

School Missed by 4-H Members

For most members, participation in 4-H events
outside the local meeting does not
jeopardize school work

LAUREL K. SABROSKY

DOES 4-H CLUB work contribute to school work or does it detract? This has been debated for years. Some argue that 4-H supplements school work and stimulates greater effort; others have argued that 4-H activities take members out of school so much that this cannot help but weaken their schoolwork. In an effort to know more specifically the extent to which members are out of school because of 4-H meetings and events (other than for local 4-H meetings), a representative sample of 251 counties in the United States was surveyed. This paper is a summary of the findings.¹

The data answer certain concerns; on the other hand, they do not tell the complete story. The survey should lead to this one conclusion: 4-H Club work need not seriously interfere with school class attendance if the opportunities to participate in meetings and events are distributed among many, if not all, members.

Indications are that 4-H Club members, as a whole, are not being deprived, by their attendance at 4-H meetings and events, of formal school attendance to an extent which would be detrimental to even those students who are struggling the hardest to complete their courses. Considering all 4-H activities and meetings which they attended, each member in the study averaged about one-third of a school day, or about one hour and 10 minutes a year, missed from school during school hours because of 4-H work (Table 1).

¹Data were collected by Mylo S. Downey and Laurel K. Sabrosky, Federal Extension Service, and tabulated and analyzed by Laurel K. Sabrosky.

LAUREL K. SABROSKY is Extension Research Specialist, Division of Extension Research and Training, Federal Extension Service. This article is an adaptation of information originally prepared in mimeographed form by the Federal Extension Service as 4-H-205, November, 1961.

Table 1. Days missed from school, on the average, by 4-H Club members in connection with 4-H meetings and events*

Types of meetings and events	No. of days missed from school by all 4-H members		Of Club members who did miss some school	
	Total missed in a year	Average missed per member per year	Per cent missing any school in a year	Avg. no. school days missed per year per member
County fair type event	10,580.5	0.1	7.2	0.9
State fair type event	5,199.2	0.03	1.8	1.9
Demonstration days	3,760.4	0.02	2.4	1.0
Regional, district, national, international shows, etc.	2,828.3	0.02	0.9	1.9
Judging events	2,223.2	0.01	1.6	0.9
Representing 4-H at other meetings	505.8	0.003	0.3	1.0
Junior leader meetings	465.0	0.003	0.3	1.0
Camps	234.5	0.002	0.1	1.7
National 4-H Congress	562.0	0.004	0.1	5.0
National 4-H Conference	99.0	0.001	0.01	5.0
Training for above events	346.5	0.002	0.3	0.6
Other trips or tours	1,466.2	0.009	0.9	1.1
Other meetings, events, activities	4,428.4	0.03	3.8	0.8
Total meetings, events, etc.	32,699.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
National 4-H Congress and National Conference	32,038.0	0.2	0.0	0.0

* There were 155,409 4-H Club members in the 251 counties which made up the representative sample. Counties from all 50 states and Puerto Rico were included in the sample.

About one-third of this time was taken up by county fair types of events. A large proportion of that one hour and 10 minutes was taken up by 4-H events which occurred in the county, or not far away.

Considering only those members who missed any school because of attendance at 4-H meetings and 4-H events (Table 1), we find these examples: The county fair type of event caused seven per cent of the members to miss some school, demonstration days caused two per cent to miss some school, and state fair type events caused one and three-quarters per cent of the members to miss some school. Meetings and events which caused members to miss several days were not attended by many. Examples: 4-H Club Congress, which caused the attenders to miss five days of school, was attended by only seven out of every 10,000 4-H members. One out of every 10,000 4-H Club members missed school by attending National 4-H Club Conference.

What these data do not tell us is how much time is missed from school by those certain 4-H Club members who go to many of the county, out-of-county, and even out-of-state 4-H events during one year. It is quite obvious that many 4-H members miss no school time at all (only seven per cent of the members in the study missed any school for the 4-H county fair type of event—this kind of event took the most members away from school). It is also quite possible that some 4-H members miss many days of school.

Certainly we know that some 4-H members go to no 4-H events; it is possible that some individuals attend every 4-H event that is held, including National 4-H Club Congress and National 4-H Club Conference. Such a pyramiding of opportunities to miss school could result in many days of school missed because of 4-H work on the part of a few individuals. It would be extremely helpful if we had data on such individuals.

These data, it seems, could form a basis for a discussion of what we are doing to and for those who attend many or most of the meetings and events and to and for those who are attending none. 4-H Club work is set up to supplement other kinds of educational opportunities. It can do so. The number of days missed from school classes could be serious if the number of days missed involved only a few members. But the number of days need not be serious, as our data indicate, if spread out among many members. Can this be done, consistently?