

Enhancing youths' growth through 4-H summer day camps

AT A GLANCE

4-H summer day camps in Bannock County engaged 60 youth in three-hour sessions, boosting enjoyment, confidence, knowledge/skills and connections.

The Situation

Many youths aged 8-11 lack access to brief, impactful educational experiences that foster enjoyment, confidence and social skills. These 4-H summer day camps are held in Bannock County, where 35% of households have children under 18. Fourteen percent of the population is below the poverty line; access to affordable enrichment programs is critical. The three-hour 4-H summer day camps, with six to 20 participants per session, addressed this need by offering diverse activities (e.g., crafts, STEM, animal care) to build essential life skills.

Our Response

We held 10 three-hour 4-H summer day camps in 2025. Out of the 10 camps, participants from five were randomly surveyed. All summer day camps used research-based curriculum, utilizing the curriculum from University of Idaho Extension programming and curriculum through other university Extension programs. This ensured evidence-based content was used when developing the summer day camps. These day camps incorporated hands-on activities to enhance learning outcomes.



Youth participating in LEGO Robotics Level 1 day camp for ages 8-9 years old. Photo by Arizona Hansen.

The Bannock County 4-H team designed a retrospective pre/post survey with a four-point Likert scale (Really awesome/Yes, I can do it! = four, Pretty good/Somewhat = three, Just okay/Not sure = two, Not good/No, I can't = one) to measure changes in 60 campers' enjoyment (How much did you like the idea of coming to this camp?), confidence (How sure were you that you could try new things at camp?), knowledge/skills (How much did you know about this camp?) and connection (How good did you feel about working with others at camp?). The survey was conducted in the final 15 minutes of the summer day camps. The survey used kid-friendly emojis and an open-ended question to gather feedback. Statistical analysis (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test) and thematic coding were used in the evaluation.

Program Outcomes

The youth that reached these day camps had not previously been able to participate in programming with STEM aspects. This experience gave them the confidence to solve problems on their own with minimal adult guidance. The participants were not enrolled in the traditional 4-H program, which allowed them to gain a new perspective and hands-on experience with what 4-H has to offer.

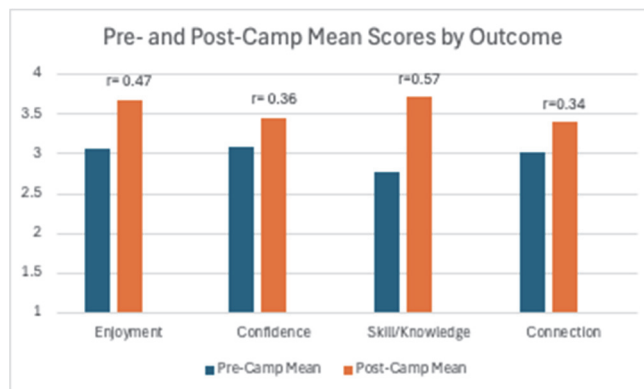
These day camps showed the urban and rural youth of Bannock County that 4-H offers more than just raising animals. Each camp introduced participants to the four H's: Head, Heart, Hands and Health while exploring a wide range of topics connected to the program. Activities included cooking, animal science and STEM-focused lessons in science, technology and engineering.

The camps significantly enhanced participant outcomes (all $p < 0.001$, Bonferroni-corrected $\alpha = 0.0125$). Enjoyment increased from a mean of 3.07 to 3.68 (76.7% post vs. 35% pre), with a medium effect size ($r = 0.47$). Confidence rose from 3.08 to 3.45 (58.3% post vs. 43.3% pre; $r = 0.36$, medium). Skill/knowledge saw the largest gain, jumping from 2.77 to 3.72 (76.7% post vs. 21.7% pre; $r = 0.57$, large). Connection improved from 3.02 to 3.40 (56.7% post vs. 45% pre, $r = 0.34$, medium). See Table 1 for a visual

summary of improvements.

Qualitative feedback from 60 participants revealed that 25% valued the activities (e.g., “Building”), 20% highlighted social connections (e.g., “Hanging out with friends”) and 16.7% appreciated learning (e.g., “Trying to find out what the tracks were and the furs!”), while 8.3% responded with “Everything.”

Table 1: Illustration pre- and post-camp mean scores across four outcomes for 60 youth



The Future

These results can help to shape future 4-H day camps, potentially expanding and adding more sessions during the summer or throughout the year to increase the impact of 4-H in Bannock County.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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