

**Title: Educational Value of 4-H Competitive Events as Perceived by 4-H Participants**

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***Description:*** Competitive events are a major component of 4-H programs. Each year hundreds of youth participate in 4-H competitive events. Literature on competitions indicates both positive and negative effects on participants. The purpose of this study was to determine the educational value of 4-H competitive events as perceived by 4-H participants. One-hundred eighty 4-Hers who participated in the State Achievement Days provided data for this study.

***Major Findings:*** Youth perceive competitive events as helping them to learn new things, develop life skills, set goals, enhance family social relationships, and strive for excellence.

On the other hand, youth are somewhat concerned about excessive parent involvement, unethical practices and unhealthy characteristics that are prevalent in current competitive events.

Participants indicated that parents and their older siblings were very helpful in preparing them for competitions. Parents, leaders, and extension educators helped youth in preparing for competitions.

An overwhelming majority (92%) indicated that 4-H State Achievement Days provided opportunities for them to understand diversity.

Demographic characteristics (educational level and residence) were not related to perceived value of competitions.

Significant relationship existed between gender and perceived value of competitions; male participants tended to perceive negative effects of competitions much higher (53%) than female participants (41%).

Prior participation in 4-H competitions was positively related to perceived value of competitions. Those who participated tended to place high value for competitions compared to non-participants.

