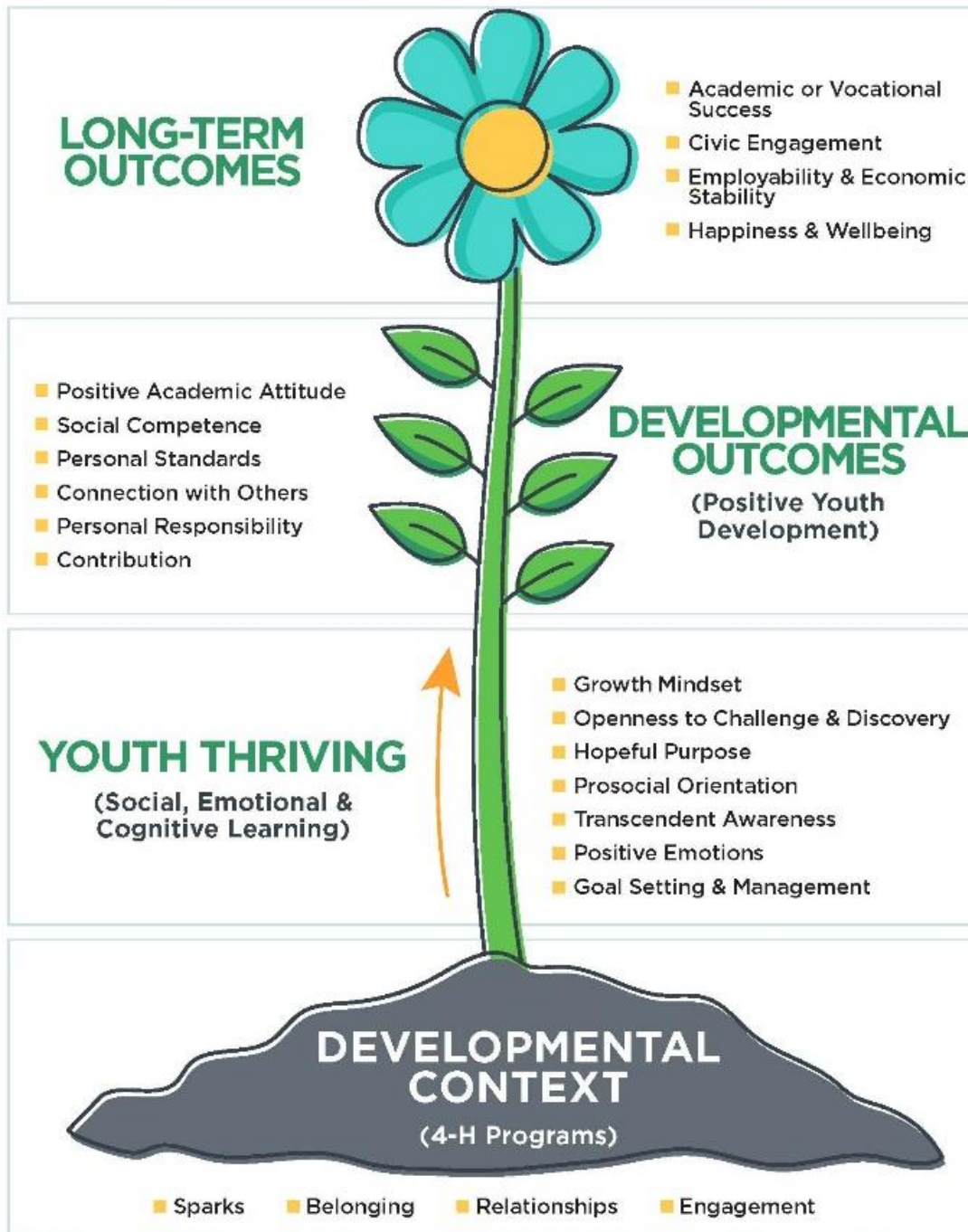
- Teach the importance of growth mindset. Through effort and hard work, help your 4-H’er set goals to get better. What can they try differently?
- Self-Regulation, or the ability to make choices with a goal in mind, is a key skill for goal setting and ultimately perseverance or “grit.”



**WHITE – Fair.** Participant did their best, but many improvements are needed to meet the pre-established standards. Several major, minor and severe faults occurred. This includes disqualification.

#### Potential THRIVE message:

- Teach youth to manage emotions effectively and positively. Express the great learning opportunities that come with receiving a white ribbon.
- When youth reach roadblocks to their goals, encourage them to reflect on what didn’t work and help them develop new strategies for achieving the goal.
- Reward your 4-H’er for taking a healthy risk simply in participating.
- Help 4-H’ers develop reappraisal skills by pointing out other sides to the situation and encourage perspective talking.



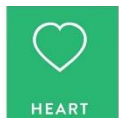
Youth who achieve developmental outcomes are better prepared for a successful transition to adulthood



= Academic and vocational success to prepare for any career



= Employability and economic stability



= Contribution to others through building relationships and civic engagement



= Happiness, encouragement, and well-being

