Intro to Agronomy - The Science of Agriculture

The Situation
Grant County youth who attend public high school typically enroll in Flasher or Elgin-New Leipzig. In 2015 the Flasher school did not offer an Agriculture Education program. Parents and students were interested in ag-education classes for youth that attend the Flasher High School. At the same time the Grant County Extension Office noticed a lack of participation from adults in agriculture-related Extension programs.

Extension Response
NDSU Extension Agent Katie Wirt designed the Intro to Agronomy program to involve high school aged youth in ag-related Extension programming and to encourage sharing information with their parents. Sessions were about five hours each and offered once a week for ten weeks.

An agronomy-related topic was introduced in a classroom setting at each session. This was followed by a field trip to a farm, NDSU plot, or agronomy business. Youth were engaged in hands on learning and were able to ask questions of NDSU Extension professionals, local farmers, and industry experts. Some classes concluded with a learning project. These included creating a plant mount collection, calibrating a backpack sprayer, constructing a rain gauge, developing an educational poster, developing a farm safety game, and creating an informational video. In addition to the structured lessons, current events and family farm management was discussed.

Impacts
- Weekly “before and after” quizzes indicated that students improved their knowledge in all of the topic areas: crop staging, entomology, farm safety, harvest, pesticide use, plant pathology, soil conservation, soil fertility, unmanned aircraft, and weather.
- Participants retained what they learned and scored an average of 85% on an exam taken 4 months after the program
- 100% of participants that completed the follow-up survey said they shared something they learned in Intro to Agronomy with both friends and parents

Feedback
Serena Frederick said she, “Really liked the class and learned a lot.”

Public Value Statement
Educating youth about agronomy resulted in youth sharing information with friends and family which increases the public understanding of the science behind agricultural practices.

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