

Beneath the Surface: How Extra-Curricular Activities Affect Students Academic Futures

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If you were to ask a 4-H member what they were getting from 4-H, what were they learning, you would probably get several different answers. Members might answer your question “How to make wood-working projects”, “How to show cattle”, or “How to garden.” Yet, for years, 4-H and other extracurricular organizations have helped to make students successful in and out of the classroom, even if it is not the obvious benefit of the student’s involvement.



Multiple studies have shown that involvement in extracurricular organizations like 4-H and FFA, help to increase success rates in high school and college. Higher Grade Point Averages (GPA) were observed at both levels of education. Consequentially, students had a higher chance of going to college and obtaining a baccalaureate degree. Students also contribute more to their home and community through community service projects. These studies proved that students are less likely to engage in risky behavior (i.e. smoking, drugs, etc.)

A local teacher, Renee Goldinger, has noted many positive characteristics of students who are members of 4-H. “I feel that 4-H helps to develop leadership skills within students that I see transferable into the classroom. Students who are in 4-H work so well in groups and are willing to be a leader for that group.” Renee said. “They listen to other group members and just seem to be much more patient overall.”

Both 4-H and FFA also support their members who choose to pursue a college education. Both offer a wide range of scholarship opportunities. The Missouri 4-H Foundation offers over \$62,000 in scholarships in Missouri alone, and the National FFA Organization offers approximately \$2 million in scholarships nationally.

Regardless of which scholarship is pursued, there are a few things that every student who fills out a scholarship will need to supply. Some fairly typical criteria on any scholarship application include GPA or academic progress, leadership activities, and community service involvement. Any 4-H or FFA involvement is going to excel in these sections. As noted earlier, students with extracurricular involvement have higher GPAs. FFA and 4-H both offer a wide range of leadership opportunities as well as opportunities for community service. By being actively involved with extracurricular organizations, students once again benefit from something they did not directly expect.

Both the 4-H and National FFA organizations have firm mission statements about creating high-quality students. 4-H states it is “Making the best, better.” And the FFA states it “...Makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success.” Through the educational offerings that 4-H and FFA offer, it seems that they would be a win-win situation for all.

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