

Factors That Influence 4-H Club Enrollment and Retention in Camden County, Georgia

by

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(Under the Direction of Jason Peake)

Abstract

Camden County 4-H has experienced a decrease in membership of 4-H members after the fifth grade. This study consist of two parts: 1.) determining participation trends from an ex post facto study, and 2.) determining reasons for reenrolling in the 4-H program or leaving the 4-H program using a survey. Youth today have many different organizations and activities to choose from to occupy their interest; 4-H must strive to provide for the developmental needs and interest of these youth. To meet these needs leaders should ask youth what they want to learn, give them leadership roles, and provide hands-on less structured lessons. Leaders should continue to promote the core programs including camp, district, and state events; and take every opportunity to recognize and reward members. Promoting the program to the community and getting parental involvement was also found to have a positive effect on reenrollment of 4-H members.

INDEX WORDS: 4-H, participation, retention, recruitment, activities, leaders, youth

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my family that provided me the support to accomplish this goal.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the people that helped me to accomplish this goal, and still work full time as an extension agent. I would like to send sincere thanks to the University of Georgia and Cooperative Extension for providing the Tuition Assistance Program and allowing me to go to school and work.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Since 1904, Georgia 4-H has joined schools to provide education. Making learning relevant, using research-based information and calling on University of Georgia faculty and staff members to provide information is a priority for Cooperative Extension” (Ryles, 2006, p. 2). Georgia 4-H has the privilege of being allowed by the state to be included in the school system to conduct in school fifth grade club meetings because our curriculums meet the current Georgia Performance Standards. However, in Georgia the privilege of meeting during school hours is not extended to middle and high school systems, where most of the meetings are moved to an after-school environment. For that reason, 4-H becomes voluntary for youth in sixth through twelfth grade. According to the Georgia Cloverleaf, the 4-H annual report (2006), the total enrollment of youth in Georgia 4-H in 2006 was 161,718. When this number is divided into a grade-level demographic, 70.75% of these youth are enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade and 29.25% are enrolled in sixth through twelfth grade. 4-H primarily targets youth from ages nine through nineteen; fifth grade youth make up the majority of these ages representing 63% of the total 143,795 enrolled in fourth through twelfth grade according to the Georgia 4-H ES237 State 4-H Enrollment Report (2006).

The following year, The Georgia Cloverleaf, the 4-H annual report (2007), reported the total enrollment of youth in Georgia 4-H in 2007 was 162,362. When this number is divided into a grade-level demographic, 72% of these youth are enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade and 28% are enrolled in sixth through twelfth grade. Fifth grade youth make up the majority of

Georgia 4-H's target population representing 66% of the total 158,713 enrolled in fourth through twelfth grade according to the Georgia 4-H ES237 State 4-H Enrollment Report (2007).

As noted in the grade-level breakdown, participation in 4-H by middle and high school students is greatly reduced. These numbers are representative of counties in Georgia where the majority of the enrollment numbers are fifth grade students that are automatically enrolled in 4-H.

“The mission of Georgia 4-H is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. This mission is accomplished, through "hands on" learning experiences, focused on agricultural and environmental issues, agriculture awareness, leadership, communication skills, foods and nutrition, health, energy conservation, and citizenship” (Georgia 4-H). This mission is difficult to accomplish if enrollment and participation does not continue into the middle and high school years.

Camden County, Georgia 4-H has an active fifth grade 4-H program. According to the 4-H Enrollment Database for Camden County, the participation numbers drop drastically in the sixth grade program and then continue to drop in seventh and eighth grade. Students in middle school sometimes say that they did not know that they could participate in 4-H or they feel as if 4-H is only a fifth grade club (kids club). This decrease in middle school attendance and misperception of 4-H has a consequently negative effect on high school students' participation in 4-H for similar reasons.

In 2004, the Camden County 4-H program was thriving, winning many most-improved and largest-participation awards. However, following the retirement of the 4-H agent and the introduction and later absence of another agent, the program was held together by the 4-H

program assistant and the agricultural and natural resources agent. In 2005, the new agent came into a program with greatly reduced numbers of Junior and Senior 4-H members. Following many efforts to form new project clubs and activities, the number of Junior and Senior participants are still declining. One theory is that once the Junior and Senior 4-H members realize that they are a minority in the project clubs, they discontinue their participation in the project clubs and attendance at these activities and events may plummet. These students also begin having the opportunities to participate in other school and community activities such as sports and clubs.

In the 2005 – 2006 school year in Camden County, the total enrollment in fifth grade 4-H was 547 students. Of the total enrollment, 100 were involved in at least one activity or event outside of the in school club meeting. In the following 2006 – 2007 school year in Camden County, only 40 of the 100 formerly active fifth graders reenrolled and became an active member in 4-H in the sixth grade and only 17 reenrolled in the seventh grade. According to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement on the Georgia Department of Education Website, Camden County had approximately 698 sixth graders enrolled in the 2006 – 2007 school year (State of Georgia, 2007). This 698 represents the number of Camden County sixth graders that could have enrolled in 4-H and only 48 of these sixth graders were active in 4-H in their sixth grade year.

The reenrollment numbers were even lower for the fifth graders that were active in the 2007 4-H year. In the 2006 – 2007 school year in Camden County, the total enrollment in fifth grade 4-H was 678 students. Of the total enrollment, 115 were involved in at least one activity or event outside of the in school club meeting. In the following 2007 – 2008 school year in Camden County, only 29 of the 115 formerly active fifth graders re-enrolled and became an

active member in 4-H in the sixth grade, and only 14 continued in the seventh grade. According to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement on the Georgia Department of Education Website, in the 2007 – 2008 school year Camden County had approximately 737 sixth graders enrolled (State of Georgia, 2008). This 737 represents the number of Camden County sixth graders that could have enrolled in 4-H and only 39 of these sixth graders were active in 4-H in their sixth grade year. See Table 1-1 for a detailed illustration these two groups' enrollment patterns.

Statement of the Problem

What factors contributed to the reduced retention rates in the 4-H program in middle school (6th – 8th grade) and what can be done to increase the interest in the program, thereby increasing enrollment and retention?

Subproblems

1. What factors including demographics, activities, and interest contributed to the reduced enrollment and retention of 4-H in the sixth through eighth grade and at what rate did the decrease occur?
2. Does participation in any of the 4-H programs including project achievement, club meetings, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or camp relate to continued participation in the 4-H program?
3. What activities and/or interests relate to currently active 4-H members remaining active in the program?
4. What can be done to increase enrollment and retention of 4-H for sixth grade Cloverleaf and Junior (7th – 8th grade) 4-H age youth?

Table 1-1: 4-H Enrollment Data from the 2006 4-H year (2005 – 2006) and the 2007 4-H year (2006 – 2007) according to the 4-H Enrollment Database for Camden County, Georgia

2006	5th grade	Number of youth	6th grade	Number of youth	7th grade	Number of youth
	2005 – 2006					
	Total enrollment					
	5th grade	547	2006 – 2007			
	Active participants		Active participants that re-enrolled	40	2007 - 2008	
	5th grade	100	Active participants that did not reenroll	60	Active 6th grade participants that re-enrolled	17
			Enrolled sixth graders that were not active in 5th grade	8	Active 6th grade participants that did not re-enroll	25
					Active 5th grade participants that skipped a year and re-enrolled as a 7th grade 4-H'er	3
2007	5th grade	Number of youth	6th grade	Number of youth	7th grade	Number of youth
	2006 – 2007					
	Total enrollment					
	5th grade	678	2007 – 2008			
	Active participants		Active participants that re-enrolled	29	2008 - 2009	
	5th grade	115	Active participants that did not reenroll	86	Active 6th grade participants that re-enrolled	14
			Enrolled sixth graders that were not active in 5th grade	10	Active 6th grade participants that did not re-enroll	25
					Active 5th grade participants that skipped a year and re-enrolled as a 7th grade 4-H'er	3

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the participation data from Camden County 4-H and questionnaire responses completed by 4-H participants to determine the contributing factors and possible remedy for the decline in the retention of middle school (6th – 8th grade) youth in the 4-H program. The information gathered from the needs assessment questionnaire could provide valuable information to the extension staff relating to programming in the following years. The results may also provide more effective recruitment and retention methods for the 4-H program in Camden County, Georgia and favorable options for the youth of Camden County for all ages and for years following the study.

Scope of Study

The scope of this study included Camden County youth who were active participants in the 4-H program during their fifth grade year. The study population was comprised of active fifth graders from the 2006 4-H year (2005 – 2006) and the 2007 4-H year (2006 – 2007). The youth included in this audience were determined from information retrieved from the county-reported information on the “official” 4-H Enrollment database. The term “active member” is defined as an individual that is involved in activities outside of monthly club meetings including project achievement, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or summer camp. These youth are currently in the ninth and eighth grade, respectively.

Hypothesis

The decrease in enrollment and retention of middle school (6th – 8th grade) youth in the 4-H program will be a compounding problem associated with decreased involvement in after-school programs and dissatisfaction with the program opportunities. Retention could be

improved by implementing suggestions provided from a needs assessment to determine program opportunities that would be more attractive to the middle school (6th – 8th grade) youth.

Objectives

The study particularly sought to:

- Determine the rate of and influences on the reduction in participation in 4-H programs among 6th – 8th grade 4-H members who were formally active in 4-H in the fifth grade.
- Determine if participation in project achievement, club meetings, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or camp relates to continued participation in the 4-H program.
- Determine what activities and/or interests relate to currently active 4-H members remaining active in the program.
- Determine what recruitment and retention efforts should be offered to provide a more attractive 4-H program to sixth grade Cloverleaf and Junior (7th – 8th grade) 4-H age students.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are important to understanding the content of discussion in the study:

4-H Agent: the leader of the 4-H program in the county by planning and implementing the 4-H activities throughout the year.

4-H Membership: refers to the program year that a 4-H member is enrolled. This program year is August 1st through the following July 31st.

4-H Member: an individual may be enrolled in Georgia 4-H from the ages of nine through nineteen years of age.

Active Member: an individual that is involved in activities outside of monthly club meetings including project achievement, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or summer camp.

Cloverleaf 4-H'er: title given to youth enrolled in 4-H in the fifth – sixth grade.

Ex Post Facto Research: Research design where the researcher examines past events and determines if a relationship exist (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Domain Analysis: Using color coding to categorize relationships found in data into themes or domains.

Drop Out: This refers to a 4-H member who was actively involved in the program during one program year that did not reenroll for the following program year.

Georgia Performance Standards: Guidelines set by the Georgia Department of Education for instruction, assessment, and student work (GeorgiaStandards.Org).

Junior 4-H'er: title given to youth enrolled in 4-H in the seventh – eighth grade.

Senior 4-H'er: title given to youth enrolled in 4-H in the ninth – twelfth grade.

Project Achievement: 4-H contest developed to “assist youth to acquire an understanding of subject matter in a given project area, to develop skills in researching, assembling and presenting information, to stimulate interest in continuing project work through 4-H experiences, and to provide opportunities for 4-H members to develop and enhance qualities of integrity, sportsmanship, cooperation, poise and self-confidence and to help 4-H members develop skills in leadership and communication” (georgia4h.org).

Limitations of Study

This study was limited to information on youth included in the Camden County “official” 4-H Enrollment database for the 2006 and 2007 year. The membership data was self-reported by the Camden County Extension Office. These were the two years that the 4-H Enrollment Database was functional and contained data entered by extension staff.

An additional limitation to the study was that 4-H members may leave the area when their families move out of the area. This may have an effect on the questionnaire portion of the study that addresses the reasons for remaining in or dropping out of the 4-H program. It will also affect the participation data, because it is difficult to determine if the 4-H member moved out of the county or remained in the county and stopped participating in 4-H.

Basic Assumptions of Study

1. The data retrieved from the 4-H Enrollment databases are accurate.
2. The 4-H members will return the questionnaires to determine factors that result in increased or decreased interest in the program.
3. The decrease in participation and reduced enrollment retention could be caused by more than one single factor.

Significance of Study

(Implications and Applications)

The results of this study could provide valuable information to the Extension staff relating to programming in the following years. The results may also provide more effective recruitment and retention methods for the 4-H program in Camden County, Georgia. The information acquired could also be used as a training tool for other agents in the state by providing recommendations on how to improve enrollment and retention in their county.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter reviews previous research that is relevant to this study. The first section will look at the factors that affect the drop out rate of middle school students that were previously involved in youth development (4-H) programs. The second section will describe the reasons youth remain in or drop out of the youth development (4-H) program and will also address whether participating in 4-H activities such as project achievement, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or camp relates to the reasons for remaining involved in the 4-H program. The third section will address methods of recruitment and retaining 4-H members once they are involved in the program by determining what youth want to get out of their youth development (4-H) program.

Why 4-H Members Drop Out?

Research studies have found that 40% – 50% of first year 4-H members do not re-enroll in 4-H upon entering their second year, which in most cases are the fifth grade and sixth grade years respectfully (Astroth, 1985). In addition, the 4-H program loses an additional 20% of the active sixth grade members upon entering their third year or seventh grade (Astroth, 1985; Harder et al, 2005). Reasons for dropping out included not understanding the 4-H program, not feeling welcome, a conflicting time commitment (i.e. school and community activities), opinions that the program was boring or for little kids, not having the financial ability to pay for some of the programs, the desire to just be with friends in a relaxed setting, inability for parental involvement such as transportation, lack of assistance with their project, and the project clubs did

not meet enough or have the appropriate activities to satisfy the youth participants (Astroth, 1985; Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, & Stone, 2005; Digby & Ferrari, 2005a; Ritchie & Resler, 1993; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005).

Some youth drop out of 4-H and other youth development programs because they are growing developmentally by gaining feelings of independence. They are making their own decisions about what they want to be involved in. It is challenging for some youth to decide how to schedule their time outside of school. After being prompted to be involved in group activities such as the 4-H program by their parents, these older youth often decide to remove themselves from the program to illustrate their independence (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995).

What Keeps 4-H Members Enrolled?

The 4-H program in Camden County becomes an entirely after school program once the 4-H members enter middle school as a sixth grader. With an increase in programs offered by the school system and community, students must make a decision of whether or not to participate in 4-H. The most likely reason for a 4-H member to choose to remain in the program would be that they are happy and satisfied with what the program offers and with what they get out of the program. Hence, what factors keep 4-H members satisfied with the 4-H program? According to Norland & Bennett (1993, Findings section, para. 4), the factors that keep 4-H'ers most satisfied with the program include: "high quality 4-H club meetings, high levels of responsibility, high commitment, positive parental involvement and support, positive experience with competition, opportunities to work with younger members, gender (girls were more satisfied than boys), and high participation in 4-H activities." They also found that youth were more satisfied with the 4-H program when they had the "opportunity to participate in older member activities, positive experiences with competition, and participation in club, county, state, and national activities"

(Norland & Bennett, 1993, Findings section, para. 2). Research by Ferrari & Turner (2006), led to the understanding that youth joined and participated in youth programs as a result of caring adults, homework assistance, physical and psychosocial environment, program opportunities, fun, learning, friends, character development, and life skills. Other fun activities that contributed to youth participation included “computers, arts and crafts, games, and recreation” (Ferrari & Turner, 2006, Results and Discussion section, para. 1).

According to research by Hartley (1983), the rate of member participation was directly associated with reenrollment in 4-H in the following years. The more activities and events youth participated in during their first year, the more likely they were to continue their participation in 4-H in the following years. If the 4-H members completed a project and received recognition, they were also more likely to re-enroll and continue their participation (Hartley, 1983).

Radhakrishna, Everhart, and Sinasky (2006, Conclusion and Recommendation section, para. 1) found that youth believe that competitive events provide them with benefits such as “learn[ing] new things, develop[ing] life skills, set[ting] goals, and striv[ing] for excellence.” A study of 4-H alumni, who reflected on their benefits from participating in 4-H found similar results including developing communication and teamwork skills (Ladewig and Thomas, 1987). Parents also found benefits with their children participating in competitive events that included enhanced personal skill development, self esteem, motivation to succeed, and goal setting (Keith and Vaughn, 1998).

Parental and leader support also reflects on the likelihood of 4-H members continued involvement in the program. Hartley (1983) found that when parents provided cooperation and support to their children, the children were more likely to continue their participation. 4-H alumni felt that the support they received from adult volunteer leaders during activities and club

meetings was very valuable to their development (Ladewig and Thomas, 1987). 4-H members also look to their parent's experiences in youth programs when determining how involved they will become. If their parents were leaders and involved, then their children are more likely to follow that example (Maurer and Bokerneier, 1984).

4-H Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment efforts can be very time consuming and expensive, so it is important for youth programs to find the most effective methods of recruiting new members into the program. Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose and Rask (2005) offer a variety of suggestions related to effective recruitment, including: promoting the benefits of the program, new activities and the safe group environment, distributing information at school open house functions, lunch time, or at locations where youth frequently visit, and providing promotional items for youth to use and share with their friends. Digby and Ferrari (2005b) also recommend highlighting the benefits of the program to the youth and their parents with emphasis on life skills, educational resources, and workforce preparation. They also recommend recruiting in peer circles and reaching out through home visits and phone calls (Digby and Ferrari, 2005b). Ferrari and Turner (2006) reminds leaders that youth organizations are suppose to be fun and determining what youth want to do and have fun with and incorporating it into programs will help lead to a successful program.

Ferrari and Sweeney (2005) recommend a method to increase recruitment by developing a 4-H club within another youth organization club, such as the Boys and Girls Club of America. When both organizations have similar goals and work together to accomplish these goals, this method works well. It provides the opportunity to reach youth that may not have been accessible before.

Once a youth organization finds the “hook” to attract the youth to join, then it must develop strategies to have continued interest in the program. Youth programs must remember that teens are voluntarily participating in the programs. Organizations need to provide flexibility in activities and schedules to keep youth’s interest (Heinsohn and Lewis, 1995). Hartley (1983, Recommendations section, Curriculum Decisions, para. 1) provides a variety of suggestions to improve the retention rates among youth programs including “provide opportunities to encourage participation of first year club members in 4-H activities, use personal and tangible recognition frequently, design activities to meet the needs and expectations of 4-H members, [and] plan 4-H activities to encourage participation of the entire family” as well as promote parental involvement and cooperation.

It is also important to teen members to feel a sense of membership, belonging, being needed, and be given leadership roles by sharing their knowledge and experiences (Ritchie and Resler, 1993). A mentoring system of the older members assisting younger or first year members should also help with retention rates (Harder, et al; 2005; Astroth, 1985). Studies by Norland and Bennett (1993, Conclusions and Implications section, para. 1) found that the “4-H program should be structured to maximize opportunities for older members to become committed, gain responsibility, and serve others – especially younger members.” In a study conducted by Ladewig and Thomas (1987), 4-H youth felt that they were not given enough leadership opportunities. 4-H activities should focus on high quality and promote “opportunities for responsibility” (leadership) and “contribution to others” (service learning) (Norland and Bennett, 1993, Conclusions and Implications section, para. 2).

Strategies for retention include “providing opportunities for youth that are interesting and relevant to what they want to learn” (Anderson-Butcher, 2005 cited by Digby and Ferrari 2005b,

p. 1), “offer challenging, age-appropriate program activities and freedom in choosing activities” (Little and Lauver, 2005 as cited by Digby and Ferrari 2005b, p. 1), and “communicate to youth and parents that attendance is important to benefit from the program, but set realistic attendance goals” (Digby and Ferrari 2005b, p. 1).

“Designing programs to meet the “felt needs” of clientele is the key to maintaining involvement and may help keep youth at risk from leaving 4-H” (Acosta and Holt, 1991, Redesigning Extension Programs section, para. 2). In the study by Acosta and Holt (1991), a needs assessment to determine what Louisiana teens wanted in their 4-H program and the program changes that were made resulted in increased enrollment and retention. The results of this study provided the leaders with the concepts that teens were most interested in and also provided opportunities to introduce concepts that the youth did not have as much interest in, but that their adult leaders still felt were important. For example, the high school students expressed interest in jobs and careers, but had no interest in learning about goal setting. Leaders know that goal setting is an important concept related to jobs and careers and developed creative ways to interject that information.

Summary

The review of literature provided a variety of ideas and concepts related to the factors that influence enrollment of 4-H members that will be used to further develop this study and the questionnaire to determine what information is relevant to Camden County 4-H members. Research studies show that 4-H members drop out of the program due to not understanding the 4-H program, not feeling welcome, conflicting time commitment including school and community activities, opinions that the program was boring or for little kids, not having the financial ability to pay for some of the programs, the desire to just be with friends in a relaxed

setting, inability for parental involvement including transportation, lack of assistance with project, and the project clubs not meeting enough or having the appropriate activities to satisfy the youth participants (Astroth, 1985; Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, & Stone, 2005; Digby & Ferrari, 2005; Ritchie & Resler, 1993; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005). It has also been found that it is not a problem with the program that is causing the youth to drop out, but rather a change in priorities and attitude by the youth due to developmental growth and the desire to show their independence (Heinsohn & Lewis, 1995).

Members remain in the 4-H youth organization programs because of high quality 4-H club meetings, high levels of responsibility, high commitment, positive parental involvement and support, positive experience with competition, opportunities to work with younger members, high participation in 4-H activities, opportunities to participate in older member activities and to participate in club, county, state, and national activities (Norland & Bennett, 1993). Being actively involved in activities, competitive events, and having parental support were also valuable criteria for remaining enrolled in the program (Ladewig and Thomas, 1987; Hartley, 1983; & Radhakrishna, Everhart, and Sinasky, 2006).

Many research studies have been conducted to determine how to better recruit and retain members of youth organization (4-H) programs. Suggestions to promote recruitment include promoting the benefits of the program, including the new activities and the safe group environment, distributing information at school open house functions, lunch time, or at locations where youth frequently visit; providing promotional items for youth to use and share with their friends, highlighting the benefits of the program to the youth and their parents with emphasis on life skills, educational resources, and workforce preparation; recruiting in peer circles, reaching out through home visits and phone calls (Digby and Ferrari, 2005; Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose

and Rask, 2005). Suggestions to improve retention include providing opportunities to encourage participation of first year club members in club activities, using personal and tangible recognition frequently, designing activities to meet the needs and expectations of 4-H members through high quality club meetings, planning 4-H activities to encourage participation of the entire family, promoting parental involvement and cooperation, and promoting opportunities for responsibility and contribution to others (Hartley, 1983; Norland and Bennett, 1993).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the participation data for Camden County 4-H to determine the contributing factors and possible remedy for the decline in the retention of middle school (6th – 8th grade) youth in the 4-H program. The information gathered from the needs assessment questionnaire could provide valuable information to the extension staff relating to programming in the following years. The results may also provide more effective recruitment and retention methods for the 4-H program in Camden County, Georgia and favorable options for the youth of Camden County for all ages and for years following the study.

Objectives

The study particularly sought to:

- Determine the rate of and influences on the reduction in participation in 4-H programs among 6th – 8th grade 4-H members who were formally active in 4-H in the fifth grade.
- Determine if participation in project achievement, club meetings, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or camp relates to continued participation in the 4-H program.
- Determine what activities and/or interests relate to currently active 4-H members remaining active in the program.

- Determine what recruitment and retention efforts should be offered to provide a more attractive 4-H program to sixth grade Cloverleaf and Junior (7th – 8th grade) 4-H age students.

Research Design

The research design consisted of a two part study. The first part analyzed the 4-H Enrollment Data in Camden County from the 2006 and 2007 4-H years to identify trends of participation in the various 4-H activities and events to determine if there was any relationship between participation and continued enrollment in 4-H through an ex post facto study. The study also looked into the sixth and seventh grade years of 4-H members who began 4-H in the fifth grade in 2005 – 2006 year and 4-H members who began 4-H in the fifth grade in the 2006 – 2007 year to determine if past participation increased their likelihood to remain involved in the 4-H program.

The second part was a needs assessment questionnaire distributed to the 4-H members with parental permission who were actively involved in 4-H during their fifth grade years for the 2006 and 2007 4-H year and reenrolled in their sixth grade year. The questionnaire was used to determine the reasons the 4-H members reenrolled or did not reenroll in the 4-H program. The questionnaire also included information related to a needs assessment of what programs and activities should and should not be offered. The questionnaire used a yes-no scale to measure the variables and also asked open ended questions for further clarification.

Ex Post Facto

The 4-H Enrollment Data in Camden County was self reported in the county maintained database using attendance data for every activity in which a 4-H member participates. The database includes information including: name, address, school, birth date, parents, gender, race,

ethnicity, military association, and years in 4-H for each 4-H member. Also included in the database is a list of every activity the 4-H member attended since he or she began 4-H in the fifth grade. Because this information has already been added to the database for past events, the researcher used an ex post facto research design as the basis of this portion of the study. In this type of research design, the researcher examines past events and determines if a relationship exists (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The researcher examined the participation data for the 4-H members in the sample study and noted relationships present between participation and continued enrollment in the 4-H program. The demographic data was also examined for relationships to the participation and continued enrollment trends.

Using a Questionnaire

The topic of survey methods has been studied for many years by many researchers. There are benefits and risks associated with the various methods including mail, internet, telephone, face-to-face, and focus groups. The survey method chosen for this study was a questionnaire that was mailed to the potential respondent 4-H members. The benefits of questionnaires as given by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Needs Assessment Tutorial (2007a, slide 2) include: “easiest to quantify data, time-effective for use with geographically dispersed or large numbers of people, relatively inexpensive, data easily summarized and reported, opportunity for expression without fear of embarrassment (anonymity), [and] relatively bias free”. Suggestions to combat the limitations from questionnaire surveys include: having an attention getting introduction letter, provide comment boxes with the question to additional suggestions or ideas, ask editors to review the survey, conduct a pilot study with similar participants that are not part of the sample population, provide a contact name and number for questions and comments, and follow up with reminder and thank

you messages (NOAA Coastal Service Center, 2007a).

Dillman (1991) warns of potential sources of error including sampling error, noncoverage error, nonresponse error and measurement error. In order to have a successful sample survey these risks of error need to be managed by giving everyone in the population sample an opportunity to be surveyed, enough people are included in the population sample, and that the questions in the survey are worded for easy understanding and interpretation by the population sample (Dillman, 1991). The greatest risk with mail surveys is nonresponse error. Research literature has tested and analyzed many different methods to reduce the number of nonrespondents in mail surveys. Possible methods include: “financial incentives, material incentives, follow-up reminders, timing of follow-ups, personalization of correspondence, anonymity of response, questionnaire layout, questionnaire length, color of questionnaire, type of outgoing postage, type of return postage, content of cover letter, source of survey sponsorship, and higher rate of postage” (Dillman, 1991, p. 229).

Dillman’s concept of the Total Design Method, he uses the theoretical framework of questionnaires “that questionnaire recipients are most likely to respond if they expect that the perceived benefits of doing so will outweigh the perceived cost of responding” (Dillman, 1991, p. 233). Dillman recommends three design considerations when developing a questionnaire including “reduc[ing] the perceived cost [by] making the questionnaire appear easier and less time consuming to complete, increasing perceived rewards [by] making the questionnaire itself appear interesting to fill out by adding interest-getting questions, [and] increasing trust by use of official stationary or sponsorship” (Dillman, 1978, 1983, 1991, p. 233). Dillman recently updated his concept to better include these considerations and renamed it the Tailored Design Method (Dillman, 2007).

Other design recommendations by Dillman, (1978, 1983, 1991, p. 233 - 234) include:

ordering questions to assure that interesting ones related to the topic described in the cover letter come first; using graphical design and numerous question-writing principles to ease the task of reading and answering questions (e.g. consistency in the use of large [capital or dark] letters and contrasting small letters); printing the questionnaire in a booklet format with a topically neutral but interesting cover; use of photo reduction of regular size type to make pages seem smaller and easier to complete; use of four carefully spaced mailings, including a postcard follow-up one week after the original mailing, a replacement questionnaire and cover letter informing the recipient the questionnaire has not yet been received four weeks after the original mailing, and a second replacement questionnaire and cover letter seven weeks after the first mailing, sent to non-respondents by certified mail; individually printed, addressed, and signed letters; addresses printed onto envelopes rather than on address labels; use of smaller than usually business stationary to reduce cost and make the entire request appear smaller and easier to comply with; cover letter content that includes descriptions of the study's social usefulness and why the respondent is important (repeated in different ways in each of the subsequent mailings); explanation of identification numbers and how confidentiality is protected; folding of outgoing material in a way that contrasts with advertising mail.

Surveying Youth

In an article by Reed (2008, p. 121) on measuring children's opinion, the author reminds the researcher that the "factors that particularly impact on the question – answering skills of children include developmental effects including language ability, reading age, and motor skills, as well as temperamental effects such as confidence, self-belief and the desire to please." When

designing questions for a survey it is important to keep the questions to a minimum, make the questions easily answered with truthful responses, and avoid using questions that could possibly be skipped or refused (Collican, 2004). To assure reliability with these suggestions, the researcher should use care when designing the survey questions, have the questions reviewed, and conduct a pilot test.

Breakwell (1995, as cited by Reed, 2008, p. 120) describes how children process questions in stages.

At Stage 1, children need to be able to read the question and understand what it is that the question is saying.[...] Successful completion of Stage 2 relies on the child being able to remember the details and, given that children meet many new things in a day, this needs to be assisted. Stage 3 is the point where the child decides on a response and Stage 4 is the matching of the response to the responses presented.

Methods of questioning including yes-no, multiple choice, rank ordering, and Likert scales have been studied for their ease of use among adults and children. The author and other studies suggest that rank order and Likert scales may be the easiest for children to use the four stages of answering questions.

Population

The population for the study included 100 active fifth grade 4-H members in the 2006 4-H year and 115 active fifth grade 4-H members in the 2007 4-H year. These numbers represent the 4-H members who were actively involved in an after school 4-H activity or event outside of club meetings. These 4-H members are categorized into (a) 4-H members that were active in the fifth grade that reenrolled in 4-H in the sixth grade, (b) 4-H members that were active in the fifth grade that did not reenroll in 4-H in the sixth grade, (c) 4-H members that were not actively

involved in 4-H until the sixth grade, (d) 4-H members that were active sixth grade participants that reenrolled, (e) 4-H members that were active sixth grade participants that did not reenroll, (f) 4-H members that were active fifth grade participants that skipped a year and reenrolled as a seventh grade 4-H member, and (g) 4-H members that were not actively involved in 4-H until the seventh grade.

The specific 4-H members included in this “active” status for their fifth grade year were determined using the search function on the 4-H Enrollment database and selecting all activities outside of club meetings for fifth grade 4-H members during the 2006 and 2007 4-H years, separately. The activities selected in the search were middle school club meetings, project achievement, camp, poultry judging, tree identification, forestry field day, cotton boll and consumer judging, fair booth, Shooting Awareness Fun and Education (S.A.F.E) Shooting Sports BB and Air Pistol, horse quiz bowl, horse club and trip, marine science club and trip, community service club, junior conference, fifth grade reward trip, awards banquet, volunteer, teen leader, Christmas party, Jacksonville reward trip, 4-H day at the University of Georgia football game, and summer fun trips. Additional search functions were conducted to determine if the 4-H members in the first search were still enrolled in 4-H in their sixth and seventh grade years. This search also determined if there were any newly enrolled 4-H members in those years. The contact information for these 4-H members was also included within the 4-H Enrollment database.

Sampling

The population for the ex post facto study included all of the 100 active fifth grade 4-H members in the 2006 4-H year and 115 active fifth grade 4-H members in the 2007 4-H year determined using the 4-H Enrollment search function.

The sample population for the questionnaire was self selected by the participants reenrolling in 4-H in their sixth grade year after being active in at least one after school activity or event in their fifth grade year. Also included in the sample were sixth graders that were new to being actively involved in the 4-H program.

Data Collection Methods

Ex Post Facto.

For the ex post facto, study the 4-H enrollment data for each member was determined using the 4-H Enrollment search function which was copied and pasted into a word document and separated by 4-H years. The activities that each 4-H member participated in were entered into an Excel spreadsheet by the researcher and separated by year to document each 4-H member for their fifth, sixth, and seventh grade years. 4-H members were given credit for a 4-H activity if they attended one practice and/or if they attended every practice and the event or competition. For the three years of participation a table was set up with the years as the rows and the activities and events as the columns. If the 4-H member participated in the activity, a number one was put in the associated column and row. In the cases of volunteering, serving as a teen leader, and summer fun trips, 4-H members may have received a value more than one for each time they attended, participated, or volunteered. The participation values were totaled at the end of each year, per 4-H member, per year. Totals were also determined for each activity per 4-H member and per the participation category including 4-H members that were active in their fifth, sixth, and seventh grade years, 4-H members that were active in their fifth and seventh grade years, 4-H members that were active in fifth and sixth grade, and 4-H members that were active in the fifth grade only.

Questionnaire

The data collection method for this needs assessment was a questionnaire distributed to the 4-H members who were actively involved in 4-H during their fifth grade year for the 2006 and 2007 4-H years that reenrolled in 4-H in the sixth grade. Also included in the sample were sixth graders that were new to being actively involved in the 4-H program. (see Appendix E). The questionnaire was used to determine the reasons the 4-H members reenrolled and did not reenroll in the 4-H program in the years following their active involvement as a fifth grader. The questionnaire also included information related to a needs assessment of what programs and activities should and should not be offered. Other programming questions such as time, date, and location of the meetings was also addressed. The questionnaire included a list of past activities available through the Camden County 4-H program and asked for a yes or no response for any activity that the sample respondents participated in during their 4-H career including the fifth grade. The information included in the questionnaire was based on information from the literature review including reasons for dropping out, remaining with the program, and recruitment and retention techniques. These sections included a list of these reasons determined from the literature and asked for a yes or no response by asking members if that reason applied to them. There was also an opportunity to further express their feelings regarding the chosen reasons via an open-ended response option. The questionnaire asked for suggestions for recruitment and retention in addition to needs assessment questions about the program format. The questionnaire was concluded by asking demographic information including age, grade, gender, and military family status.

Validity

Norland (1990) provides suggestions to determine the validity of a program evaluation instrument. An instrument is considered valid if it measures what we plan for it to measure. To determine validity, “all instruments should be reviewed by a panel of experts in subject matter and measurement to determine whether the content of the instrument is appropriate” (Norland, 1990, Validity Section, para.2). The researcher should ask “Are the questions related to the focus of the instrument? Are there questions missing? Are there inappropriate questions?” (Norland, 1990, Validity Section, para.2). The study questionnaire was peer reviewed by Cooperative Extension and 4-H staff members, other 4-H staff in the district, and the Camden County 4-H advisory board for validity. The reviewers were asked to consider the following questions when reviewing the questionnaire: Are the instructions understandable? Are the questions confusing? Are any of the questions too long or too short? Are any of the questions leading, meaning do they suggest or imply a certain answer? Is the format of the survey easily understood or confusing? The questionnaire was also reviewed by a University of Georgia Professor with expertise in evaluation. The professor recommended changing the format of the questions from a check all that apply to a yes-no system to prevent the “Christmas tree” method of answering surveys.

Institutional Review Board

The University of Georgia requires a review to be exercised and approval to be given before studies involving human subjects can be carried out. Following the peer review, revisions were made and a request was made to the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board for this study and acceptance was granted by the review board under Project Number 2010-10062-0.

Questionnaire Pilot Test to Determine Reliability

The pilot test can help to determine if any of the questions are confusing or difficult to understand (Norland, 1990). Following approval by the Institutional Review Board, the questionnaire was then pilot tested by 4-H members who were currently active in the 4-H program during the 2008 and 2009 program year who were not included in the original study. These youth were in the sixth grade and the ninth through twelfth grade during the 2009 program year. Convenience sampling was employed to select fifty of these members to participate in the pilot test. The questionnaire was pilot tested in summer of 2009 using the sample population described above. It was mailed to fifty two possible survey participants and yielded only 12 responses. The responses of members were compiled and entered into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 14.0 and reliability was calculated for the scales on the instrument. Reliability was not calculated on the demographic section of the instrument as responses to demographic data by members were expected to be reliable and valid. According to Radhakrishna, (2007, Step 5 – Establishing Reliability, para.3), “data collected from pilot test is analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences)”...[to determine] “the reliability coefficient (alpha) [that]can range from 0 to 1, with 0 representing an instrument with full of error and 1 representing total absence of error.”(Radhakrishna, 2007, Step 5 – Establishing Reliability, para.3). “A reliability coefficient (alpha) of .70 or higher is considered acceptable reliability.” (Radhakrishna, 2007 , Step 5 – Establishing Reliability, para.3). Remaining sections of the instrument for this study had a Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha of .85 for measuring member activity.

Questionnaire Sample Population

Following the pilot test and data analysis, the questionnaire was mailed to the active sixth grade 4-H members from the 2007 and 2008 4-H years with a letter of description, a letter requesting parental consent, and a letter requesting youth assent. (see Appendix B, C, & D). The packet also included a pre-addressed stamped envelope for the timely return of the questionnaire along with a copy of the parent consent and youth assent letters. This packet was preceded by an introductory letter informing the sample respondents' parents about the purpose of the study and the questionnaire packet that would be arriving soon. (see Appendix A). One week after the questionnaire was sent out, a postcard reminder was sent with a note of appreciation to those that had already returned their questionnaires and a request to complete and return the questionnaire to those that had not or they could request for a replacement questionnaire to be sent. In addition to Dillman's (1991) recommendations to increase the response rate, the researcher sent, e-mail reminders to the 4-H members that had not returned their questionnaire one week following the postcard reminder. Some of the sample participants requested a new survey as a response to the e-mail reminder, and a new survey was mailed promptly. Two weeks later a new cover letter was developed reminding the sample participants that had not responded the importance of the study and their returning the completed questionnaire. A second questionnaire, parental consent forms, youth assent forms, and pre-addressed stamped envelope was sent with the new cover letter.

After following the guidelines recommend by Dillman (1991) to reduce non-respondent error, only 23 responses to the questionnaire were collected by the researcher from September 2009 thru November 2009. The completed questionnaire, consent form, and assent form were returned individually. The researcher documented the date the response was returned and the

consecutive number it arrived in association with the other returned responses. The consent and assent forms were separated upon receipt and stored separate from the surveys at all times during collection and analysis. The responses were scored by the researcher using Microsoft Excel, separating each question with a workbook page. The responses to the questions that asked for yes or no responses were given the value of one for yes or the value of zero for no. If the question was left blank the lack of response was giving a value of a blank cell in Excel. The responses to the qualitative questions were typed identically as they were written in the row associated with the survey number. The responses to the demographic questions were given a value of one for yes, zero for no, one for female, and two for male.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the 4-H Enrollment Database for the ex post facto portion of the study and the survey sample was entered into Microsoft Excel and summarized using the count feature to determine the frequency of each 4-H member or 4-H activity. Percentages based on the population were also calculated by entering formulas into the Excel spreadsheet. The data obtained from the questionnaire responses was also entered into Microsoft Excel and was subjected to the same data analysis as the 4-H Enrollment data. The items were then summarized into tables and general themes were determined. The responses to the portion of the survey questionnaire that included open ended questions were also entered into Microsoft Excel separately by question. Domain analysis was used to analyze these open ended questions using guidelines from Spradley (1980). The responses were reviewed by the researcher and categorized into themes using color coding. The themes were categorized in a table and enumerated to determine prevalence.

Chapter 4

Results

In this chapter, research findings are presented from data collected from the 4-H Enrollment Database of 4-H members who were active in fifth grade and reenrolled in 4-H in their sixth grade year. The members included were active fifth graders in the 2006 4-H year (2005 – 2006) and the 2007 4-H year (2006 – 2007). Findings will also be presented from a survey instrument given to a sample of these 4-H members that reenrolled for their sixth grade year, which included 53 possible respondents. Utilizing the data collected from the 23 returned questionnaires; responses were divided into categories according to the sections of the questionnaire and the themes of the study.

Demographics of 4-H Members

In order to understand the rate of participation, the researcher will first describe the target population and survey sample including demographics. The target population for this study included 4-H members who were active in the Camden County 4-H program in the fifth grade during the 2006 4-H year (2005 – 2006) and the 2007 4-H year (2006 – 2007). The study utilized enrollment data from the official 4-H Enrollment Database maintained by the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and entered by the staff of the Camden County 4-H office. Camden County 4-H began using the 4-H Enrollment Database Program in 2005. From this program the researcher was able to obtain information on 4-H members who were enrolled in the 4-H program during the 2006 and 2007 4-H years. The search function was used to determine the 4-H members with status as an active member which was determined by participation in at

least one 4-H activity outside of the fifth grade club meetings. This group of participants included 100 4-H members in the 2006 4-H year and 115 4-H members in the 2007 4-H year.

Gender of 4-H members.

The active 4-H members in the 2006 4-H year included 38 males (38%) and 62 females (62%), and the active 4-H members in the 2007 4-H year included 50 males (43%) and 65 females (57%). The gender of the 4-H members is illustrated in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1
Gender of 4-H Members by Year

4-H Year	2006		2007	
	N	%	N	%
Male	38	38	50	43
Female	62	62	65	57
Total	100	100	115	100

Racial classification & ethnicity.

The demographics of race and ethnicity are included in Table 4-2. In the overall target population, no 4-H members classified their race as Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. The racial classification and ethnicity demographics for the target population were 73% White (n=77), 18% African American/Black (n=19), two percent (n=2) American Indian/Alaskan Native, and one percent Asian (n=1) in the 2006 4-H year, and 79% White (n=91), 15% African American/Black (n=17), and two percent American Indian/Alaskan Native (n=2) in the 2007 4-H year. The target population also included participants with Hispanic Ethnicity with six percent (n=6) in the 2006 4-H year and four percent (n=5) in the 2007 4-H year.

Table 4-2
Racial Classification & Ethnicity of 4-H Members by Year

Racial Classification	2006 4-H Year		2007 4-H Year	
	N	%	N	%
White	77	73	91	79
African American/Black	19	18	17	15
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	2	2	2	2
Asian	1	1	0	0
Hispanic Ethnicity	6	6	5	4
Total	105	100	115	100

Military status of 4-H members family by year.

Camden County is the location of Kings Bay Naval Base and the home base for many 4-H families. The military status of the 4-H members in the target population was 38% military (n=38) and 62% (n=62) non-military in the 2006 4-H year and 32% military (n=37) and 68% non-military (n=78) in the 2007 4-H year. Refer to the 4-H military distribution in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3
Military Status of 4-H Members' Family by Year

Military Family Status	2006 4-H Year		2007 4-H Year	
	N	%	N	%
Military	38	38	37	32
Non-military	62	62	78	68
Total	100	100	115	100

Ex Post Facto

Retention of 4-H members.

The 4-H members in the target population participated in at least one activity outside of the fifth grade 4-H club meeting. These 4-H members' participation was documented for three

years to determine if the 4-H members remained active by re-enrolling in the 4-H program in the following years. In the 2006 4-H year, 547 members joined 4-H. Of that, only 100 (18%) were in the target population of this study. There were 40 of the active members (40%) in 2006 that re-enrolled in 2007. There were 57 (57%) that did not reenroll in 2007. Twenty five members did not reenroll in 4-H for their seventh grade year after being active in the 2007 4-H year (63% of enrolled in 2007). Three members (3%) that were active in the 2006 4-H year, were not active in their sixth grade year, and then reenrolled in their seventh grade year. Fifteen members joined 4-H in 2006 and continued their membership into their seventh grade year (38% of enrolled in 2007). See Table 4-4 for an illustration of retention trends beginning with the 2006 4-H year.

The rate of retention of 4-H members who were active in fifth grade beginning in the 2007 4-H year is illustrated in Table 4-4. In the 2007 4-H year, 678 members joined 4-H, and only 115 (17%) were in the target population by being active in at least one 4-H activity outside of the fifth grade club meetings. Only 29 of the members active in 2007 re-enrolled in 2008 (25%). Eighty-three of the members' active in 2007 did not reenroll in the 4-H program in 2008 (72%). There were 15 members (52% of enrolled in 2008) that did not re-enroll in 4-H after being active in the 2008 4-H year. Three members (3%) that were active in the 2007 4-H year, were not active in their sixth grade year, and then reenrolled in their seventh grade year. Four-H members that continued their membership from 2007 when they first joined 4-H into their seventh grade year made up 48% of members enrolled in 2008 (n=14)

Table 4-4
Enrollment of 4-H Members for Three Years

Retention Trends	2005 – 2006			2006 – 2007		
	N	%	N	n	%	N
Active in 4-H in 1 st year	100	18	547	115	17	678
Re-enrolled in 2 nd year	40	40	100	29	25	115
Did Not Re-enroll in 2 nd year	57	57	100	83	72	115
Skipped 2 nd year Reenrolled in 3 rd year	3	3	100	3	3	115
Re-enrolled in 3 rd year	15	38	40	14	48	29
Did not Reenroll in 3 rd year after being enrolled in 2 nd year	25	63	40	15	52	29

Gender of 4-H members and member retention.

Active 4-H members that did not re-enroll in 4-H for the 2006 – 2007 year (their sixth grade year) consisted of 24 males (24%) and 33 females (33%). The members that continued participating in 4-H and re-enrolled for their sixth grade year included 13 males (13%) and 27 females (27%). Of that group re-enrolling as sixth graders, only 3 males (8%) and 12 females (30%) re-enrolled in 4-H for their seventh grade year (2007 – 2008). Table 4-5 has a visual description of this comparison of gender and member retention.

Of the group of 4-H members that began 4-H in 2006 – 2007, 33 males (29%) and 50 females (43%) did not re-enroll in 4-H for the 2007 – 2008 4-H year. The members that re-enrolled for their sixth grade year were comprised of 15 males (13%) and 14 females (12%). Of that group of sixth grade 4-H members, 9 males (31%) and 5 females (17%) continued with 4-H by re-enrolling in the 2008 – 2009 4-H year.

Table 4-5
Gender of 4-H Members and Member Retention

2005 – 2006	N	Male		Female	
		n	%	n	%
Did not Re-enroll in 2006 – 2007 (6 th grade)	100	24	24	33	33
Re-enrolled in 2006 – 2007 (6 th grade)	100	13	13	27	27
Skipped 6 th grade Reenrolled in 2007 – 2008 (7 th grade)	100	1	1	2	2
Re-enrolled in 2007 – 2008 (7 th grade)	40	3	8	12	30
Did not Reenroll in 2007 - 2008 after being enrolled in 6 th grade year	40	10	25	15	37
2006 – 2007	N	n	%	n	%
Did not Re-enroll in 2007 – 2008 (6 th grade)	115	33	29	50	43
Re-enrolled in 2007 – 2008 (6 th grade)	115	15	13	14	12
Skipped 6 th grade Reenrolled in 2007 – 2008 (7 th grade)	115	2	2	1	1
Re-enrolled in 2008 – 2009 (7 th grade)	29	9	31	5	17
Did not Reenroll in 2007 - 2008 after being enrolled in 6 th grade year	29	6	21	9	31

Participation in 4-H activities.

The 4-H Enrollment Database documents every activity in which a 4-H member participates. The researcher organized the activities into major categories according to the content of the programs and how they are promoted. The 4-H members who had been active in at least one 4-H after school activity in their fifth grade year in the 2006 and 2007 4-H years were included in the study. 4-H members can participate in one or more 4-H activity and major

category in a year. Table 4-6 and 4-7 displays the number of activities that were attempted each year by 4-H members according to the major categories. The major categories were core programs which included middle school club meeting, county project achievement, district project achievement and 4-H summer camp; judging and competitive events including poultry judging, tree identification, S.A.F.E. BB gun program which occurred all three years studied, and forestry field day, cotton boll and consumer judging, fair booths, S.A.F.E. air pistol, and horse quiz bowl which was not offered until the 2007 4-H year; recognition in the form of fifth grade reward trip and awards banquet; and extra fun trips and events including the 4-H Christmas party, Jacksonville fun trip, 4-H Day at the University of Georgia football game, and summer fun trips. Other activities were only available to 4-H members as they progressed through their 4-H years or were not offered every year. The special interest clubs which included horse club, marine science club, community service club and the fun trips associated with those clubs were not offered until 2008 4-H year. The leadership category which included Junior Conference was only available in the 4-H member's seventh and eighth grade year.

2005 – 2006 active fifth graders.

The helping category which included serving as a volunteer or teen leader was usually available only to the more experienced 4-H members. The categories were totaled by a search function to mark a number one if at least one of the activities in each category had a participant, and the categories were also summed by the number of participants that participated in each activity included in each category during the 4-H year.

4-H members who were active in fifth grade in the 2005 – 2006 year participated in a total of 240 4-H activities during the year. The core programs category had the highest number of participants in the 2006 4-H year with 102 (43%). In the core programs category, camp had

the highest number of participants from this group of fifth graders with 72 of the 102 participants. Fun trips and events had the second highest number of participants in the 2006 4-H year with 61 (25%). In the fun trips category, the summer fun trips made up 100% of the participants. The next highest category was the recognition category with 45 participants (19%). The fifth grade club of the year reward trip made up 28 of the 45 participants in recognition activities for the fifth graders in the 2006 4-H year.

Following those 4-H members into their sixth grade year in which they participated in 142 4-H activities during the 2006 – 2007 4-H year. Core programs were once again the category with the highest number of participants with 64 (45%). Summer Camp was the category with the most participants out of the other core programs with 31 of the 64 participants. The second highest category was competitive events with 33 participants (23%) with a poultry judging, tree identification, and forestry field day having the most participants with a combined 20 of the 33. The next category with the highest number of participants was fun trips and events with 27 (19%) and summer fun trips have 20 of the 27 participants.

In the 2007 – 2008 4-H year, the seventh grade year of the original group, 4-H members participated in 113 4-H activities. Core programs were the highest category with 32 participants (29%). Middle School club meetings made up 16 of the 32 and summer camp made up 13 of the 32 participants. The second highest category was fun trips and events with 30 participants (26%), with summer fun trips having 20 of the 30 participants. Judging and competitive events had the next highest category with 20 participants (18%), which resulted from an equal number of participants in the poultry judging, cotton boll and consumer judging, and fair booths with a combined 12 of the 20 participants.

Table 4-6
Number of 4-H Activities by Category and Year for the 2005 – 2006 Active Fifth Grade 4-H Members

4-H Categories	2005 – 2006		2006 – 2007		2007 – 2008	
	Fifth Grade		Sixth Grade		Seventh Grade	
	n = 240		n = 142		n = 113	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Core Programs	102	43	64	45	32	29
Judging & Competitive Events	32	13	33	23	20	18
Special Interest Clubs	0	0	1	1	9	8
Leadership Conferences	0	0	0	0	4	3
Recognition	45	19	9	6	0	0
Helping	0	0	8	6	18	16
Fun Trips & Events	61	25	27	19	30	26
Total	240	100	142	100	113	100

Note: n = number of activities, *f* = number of participants in the category

2006 – 2007 active fifth graders.

Looking into the 2006 – 2007 group of active fifth grade 4-H members, yielded somewhat similar results. The fifth grade 4-H members in the 2006 – 2007 4-H year participated in 261 activities. Core programs were the highest category with 89 (34%) of the participants. Camp was the activity in core programs that had the most number of participants with 68 of the 89 participants. Judging and competitive events was the second highest category with 81 participants (31%). Tree identification was a popular program in this category with 35 of the 81 participants. The next highest category was the recognition category with 55 participants (21%). In the recognition category the 4-H fifth grade reward trip was comprised of 35 of the 55 participants.

In the sixth grade year, 4-H members in the 2007 – 2008 4-H year participated in 111

activities. The highest category was core programs 39 participants (35%) which includes camp (18 of the 39 participants) and club meetings (18 of the 39 participants). The second highest category was fun trips and events with 30 (27%) participants, with summer fun trips being enjoyed by 21 of the 30 4-H members. The next highest category was judging and competitive events with 18 (16%) of the participants. The S.A.F.E. BB team recruited the highest number of participants with 7 of the 18.

The seventh grade year of these 4-H members was marked with a large drop in participation in 4-H activities with only 55 in the 2008 – 2009 4-H year. Core programs were once again the highest category with 21 participants (38%). Middle school club meetings were the activity with the most participants in the core programs category with 12 of the 21 participants. The second highest category was judging events and competition with 15 participants (27%). The activity with the most participants in this category was the S.A.F.E BB team with five of the 15. The next highest category was helping with nine activities (16%); 4-H members embraced helping others by having six of the nine participants in this category serving as teen leaders. It should be noted that the previously popular summer fun trips had zero participants in the 2008 – 2009 due to every trip being cancelled due to low participation, in addition to cut backs on fun trips due to budget restrictions.

Table 4-7
Number of Activities by Category and Year for the 2006 – 2007 Active Fifth Grade 4-H Members

4-H Categories	2006 – 2007		2007 – 2008		2008 – 2009	
	Fifth Grade		Sixth Grade		Seventh Grade	
	n = 261		n = 111		n = 55	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Core Programs	89	34	39	35	21	38
Judging & Competitive Events	81	31	18	16	15	27
Special Interest Clubs	0	0	12	11	7	13
Leadership Conferences	0	0	0	0	1	2
Recognition	55	21	8	7	2	4
Helping	0	0	4	4	9	16
Fun Trips & Events	36	14	30	27	0	0
Total	261	100	111	100	55	100

Note: n = number of activities, *f* = number of participants in the category

Participation & retention.

Another objective of the study was to determine the relationship between participation in activities in the given categories and reenrolling in the 4-H program in the following years. 4-H members who were active in at least one after school activity in their fifth grade year during the 2005 – 2006 and 2006 – 2007 4-H years were tracked by their retention in the 4-H program in consecutive years and the number and type of activities in which they participated. 4-H members could have participated in one or more 4-H activity and major category in a year.

4-H members retained fifth –seventh grade (2005 – 2008).

The 4-H members that began 4-H in 2005 as a fifth grader and continued through 2008 as a seventh grader totaled to 15 members. Table 4-8 has an illustration of the participation by

category and year. The project category of core programs had almost 100% of the 4-H members that were retained in the 4-H program for their fifth, sixth and seventh grade year for all three years. In the 2005 -2006 year, the recognition category consisted of 13 participants (87%). In 2006 – 2007 and 2007 - 2008, fun trips was the category with the most participants with 9 (60%) and 12 (80%) respectively. The special interest clubs category had the lowest number of participants in the 2008 4-H year.

Table 4-8
Members Retained for 2005 – 2008 Participating in at Least One Project from a Given Category (n=15)

Project Categories	2005 – 2006		2006 – 2007		2007 - 2008	
	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
Core Programs	14	93	14	93	15	100
Judging & Competitive Events	6	40	9	60	8	53
Special Interest Clubs	N/A	--	N/A	--	3	20
Leadership Conference	N/A	--	N/A	--	4	27
Recognition	13	87	8	53	7	47
Helping	N/A	--	N/A	--	7	47
Extra Fun Trips & Events	8	53	9	60	12	80

4-H members retained fifth & sixth grade (2005 – 2007).

The 4-H members that were fifth graders in 2005 – 2006 and continued into their sixth grade year in 2006 – 2007 total to 25 members. Those 4-H members that were active in their fifth grade but did not reenroll in their sixth grade year in 2006 – 2007 totaled to 57 members (see Table 4-9). The members that were retained participated most in the core program activities with 23 (92%) participating in the 2006 4-H year and 22 (88%) participating in the 2007 4-H

year. The members that did not reenroll in the 4-H program in 2006 – 2007 were also active in core programs during the fifth grade year with 38 participants (67%). The group of members not retained had higher participation percentages than those retained in almost every category. An interesting finding is that the 4-H members (20%) that were retained into the 2006 – 2007 participated in the judging and competitive events and did not receive recognition at the awards banquet. This means that they received an invitation and did not attend.

Table 4-9
Members Retained for 2005 – 2007 Participating in at Least One Project from a Given Category (does not include group of members in Table 4-8)

Project Categories	Retained (n = 25)				Not Retained (n=57)	
	2005 – 2006		2006 – 2007		2005 – 2006	
	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
Core Programs	23	92	22	88	38	67
Judging & Competitive Events	3	12	5	20	13	23
Special Interest Clubs	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--
Leadership Conference	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--
Recognition	6	24	0	0	21	37
Helping	N/A	--	1	4	N/A	--
Extra Fun Trips & Events	2	8	3	12	17	30

4-H members retained fifth –seventh grade (2006 – 2009).

The 4-H members that began their 4-H experience in 2006 and continued with the program into their seventh grade year in 2008 – 2009 totaled 14 members as illustrated in Table 4-10. This group also participated in the most activities in the core program category for all three years. Judging and competitive events was also a category with a large percentage of

participants with 10 (71%) in the 2007 4-H year, eight (57%) in the 2008 4-H year, and seven (50%) in the 2009 4-H year.

Table 4-10
Members Retained for 2006 – 2009 Participating in at Least One Project from a Given Category (n=14)

Project Categories	2006 – 2007		2007 – 2008		2008 - 2009	
	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
Core Programs	11	79	13	93	12	86
Judging & Competitive Events	10	71	8	57	7	50
Special Interest Clubs	N/A	--	4	29	4	29
Leadership Conference	N/A	--	N/A	--	1	7
Recognition	7	50	5	36	2	14
Helping	N/A	--	2	14	4	29
Extra Fun Trips & Events	4	29	7	50	0	0

4-H members retained fifth & sixth grade (2006 – 2008).

The 4-H members that remain with the 4-H program for their fifth and sixth grade year totaled 15 members and those that did not reenroll in 4-H for the 2006 – 2007 year totaled 83 (See Table 4-11). Those members that reenrolled in the 4-H program for their sixth grade year participated in the core programs category the most in both the 2007 4-H year with 13 participants (87%) and the 2008 4-H year with 11 participants (73%). The 4-H members that did not reenroll also participated in many of the core programs with 46 participants (55%). Judging events also had a substantial percentage 48% (n=40) of participants from those 4-H members that did not reenroll.

Table 4-11
Members Retained for 2006 – 2008 Participating in at Least One Project from a Given Category
(does not include group of members in Table 4-10)

Project Categories	Retained (n = 15)				Not Retained (n=83)	
	2006 – 2007		2007 – 2008		2006 – 2007	
	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%	Number of Participants	%
Core Programs	13	87	11	73	46	55
Judging & Competitive Events	5	33	3	20	40	48
Special Interest Clubs	N/A	--	2	13	N/A	--
Leadership Conference	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--
Recognition	7	47	3	20	33	40
Helping	N/A	--	1	7	N/A	--
Extra Fun Trips & Events	5	33	5	33	15	18

Questionnaire

Questionnaire sample population.

The target population for the questionnaire was a purposive sample of Camden County, Georgia 4-H members that reenrolled in 4-H their sixth grade year. This group was chosen because they experienced at least one year in 4-H and were active in 4-H programs outside of the fifth grade club meeting. Sixty one questionnaires were mailed to the 4-H members, six were returned due to address change, and at least two more had moved to another state. This resulted in 53 4-H members that could participate in the study. The updated questionnaire sample population included 4-H members in their sixth grade year from 2006 – 2007 and 2007 – 2008. From the 2006 – 2007 group of sixth grade 4-H members, 10 were male and 21 were female. The 2007 – 2008 group of sixth grade 4-H members included 11 males and 11 females. Table 4-12 has a numerical illustration of this gender information.

Table 4-12
4-H Member Questionnaire Sample Population by Gender and Year (n = 53)

4-H Year	2006 – 2007 Sixth Graders		2007 – 2008 Sixth Graders	
	n	%	N	%
Male	10	19	11	21
Female	21	40	11	21
Total	31	59	22	41

Questionnaire Respondent Demographics

As presented in Table 4-13, 23 of the total sample population (43%) responded to the questionnaire. In the sample group of sixth graders in 2006 – 2007, 13 responded to the questionnaire. The gender of the respondents was four males (7.5%) and nine females (17%). Of the 18 4-H members that were sixth graders in 2006 – 2007 that did not respond, there were six males (11%) and 12 females (23%). Ten from the sample group that were sixth graders in 2007 – 2008 responded to the questionnaire. Of that ten, five were female (9%) and five were male (9%). Of the twelve from the sample group of 2007 – 2008 that did not respond, six were females (11%) and six were males (11%).

Table 4-13
Gender of Respondents by Year

4-H Year	2006 – 2007 Sixth Graders		2007 – 2008 Sixth Graders		Total Sample Populations	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total Sample Population	31	58	22	42	53	100
Respondents	13	24.5	10	18.5	23	43
Male	4	7.5	5	9		
Female	9	17	5	9		
Non-respondents	18	34	12	23	30	57
Male	6	11	6	11		
Female	12	23	6	11		

Participation Level of Respondents

Participation by grade level.

Respondent 4-H members were asked to note the grades they were active in 4-H and what activities they had participated in since they joined 4-H in the fifth grade. The 23 respondents were available to participate in more than one year in 4-H and more than one activity per year. The activity by grade level had 100% at the fifth grade level and then gradually decreased with 91% (n=21) in sixth grade, 74% (n=17) in seventh grade, 61% (n=14) in eighth grade, and 35% (n = 8) in ninth grade. (Table 4-14). The survey respondents' grade level at the time of completing the questionnaire was eighth and ninth grade. The rate of decline from one year to the next was also calculated. The decrease in participation by 4-H survey respondents was nine percent from fifth to sixth grade, 19% from sixth to seventh grade, 18% from seventh to eighth grade, and the largest percentage of decline was from eighth to ninth grade with 43%.

Table 4-14
Participation by Grade Level

Grade Level	Survey Respondents	%	Rate of Decline %
Active in 5 th Grade	23	100	
Active in 6 th Grade	21	91	9
Active in 7 th Grade	17	74	19
Active in 8 th Grade	14	61	18
Active in 9 th Grade	8	35	43

Participation in 4-H activities.

Respondents selected the 4-H activities they remembered participating in since the fifth grade by circling yes next to each activity from the yes-no response choices. Some respondents left the yes-no response blank for a few of the 4-H activities. The amount of blank responses varied by activity, so the researcher included every response and denoted which activities had no response. It is possible that the respondents did not select a response, because they did not

participate in the activity. The core programs of club meetings and camp had the most participants from the respondents of the questionnaire (Table 4-15). Club meetings had a total of 21 participants (91%) and camp was attended by 22 of the respondents (95%). Summer fun trips were attended by 70% of the respondent sample (n=16). The lowest number of participants was in the special interest clubs with four percent of the respondents (n=1) participating in the horse club, 13% participating in the community service club (n=3) and nine percent participating in the marine science club (n=2).

Table 4-15
Participation in 4-H Activities by Survey Respondents

4-H Activities	Yes	%	No	%	No Response	%
Core Programs						
Club Meetings	21	91	0	0	2	9
Club Officer	11	48	9	39	3	13
Project Achievement	9	39	10	43	4	17
Camp	22	96	0	0	1	4
Judging and Competitive Events						
Tree Identification	9	39	11	48	3	13
Cotton Boll & Consumer Judging	3	13	16	70	4	17
Fair Booths	3	13	17	74	3	13
Poultry Judging	7	30	13	57	3	13
BB Team/Air Pistol	9	39	12	52	2	9
Horse Quiz Bowl	0	0	18	78	5	22
Special Interest Clubs						
Horse Club	1	4	17	74	5	22
Community Service Club	3	13	15	65	5	22
Marine Science Club	2	9	16	70	5	22
Fun Activities and Events						
Summer Fun Trips	16	70	5	22	2	9
Fun Trips – Football/Hockey	7	30	14	61	2	9
Leadership Conferences						
District/State Weekend Conferences	5	22	13	57	5	22

Questionnaire Responses

The survey instrument included three questions related to (a) reasons for continuing to participate in 4-H, (b) reasons for no longer participating in 4-H, and (c) recruitment methods to encourage participation in 4-H. Each question contained a list of possible reasons determined from the literature review of previous studies on youth organization participation and retention. The reasons were selected by circling either the yes or no response. All of the survey respondents (n=23) answered the first question. Question two about reasons for no longer participating in 4-H may have been confusing to those 4-H members still participating in 4-H. For question two, 10 respondents answered the reason statements with a yes-no response, seven respondents selected no for every reason, and four respondents did not select any response. In question three, three of the respondents left a reason without any response. This may make determining a percentage confusing or difficult.

Open-ended questions.

A portion of the survey questionnaire included open ended questions related to the participation questions that were used in the yes-no response section. The first two questions related to the reason that was most influential to continuing to participate in 4-H, and no longer participating in 4-H. The third question asked the youth for any cool ideas for new 4-H programs or activities. Domain analysis was used to analyze these open ended questions using guidelines from Spradley (1980). The responses were reviewed by the researcher and categorized into themes using color coding. The themes were categorized in a table and enumerated to determine prevalence.

Question 1: Indicate the reasons you decided to continue participating in 4-H by circling YES for the reasons you continued to participate.

Continuing to participate in 4-H.

Question one asked the respondents to select any reason that contributed to their decision to continue participating in 4-H. The reasons were grouped in general themes of participation in 4-H activities, recognition, learning and life skill development, responsibility/leadership, family support and involvement, and sense of belonging. (Table 4-16). Participating in 4-H afterschool activities and events in my fifth grade year was selected by 17 respondents (70%) and 10 respondents (43%) indicated that participating in the S.A.F.E. shooting sports program contributed to their continued participation in 4-H. Learning new things (96%) and developing life skills (87%) were selected often by the respondents as reasons for participating. Almost all of the respondents 22 (96%) included parent support as a reason for continuing to participate. The theme of responsibility and leadership had a high number of responses with all reasons being chosen by more than fifty percent of the respondents with setting and achieving goals having the highest percentage of 83% (n=19). Respondents also indicated liking the leaders (96%) and that the leaders cared about them (87%) as reasons for remaining with 4-H. This instills a sense of belonging.

Table 4-16
Reasons for Continuing to Participate in 4-H

Possible Reasons/Themes	Yes	%	No	%
Participation in Activities				
Participated in 4-H afterschool activities & events in my 5 th grade year	16	70	7	30
Participated in Project Achievement	8	35	15	65
Member of a Judging Event Team	7	30	16	70
Member of a 4-H Special Interest Club	4	17	19	83
Participated in the S.A.F.E. Shooting Sports Program	10	43	13	57
Wanted to have more opportunities to participate in county, district, and state 4-H activities	12	52	11	48
Recognition				
Was recognized at the 4-H Awards Banquet	13	57	10	43
Received a Ribbon at Project Achievement	4	17	19	83
Learning & Life Skill Development				
Like to learn new things	22	96	1	4
Like developing life skills	20	87	3	13
Responsibility/Leadership				
Like to set & achieve goals	19	83	4	17
4-H helped me to have the motivation to succeed	14	61	9	39
I liked being given additional responsibility (officer/teen leader)	12	52	11	48
I liked the 4-H teen leaders	17	74	6	26
I wanted to become a 4-H teen leader	14	61	9	39
I wanted to become a 4-H camp counselor when I graduated from high school	14	61	9	39
Family Support and Involvement				
My parents were involved in the program	9	39	14	61
My parents were supportive of me being in 4-H	22	96	1	4
My brother or sister was also involved in 4-H	10	43	13	57
Sense of Belonging				
I liked the activities we had at the 4-H club meetings	16	70	7	30
I liked the 4-H leaders & volunteers	22	96	1	4
I felt like adults cared about me	20	87	3	13
4-H helped to develop or improve my self esteem	15	65	8	35
I liked being able to be myself around others	19	83	4	17

Open Response to Question 1: “Of the reasons you indicated with yes for continuing to participate in 4-H, can you describe the one reason that was most influential to you and why?”

Of the 23 responses to the survey question, 34 different comments were identified. These comments were grouped into five domains using domain analysis. The five domains related to continuing to participate included 4-H is fun, learning new things, events, camps, and parental involvement. The detailed answers to Question #1 are illustrated in Table 4-17.

Domain #1: 4-H is Fun!

In nine of the 34 comments, youth related their continuing to participate in 4-H because it was fun. The youth related the 4-H fun to the activities (n=2), learning new things (n=2), camp (n=4), and shooting sports (n=1). One youth wrote, “I wanted to learn new things, but at the same time, have lots of fun.”

Domain #2: Learning New Things.

In seven of the 34 comments, youth related 4-H to learning new things. Some of the responses indicated a desire to learn new things to “prepare them for the real world” or “for the future.” One youth wrote, “because of the learning, skills, and friendships I have made. 4-H has taught me many things.”

Domain #3: 4-H Events.

Different 4-H events were included in six of the 34 comments, including judging events (n=2), S.A.F.E. shooting sports (n=3), district events and state events (n=1). One youth responded, “Participation in district and state events was very enjoyable for me. This was a lot of my motivation.”

Domain #4: Camp.

Comments about camp made up five of the 34 responses. Camp was associated with fun

(n=5), being with friends (n=10), and wanting to be a camp counselor or camp teen leader (n=2). A large portion of the original survey sample (93%) attended 4-H summer camp at least one year.

Domain #5: Parental Involvement.

Parental involvement influenced three participants to continue participating in 4-H. One response was related to the parents' involvement when they were younger and the fun they had. The other two responses were related to the parents being involved in the 4-H program along with their children. Georgia 4-H allows volunteers to lead many of the special interest clubs such as the S.A.F.E. shooting sports team or the horse club and volunteers also help with the special events. Parents are often the volunteers that help with these clubs and activities.

Four other general themes were recognized in the responses including offering opportunities, helping to boost confidence and self esteem, being recognized at the 4-H awards banquet, and meeting new people. The youth's responses with these general themes were very powerful and heartfelt. One youth wrote, "I was recognized at the 4-H awards banquet. Because it felt nice to be recognized as someone who can and has achieved something throughout my life." Another youth wrote, "I am most influenced to continue by the people. I enjoyed meeting new people. Every activity I go to I meet someone new, and feel like I'm part of something big." Both of these responses relate to accomplishment and being part of something.

Table 4-17
Most Influential Reasons for Continuing to Participate in 4-H

Domain	Evidence
4-H is fun!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was fun and I wanted to get more education out of it. • My dad was in 4-H when he was younger, and he had fun doing it. • I thought it would be a fun experience, and it was I enjoyed it very much. • Camps because they are fun. • I got to be with friends and do fun things. • I really like 4-H because it's non-stressful and we do fun stuff. • I wanted to learn new things, but at the same time, have lots of fun. • I wanted to go to camp, It looked fun. • I saw how much fun all the camp counselors had whenever I went to camp. • I participated in the S.A.F.E. Shooting Air Pistol Team. It is so much fun. • Summer camps, camps were awesome! Great Experience - so much fun!
Learning new things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was fun and I wanted to get more education out of it • I also like the activities. I learn something new and enjoy trying to perfect it. • I liked learning new things and 4-H was an amazing way to achieve that. Not many other places allow you to judge chickens. • Learning new things because I love new things and it might come in handy in the future. • I liked to learn new things so that I could use them in the "real world." • I wanted to learn new things, but at the same time, have lots of fun. • Because of the learning, skills, and friendship I have made. 4-H has taught me many things.
4-H events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judging Events, not many other places allow you to judge chickens. • Participation in district and state events was very enjoyable for me. This was a lot of my motivation. • I liked S.A.F.E. shooting sports because it interested me. I also made friends and got my dad involved. • I participated in S.A.F.E. shooting sports, my parents were involved in 4-H • The reason that was most influential to me was that I participated in • The S.A.F.E. Shooting Air Pistol Team. It is so much fun.
Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camps because they are fun. I got to be with friends and do fun things • I want to be a teen leader at camp. • I wanted to go to camp, It looked fun • I wanted to become a 4-H camp counselor when I graduate from high school, because I saw how much fun the camp counselors had whenever I went to camp. • Summer camps, camps were awesome! Great Experience - so much fun!
Parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My dad was in 4-H when he was younger, and he had fun doing it. • I liked S.A.F.E. shooting sports because it interested me. I also made friends and got my dad involved. • I participated in S.A.F.E. shooting sports, my parents were involved in 4-H

Question 2: Indicate the reasons you decided to leave 4-H by circling YES for the reasons that you no longer participate in 4-H and NO for the reasons that had no effect on your decision to leave.

No Longer Participating in 4-H.

As mentioned above, question two about reasons for no longer participating in 4-H may have been confusing to those members still participating in 4-H. For question two, 10 respondents answered the questions with a yes-no response, seven respondents selected no for every reason, and four respondents did not select any response. In this section it is important to note that a response of yes is the reason for no longer participating. The respondents indicated that the reasons listed were not high in their reasons for leaving 4-H. The respondents chose yes only one to seven times for a single reason. The reason for leaving with the highest number of respondents choosing yes was 4-H meetings conflicted with school and community activities with seven responses (30%). Other reasons with high numbers of respondents choosing yes included wanting to be with friends in a relaxed setting (n=5), not liking the activities and lessons at the special interest club meetings (n=5), and not feeling welcome in my 4-H club meetings (n=5). The details for these responses are listed in Table 4-18.

Table 4-18
Reasons for No Longer Participating in 4-H

Possible Reasons/Themes	Yes	%	No	%	No Response	%
Did not Like 4-H						
I think 4-H is just for 5 th graders	1	4	18	78	4	17
4-H is boring	3	13	15	65	5	22
I don't understand the 4-H program	1	4	16	40	6	26
I did not feel welcome in my 4-H club meetings	5	22	12	52	6	26
Conflict with Other Things						
4-H meetings conflicted with my school & community activities (location/time)	7	30	10	43	6	26
Table 4-18 Continued						
I wanted to be with friends in a relaxed setting	5	22	12	52	6	26
Lack of Resources						
My parents could not provide transportation to and from the club meetings and other activities	2	9	15	65	6	26
My parents could not help me with my project (demonstration or study for judging events)	0	0	17	74	6	26
I did not have the money to pay for some of the programs	3	13	14	61	6	26
Special Interest Clubs						
The Special Interest Clubs did not meet enough	1	4	15	65	7	30
I did not like the activities and lesson at the special interest club meetings	5	22	11	48	7	30

Open Response to Question 2: Of the reasons your indicated with yes for no longer participating in 4-H, can you describe the one reason that was most influential to you and why?

Of the 23 respondents to the survey, only nine provided responses to this question. The researcher felt that the survey respondents that left this section blank may still be participating in the 4-H program and felt that this question did not apply to them. In the yes-no portion of this question, four of the 23 left this section completely blank. Seven of these respondents, answered No to every question in this section and left this question blank. Three survey participants actually wrote "I am still participating" or "NA" next to this section as a reason for leaving it

blank.

From the nine comments provided, three domains were identified using domain analysis. The three domains related to no longer participating in the 4-H program included involvement in other activities, feeling 4-H was just for fifth graders, and club meetings were boring or not interesting. The detailed responses to Question #2 are illustrated in Table 4-19.

Domain #1: Involvement in Other Activities.

Many of the survey respondents noted being involved in other activities as the reason they are no longer participating in the program. 4-H competed with additional homework demands (n=1) and afterschool sports practices (n=4). One youth commented that, “if he missed sports practice for 4-H club meeting, the coaches would cut down on his playing time or make him run after practice.” Another youth wrote, “I got too busy. I had other things.”

Domain #2: Just for Fifth Graders.

One youth responded that she felt “4-H is just for fifth graders because after that all my friends left and I didn’t know anyone anymore.”

Domain #3: 4-H was Boring/Not Interested.

One youth boldly gave their opinion of the 4-H club meetings by writing, “the meeting seemed boring and the topics were not interesting. We would talk about washing your hands, etc. nothing real exciting or in depth.”

Table 4-19
Most Influential Reasons for No Longer Participating in 4-H

Domain	Evidence
Involved in Other Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm in high school now, so I have a lot of homework. I also have swim practice every day from 4:00 - 6:30 p.m. • 4-H was often after school. I play sports and by missing practice the coaches cut down my playing time or made me run after practice. • I am involved in other stuff now, tennis and guitar. • I just already had scheduled practice for sports. Meetings on the weekends or later in the evening might work better. • I got too busy. I had other things. • 4-H meetings conflicted with my school and community activities. Because of the fact that I was doing sports and school activities the meetings were conflicting with other after school meetings.
Just for Fifth Graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-H is just for fifth graders because after that all my friends left and I didn't know anyone anymore
Boring/Not Interesting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meetings seemed boring and the topics were not interesting. We would talk about washing your hands, etc. nothing real exciting or in depth.

Question 3: Which of the following recruitment methods do you think would encourage you and/or your friends to join 4-H? Circle YES for the methods that may result in more youth joining 4-H and NO for the reasons that would not help promote the 4-H program to you and/or your friends.

Recruitment and Retention Methods.

The purpose of this question was to determine the best methods for promoting 4-H to youth. Marketing in order to acquire new members and recognizing current members is important to the success of a 4-H program. In question three, one to three of the respondents left a reason without any response. This may make determining a percentage confusing or difficult. The recruitment methods listed in the questions can be found in Table 4-20.

In the theme of promoting the program to potential and current members, the respondents selected promoting new activities (96%), promoting opportunity to be with friends (91%), and promoting 4-H at open house (91%) as possibly successful methods of recruitment. However in the same category, only eight respondents (35%) thought that promoting 4-H at lunch time

would be helpful. Providing incentives and more opportunities was suggested by the respondents. The recruitment method chosen most by the respondents (74%) was for 4-H leaders to follow up with the current members that miss club meetings. 4-H members recruiting their friends was also a method that had a large number of respondents (83%) for an effective method for acquiring new members.

Table 4-20
Recruitment Methods

Recruitment Methods/Themes	Yes	%	No	%	No Response	%
Promoting the 4-H Program						
Promoting new activities available through 4-H	22	96	0	0	1	4
Promoting the opportunity to be with friends in a safe group environment	21	91	1	4	1	4
Promoting 4-H at open house	21	91	1	4	1	4
Promoting 4-H at lunch time	8	35	14	61	1	4
Incentives/Rewards						
Giving out 4-H items for you and your friends to use and share	18	78	4	17	1	4
4-H should provide an incentive system (points/prizes) for middle and high school members	15	65	7	30	1	4
4-H should give out more rewards/awards	15	65	7	30	1	4
Table 4-20 Continued						
Recruitment Methods						
4-H leaders should recruit through phone calls to former members	10	43	12	52	1	4
4-H leaders should send follow up phone calls or mail outs for people that miss club meetings	17	74	5	22	1	4
4-H members should recruit their friends	19	83	3	13	1	4
Family Involvement						
4-H should plan activities that my entire family could be part of	13	57	9	39	1	4
Parents should be more involved in 4-H	15	65	5	22	3	13
More Opportunities						
4-H should provide more leadership opportunities	15	65	5	22	3	13
4-H should provide more opportunities to help and serve others	16	70	4	17	3	13

Open Response following Question 3: Do you have any cool ideas for new 4-H programs or activities?

The final open ended question was included to get feedback for new ideas to help the 4-H program grow or improve. Of the 23 survey respondents, 23 different comments accumulated into three main domains using domain analysis. The three main domains for ideas for the 4-H program included more special interest clubs, 4-H special events, and promoting 4-H more in the community and schools. The detailed answers to Question #3 are illustrated in Table 4-21.

Domain #1: More Special Interest Clubs.

Nine different comments related to the survey respondents special interest. The Camden County 4-H program currently has two special interest clubs including the horse club and the community service club. In years past, there was also a marine science club that was eliminated due to time and personnel constraints. The special interest clubs recommended included general projects, recycling, music, art, first aid, archery, poultry club, and football team.

Domain #2: 4-H Special Events.

Eight different ideas for 4-H special events were shared including games, places to go, 4-H 5K Fundraiser, 4-H Beach Day, National 4-H Day, 4-H Kayak/Canoe Trip, a group clean up/making things greener, and a Get Fit Day at the Recreation Center.

Domain #3: Promoting 4-H Around Town.

Four comments related to promoting 4-H more with activities such as local festivals, parades, or posters around town and the schools. One youth wrote, “I think a lot of people don’t know what 4-H is all about. Leaders should be more proactive with students, 4-H in the community.”

Table 4-21
Cool Ideas for New 4-H Programs or Activities

Domain	Evidence
More Special Interest Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should have projects with 4-H • Recycling • Maybe a music club for people who play instruments and are not part of the school band • I like to see a club that handles first aid or nursing, We could make tie-dye shirts as a fundraiser. I'd like to see an art club. • Put together a rock band, battle of the bands, football team • Poultry Club • Archery
4-H Special Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More games to do with 4-H & should have more places to go with 4-H • 4-H 5K Fundraiser • 4-H Beach Day • National 4-H Day • 4-H Kayak/Canoe Trip • A group clean up - Making things greener • Get fit - go to the recreation center for 2 days
Promoting Around Town Flyers/Festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-H Booths at festivals and getting involved in local festivals and parades • Make huge posters and post them around the school • 4-H should be promoted around town - flyers, signs, etc. I think a lot of people don't know what 4-H is all about. • Leaders should be more proactive with students, 4-H in the community.

Chapter 5

Summary & Recommendations

Youth today have many different organizations and activities to choose from to occupy their interest. 4-H must strive to provide for the developmental needs of these youth. It is necessary to retain 4-H members in order to accomplish the mission of Georgia 4-H. Participation and needs assessment studies such as this are needed to identify youth interest, needs, and wants regarding youth organizations. Acosta and Holt (1991) found that having programs related to the needs of youth would help 4-H members stay interested and involved in the 4-H program.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the participation data from Camden County 4-H and questionnaire responses completed by 4-H participants to determine the contributing factors and possible remedy for the decline in the retention of middle school (6th – 8th grade) youth in the 4-H program. The information gathered from the needs assessment questionnaire provided valuable information to the extension staff relating to programming in the following years. The results may also provide more effective recruitment and retention methods for the 4-H program in Camden County, Georgia and favorable options for the youth of Camden County for all ages and for years following the study.

Objectives

The study particularly sought to:

- Determine the rate of and influences on the reduction in participation in 4-H programs among 6th – 8th grade 4-H members who were formally active in 4-H in the fifth grade.

- Determine if participation in project achievement, club meetings, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or camp relates to continued participation in the 4-H program.
- Determine what activities and/or interests relate to currently active 4-H members remaining active in the program.
- Determine what recruitment and retention efforts should be offered to provide a more attractive 4-H program to sixth grade Cloverleaf and Junior (7th – 8th grade) 4-H age students.

Review of Methods

The 4-H Enrollment database was used to determine enrollment and participation data for 4-H members who were active in 4-H in their fifth grade year. These fifth graders from the 2006 and 2007 4-H years were chosen because they had participated in at least one activity outside the fifth grade club meeting. These 4-H years were the first years of the 4-H enrollment system and also allowed a retention analysis on these youth for three years. The participation data for these 100 4-H members from the 2006 4-H year and 115 4-H members from the 2007 4-H year was analyzed to determine if participation in activities had any relation to retention in the program as part of the ex post facto study.

The second portion of the study, utilized a sample of the fifth grade active participants that reenrolled in 4-H in their sixth grade year to determine the reasons for continuing with the 4-H program, leaving the 4-H program, and methods to retain and recruit other 4-H members. The questionnaire also asked demographic information and program format questions. The sample for the questionnaire was 53 4-H members, 23 responded.

The returned questionnaires were entered into Microsoft Excel and stored. Responses were

coded and analyzed to determine themes. The frequency and percentages were determined for the themes to better represent the results of the study.

Summary of Findings

Objective 1: Determine the rate of and influences on the reduction in participation in 4-H programs among 6th – 8th grade 4-H members who were formally active in 4-H in the fifth grade.

Gender.

The gender of these groups that were not retained for both years totaled was 57 males (26.5% of total) and 83 females (39% of total). Comparing the number not retained by gender to the totals for each gender, the males (out of 88 total) and females (out of 127 total) both had 65% of the members not retained. There is little difference in gender in relation to the rate of leaving 4-H.

Retention.

In each year that was studied, there was a substantial decline in the number of members returning that were previously active in the 4-H program. As shown in Table 4-4, in the 2005 – 2006 year, 57 % (n = 57) of the formally active fifth graders did not reenroll in 4-H for their sixth grade year. Of the 40 returning members (40%), 25 (63%) did not reenroll for their seventh grade year. From the fifth graders that were active in the 2006 – 2007 year, 83 members (72%) did not return. Of the 29 members that did reenroll in 4-H for their sixth grade year, 15 members (52%) did not reenroll their seventh grade year. With the yearly demonstration, there is a marked decline in participation every year with a specific emphasis in the 2007 – 2008 year with 63% of the first group of fifth graders and 72% of the second group not returning to the 4-H program after being active in the previous year. The researcher is unclear about what contributed to the decline in this specific year.

Participation in 4-H activities.

The 4-H members from the 2005 – 2006 4-H year that did not return participated in more activities than those that were retained in every category except for core programs. The core program category had a high number of participants for both those that were retained (92%) and those that were not (67%). Core programs include one of the most popular activities for fifth grade participation which is 4-H summer camp. Therefore, participation at camp could be the main portion of those high percentages. The 2006 – 2007 active fifth graders that did not return participated in more judging events (48%) than those that did return (33%). The members could have not returned because they did not like the material presented in the judging events or they had a negative experience with competition. It is difficult to determine why these 4-H members did not reenroll based on participation by visual comparison of the data, additional analysis are needed.

Reasons for No Longer Participating.

The questionnaire respondents did not indicate a definite reason for leaving the 4-H program. Of the reasons listed, the respondent only chose yes one to seven times for a single reason. The greatest reason listed according to the number of members that marked yes was that 4-H meeting conflicted with school and community activities (30%). Other reasons that some respondents selected included wanting to be with friends in a relaxed setting (n=5), not liking the activities and lessons at the special interest club meetings (n=5), and not feeling welcome in the 4-H club meetings (n=5). These results agree with the findings of Astroth (1985), from a retention survey with middle and high school 4-H members and their families in Kansas including not having the sense of belonging and time conflicts. The open response questions related to no longer participating yielded themes of involvement in other activities, feeling 4-H was just for fifth graders, and club meetings were boring or not interesting. The researcher had come to terms with the first two responses, but the final response led the researcher to feeling that something needed to

change in regards to the club meetings. Possible suggestions to provide more interesting club meetings include: asking the youth what they want to learn about, giving them a role in instruction, more hands-on lessons, lessons that are less structured and like the classroom, and more time to relax and talk with their friends.

The researcher also compared the respondents to the questionnaire between the six that did not reenroll in 4-H after their sixth grade year and the 17 that did reenroll after their sixth grade year and in some cases were retained through the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade year. In the reasons for leaving that both of these groups had common responses, the group that was not retained had a much larger percentage responding to the reasons that 4-H was boring (50% compared to zero percent), scheduling conflicts (50% compared to 25%), and not liking activities in club meetings (83% compared to 12%) as compared to those that were retained. The 4-H members that dropped out of the program did not like the activities and was bored with 4-H. This may stem from the middle school club meetings, which can be very similar to a structured classroom environment. The 4-H members do not consider this environment or activities fun or think of it as what they have been doing all day in school. Those members that reenrolled may have liked the club meetings and been okay with the activities. Camden County 4-H middle school programs are still having this problem. The curriculums for the programs are not interesting to the members. According to current middle school 4-H members, they want to move around, do something different every meeting meaning no themes for the year, and want to learn something new. Researchers have found that youth and parents do not want their after school time to be associated with more school (Anderson-Butcher, 2005) and wanted less structure and more flexibility (Marczak, Dworkin, Skuza, and Beyer, 2006).

Objective 2: Determine if participation in project achievement, club meetings, judging events, special interest clubs, summer fun trips and/or camp relates to continued participation in 4-H.

Participation in 4-H activities.

The 4-H members that joined 4-H in 2005 and remained active through their seventh grade year participated in core program activities the most in each of the three years with almost 100% of the participants involved. Recognition events and summer fun trips also had a large number of participants. Special interest clubs had the lowest number of participants in their first year, which could be related to the reason that these clubs are new and growing or that they do not meet the interests or needs of the youth. The members that joined 4-H in 2006 and continued participating had similar results in the number of activities with core program and judging events having a large number of participants for all three years. Research by Hartley (1983) and Norland & Bennett (1993) confirms that active participation in 4-H programs contributes to satisfaction and reenrollment in the program.

In comparison of the 4-H members in the 2006 and 2007 4-H year that were only retained to their sixth grade year to those that were only active in their fifth grade year, there were not many differences in participation. The 4-H members that began 4-H in the 2006 4-H year, both those retained and not retained participated in core programs and received similar amounts of recognition. In fact the group of members not retained had higher participation percentages than those not retained in almost every category. In the 4-H members that began 4-H in the 2007 4-H year, the members that were retained had higher participation percentages in every category except judging and competitive events. The members not retained had 48% participation in the judging and competitive events and those retained had 33% participation. The competitive experience may be part of the reason the members not retained decided to not reenroll as mentioned in research by

Albright (2008). When analyzing these participation results, one conclusion could be that this study's participants contradict the research by Hartley (1983) and Norland & Bennett (1993) that participation contributes to reenrollment. However when comparing the participation percentages of the group of 4-H members that were retained for three years to the groups that were retained for only one or two years, the results show that the 4-H members retained the longest participated in the larger percentage of activities overall throughout their years in 4-H.

Participation by survey respondents.

The survey respondents selected the activities that they remembered participating in since the fifth grade. Club meetings (91%), camp (96%), and summer fun trips (70%) had the largest number of participants. Remembering that 4-H members can participate in more than one 4-H activity each year, all other activities with the exception of horse quiz bowl received at least one response of yes.

The researcher compared the respondents to the questionnaire between the six that did not reenroll in 4-H after their sixth grade year and the 17 that did reenroll after their sixth grade year and in some cases were retained through the seventh, eight, and ninth grade year in regards to participation in activities and programming. The 4-H members that continued with the program participated more in district and state activities and liked participating in 4-H activities. The members that dropped out may have left too early to see the benefits of the district and state activities, because many are not available until the 4-H member has reached the seventh grade. The members that stayed were able to realize the benefits and enjoyment of the district and state activities. An option might be to offer more district and state activities to 4-H members as they enter middle school rather than giving them the wait until your older rationale. Albright (2008) also gave the suggestion to provide this age group with leadership opportunities to keep them involved during this transitional time in the youth's 4-H career.

Objective 3: Determine what factors including demographics, activities and/or interests relate to currently active 4-H members remaining active in the program.

Reasons for continuing to participate in 4-H.

The survey respondents provided a variety of reasons for continuing with the program. The theme of learning and life skill development had the most responses, along with parental support and the leaders of the program. Participation in activities as a fifth grader and the S.A.F.E. shooting sports program also led many of the respondents to continue with the 4-H program. 4-H members liked being given responsibility by setting and achieving goals. The additional reasons 4-H members continued to participate in 4-H is because they felt that 4-H was fun, they liked learning new things, they enjoyed the 4-H events including camp, and parental involvement contributed to their involvement. It should be noted that respondents selected “no” in response to participating in judging events (16 or 70%) and special interest clubs (19 or 83%) having an effect on their decision to continue to participate. This could mean that participating in these activities did not contribute to the survey respondents reenrolling in the following years. The researcher also compared the respondents to the questionnaire for their reasons for continuing with the 4-H program. Similarities were found in the desire to learn new things, develop life skills, set and achieve goals, develop self esteem, to be themselves; and that they like the leaders, felt that the adults cared about them, and their parents supported their involvement in 4-H. The differences that were found when reasons for continuing with the 4-H program were compared between those that dropped out and those that reenrolled included participation in judging events (zero percent to 35%), desire to participate in state and district activities (zero percent compared to 65%), wanting to be a teen leader (33% compared to 71%), liking the 4-H activities (17% compared to 88%), parents being involved in the program (17% compared to 100%), motivation to succeed (33% compared to 71%), and the desire to be given additional responsibility (17% compared to 65%).

The 4-H members that remained with the program responded often to having their parents involved in the 4-H program. The 4-H members that continued with the program had 100% parental involvement. Parents are able to be involved in the 4-H program by serving as a leader or coach of a special interest club or judging event, serving as a volunteer at events, or being part of the 4-H advisory board. The effect of positive parental involvement has been studied by researchers. Norland & Bennett (1993) found that positive parental involvement was a factor that led to more satisfaction with the program by youth. The third major theme was with leadership and responsibility. The members that continued with the program wanted to be teen leaders, wanted to achieve their goals, to succeed, and to have additional responsibility. Norland & Bennett (1993) noted that 4-H members strive to be given responsibility and leadership roles. Ferrari & Turner (2006) found that among many other factors, development of life skills was a reason that youth participated in youth programs such as 4-H. Not as many of the members that left desired to develop these skills of a leader. Many of the members that dropped out wanted to be with friends in a relaxed setting. Their goal was to be themselves and take a break from the stresses of school.

Objective 4: Determine what recruitment and retention efforts should be offered to provide a more attractive 4-H program to sixth grade Cloverleaf and Junior (7th – 8th grade) 4-H age students.

Promoting the 4-H program.

The survey instrument was separated into themes and promoting the program received the most responses with the exception of one method. Survey respondents felt that promoting new activities, promoting at open house, and promoting the opportunity to be with friends would be best for promoting the program. The statement of promoting 4-H at lunch received a lower number of responses. This was interesting to the researcher who had tried the method of promoting at open house without much success, and the middle and high schools often offer for 4-H to come and

promote the program during lunch. The findings from the survey contradict these previous experiences.

The open ended responses also recommended promoting 4-H around the community with posters and promoting 4-H in parades and at local festivals. Another common suggestion for promoting the program was 4-H special events including games, places to go, 4-H 5K road race, National 4-H Day, 4-H kayak/canoe trip, group clean up, and getting fit as a 4-H group. These events incorporate the fun that many youth desire with continuing with the 4-H program. However, they do require many people, hours, and effort to organize and implement.

Some new activities were also requested in the form of special interest clubs. The clubs requested were general projects, recycling, music, art, first aid, archery, poultry club, and a football team. The challenges of having multiple special interest clubs is the time and personnel constraints, in addition to pulling 4-H members in many different directions to pick the club they want to be involved with. The benefits of special interest clubs is these clubs can be the motivation for keeping youth involved in the 4-H program. Questionnaire results showed that the special interest clubs had the lowest number of participants. Respondents did not feel that the special interest clubs affected their reasons for continuing with the program. Of the 4-H members that were retained, very few participated in the special interest clubs. This could be because they did not know about the clubs, understand the purpose, they did not like the activities at the meetings, or the clubs did not meet enough which were all responses from the survey.

Incentives and rewards.

Survey respondents selected giving out 4-H materials to members and friends would be a good incentive or reward. They also indicated that point systems and more rewards should be implemented by the 4-H program. The Camden County 4-H program offers a point system for

middle and high school students that allow the points to be used as credit to pay for 4-H activities and events.

Recruitment methods.

The most selected recruitment method was for 4-H members to recruit their friends. Survey respondents also indicated that 4-H leaders should follow up with active members when they miss meetings and activities. These recruitment methods were also recommended by Digby and Ferrari (2005b) as methods of recruiting and retaining 4-H members.

More opportunities.

As previously mentioned in the reasons for participating section, 4-H members want to have opportunities to lead, help and serve others. The 4-H alumni study by Ladewig and Thomas (1987), found that 4-H members did not feel like they were being given enough leadership opportunities. 4-H activities should promote leadership and service learning to keep youth interested in the program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The target population from Camden County 4-H seemed to follow previous research study results. However, knowing some of the exact reasons for the specific county is beneficial. Some themes or ideas that the researcher felt were highlighted in the study was that former members are busy or they were not satisfied with the 4-H program, so the solution could be to ask youth about their schedule and the best time to meet and ask youth about their interest. Camp, special events, and trips were also referred to often as reasons for returning and methods of recruitment. Youth want to have fun and most 4-H members recognize 4-H as fun. Leaders should design programs to incorporate that desire for leisure and variety instead of the more school approach.

It is important to determine the interest in and need for special interest clubs and judging events before initiating and promoting new programs. Four-H members indicated individual interest in possible special interest club topics; however participation in previous special interest

clubs has been low. Core programs can be the hook to get youth more involved in 4-H. Once youth are involved in the core programs, leaders should determine the interest in and need for the special interest clubs. 4-H members recognized that parental support was an important factor in continuing to participate in 4-H, so get the parents' buy in for support and involvement. It is also important to remember to recognize 4-H members and providing incentives for even the small actions or activities.

The researcher could develop focus groups with the current 4-H members to help determine the changes that need to be made to retain more youth in the 4-H program. These focus groups could be made up of the officers of each of the middle and high school clubs in the form of a county council or youth advisory committee. This would provide 4-H members with the leadership and responsibility roles they desire and also help the program to be better.

Another focus group method could be to follow up with the 4-H members that continued with the program by asking questions about reasons for staying, were their parents involved, did they have enough leadership opportunities, did their parents make you stay involved or was it their decision. Answers to these questions can help 4-H staff to determine to best methods for retaining 4-H members in the future.

Another option could be to develop and implement more opportunities for middle school 4-H members; especially for the 6th grade Cloverleaf 4-H'ers that often drop out waiting to be eligible for Junior 4-H activities. Since fun and camp trips were given as reasons for returning to the program in following years, more trips that incorporate the fun, learning, positive youth-adult partnership and overnight residential experiences should be offered to this group of 4-H members.

4-H leaders should increase marketing efforts in schools and community by encouraging 4-H members to recruit their friends, following up with members that miss meetings, provide information to youth and parents about the benefits of 4-H, and participate in more community

activities including festivals and parades. These efforts would help remind 4-H members and the community that 4-H is still available to middle and high school students.

Implications for Future Research

Survey methodology.

The target population for the survey was 53 and yielded 23 responses. Further research should be conducted with a larger population to receive more responses within Camden County or within the state.

The question about leaving 4-H was confusing for those 4-H members still involved in the program. The question could be preceded with a leading question such as: please circle yes or no if you are still currently active in the 4-H program or are you no longer active in the 4-H program. If you selected yes, please answer the following question about reasons youth leave the 4-H program by thinking about the reasons the people you know left the program.

Data Analysis.

Future research should include collecting and analyzing 4-H Enrollment data for future years to determine participation trends. Statistical test such as correlation analysis should be conducted to attempt to better determine a relationship between participation and remaining or leaving the 4-H program.

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Appendix A

Notice of Questionnaire

August 26, 2009

To the Parents of:

A few days from now you will receive in the mail a request to complete a brief questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by Amber Defore and Camden County 4-H.

It concerns the experience you and your child had with the Camden County 4-H program.

I am writing in advance because we have found many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is an important one that will help Camden County 4-H determine better methods of marketing and programming.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the generous help of people like you that our research can be successful and we can continue "To Make The Best Better."

If you have any questions or concerns you can always ask me or contact my professor, Dr. Jason Peake at jpeake@uga.edu, or at 229-386-3085.

Sincerely,

Amber Defore
Camden County Cooperative Extension - 4-H Youth

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix B

Informational Cover Letter to 4-H Member and Parent

Dear 4-H Member and Parent,

You are invited to participate in a research study titled “Needs Factors that Influence 4-H Club Enrollment and Retention in Camden County, Georgia” conducted by Amber Defore and Dr Jason Peake, Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication, University of Georgia, 110 Four Towers, Athens, GA 30602, 229-386-3085.

The purpose of this research study is to determine better programming for Camden County 4-H programs and we are asking for your child to complete the included survey.

If you should choose to allow your child to participate in this study, his or her participation will involve the following:

- Completing a survey that will take approximately 15 minutes that includes basic demographic questions and that asks you to give your opinion on 4-H programming. Please note that you may choose not to have your child participate in this research.

Completion of the survey is expected to take a maximum of 15 minutes. Once I receive the completed surveys, I will store them in a locked cabinet in my office and will destroy them and any names and contact information that I have by June, 2010. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential unless required by law.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty, or skip any questions you feel uncomfortable answering.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to ask now or at a later date. You may contact Amber Defore 912-576-3219 or email at adefore@uga.edu

Thank you for the invaluable help that you are providing by participating in this research study.

Sincerely,

Amber Defore
Camden County Cooperative Extension – 4-H Youth

*Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to
Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research
Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.*

Appendix C

Youth Assent Form

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in my research project titled, “Needs Factors that Influence 4-H Club Enrollment and Retention in Camden County, Georgia.” Through this project I am gaining a better understanding of the programming needs of 4-H youth in Camden County.

If you decide to be part of this, you will agree to complete a survey which gives you a chance to express your feeling about the 4-H program by providing suggestions to improve the actual programs and how they are promoted to youth in Camden County. This survey will take about 15 minutes for you to complete. Your participation in this project will not affect your status as a Camden County 4-H member. I will not use your name on any papers that I write about this project. However, because of your participation, you may provide insight into the programming needs of 4-H youth in Camden County. I hope to learn something about the current attitudes about the program, and this should help realize if changes in the program and how it is promoted are needed.

If you want to stop participating in this project, you are free to do so at any time. You can also choose not to answer questions that you don’t want to answer.

If you have any questions or concerns you can always ask me or contact my professor, Dr. Jason Peake at jpeake@uga.edu, or at 229-386-3085.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amber Defore
Camden County Cooperative Extension - 4-H Youth
P.O. Box 309
Woodbine, GA 31569
Telephone: 912-576-3219
Email: adefore@uga.edu

I understand the project described above. My questions have been answered and I agree to participate in this project. I have received a copy of this form.

Name of participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher with the completed survey.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix D

Parental Consent Form

I agree to allow my child, _____, to take part in a research study titled, “Needs Factors that Influence 4-H Club Enrollment and Retention in Camden County, Georgia” conducted by Amber Defore and Dr. Jason Peake, Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication, University of Georgia, 110 Four Towers, Athens, GA 30602, 229-386-3085.

- As a participant of the study, my child will be asked to complete a survey, and the completion of the survey should take about 15 minutes (*see survey attached, for your information*). *Upon completion, please mail both the survey and the parent consent form to the researchers using the included preaddressed and stamped envelope.*
- The reason for the study is to determine better programming for Camden County 4-H programs.
- There are no direct benefits to my child as a participant. However, by participating my child’s answers may help researchers gain a better understanding of the programming needs of 4-H youth in Camden County.
- Any individually-identifiable information collected about my child will be held confidential unless otherwise required by law. My child will not sign or put his/her name in the survey. Consent forms will be separated from the questionnaire as soon as they are received, and all data will be kept in a secured location.
- My child can quit at any time or skip any questions he/she feels uncomfortable answering.
- My child’s participation in the Camden County 4-H program will not be dependent upon my response to the parental consent form or my child’s decision regarding the survey.
- I do not have to allow my child to be in this study if I do not want to. My child can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which she/he is otherwise entitled. I can ask to have the information that can be identified as my child’s returned to me, removed from the research records or destroyed.
- No discomforts or stresses are expected.
- No risks are expected.

The researcher, Mrs. Amber Defore, will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 912-576-3219 or by email at adefore@uga.edu. I may also contact the professor supervising the research, Dr. Jason Peake, Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication, at the University of Georgia –Tifton Campus (229-386-3085).

I understand the study procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Amber Defore

Name of Researcher

Telephone 912-576-3219

Email adefore@uga.edu

Signature

Date

Name of Child

Name of Parent/Guardian

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher with the completed survey.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix E

Camden County Participation Questionnaire

You are invited to participate in my research project titled, “Needs Factors that Influence 4-H Club Enrollment and Retention in Camden County, Georgia.” Through this project I am gaining a better understanding of the programming needs of 4-H youth in Camden County. Completing this survey will give you a chance to express your feeling about the 4-H program by providing suggestions to improve the actual programs and how they are promoted to youth in Camden County.

If you have any questions or concerns you can always ask me or contact my professor, Dr. Jason Peake at jpeake@uga.edu, or at 229.386.3085.

Thank you for help with “Making The Best Better.”

Sincerely,

Amber Defore
Camden County Extension Office – 4-H Youth
P.O. Box 309
Woodbine, GA 31569
912-576-3219
adefore@uga.edu

1. Please mark ALL of the 4-H activities in which you have been involved as a 4-H member since the fifth grade.

- Club Meetings ____ Yes ____ No
- Club Officer ____ Yes ____ No
- Project Achievement ____ Yes ____ No
- Tree Identification ____ Yes ____ No
- Consumer Judging & Cotton Boll ____ Yes ____ No
- Fair Booths ____ Yes ____ No
- Poultry Judging ____ Yes ____ No
- BB Team/Air Pistol ____ Yes ____ No
- Horse Club ____ Yes ____ No

- Horse Quiz Bowl ____ Yes ____ No
- Community Service Club ____ Yes ____ No
- Marine Science Club ____ Yes ____ No
- Summer Fun Trips ____ Yes ____ No
- Fun Trips
UGA Football Game/
Jacksonville Barracudas Game ____ Yes ____ No
- District/State
Weekend Conferences ____ Yes ____ No
- Camp ____ Yes ____ No

2. Indicate the reasons you decided to continue participating in 4-H by circling YES for the reasons you continued to participate and NO for the reasons that had no effect on your participation.

- Yes – No I participated in 4-H after school events and activities in my fifth grade year
- Yes – No I participated in project achievement
- Yes – No I received a ribbon at project achievement
- Yes – No I was a member of a judging event team (tree identification, consumer judging, poultry judging)
- Yes – No I was a member of a 4-H special interest club (horse club, marine science club, community service club)
- Yes – No I participated in the S.A.F.E. shooting sports program (BB Team/Air Pistol Team)
- Yes – No I wanted to have more opportunities to participate in county, district, and state 4-H activities
- Yes – No I was recognized at the 4-H awards banquet
- Yes – No I like to learn new things
- Yes – No I like developing life skills (teamwork, leadership, helping others)
- Yes – No I like to set and achieve goals
- Yes – No 4-H helped to develop or improve my self esteem
- Yes – No 4-H helped me to have the motivation to succeed
- Yes – No I liked the 4-H teen leaders
- Yes – No I wanted to become a 4-H teen leader
- Yes – No I wanted to become a 4-H camp counselor when I graduate from high school
- Yes – No I liked the 4-H leaders and volunteers
- Yes – No I liked the activities we had 4-H club meetings
- Yes – No I liked being given additional responsibility (officer/teen leader)
- Yes – No My parents were involved in the program
- Yes – No My parents were supportive of me being in 4-H

Yes – No My brother or sister was also involved in 4-H

Yes – No I felt like adults cared about me

Yes – No I liked being able to be myself around others

Yes – No Other _____

Yes – No Other _____

3. Of the reasons you indicated above with YES for continuing to participate in 4-H, can you describe the one reason that was MOST influential to you and WHY?

4. Indicate the reasons you decided to leave 4-H by circling YES for the reasons that you no longer participate in 4-H and NO for the reasons that had no effect on your decision to leave.

Yes – No I think that 4-H is just for 5th graders

Yes – No 4-H is boring

Yes – No I don't understand the 4-H program

Yes – No I did not feel welcome in my 4-H club meetings

Yes – No 4-H meetings conflicted with my school and community activities – time/location

Yes – No I did not have the money to pay for some of the programs

Yes – No I just wanted to be with friends in a relaxed setting

Yes – No My parents could not provide transportation to and from the club meetings and other activities

Yes – No My parents could not help me with my project (demonstration or study for judging events)

Yes – No The special interest clubs (horse club, marine science club, community service club) did not meet enough

Yes – No I did not like the activities and lessons at the special interest club meetings

Yes – No Other _____

Yes – No Other _____

5. Of the reasons you indicated above with YES for no longer participating in 4-H, can you describe the one reason that was MOST influential to you and WHY?

Please rank the following.

6. When would be the best time for you to be able to attend 4-H club meetings? Please rank your choices with 1 being the best and 3 being the worst.

- Before school
 Immediately after school
 In the evenings, about 6:00pm

7. What day would be best for you to attend 4-H club meetings? Please rank your choices with 1 being the best and 7 being the worst.

- Monday
 Tuesday
 Wednesday
 Thursday
 Friday
 Saturday
 Sunday

8. 4-H club meetings should be how long? Please rank your choices with 1 being the best and 4 being the worst.

- 30 minutes
 1 hour
 1 hour and 30 minutes
 2 hours
 Other _____ How Long?

9. Which kind of 4-H club meeting works best for you? Please rank your choices with 1 being the best and 3 being the worst.

- Individual school club meetings at your school
 Both middle schools meeting together at Camden County Library or other central location
 On-line through website (you use your home computer with internet access)

10. Which of the following recruitment methods do you think would encourage you and/or your friends to join 4-H? Circle YES for the methods that may result in more youth joining 4-H and NO for the reasons that would not help promote the 4-H program to you and/or your friends.

- Yes – No Promoting new activities available through 4-H
 Yes – No Promoting the opportunity to be with friends in a safe group environment
 Yes – No Promoting 4-H at open house
 Yes – No Promoting 4-H at lunch time
 Yes – No Giving out 4-H items for you and your friends to use and share
 Yes – No 4-H members should recruit their friends
 Yes – No 4-H leaders should recruit through phone calls to former members
 Yes – No 4-H leaders should send follow up phone calls or mail outs for people that miss club meetings

- Yes – No 4-H should plan activities that my entire family could be part of
- Yes – No 4-H should provide an incentive system (points or prizes) for middle and high school members
- Yes – No 4-H should give out more rewards/awards
- Yes – No Parents should be more involved in 4-H
- Yes – No 4-H should provide more leadership opportunities
- Yes – No 4-H should provide more opportunities to help and serve others
- Yes – No Other _____
- Yes – No Other _____

11. Do you have any cool ideas for new 4-H programs or activities? Tell us about them here!!!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Directions: Please answer the following questions as they relate to your current situation. Place a written response or circle adjacent to each question.

What grade are you in now? _____

Were you active in 4-H in

5th grade – Yes or No

6th grade – Yes or No

7th grade – Yes or No

8th grade – Yes or No

9th grade – Yes or No

10th grade – Yes or No

11th grade – Yes or No

12th grade – Yes or No

Graduated - Yes or No

Age _____

Gender Male/Female _____

Military Yes or No

Thank you for completing this participation survey. We would like to encourage your continued participation and support of the 4-H program in Camden County.

Amber Defore
Camden Cooperative Extension and 4-H Office