4-H Youth Development Movement Essay, Research Paper

4-H’s goal is to advance the 4-H youth development movement to build a world in which youth and adults learn, grow and work together as catalysts for positive change. 4-H serves youth through a variety of methods including organized clubs, school enrichment groups, special interest groups, individual study programs, camps, school-age child care programs and instructional television programs. They try to promote power of youth, and involvement of citizens in their communities and government, mostly the children.

Youth development is the process of growing up and developing one’s capacities in positive ways. This typically takes place in the context of the family, the peer group, the school, and the neighborhood or community. Many young people do not have the advantages that promote optimal, healthy development of the body, mind, and spirit. Many youth do not have opportunities to experience positive stimulation for growth or nurturing support from family, friends, and community. Youth development is a natural process, but it cannot be left to chance.

“Youth development ought not to be viewed as a happenstance matter. While children can, and often do, make the best of difficult circumstances, they cannot be sustained and helped to grow by chance arrangements or makeshift events. Something far more intentional is required: a place, a league, a form of association, a gathering of people where value is placed on continuity, predictability, history, tradition, and a chance to test out new behaviors. ”

Nonformal education is organized, systematic teaching and learning carried on outside the formal school system. Generally, nonformal education is sponsored by community groups that provide particular types of teaching and learning experiences for specific youth populations. It is not an alternative to formal education offered in the schools; it is another kind of education essential for helping young people grow to optimal maturity.

The schools that provide formal education are “society’s most legitimate and formal system of teaching and learning.” (LaBelle, 1981, p. 315) They are typically chronologically graded and hierarchically structured. They offer credits, grades, and diplomas to document learning and achievement. Increasingly, schools are asked to document more closely the competency of their learners as proof that the credits, grades, and diplomas have real value.

For several reasons, nonformal education provides the ideal system for youth development education to take place.

? Youth development organizations are most often voluntary, reflecting the values, priorities, and goals of the adults and young people who support them.

? Nonformal youth development programs identify their own mission, their curriculum priorities, their population of learners, and their teaching methods.

? Nonformal youth programs commonly use club structures, camps, sporting activities, regular group meetings, expressive arts, and youth conducted events to carry out their educational work.

? Nonformal programs operate largely outside the scope of public funding and public policy directives, hence they can respond to community-based agendas.

? Nonformal programs typically reward learning, achievement, and positive growth through recognition and incentives such as certificates, ribbons, badges, and increased opportunities for leadership.