

4-H Presentation Contest in Homeschool Learning: A Case Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to determine why homeschool teachers in Tazewell County, Virginia support and implement the Virginia 4-H presentations program and what potential life skills are learned by students. The theoretical framework for this study was the Experiential Learning Theory and Model. A qualitative case study was developed to determine why teachers utilize the contest and what potential life skills they feel students learn. The participants of this study were two Tazewell County homeschool teachers that implemented the program and subsequent contest each year with students. Teachers participated in a pre and post-interview that was audio recorded and transcribed. Themes that emerged included potential life skills learned and provided a better understanding as to why this contest has been supported for over 25 years. Recommendations from the research include conducting a similar study throughout the state to examine a larger sample. Practitioner recommendations include introducing new ways to implement the contest into teacher's educational curriculum and share other teachers' rubrics and lesson plans for this contest. Both would be beneficial in creating a more universal contest.

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Introduction

Background and Setting

Presentations continue to be a cornerstone of the 4-H Youth Development Program. Over time, the presentation program in 4-H has expanded to include competitions and various public speaking formats. A public presentation is a talk given by a 4-H member in front of a group. Virginia 4-H is rich with learning experiences in which young people work with adults and volunteers to learn by doing. 4-H is the youth development education program of Virginia Cooperative Extension that is in partnership between Virginia Tech and Virginia State University. Virginia 4-H provides many opportunities to youth ages 5-19 with a variety of curriculums, programs, clubs, and contests. 4-H presentations are one of the many learning opportunities and contests provided for youth ages 9-19 (“4-H & Youth Development at VSU”, n.d.). In Tazewell County, 4-H presentations are often the first experience youth have with a 4-H contest. 4-H presentation contests allow members the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills (Norman & Jordan, 2006). Youth have the opportunity to teach or inform their peers about a topic of their interest. In today’s society, the ability to clearly communicate with others is vital (Borden, Perkins & Hawkey, 2014).

Every 4-H homeschool club in Tazewell County participates in the 4-H presentations contest at the club, county, and district level. 4-H presentations in Tazewell County can be developed in a demonstration or an informative approach. A demonstration presentation asks the participant to teach the audience how to do something and an informative presentation is when the participant is informing the audience about a certain topic. By preparing students to give their first 4-H presentation, teachers and the researcher hope to teach students essential life skills to help them become successful adults in society. The homeschool club teachers will be the target

for the study as each group varies greatly on how they prepare students for the presentation contest. This case study will compare the two preparation methods most used and how they vary in developing potential life skills.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of completing this case study is to compare the two methods used by homeschool teachers to prepare students for 4-H presentations and determine what life skills are learned based on the preparation methods. 4-H presentation contests have been active since the early 1900's (Borden, Perkins & Hawkey, 2014), but with little to no studies on why it continues to be a popular contest among schools and clubs across the nation have been conducted. For Tazewell County 4-H to continue this contest, it is important to understand if the contest is actually helping teachers and students. Tazewell County 4-H Homeschool Clubs have been conducting 4-H presentations for 2 years and over 25 years in the public-school system. As new students enter the homeschool clubs, it is an expectation they will participate in this contest. During this case study both pre and post interviews were conducted with participating teachers to help determine their motives, teaching methods, and expectations for students during the 4-H presentations contest.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this project are:

1. What teaching methods do homeschool group leaders use to prepare students for the 4-H presentations contest?
2. What skills do teachers report that students gain from participating in the 4-H presentations contest?

Project Objectives

The objectives for this case study were to (1) evaluate the various ways 4-H presentations are orchestrated in Tazewell County Homeschool Clubs, (2) determine teacher motives and support for the 4-H presentations contest; and to (3) study what potential life skills teachers feel were gained by students from this contest. These objectives were decided by the researcher along with the homeschool club teachers. The goal of the study was for teachers and the researcher to look at the two preparation methods used in Tazewell County and how teachers felt the contest affected life skill development in youth and how it related to the Experiential Learning Model.

Limitations

The project was limited to the number of teachers who agreed to participate in the study and implemented the presentations contest in Tazewell County, VA. All reasonable efforts were made to work with each teacher in the two homeschool groups. Limitations for this study was the current COVID-19 pandemic and how it changed the usual 4-H presentations process. Another limitation was the pandemic forcing 4-H meetings to be virtual putting strain on students, parents, and teachers.

Literature Review

Virginia 4-H currently has 188,563 youth members enrolled and over 3,000 of those youth members are located in Tazewell County, VA. Youth 4-H members in Tazewell County have the opportunity to take part in 4-H contests including the 4-H Presentation contest. Americans spend 50%–80% of the day communicating, two-thirds of that in talking (Klemmer & Snyder, 2006). In Virginia 4-H, a presentation is designed as informative, demonstration, or even a dramatic reading. Presentation contests give youth the opportunity to inform an audience at a young age. Most of the 4-H presentation curriculum is delivered through a 4-H elementary

school enrichment programs or 4-H Homeschool Clubs in collaboration with Virginia Cooperative Extension. 4-H presentations do not only help gain self-confidence but can also instill many other vital skills needed today (Mary & Ryan, 2020).

Virginia 4-H Presentations

Virginia 4-H provides a 4-H presentations contest guide along with a tip sheet provided in Appendix C and score sheet for guidance when completing this contest. The guide provided in Appendix B provides a description of the contest, levels of competition, and the rules (Jamison, 2015). The tip sheet provides suggested tips for teachers and participants when preparing for the contest. This document outlines the different methods on how a presentation can be organized as a demonstration or illustrated talk and the steps to organize note cards and other props. The score sheet is the official scoring system to be used for the 4-H presentations in Virginia. The Danish system is used with ribbons being awarded in 3 colors based on the numerical score:

- Blue – 100-90
- Red – 75-89
- White – 74 or below

This system is often used within 4-H because everyone whose work fulfills minimum requirements receives a ribbon. If all the projects are excellent, they can all receive a blue award. This system gives every 4-H member some type of recognition for their work that was done. It also helps youth recognize the need for improvement. 4-H strives to teach youth that quality of work is more important than the contest itself, is a learn by doing process, and there is always more than one way of doing well (Bethard, 1994).

Homeschool students who participate in the 4-H presentations have the following learning objectives to meet. These objectives are formatted by the homeschool teachers using the guidance of the Virginia homeschool requirements (Virginia Department of Education, 2018).

Mastery of skills

- Development of organizational skills (speech resources and materials)
- Speaking in public
- Learning about the subject presented
- Recognizing the importance of getting the facts and obtaining all of the information on a subject
- Learning how to teach others

Independence

- Setting priorities
- Managing time
- Developing skills and confidence for leadership and self-discipline

Generosity

- “Doing something valued by others raises feelings of self-worth and competence”
- Helping other 4-H’ers through the process
- Developing a pleasing personal appearance before an audience
- Sharing information

Belonging

- Support from parents, leaders, judges

- Learning and working together
- Group participation

Life Skills

4-H focuses on developing skills that are healthy and productive for both youth and their communities. The Hendricks model (Maass, Wilken, Jordan, Culen, & Place, 2006) is used extensively in 4-H as it addresses the skills within the five competency areas that youth development should address. Each homeschool club has a poster displayed of the Hendricks Model in the classroom or meeting location to utilize during 4-H presentations and many have adopted this model for other assignments. Virginia 4-H focuses on the head, heart, hands, and health competencies. Life skills are needed for growth and development and by understanding this structure, professionals, volunteers, and parents will know the expectations and goals the organization has for its participants (Norman & Jordan, 2006). Groups of youth have previously been interviewed about their public speaking experience and nearly 90% reported they gained greater self-confidence throughout the process and contest. Additionally, 50% of the participants shared that participation sparked an interest in learning more in-depth information about their topic. By implementing youth presentations, there is an increase in communication skills, goal setting, and teamwork skills. Results from this study concluded that most youth organizations could potentially enhance life skills by incorporating some type of public speaking in their programs (Silliman, 2009). 4-H and other youth development programs supplement the development of 36 essential life skills and 4-H alumni ranked public speaking skills as the top life skill they were taught as a result of their participation in 4-H (Maas, Wilken, Jordan, Culen, & Place, 2006). The life skills learned through 4-H programs in general are those which contribute positively to productive, healthy, and competent lives (Junge, Manglallan,

Raskauskas, 2003). Other similar organizations such as FFA, Future Homemakers, and various sports organizations also provided evidence of fostering the development of this life skills (Maass, Wilken, Jordan, Culen, & Place, 2006). Figure 1 highlights the Targeting Life Skills Model as mentioned above (National 4-H Organization, 2013).

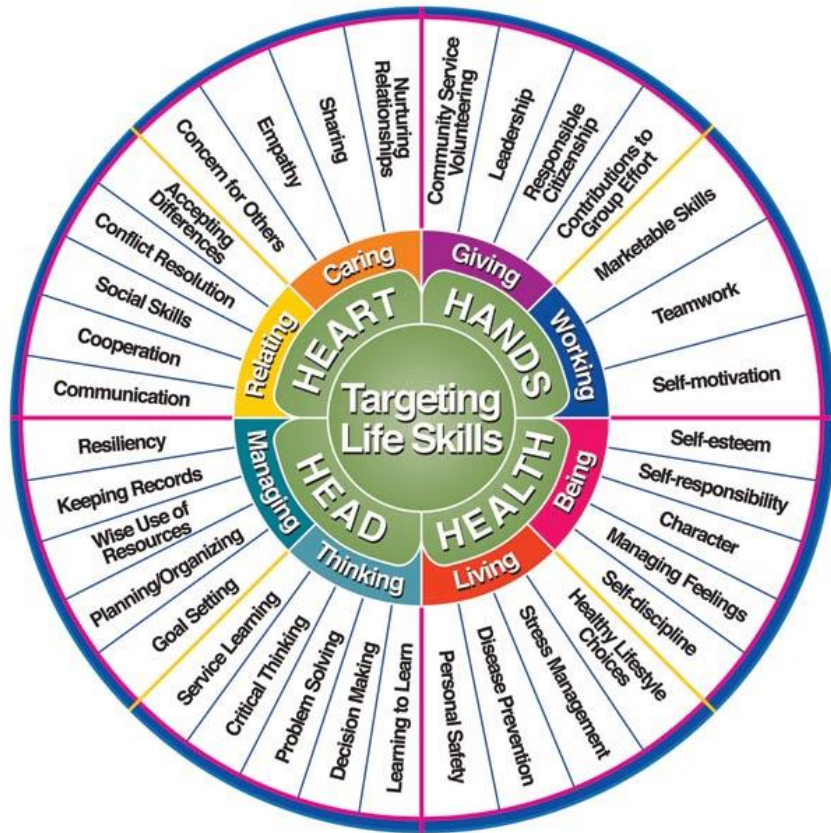


Figure 1

(National 4-H Organization, 2013)

4-H Homeschool Programs

Homeschooling has seen an increase from 10% to 15% a year in when looking at 2005 averaging about 37,000 homeschooled students in Virginia (Ray, 2005). Currently, about 43,500 Virginia students study at home instead of attending a public or private school (Belt, 2019). This

growing audience presents an opportunity for 4-H programs to assist homeschool families in reaching their educational goals, while increasing the reach of 4-H. A 4-H homeschool program involves coordinating enrichment classes and field trips for homeschool families. Enrichment classes use 4-H curriculum taught by volunteers, partners, and/or 4-H staff during the school day. There tend to be two broad categories of rationales for homeschooling: (1) empirical — claims of greater efficiency, effectiveness, or pedagogical appropriateness; and (2) ideological – often informed by a religious or political disposition (Brewer & Lubienski, 2016). Research affirms that although homeschooling parents are not worried about their children’s social development, they do care about it (Medlin, 2006). In fact, they are strongly committed to providing positive socialization experiences for their children.

Contest Preparation

There are numerous ways teachers can prepare youth for presentations or public speaking. Often, the first step is to implement Experiential Learning by allowing students to brainstorm ideas and begin researching their topic. Then supplemental items like a rubric or structure web is often provided to help organize the information gathered (Barnard, 2017). Once information is organized it is ready to be written on paper or note cards. Teachers usually mention to students that this is not a script, just a supplemental item. After this is complete, preparing youth to know the room or surroundings is a good first step when preparing for a presentation (Nikitina, 2011). Practicing the presentation out loud helps to develop voice control and make eye contact with the audience, giving the presenter get a more accurate feel for how much time the presentation will take (Bell, Murison, & Warman, 2014). Being familiar with the presentation material is vital as well as practicing the presentation at home will help one feel confident in this type of contest. Simply picking a topic one is familiar with and interested in

typically helps youth feel more comfortable when speaking in front of an audience (Stuart, 2013). It is important to help youth understand they don't have to apologize for being nervous because most of the time, the audience doesn't even notice if it isn't brought to attention. In general, most everyone wants the presenter to succeed in a youth competition (Purdue, 2007).

Partnering

Many teachers and 4-H agents partner when preparing for 4-H presentation contests. In 2002, 94% of 4-H agents responded they had a current relationship with their schools and homeschool groups in the county across the United States (Mincemoyer, 2002). The other 6% identified barriers preventing the partnership such as the reluctance of school administration, lack of promotional materials, and lack of Cooperative Extension staff. With extension staff partnering with schools, homeschool groups, and children, it creates a youth mentoring situation promoting positive youth development. 4-H educators and teachers work together to provide the guidance and knowledge to encourage youth to take the presentation contest seriously (Liang, Spencer, West, & Rappaport, 2012). 4-H agents use social media as a tool to communicate with potential and current stakeholders. Social media communication can help maintain or increase stakeholder involvement in the 4-H program because a large percentage of the population is active on social media (Beattie, Lamm, Bunch, & Lundy, 2019). Often, interested stakeholder such as teacher follow up with a meeting with the agent to help develop a plan to incorporate 4-H presentations within the classroom to develop skills that can be used within the classroom and adulthood. 4-H presentation contests are often organized with schools or clubs as a school-level contest with winners advancing to a county contest. The agent may come into the classroom monthly for various 4-H youth development lessons. During the presentations contest at the school or club level, the agent visits to present the basics and tips on 4-H presentations and the

teacher helps students work individually with their project at school making use of the computer and library for resources. Other external partners are beneficial to have as judges for contests like the 4-H presentations (Terry, Harder & Pracht, 2011). This may include a county Farm Bureau Women's committee member or other youth organization in the area. There are also over 14,000 Virginia 4-H volunteers that are a vital asset when partnering with schools and homeschool clubs. They are the backbone of a 4-H program (Knutz, 2007). Adult volunteers can aid in organization, supervision, and leadership of the 4-H presentations contest (Culp, 1997).

Positive youth development has been endorsed as an effective approach to prevention and youth programs (Lerner, 2005). Fundamental to this approach is the creation of mechanisms that encourage youth to participate with adults such as the Youth Adult Partnership Model or YAP Model (Zeldin, Petrokubi & MacNeil, 2008). The YAP model (Figure 2) was used throughout the study with the students serving as youth and the teachers and researcher serving as the adults. Youth-adult partnerships are being promoted as a key strategy in community building as well (Camino, 2000). Partnering in general has proven to be successful in organizations for many years. Through partnerships, schools, youth-serving organizations and community coalitions can cultivate strong working relationships with one another (Fabionar & Campbell, 2010). The YAP model is referenced below in figure 2 (YAP Model, 2000).



Figure 2
(YAP Model, 2000)

Perception of Public Speaking

Public speaking is a frequent and crucial activity in today's workplace (Arnold, 2018). Simply expressing ideas, persuading others, and providing information are examples of public speaking that occurs at all ages (Buxman & Lemons, 1991). It is troubling that even though this skill is vital, many have a fear of public speaking. The fear is so prominent that it is one of the top ten American fears, even more common than the fear of death (Nagata, Suzuki & Teo, 2015). Public speaking fears are highly prevalent in the general population, especially youth. The fear of public speaking is among one of the most common symptoms of social anxiety disorder which is typically first observed in a person when they are young. Public speaking tends to be feared in females more often than males but it does tend to decrease with age and maturity (Furukawa, Watanabe, Kinoshita, Sasaki, Nishida, Okazaki, & Shimodera 2014). Adolescence is described as a period of increased stress sensitivity. When given the responsibility of a public speaking task such as a presentation, cortisol levels in youth can fluctuate during the session. Students also

may experience increased blood pressure, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, nausea, and even dizziness when attempting to give a presentation (Bodie, 2010). Students with high-pitched or soft-spoken voices tend to have a greater fear of public speaking than those who don't. Students who are actively involved in other social activities such as sports or clubs tend to have a decreased fear of public speaking when compared to less socially active children (Marinho, de Medeiros, Cortes Gama, & Teixeira, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study will be the Experiential Learning Theory and Model (Kolb, 1984). 4-H Youth Development relies heavily upon the Experiential Learning Model to teach life skills (Bechtel, Ewing, Threton, & Mincemoyer, 2013). These steps include experience, share, process, generalize, and apply. Experience is the participant performing the activity. Share allows participants to describe the experience and share their reaction with others. Process encourages participants to understand the activity and what was learned and how to apply it to their everyday life. This model strives to place the experience at the center of the learning process and is simply "learning by doing." This process is used in every elementary school classroom and 4-H Homeschool Clubs in Tazewell County. Fourth and fifth grade aged students specifically use this model with the help of teachers and the researcher when preparing for the 4H presentations contest. This method is often used in multiple areas of 4-H because it is relatable to many projects and contests and supports many learning styles. Experiential learning focuses on action and reflection and helps participants gain first-hand knowledge and life skills from the experience (Woffinden & Packham, 2001).

The Virginia 4-H Youth Development program relies heavily on the Experiential Learning Theory and model when developing and evaluating 4-H programs (Kolb, 1984). In

many 4-H programs, facilitators and participants use the five-step experiential process consisting of experience, share, process, generalize, and apply (Woffinden & Packham, 2001). The Experiential Learning Theory requires the teacher to be very clear about the skills targeted and that the processing questions are designed to support the learner. The goal of this theory is to engage learners in all phases of the activity fostering the ability to generalize this learning and apply it to new situations (Norman & Jordan, 2006). In this model, participants first experience or perform the activity. The 4-H presentations contest is also organized this way. For this case study, experience or “doing” would consist of the teacher and researcher facilitating the 4-H presentations process chosen by the teacher. Students are experiencing the project in an experiential way by going through all the steps of the project such as brainstorming, preparing, developing, sharing/presenting, and more. Allowing time for questions and thoughts allow the student the opportunity to collaborate with peers and their teacher. Additionally, having students developing a hypothesis will help both the teacher and students prepare for the contest. This is followed by sharing the experience letting students present their project in front of their teacher, classmates, and judges. This gives students the opportunity to teach others by sharing information on a topic they are passionate about and welcoming questions from their peers. After the presentations contest is complete, teachers work with students to reflect through discussion, asking them to describe what happened and processing the experience determining important concepts and common themes. The participants process and generalize from their experience relating it to their daily lives and how the skills they learned can be applied daily and in the future such as a college interview or job presentation.

Finally, participants are ready to apply what they learned to a new situation. This could include the teacher altering the way they prepare students for presentations in the future or

continuing with the same method. Teachers may also begin to adopt this method for other school assignments such as a science fair project or other school lesson. Throughout the entire 4-H presentation process, it is important to emphasize the importance of life skills and how they are considered life-long needs and vital to careers and workforce preparation (Diem, 2001). When integrating life skills in Experiential Learning, they are often divided into five categories:

- Enhance Learning Skills
- Strengthen and use design making skills
- Develop a positive self-concept
- Communicate with others
- Respond to needs of others and community

These five categories will be studied and observed throughout the presentation process to foster the development of these skills in students. When looking at the Experiential Learning Model, there are several advantages and disadvantages to consider. There is often an increased retention on what is learned, different teaching and learning methods can be integrated, it often builds self-esteem, and youth are actively engaged throughout the entire process. However, it does require extensive preparation from the leader along with patience and guidance. There is also no single “right” answer making it difficult for rubric development and grading (Diem, 2001).

David Kolb published the Experiential Learning model in 1984 and he believed learning is the process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). The Experiential Learning Theory allows learners to both experience and process the activity (Norman & Jordan, 2006). Experiential Learning is one of the most significant areas for current research and practice in education for both youth and adults. This theory strives to place experience at the center of the learning process and supports different learning styles, encourages

discovery of knowledge, and helps participants draw conclusions (Bechtel, Ewing, Threeton, & Mincemoyer, 2013). Providing the experience alone does not create Experiential Learning. Experiences lead to learning only if the participant understands what happened, sees the pattern of observations, generalizes from them, and understands how to use them in a new situation.

The use of Experiential Learning theory in Virginia 4-H also helps teachers and 4-H educators target life skills in their curriculum. The goal of the 4-H presentations program is to help students learn vital life skills such as public speaking to help them in everyday life. The Hendricks model is often used along with the Experiential Learning Theory to help youth meet their basic needs and aid teachers in being successful at this goal. Overall, all 4-H programs are designed around the “learn by doing” or Experiential Learning Model in an effort to create better understanding and critical thinking skills. This case study focused on the Experiential Learning Theory along with the Hendricks model to determine teacher motives and preparation methods to the 4-H presentations contest. The Experiential Model is referenced in figure 3 (Experiential Learning Model, 2013).

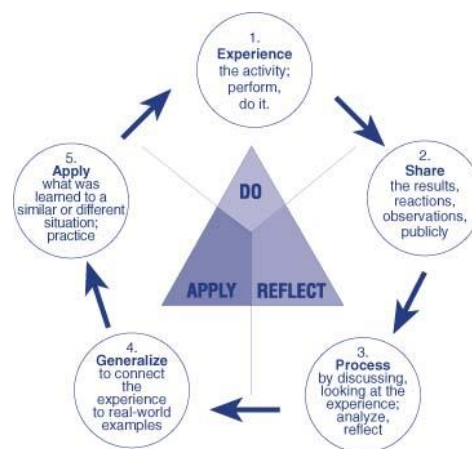


Figure 3

(Experiential Learning Model, 2016)

Summary

Having the skill of public speaking is necessary at all ages. Speaking in front of an audience is unavoidable in today's society. This study will look at teacher motives for supporting the 4-H presentations contest and their preferred preparation method. Students will be properly prepared for the presentations contest and will work closely with the teacher and researcher throughout the study.

Methodology

Project Overview

4-H presentations are a life skill project that Tazewell County 4-H works homeschool students and teachers every school year. This project and contest reach about 40 homeschool students total in four different clubs throughout the school year. An impact evaluation was useful in determining the impacts being made throughout this programming effort (Giancola, 2014). Using a case study approach can aid in obtaining an in-depth understanding of something in a natural real-life context (Crow, Creswell & Robertson, 2011). Pre and post interviews were used to collect data throughout the study. Open-ended questions were used in the interview process to gather more information from each teacher about their perceptions while administering and facilitating as students prepare their presentations (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). With permission, the researcher recorded the interview process in hopes to capture all information that can be accessible at a later time. This process was used as this case study was looking for the "what and why" rather than "if." Working closely with students and teachers throughout the school year provided opportunities to interview the teachers and evaluate if the intended impacts were met based on two methods of 4-H presentations being used in the two homeschool groups. Two clubs agreed to participate in this evaluation project (Peterson, 2016).

In the junior club, students were given an assigned topic, not allowed to use note cards, and constructed their 4-H presentation during club time. In the senior club, the students picked their own topic of interest, were allowed to use notecards, and work on the presentation outside of club time. This study compared the two methods to determine why teachers choose to organize the project this way and how it is helpful.

Participants

Two homeschool teachers from two different homeschools coops agreed to participate. These teachers were asked for their consent to participate before the work began pending exempt status from IRB. These clubs were studied because of the diverse ways 4-H presentations are delivered. The junior club focused on an educational related topic and made it a required, graded assignment for each student. The senior club teachers offered the students the choice in their topic, left the timeline and planning up to the student, were not given a grade, and were allowed to use notecards or any other supplemental items. A bonus grade or extra credit was given to the students in this group for completing the project. By studying these two clubs, it helped Tazewell County 4-H to understand why the teachers have embraced this project for over 25 years and evaluate the impacts related to how the teachers feel it is helpful to student skill developments. The researcher and teachers acted as the instructors for this process carrying out the preparation methods designed by the club teacher. The researcher worked closely with the teachers and students through Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Interview Guide

The researcher developed interview questions along with the help of an advisor and supporting literature about the presentations contest. The 4-H Common Measures resources was

used as an aid for developing the research questions. 4-H Common Measures can help avoid developing questions that are leading or biased (Common Measures).

Since each club prepares students for 4-H presentations differently, the case study allowed the researcher to investigate both clubs and their different method of preparing students and got their feedback as part of the process (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research focuses more on in-depth research and is focused on understanding and words. This method allowed the researcher to study the topic in depth (Creswell, Hanson, Clark & Morales, 2007). The sample size included two teachers and two different preparation methods as described above. Teachers were asked to participate in two audio recorded interviews in a pre and post style. A pre and post interview allowed the researcher to gather information throughout the entire process (Fox, 2009). The process consisted of an initial interview with each teacher capturing the reasoning for embracing the 4-H presentations program and what method was chosen by that teacher. This interview was also used to gather teacher ideas and feelings about the current 4-H presentations curriculum and how it may be improved to enhance their teaching methods. Interviews are the most common form of data collection in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). The post interview was conducted to capture more information on the teaching methods used to prepare students for the contest and to gather potential skills learned by the students.

Data Collection

Each interview was during club meeting hours and was voluntary. The audio recorded interviews captured why teachers support 4-H presentations, how they were helpful for educational purposes, and how they evaluated the impacts in skill development of the students. Interviews with the teachers were only conducted upon approval and at a time that was convenient for the homeschool teacher. The same questions were asked to both teachers and left

room for discussion in a semi-structured format. This method of data collection gave an inside look on how teachers felt 4-H presentations were beneficial and the reasoning behind their chosen student preparation method. The interviews even reflected some personal stories of why they choose to use a certain method or why 4-H is helpful to students and themselves.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and open coded to find commonalities, differences, and learn about the perceptions the teachers had about their method of preparation and life skills they felt as though the students learned. (Elliot, 2018). Data was organized by open codes and then focus coded to start to aggregate the data and put pieces of the transcripts together into groups. Finally, the data was put into themes with quotes to support those themes (Elliot, 2018). The results were also beneficial in determining which method may work best, which method to recommend to new teachers, and how to move forward with the presentation process in Tazewell County Homeschool Clubs. An a priori proposition table was formatted to ensure all research questions and interview questions were answered (Table 2).

Table 2: A priori Propositions

Proposition	Supporting Literature	Research Question	Interview Questions
Youth must be able to communicate clearly with others in today's society.	(Borden, Perkins & Hawkey, 2014)	What skills do teachers report that students gain from participating in the 4-H presentations contest?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you implement or integrate 4-H presentations in your classroom? 2. What life skills do you feel students learn from

			participating in this contest?
4-H presentations help students gain self-confidence and many other vital life skills.	(Norman & Jordan, 2006)	What skills do teachers report that students gain from participating in the 4-H presentations contest?	1. What life skills do you feel students learn from participating in this contest?
Allowing youth to pick a topic of their choice for a 4-H presentation helps them feel more comfortable speaking in front of an audience.	(Stuart, 2013)	What methods do homeschool group leaders use to prepare students for the 4-H presentations contest?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What form of instruction do you provide to students in your classroom? 2. What type of additional resources do you provide to students related to the contest?
Americans spend 45% of their day talking, making public speaking vital.	(Lee & Hatesohl, 1993)	What methods do homeschool group leaders use to prepare students for the 4-H presentations contest?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you implement or integrate 4-H presentations in your classroom? 2. What life skills do you feel students learn from participating in this contest? 3. In what ways do you feel this contest prepares students for adulthood?
Virginia 4-H provides a contest guide along with a	(Jamison, 2015)	What methods do homeschool group	1. How would an official 4-H

<p>scoresheet for guidance when completing this contest.</p>		<p>leaders use to prepare students for the 4-H presentations contest?</p>	<p>presentations curriculum change the contest? 2. What type of additional resources do you provide to students related to the contest?</p>
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Timeline

This work took place in Fall 2020. The initial contact for this program was addressed in August when homeschool coops started, preparations began in September and October, and presentations began in late October into November. The researcher worked with the teachers in both clubs throughout the process and adjusted to meet the regulations the state of Virginia set for COVID-19.

Junior Club Teacher Profile

The junior club teacher has been a homeschool teacher for 10 years for both a local community program and the 4-H Homeschool Program in Tazewell County. This teacher has a teaching certificate issued by the Virginia Board of Education. The junior club teacher left the public-school system to eliminate the stress of standardized testing. This participant has guided students through the 4-H presentations contest for nine years and does not allow students to use notecards and all of their presentation must be memorized. They can put key words on their poster board or PowerPoint to help. All work for this contest is to be done outside of school time.

Senior Club Teacher Profile

The senior club teacher is a homeschool teacher for her children and the local 4-H Homeschool Program in her area of Tazewell County. This participant has been conducting 4-H presentations with the homeschool group for four years and has a high school diploma qualifying them to teach homeschool students in the state of Virginia. Notecards, visual aids, and props are encouraged by this teacher and the presentation is worked on during 4-H club time.

Preparing the Students to Present

Even though participants see similar results, they each prepare students differently. The junior club teacher mentioned they prefer to have a more formal type of instruction and the senior club teacher prefers a more relaxed type of instruction. Throughout the duration of the project, students present their topic at different stages to help them become accustomed to speaking in front of a group. Both teachers began by having the student present a small portion of their presentation to the teacher only. This gave the teacher the opportunity to implement Experiential Learning by providing feedback and allowing students to reflect on their work to make improvements as needed. The next week, students presented in front of the teacher and classmates. This allowed for the teacher to provide feedback again and gave students in the class the opportunity to ask their peers questions about the topic.

Once the first two steps of presenting were complete, the 4-H agent then watched the presentations virtually along with a community partner serving as a judge. The judge filled out a scoresheet that was given back to the student at the conclusion of the contest. This provided the student the opportunity to generalize, reflect, and then apply what they learned throughout the experience. Even though teachers felt these steps were helpful, both teachers identified student

challenges such as the fear of a shy student and how students tend to pick a broad topic. Below is a table describing how each participant prepares students for the contest (Table 3).

Table 3

Participant Preparation for 4-H Presentations Contest

Junior Club Teacher	Senior Club Teacher
Step 1- Introduces topic, provides rubric, 4-H materials, and outline	Step 1- Introduces topic and provides 4-H materials
Step 2- Assigns deadlines for each piece and topic approval.	Step 2- Works with students throughout the process during class time.
Step 3- Students work on presentation at home presenting materials when asked.	Step 3- All work is done during class time, no graded materials.
Materials Allowed- Posters Display Boards PowerPoint	Materials Allowed- Posters Display Boards Notecards PowerPoint

Results

The major challenge of completing this work and of preparing the students that was identified was the struggle of COVID-19 on teachers and students. Homeschool groups were still

meeting in person when pre-interviews were conducted and materials were given to students, but they feared learning would soon move online as infection rates rose in Fall 2020. This made it challenging for participants to plan for the unknown and alter the contest and timeline as needed. As time passed, meetings were moved virtual and teachers felt students struggled because they had less access to their teacher for questions and concerns. Additionally, many of the submission formats were virtual due to the pandemic and students only received verbal feedback rather than written. The senior club teacher said: “The pandemic made it really hard to conduct presentations. There was inconsistency in the submissions. Some students submitted both the written speech and visual aids and some were only able to submit the written portion.”

Three themes emerged from the two sets of interviews related to the skill acquisition as a result of preparing and participating in the contest. Both teachers were asked what life skills they felt as though the contest taught students. Similarities of how this contest satisfies elements of the homeschool curriculum expectations of public speaking, writing, and Experiential Learning were also identified. Results of the pre-interviews were transcribed and placed into three themes:

1. Advantages (teachers and students)
2. Disadvantages
3. Experiential Learning

Theme: Advantages

1. Teachers

During the pre-interview, both teachers acknowledged that the 4-H presentations contest covered necessary Virginia Homeschool learning expectations and they felt students enjoyed participating while learning a necessary skill. By partnering with the researcher to do this contest, it allowed teachers to satisfy these schooling requirements in a fun way. The senior club

teacher reported they felt this contest was a great way to ease their workload by implementing this contest.

2. Students

Life skills such as self-confidence, increased public speaking skills, and responsibility were identified as potential life skills learned by the students from the teachers point of view. These skills relate back to the Targeting Life Skills Model with self-confidence and responsibility shown in the health category and social skills included in the heart category (Norman & Jordan, 2006). Both teachers expressed that they found the 4-H contest to be useful, “4-H is a great way for students to unplug from technology and learn communication skills the old-fashioned way.”

Theme: Disadvantages

One disadvantage both teachers identified during the pre-interview is that it can be time consuming, especially if there is no parental help at home. The junior club teacher said, “This is really the only disadvantage I see in the presentation contest. We have some students that have little to no parent help so it is hard to judge how much time each student will need.” This was one disadvantage teachers were expecting during the pre-interview due to the uncertainty of COVID-19. The junior club teacher elaborated more on this disadvantage as all of their student’s work is done outside of school time and some have a better support system than others. Another disadvantage identified was the cost of supplies. The senior club teacher provided note cards and other supplemental material to students to enhance their speech. This is not required but the senior club teacher felt this helped avoid the disadvantages mentioned above. The junior club teacher mentioned that this was their reasoning behind not providing materials, “You can give a student all the tools necessary to succeed in this contest but that doesn’t mean they will

take full advantage of it. This is why I choose to let them do the project on their own with the materials they have access to.”

Theme: Experiential Learning

There were examples of Experiential Learning that emerged from the pre-interviews with teachers. The teacher and researcher planned to present the presentation material to students and then allow the students freedom with minimal guidance to determine which two approaches they would like to pick for their topic. Both teachers expressed they planned to observe and guide learning as the process was taking place. Teachers felt this would help with issues and misunderstandings as they could be addressed immediately as part of the learning process, rather than corrected at a later stage after the projects were completed. The junior club teacher planned to have an open discussion with students about the contest and discuss different the two different approaches and help students brainstorm ideas. Additionally, she provided a rubric so the students could go through each step and be able to connect their project back to the Experiential Learning Model. The senior club teacher planned to have students share their experience after the contest with peers and reflect on how this could be used later in life. This teacher mentioned that, “By having students reflect on their presentation with peers, they often get input and advice that sometimes is more beneficial than mine.” Finally, both teachers mentioned that they plan to reflect on the contest to make plans and changes as needed for the next year.

Post Interview Results

A post interview was conducted with each teacher after students completed the 4-H presentations contest 6 weeks after the pre-interviews. The three themes were the same as the pre-interview. Most students were excited to participate and reported to teachers they were sad to

see the contest end. Some students expressed relief that the contest has ended according to teachers. Teachers elaborated about how COVID-19 had been a challenge for both them and the students when implementing this contest. Students began the school year meeting face to face but were changed to virtual instruction in late October after the virus spread through the community. The switch put more responsibility on the parent(s) of the child to help them complete the contest. Teachers felt the presentation quality was lower than usual due to this change. The junior club teacher mentioned, “With COVID-19, the presentation responsibility fell onto the parents. We understand they are already busy, so this was a challenge we were expecting from this year.”

Theme: Advantages

1. Teachers

During the post interview, both teachers identified how the contest satisfies the Virginia Standards of Learning and homeschool learning requirement as their most appealing advantage. One teacher said, “This contest goes along with our Virginia Homeschool requirements and the students love it. We always look forward to this contest and plan to take part again in the future.” By implementing the contest, it also takes some of the lesson-planning pressure away from the teachers.

2. Students

Both teachers felt the main advantage for the students was how the presentations contest gave them an opportunity to learn their required lessons in a fun way. Skills from the Targeting Life Skills Model were mentioned by the teachers during the post interview such as “responsibility,” “improved public speaking,” “improved writing,” and “improved self-esteem”

as life skills they felt the students learned (Norman & Jordan, 2006). The senior club teacher said:

“I love how the 4-H presentations contest gets my students excited for this part of their English curriculum. I feel like they tend to learn more and retain the information because they are placed in the driver’s seat and have the opportunity to be creative all while satisfying their learning requirements.”

Theme: Disadvantages

Time was the major disadvantage both teachers identified. The contest could be time consuming depending on school schedules and closures. Lost time due to the pandemic was a major factor and neither teacher had experienced issues around time like this before. Inconsistent school schedules and rapidly changing conditions made it especially hard for teachers to set reasonable deadlines. Additionally, the pandemic also enhanced the disadvantage of students struggling to get supplies to prepare for their presentations.

“Some students were able to provide things such as visual aids and props and others struggled to even get notecards or a poster board. We had to be lenient with grading due to the pandemic and didn’t want anyone to feel pressured during this time.”

Theme: Experiential Learning

Evidence of Experiential Learning emerged during the post interviews by teachers saying that even though class meetings became virtual, they were still able to have their post-contest discussions about how they felt about the contest and if students thought it would be helpful later on in life. When the senior club teacher finished her reflection, she felt that she may begin to implement a small rubric similar to the junior club teacher expressing that it may better help

students through the process. The junior club teacher mentioned in the post-interview that, “I am confident that students will remember this project 10-15 years from now when they are approaching adulthood and preparing for similar situations such as a college or job presentation.”

Discussion

The purpose of this project was to collect information on experiential teaching methods homeschool teachers use to facilitate the 4-H presentations contest and what skills they feel students potentially gained. The 4-H presentations contest is a long-standing program in Virginia 4-H and has been supported in Tazewell County for over 25 years but there was little evidence on how it is introduced to students and how teachers feel it is beneficial as part of their curriculum (Borden, Perkins & Hawkey, 2014). After pre- and post-interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed individually, the researcher had a better understanding of how the teachers orchestrate the 4-H presentation contest and what skills students potentially learned. Both the teachers and researcher felt that the learning objectives for students were achieved throughout the duration of the project.

What teaching methods do homeschool group leaders use to prepare students for the 4-H presentations contest?

The junior club teacher took a more formal approach when compared to the senior club teacher. The junior club teacher formats the contest like a regular lesson plan assigning deadlines and work to be done outside of class. This teacher conducted a lesson about presentation basics and what was expected using a rubric on how they would be graded. Providing a rubric to the junior club students related to the Experiential Learning Model and provided students guidance to go through the five-step process. The Experiential Learning process engaged the learners in all

phases of the activity, resulting in the ability to generalize this learning to new situations and the rubric is a supplemental resource (Norman & Jordan, 2006). The senior club teacher took a more relaxed approach allowing the presentation to be extra credit and an assignment they work on during class. Students also had the option to participate receiving extra credit if they participated.

What skills do teachers report that students gain from participating in the 4-H presentations contest?

When the pre- and post-interviews were complete, the teachers reported that they feel students potentially learned the following skills:

- Improved public speaking
- Increased confidence
- Responsibility
- Improved communication skills

Both teachers were asked if an official 4-H Presentations curriculum to accompany the contest would change the contest. They reported that there was no need for an official curriculum in their opinion. They felt if a curriculum were to be added, the contest may lose some of its “fun factor” to students as it may become more intimidating to students. Both teachers did mention a rubric explaining the Danish system scoring would be the only document they felt could potentially improve the contest and would like to see this in the future. This could potentially increase experiential learning giving the students more control over their learning so by adding a rubric and Danish handout. Students may also better understand what they are striving for and help them tie back to the Experiential Learning Model. This would fall into step three and four of the Experiential learning Model, students could process their experience and the generalize on

how the Danish ribbons relate to their given grade (Norman & Jordan, 2006). Overall, both participants concluded the contest was beneficial as the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages and they plan to conduct the contest with homeschool students in years to come. The research questions were answered as the why the contest is supported and how it potentially benefits students. Teachers recommended when regular in-person learning is resumed, the researcher meet with them to determine if there is a way for all students to have the same opportunity to present.

Recommendations

Research Recommendations

Future research of this topic could include a larger population of participants and include a public-school system or several counties to provide a larger sample and collect more information for the research questions to help make the work generalizable to a broader audience. An additional recommendation would be providing a written evaluation for participants to complete across the state. An evaluation would help the researcher and practitioners solidify data collected and identify current needs of professionals that are conducting this contest. It is clear that teachers feel students are benefiting from this program, but this is being achieved by different methods. Implementing a contest guide and rubric could potentially help identify the best way for teachers to conduct this contest to maximize the students benefits. The results of this research can then be shared to 4-H agents across the commonwealth to enhance their 4-H presentations curriculum.

Practitioner Recommendations

The results of this case study concluded homeschool teachers in Tazewell County, Virginia feel the 4-H presentations program is beneficial to students. Extension professionals should consider providing professional development opportunities to other extension professionals, teachers, homeschool groups, and stakeholders to update them of the 4-H presentations contest foundation and mission, offer basic support, and provide updated information on how the contest relates to Virginia SOL and homeschool standards. Extension professionals who are experienced in the 4-H presentations program could also introduce familiar ways to implement the contest into teacher's educational curriculum. Lastly, extension professionals could publish an updated presentations contest guide, tips, and rubric.

Conclusion

Tazewell County 4-H presentations have been conducted annually for over 25 years in elementary schools and homeschool clubs. The "learn-by-doing" approach that this program takes allows youth to do something with minimal guidance from an adult. Instead of being told "the answers," they are presented with a question, problem, situation, or activity which they must make sense of for themselves. This is otherwise known as the popular concept of Experiential Learning because it is based on learning from experiences (Diem, 2001). This case study revealed reasons as to why it has been supported and how it has become an essential part to the homeschool curriculum. Both teachers will continue to support and advocate for this program both locally and state-wide as it covers Virginia homeschool requirements in writing and shows evidence of teaching students life skills. Conducting this research in other areas of the state could reveal more information as to why this contest is beneficial to youth. The information gathered through this case study will be shared with peers across the state. The mission of Virginia 4-H is

to assist youth, and adults working with those youth, to gain additional knowledge, life skills, and attitudes that will further their development as self-directing, contributing, and productive members of society. The 4-H presentations program provides youth the opportunity to speak in front of their peers and prepare them for their future careers.

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Appendix A- Interview Questions

PRE

1. Why do you implement or integrate 4-H presentations in your classroom?
2. What form of instruction do you provide to students in your classroom?
3. What common challenges do you feel students face when preparing for the contest?
4. How does the 4-H presentations contest relate to other lessons you provide as an educator?
5. What type of additional resources do you provide to students related to the contest?
6. What life skills do you feel students learn from participating in this contest?
7. What type of feedback do you typically hear from students after the contest?
8. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the contest?
9. In what ways do you feel this contest prepares students for adulthood?

POST

1. What life skills do you feel students learned from participating in this contest?
2. What type of feedback did you hear from students after the contest?
3. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the contest?
4. What common challenges did the students face as they prepared for the contest this year?
5. How would an official 4-H presentations curriculum change the contest?
6. In what ways do you feel this contest prepares students for adulthood?
7. How are visual aids, note cards, and audience participation incorporated in your method?
8. After the process, what skills did you notice students developing?
9. What other help or resources would you find helpful in the future to implement this contest?
10. How has COVID-19 affected the 4-H presentations program?

Appendix B Supplemental Materials



Publication 4H-420NP

Virginia 4-H Contest Guide- Presentations

Description of Contest

A 4-H Presentation can be a demonstration, which shows how to do something, or an illustrated talk, which provides information through speech and visual aids. Presentations are categorized by subject matter. Contestants should refer to the State 4-H Areas of Competition document (publication 4H-415NP).

Levels of Competition

Unit (county), District, State

Age categories are as follows, using September 30th of the 4-H year as the determining date.

Juniors (ages 9-11) Intermediates (ages 12-13) Seniors (ages 14-18)

**Cloverbuds, ages 5-8, are encouraged to give short presentations, or show-and-tell presentations, but they are not judged. Cloverbuds may participate at the club and unit level only.*

Awards to be Earned

The Danish awards system will be used at all levels of competition. Blue ribbons will be awarded to competitors earning 90-100 points; red ribbons will be awarded to competitors earning 75-89 points; white ribbons will be awarded to competitors earning 74 points or less.

Certain Extension districts award a purple ribbon to the highest scoring youth in the category. Districts determine the awarding of these ribbons, but they are generally reserved for blue ribbon winners only. At the state contest, the highest scoring youth will be awarded a project medal. Youth who win the state project medal are ineligible to compete in that category in future years.

Rules for this Contest

1. Presentation categories are divided by subject matter, with awards given in each category.
2. Time Limits are dependent upon the contestant's age.
 - a. Juniors- 2-5 minutes
 - b. Intermediates- 5- 8 minutes
 - c. Seniors- 8-15 minutes
3. Presentations outside the required time limits will incur the following point deductions.
 - d. Up to one minute outside range (:01-:60) – 2 points deducted from final score
 - e. More than one minute outside range (1:01+) – 5 points deducted from final score

1. At least one visual aid such as poster, models, or an electronic slide must be used.
 - d. PowerPoint or other software may be used, but should remain a visual aid to complement the speaker. The youth speaker is the most important part of the presentation. Electronic presentations should not be recordings of the youth speaker's voice from a previous presentation.
2. Judges may ask questions after the speech is presented.

Educational Resources to Help Prepare for this Contest

VCE Publication 388-056 "4-H Presentations" Available:

http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/4-H/4H-23NP/4H-23NP_pdf.pdf

VCE Publication 388-061 "4-H Presentations Tip Sheet " Available:

http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/388/388-061/388-061_pdf.pdf

Score Sheets for this Contest

VCE Publication 388-062 "4-H Presentations Scoring Aid " Available:

http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/388/388-062/388-062_pdf.pdf

Sample YouTube Videos of 4-H Youth in This Contest

None available at this time, but this is a goal for Virginia 4-H! If you are interested in creating a how-to video or posting a sample of your work, please contact your unit Extension staff who will work with the State 4-H Office.

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Appendix C Supplemental Materials



Publication 388-061

4-H Presentations Tip Sheet

Dr. Kathleen Jamison, 4-H Curriculum and Learning Specialist

4-H Agents: Shelia Belcher, Patty Collier, Cathy Howland, Herman Maclin, Leslie Rafter, and Kaci Coppedge

What Is Your Style? - Demonstration or illustrated talk

Ask yourself!	Do I want to show and explain the actual steps in doing something?	Do a demonstration
	Are visuals the best way to explain my topic?	Do an illustrated talk
	Can I take all the equipment needed or does space allow use of equipment? If the answer is "no,"	Do an illustrated talk
	Am I teaching members of a small group how to do a new skill?	Do a demonstration

What Are the Differences?

Demonstration

- A demonstration is **DOING**.
- A demonstration is **SHOWINGHOW**.
- As you show how, you tell how.
- In a demonstration you **MAKE** something or **DO** something.
- There is always a finished product.
- Minimum of 4 posters or electronic slides must include:
 1. Title and name
 2. Materials/supplies
 3. Directions (step by step)
 4. Summary

Illustrated Talk

- An illustrated talk is **TALKING**.
- An illustrated talk is **TELLING HOW**
- In an illustrated talk you use visuals: **CHARTS, PICTURES, MODELS, CUTOUTS, ETC.**
- Minimum of 1 visual (may be poster/electronic slide or object)

What Is the Same?

- Select a 4-H project you enjoy.
- You may use an outline sheet/note card to remind you of your steps, **but** note cards cannot be held during the presentation.
- No live animals permitted.
- Individual presentations, not teams.
- Organization and visibility of work area are important; make sure audience can see materials from all angles in the room.
- Length of time:
 - Juniors (9-11 years) – 2 to 5 min.
 - Intermediate (12-13 years) – 5 to 8 min.
 - Seniors (14-19 years) – 8 to 15 min.

