

4-H & Benefits of Video Games

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4-H is a non-profit organization funded through the federal government, that encourages youth to reach their fullest potential. The 4-H name represents four personal development areas of focus for the organization: head, heart, hands, and health. The organization has over 6.5 million members in the United States. "Though typically thought of as an agriculturally focused organization as a result of its history, 4-H today focuses on citizenship, healthy living, science, engineering, and technology programs. The 4-H motto is "To make the best better", while its slogan is "Learn by doing" (sometimes written as "Learn to do by doing")." (4-H)

4-H has gained popularity on using innovative methods of engaging youth. The most innovative way to engage teens in this era is to use innovative technology, video games in particular. Video Games have received a bad reputation due to violence and claims of shortening teens attention spans. However most parents, and teachers have not researched the positive attributes of video games and how they can positively impact teens, especially those in impoverished communities. Video Games expose teens to numerous jobs in the field of mathematics and coding industry.

According to the 2010 census, women only made up twenty-seven percent of the jobs in the computer science industry. African Americans made up 11 percent and hispanics made up six percent of all jobs in the computer industry. (Mason) Coding and computer science is the future, and a large and ever growing job market. Young people need more platforms exposing them to all job markets and how they play a role in our everyday live. 4-H can do so by creating a spring/summer program that help young people explore the world of coding thru video games and mobile apps.

There has been much less evidence on the effects of prosocial video games. In the present research, four experiments examined the hypothesis that playing a prosocial (relative to a neutral) video game increases helping behavior. In fact, participants who had played a prosocial video game were more likely to help after a mishap, were more willing (and devoted more time) to assist in further experiments, and intervened more often in a harassment situation. Results further showed that exposure to prosocial video games activated the accessibility of prosocial thoughts, which in turn promoted prosocial behavior. Thus, depending on the content of the video game, playing video games not only has negative effects on social behavior but has positive effects as well. (Greitemeyer)

Nine in ten parents want their child to study computer science, but only one in four schools teach computer programming. Computing makes up 2/3 of projected new jobs in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Computing occupations are among the highest-paying jobs for new graduates. Yet fewer than three percent of college students graduate with a degree in computer science, and only eight percent of STEM graduates are in computer science. In twenty-two states, computer science classes don't count toward math or science high school graduation requirements. Only twenty-two percent of AP Computer Science students are women. Only thirteen percent are Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino. (Blurbs)

If we can expose more young people to the effects that jobs in computer science have, the most likely we can slowly increase the amount of minorities in the computer science profession. 4-H has 6.5 million participants in the United States between the ages of 5 to 21. With that type of influence we could change the computer science industry for the next generation. 4-H stands on the principles of head, hearts, hands, and health. The organization should invest in a program focused on video games for its participants starting from the age of 5. Psychological studies have shown that prosocial video games can influence prosocial behavior. By consistently exposing students to video games at a young age throughout the adolescent years, we can introduce them to an innovative career field and implement positive character traits making for a better society.

If a program were to be implemented it should be a multi-year program that is customized and perfected for each age group. For example, five to eight year olds would explore the joys and the wonderful world of video games (non-violent of course). The age group 9-12 explore video games with a general breakdown of how video games are made/. The age group 13-15 receive a more detailed curriculum around video games and how they are made featuring video game developers and possibly field trips to game developing laboratories. The age group 16-21 could do coding camps and workshops to learn how to create their own video games over the summer, and have other age groups play the video game. With this program model, students learn to interact with each other while learn valuable character traits and being exposed to an innovative career field. Also this model encourages exposure to higher education (which is always a plus). This program on video games also address three out of the four of the 4-H principles. This touches on the head, heart, and hands. It involves the head with critical thinking skills in regards to coding, mathematics, and computer science. It regards the hands as video games are an interactive experience involving hand eye coordination. It also involves the heart because it incorporates things that most teens do in their spare time and have a passion for, video games. By tying all these things into one program we can positively influence students to be apart of innovation.

In conclusion, these were reasons why 4-H should adopt a video game program for its participants. 4-H is a non-profit organization funded through the federal government, that

encourages youth to reach their fullest potential. The 4-H name represents four personal development areas of focus for the organization: head, heart, hands, and health. 4-H has gained popularity on using innovative methods of engaging youth. The most innovative way to engage teens in this era is to use innovative technology, video games in particular. There has been much less evidence on the effects of prosocial video games. In the present research, 4 experiments examined the hypothesis that playing a prosocial (relative to a neutral) video game increases helping behavior. Computing occupations are among the highest-paying jobs for new graduates. Fewer than 3% of college students graduate with a degree in computer science, and only 8% of STEM graduates are in computer science. Nine in ten parents want their child to study computer science, but only one in four schools teach computer programming. If we can expose more young people to the effects that jobs in computer science have, the most likely we can slowly increase the amount of minorities in the computer science profession. 4-H has 6.5 million participants in the United States between the ages of 5 to 21. With that type of influence we could change the computer science industry for the next generation. The organization should invest in a program focused on video games for its participants starting from the age of 5.