Fact Sheet
Promote Positive Youth Development in Online Learning

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Online learning environments may provide opportunities for youth to experience positive youth development similar to physical learning environments. The 4-H youth development program is well-positioned to foster innovation for online learning that promotes youth development.

Positive youth development occurs from an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes by building on young peoples' strengths and assets through positive youth-adult relationships, life skills development, and youth leadership.[i]

Relationships	Skill Building
Positive Youth Development	
Youth Leadership	Safety

Practices. Positive youth development may be promoted in online learning environments with adaptations to ensure core practices are integrated, including:

- *Safety* is maintained in all functions so youth experience physical and emotional well-being.
- *Youth-Adult Relationships* are an essential component. Youth need to have positive, sustained, and trusting relationships with caring, competent, and committed adults. Interactions between youth and adults must be respectful, encouraging, promote a sense of trust and belonging, and be focused on the growth and development of the child.
- *Life Skills Development* through educational activities targeting knowledge, applied skills, interpersonal attributes (self-esteem, confidence, empathy, character), and social skills (teamwork, public speaking).
- *Youth Leadership* opportunities in valued family, school, and community activities. Youth are engaged in decision making and able to actively participate and contribute.
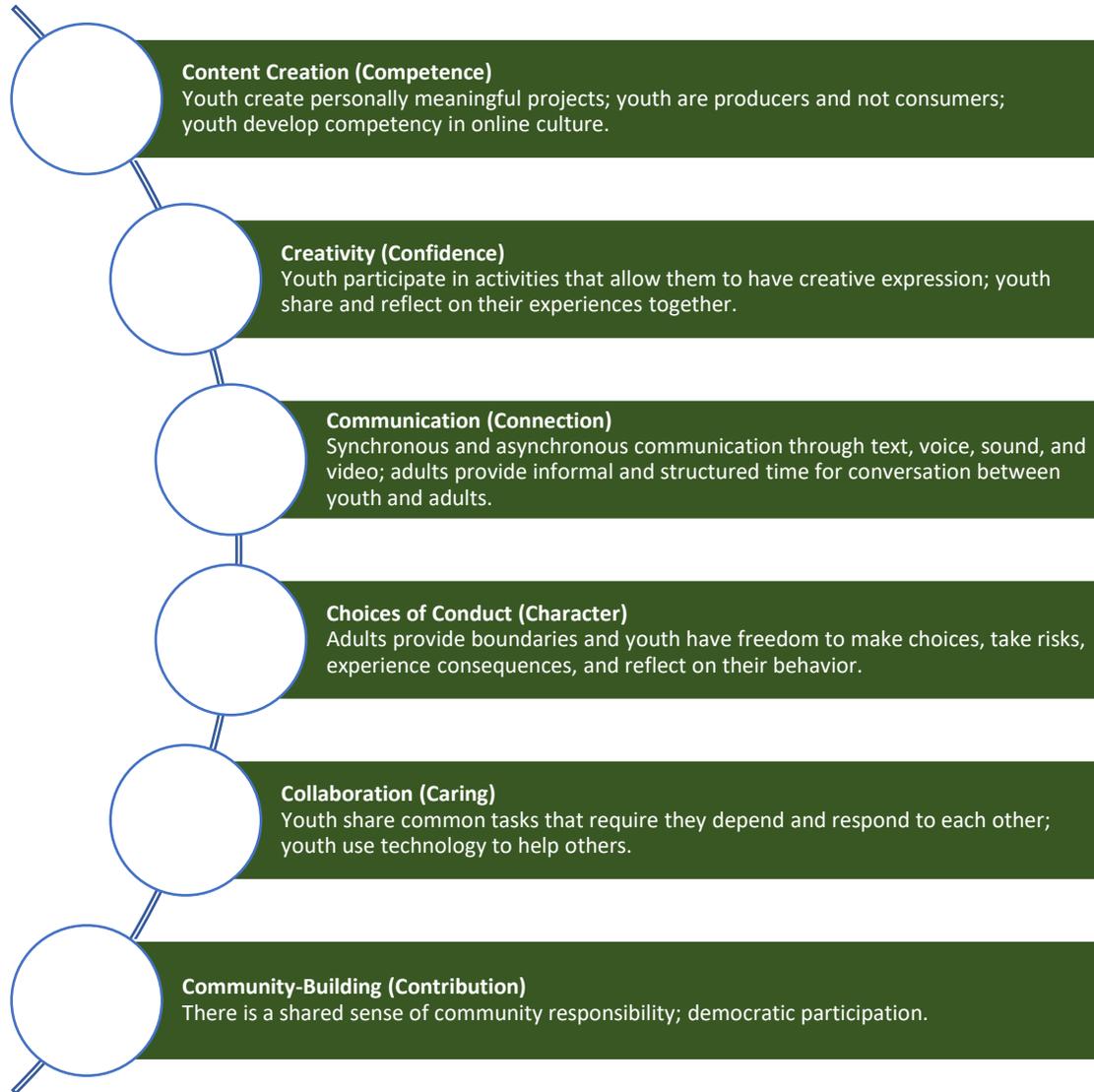
Outcomes. When implemented well, positive youth development will occur in online environments and achieve similar outcomes to physical environments. There are 6 Cs of positive youth development[ii]:

- Competence - The ability to be successful in social situations (conflict management), make good decisions, in school, and at work. Includes one's ability
- Confidence - An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy.
- Connection - Positive bonds with people, institutions, peers, family, school, and community.
- Character - Respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity.
- Caring - A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.
- Contribution - The capacity to participate effectively by caring for themselves, and by giving of themselves at home, in the community, and in civic life.

Alternatives for the term "online learning" include e-learning, distance learning, virtual learning, web-based learning.

Positive Technological Development[iii]

The table below may be useful for adults in planning a 4-H educational project so that it promotes all the 6 Cs. The positive technological development framework provides guidance on the types of digital activities, online experiences, and programs that promote positive technological development each linked to a C. The positive technological development framework acts as a checklist for adults in selecting and adapting activities and experiences, so youth have opportunities to create content, be creative, communicate, choose their conduct, collaborate, and build community. Strengthening these six aspects will help promote positive youth development.

Content Creation (Competence)
Youth create personally meaningful projects; youth are producers and not consumers; youth develop competency in online culture.

Creativity (Confidence)
Youth participate in activities that allow them to have creative expression; youth share and reflect on their experiences together.

Communication (Connection)
Synchronous and asynchronous communication through text, voice, sound, and video; adults provide informal and structured time for conversation between youth and adults.

Choices of Conduct (Character)
Adults provide boundaries and youth have freedom to make choices, take risks, experience consequences, and reflect on their behavior.

Collaboration (Caring)
Youth share common tasks that require they depend and respond to each other; youth use technology to help others.

Community-Building (Contribution)
There is a shared sense of community responsibility; democratic participation.

[i] Lerner, R.M., Lerner, J.V., Lewin-Bizan, S., Bowers, E.P., Boyd, M.J., Mueller, M.K., et al. (2011). Positive youth development: Process, programs, and problematics. *Journal of Youth Development, 6*(3), 41-64

[ii] Lerner, R. (2004). *Liberty: Thriving and civic engagement among America's youth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

[iii] Bers, M. (2012). *Designing Digital Experiences for Positive Youth Development*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.