

Effective learning environments intentionally connect home, school, and community.

(verbatim from "Community-Based Learning. Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship)

Positive youth development theory has re-evaluated how adults view young people and the challenges they face. At its center is awareness of young people's strengths. Positive growth is most likely to occur in an environment that recognizes and builds on young peoples' abilities rather than simply working to prevent weaknesses. In Karen Pittman's words, "problem-free is not fully prepared."⁶⁵

Positive youth development refers to an ongoing process in which meaningful content, practice, and opportunities for active participation allow young people build the skills, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences that equip them for life. It is also a deliberate approach for working with young people that can be implemented in various settings. Its practices are grounded in the tenants of developmental theory beginning with the notion that young people develop at various rates along several dimensions—intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.⁽⁶⁶⁾ It recognizes that supportive environments promote growth in all these areas. Following psychologist Abraham Maslow's⁶⁷ well known hierarchy, it calls for learning environments that address young people's basic needs so they can successfully meet higher order challenges. It acknowledges Urie Bronfenbrenner's ⁽⁶⁸⁾ understanding that young people experience the world in concentric, expanding circles of family, school, community, and the larger society. Effective learning environments find ways to intentionally connect all of the systems that affect young people's lives—home, school, and community.

65. K. J. Pittman and W. P. Fleming, "A New Vision: Promoting Youth Development" (Washington DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, September 1991). [Written transcript of live testimony by Karen J. Pittman given before The House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families.] Also see K. Pittman, M. Irby, and T. Ferber, "Unfinished Business: Further Reflections on a Decade of Promoting Youth Development," *Youth Development: Issues and Challenges* (Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 2000). [Retrieved from <http://www.ppv.org/indexfiles/pubsindex.html>]

66. For a discussion on origins of the field of positive youth development, see R. Catalano et al., *Positive Youth Development in The United States: Research Findings on Evaluations of Positive Youth Development Programs* (Washington, DC: US Department Of Health and Human Services and the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, November 1998).

67. Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

68. Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<http://www.communityschools.org/CCSDocuments/CBLFinal.pdf>