

National 4-H Learning Working Group DRAFT Definition of Learning in 4-H - June 2015

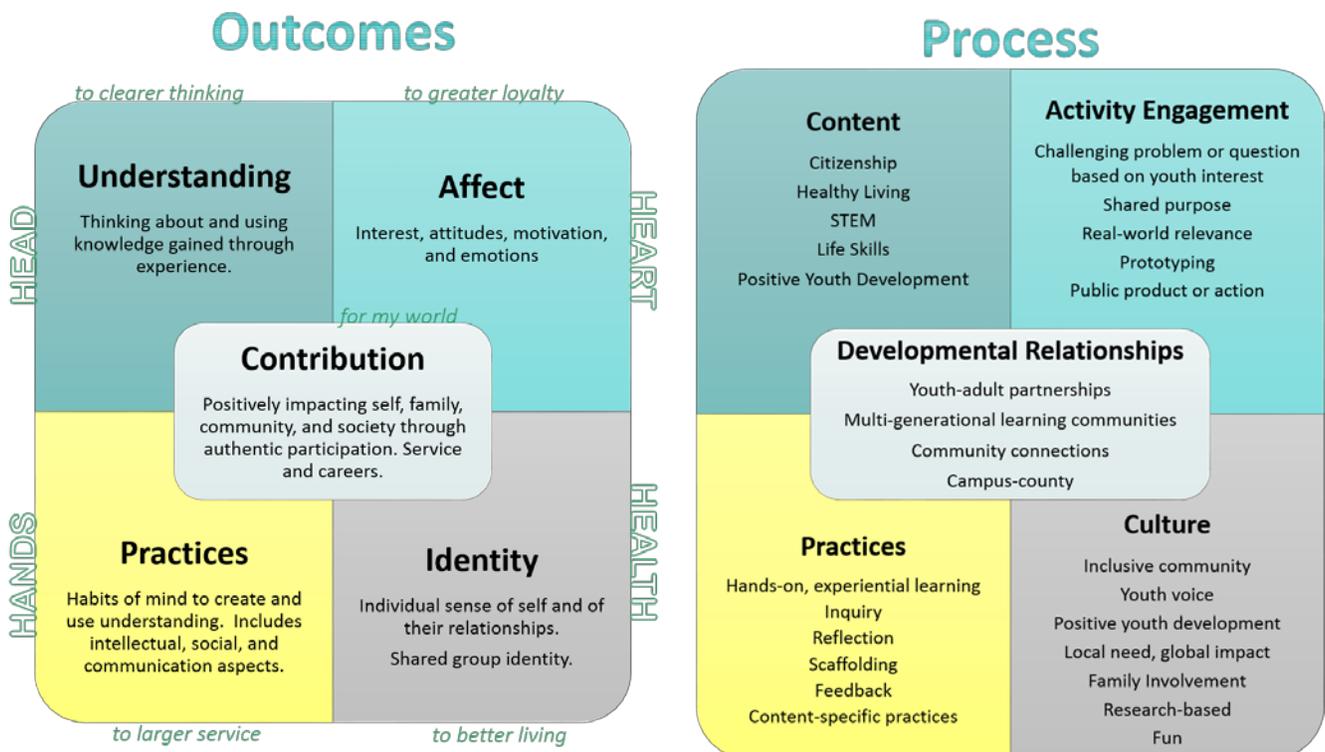
Theoretical Definition of Learning Grounded in the Scholarly Literature:

Learning is the progressive and purposeful familiarity, use, and transformation of cultural tools and practices including physical artifacts and symbols (such as language) that influence one’s changing and continuous capacity to act in and upon the world. Learners construct their own knowledge through sense-making of experiences. This process of learning is mediated and oriented through culture, is situated in cultural communities in which one participates, and emphasizes culturally-determined goals leading to culturally-valued development. The definition of learning strives to balance constructivist and sociocultural perspectives; see Barab & Duffy (2012); Dewey (1938); Fosnot (1996); Lave and Wenger (1991); Rogoff (2003); Vygotsky (1978).

Learning Applied in a 4-H Context:

Outcomes: 4-H programs emphasize supporting young people to take active roles in their own learning and growth across all domains of their life, expanding their capacity to achieve the successes they want in life, and to thrive. Learning involves a change in young people, which may include intertwined aspects of knowledge, reasoning and process skills, interests and attitudes, motivations, cultural practices, contribution, and identity. 4-H helps youth find personal and career pathways in life. Youth develop their agency, belonging, and competence while becoming engaged leaders in their communities to positively impact the world.

Processes: 4-H learning activities are experiential, grounded in positive youth development approaches, based on young people’s interests, and provides skill-building opportunities with real-world application. Developmental relationships are the heart of 4-H Learning. Learning experiences happen through participation in activities, experiences, and through social interaction guided by caring adults and peers. Learning experiences are designed for frequency and duration that build learning over time.



Relevant Literature

The Prevailing Metaphors for Learning: Acquisition versus/and Participation

Barab, S. A. & Duffy, T. (2012). From practice fields to communities of practice. In D. Jonassen & S. Land (Eds.), *Theoretical Foundations of Learning Environments* (2nd ed., pp. 29-65). New York: Routledge.

Greeno, J. G., Collins, A. M., & Resnick, L. B. (1996). Cognition and learning. In D. Berliner and R. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (pp. 15-46). New York: MacMillian.

Sfard, A. (1998). On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 4-13.

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Sociocultural Perspectives of Learning and Cognition

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Nasir, N. S. & Hand, V. M. (2006). Exploring sociocultural perspectives on race, culture, and learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(4), 449-475.

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Constructivist and Experiential Perspectives

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Touchstone.

Fenwick, T. J. (2000). Expanding conceptions of experiential learning: a review of the five contemporary perspectives on cognition. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 50(4), 243-272.

Fosnot, C. T. (1996). Constructivism: A psychological theory of learning. In C.T. Fosnot (Ed.), *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives and practice* (pp. 8-33). New York: Teachers College Press.

Out-of-School Time Learning Environments

Bevan, B., & Michalchik, V. (2013). Out-of-school time STEM: It's not what you think. In B. Bevan, P. Bell, R. Stevens, & A. Razfar (Eds.), *LOST Opportunities: Learning in Out-of-School Time* (pp. 201-217). New York: Springer.

Blumenfeld, P., Marx, R., & Harris, C. (2006). Learning environments. In W. Damon & R. Lerner (Eds.) *Handbook of Child Psychology. Volume 4: Child Psychology in Practice. Sixth Edition* (pp.297-342).

Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Vadeboncoeur, J.A. (2006). Engaging young people: Learning in informal contexts. *Review of Research in Education*, 30, 239-278.