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AN EVALUATION OF THE BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE PARTICIPANTS  
IN THE SOUTH DAKOTA FFA PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST  
AND METHODS OF PREPARATION OF CONTESTANTS

By

Loren G. Kasten

A problem submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Science (Plan B) at South Dakota  
State College of Agriculture  
and Mechanic Arts

August, 1958

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L. O. K.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Future Farmers of America Public Speaking Contest is one of the eight FFA contests conducted on a state level in South Dakota. This research problem is a study of the contestants who participated in the State FFA Public Speaking Contest and a vocational agriculture classmate of each contestant who was selected at random by the present vocational agriculture instructor in each department concerned. Some of the contestants have been out of high school many years and the study goes back to 1930 when the first record of speakers in FFA Public Speaking Contests was kept. Information and data are included relating to speakers from 1930 through 1954.

The contest is designed to develop rural and agricultural leadership by providing opportunities for participation in agricultural public speaking activities.<sup>1</sup> The ability to speak in public is a characteristic that must be developed by an individual and one which a person will use to a considerable extent all through his lifetime. Opportunities to develop such ability need to be provided for farm youth in many phases of their formal education. The American farmer needs capable leaders in agriculture, and the need is becoming more evident as farming becomes more complex. Without good leadership farming will diminish

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1. Phipps, Lloyd J. Your Opportunities in Vocational Agriculture, p. 131.

from its status as one of America's leading industries and become a pawn for other more aggressive businesses.

An abundance of leaders with a true knowledge of agriculture cannot be expected to come forth at the moment when needed. Such leadership must be developed from the boys growing up on the farms of America. Among the qualities of a leader today is the ability to speak before a group with confidence and knowledge of his subject. He must be able to effectively and forcefully present his ideas to others. Motivation must be provided the future leaders in order that they will recognize the values of becoming more fluent and competent speakers.

Any boy who is a member of the Future Farmers of America has the opportunity to participate in public speaking. It is the intent of the writer to determine whether the FFA Public Speaking Contest is accomplishing its objectives aimed toward the development of better speakers and leaders in agriculture.



PURPOSE

The purpose of this research problem is to determine whether the experiences received through participation in State FFA Public Speaking Contests have been beneficial to the contestants. The study is to reveal the relationship, if any, academically in high school and in leadership activities after leaving high school, between the contestants and their random selected classmates who did not participate in the speaking contests.

An effort is also made to determine how the contestants were selected from the local chapters and the extent of preparation made by the contestants for the contests. The cultural, social, and economic benefits are evaluated by the contestants to illustrate the value, if any, received from this activity.

The public speaking contest in South Dakota is gaining in popularity each succeeding year and the writer feels a study of various aspects of the contest would be of benefit to the vocational agriculture teachers in preparing and selecting speakers to represent their chapters. This study is not aimed at how to win the contest, but to evaluate the benefits of participation in terms of its enrichment of the lives of those whose efforts are aimed toward such betterment.

## PROCEDURE

The names of one hundred two former contestants in the State FFA Public Speaking Contest were obtained from the records of the State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture of South Dakota. Only the names of the participants in the contests up to and including the year 1954 were obtained and used in this survey. The writer felt that participants in contests held during the years later than 1954 would not be able to present as objective an evaluation of the speaking contest, and consequently, their names have been omitted. The names of the contestants were mailed along with a letter of explanation to the vocational agriculture instructors teaching in the schools represented by the contestants (Appendices A and B). The instructors provided the present addresses of the contestants and also selected at random the name of a classmate of each contestant and his address. In several cases, the vocational agriculture program had been discontinued in the school, and in such cases the information was requested of the superintendent. The name of a classmate of each contestant was obtained in order to get as accurate a comparison as possible, since comparison under uniform circumstances is most objective. In most cases the individuals' names were obtained from the permanent record files of the vocational agriculture department.

A letter of explanation and a questionnaire (Appendices C and D) designed to obtain the necessary information, and an addressed envelope were sent to each contestant. A different letter and questionnaire (Appendices E and F) were sent to the non-contestants. Fifty-one contestants or 73 per cent of those contestants contacted, and forty-three, or 69 per cent of the non-contestant classmates returned their questionnaires, making a total over-all return of 71 per cent. The contents of the questionnaires were compiled to obtain the results of the study. A summary and a set of recommendations were drawn up and are submitted as a portion of this research problem.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Participating in public speaking is being emphasized mere every day by vocational agriculture instructors. Winning the state speaking contest and representing one's state is a goal well worth working for, but should be secondary in importance to the educational and experience values received from participation. Although public speaking is a very important quality in leadership the writer has not been able to find any studies on this subject. There are, however, many magazines with articles regarding public speaking and contests. Many authors have discussed the value of leadership and the fact that public speaking ability is a prerequisite for effective leadership.

A supervisor in Washington<sup>2</sup> stressed the educational values of the FFA in the agriculture program. One of his selling points is that every year in increasing numbers many more former FFA members are taking their places of membership, leadership, and citizenship in adult organizations in their communities, counties, states, and in the nation. Almost without exception, these men in active leadership positions today who were former FFA members, give due credit to the leadership and public speaking training received by FFA members.

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2. Bert L. Brown, "Who is Wagging Whom?", Agricultural Education Magazine, XXVIII, (December, 1955), p. 126.

In an article written by the State Supervisor of New York<sup>3</sup> the method of training the state officers as leaders is discussed. One of the most important phases of instruction for the officers is the ability to speak in public. They are required to present speeches and extemporaneous talks before various groups for experience prior to becoming state officers.

A former national officer<sup>4</sup> in the FFA attributes much of his success to participation in public speaking contests. He also tells of a fifteen year old who, through his profound interest in FFA public speaking, earned a very good salary speaking for a state political contender. Another such interested member worked as a radio announcer while still in high school.

A teacher trainer<sup>5</sup> from Michigan State College elaborates on the objectives of contests. He states that they are designed to train and improve participants along agricultural lines and are used as a teaching aid. His suggestions for selecting a speaking contestant are to start with the freshmen giving magazine reports and build intergroup competition from there on up to the best in the school.

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3. J. O. Sanders, "Training For FFA Officers", Agricultural Education Magazine, XVIII, (December, 1955), p. 131.

4. Merril T. Cartwright, "FFA - Vocational Agriculture's Strength", Agricultural Education Magazine, XVIII, (December, 1955), p.129.

5. Guy E. Timmons, "Let's Examine FFA Contests", Agricultural Education Magazine, XVII, (August, 1954), p. 46.

A vocational agriculture instructor<sup>6</sup> from Morgantown, West Virginia, states that much of our rural leadership comes from the FFA. In developing leadership attributes, the FFA makes provisions for all the members to have the opportunity to participate in public speaking endeavors. He considers the ability to speak in public one of the essentials of a good rural leader.

Leslie Fry, the third national FFA president,<sup>7</sup> indicates that of his many FFA activities, he enjoyed debate and public speaking most of all. He studied agriculture in college for three years and then switched to law. His reason was that law presented a real challenge and that he was always interested in public relations. His FFA experience in leadership, public speaking, and training in meeting people were real assets in the practice of law. Such experiences gave him a background difficult if not impossible to obtain through other means.

A regional agent of the U. S. Office of Education<sup>8</sup> declares that public speaking contests are designed to develop rural and agricultural leadership by providing agricultural public speaking activities for members.

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6. Bond L. Bible, "Rural Leadership Looks to the FFA", Agricultural Education Magazine, XXVII, (December, 1954), p. 124.

7. Howard Christensen, "Leslie Fry, Third National President, Tells How the FFA Helped Him," Agricultural Education Magazine, XXIX, (March, 1958), p. 210.

8. E. J. Johnson, "Public Speaking Contests," Agricultural Education Magazine, XIX, (August, 1946), p. 36.

He also implies that care in the selection of a topic is very essential. In order for a speaker to be successful in regional or national contests the topic must be broad enough to interest people in various sections of the country. The importance of obtaining assistance from sources in addition to the vocational agriculture instructor was stressed. A survey made in 1946 of eleven Pacific Region states revealed only twenty per cent participation of vocational agriculture students in local speaking contests. However, the idea of securing 100 per cent participation is currently growing.

A teacher from Tennessee<sup>9</sup> who has had considerable experience in training boys for public speaking considers three essentials to be of major importance in a boy from a public speaking standpoint. Specifically, he indicates: (1) a willing attitude, (2) a pleasant voice, and (3) a pleasing personality, as personal requisites for effective public speaking. His training devices were quite simple. Some impromptu speeches were given by his classes. He subsequently developed a gradual movement toward longer speeches with better preparation, and culminating in a local chapter speaking contest. After the local winner was selected the vocational agriculture instructor contributed much individual help and advice.

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9. Elmo Johnson, "Training Public Speakers," Agricultural Education Magazine, XVIII, (May, 1946), p. 213.

A survey<sup>10</sup> of participants in the national public speaking contest during the years 1931-1943 was made in an attempt to determine the amount and kind of preparation made. The respondents emphasized the fact that the speech should be of national interest and appeal. Much research was done before a skeleton outline was written. The speakers surveyed stated that an average of one year was spent in preparing their speeches and much time was devoted to practicing delivery. Whether honors were won, each participant acquired personal development in proportion to the efforts exerted.

The general consensus of most writers is that the public speaking contest is a worthwhile activity, and is one of the most useful training devices in developing leadership abilities in a farm boy. Much preparation and effort are necessary, but the outcomes are very beneficial. The opportunity of participating in public speaking should be afforded all FFA members in order that society can be provided with the best possible rural leadership.

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10. L. K. Humpherys, "Some Essentials Factor in FFA Public Speaking," Agricultural Education Magazine, XI, (October, 1947), p. 64.



## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

## Education

The amount and kind of education a person receives normally influences his future activities and capabilities. It would be important to know about the educational progress of the FFA public speaking contestants and their classmates in order to objectively evaluate the accomplishments of the two groups. A comparison of the amount of college training which the state speaking contestants and non-contestants received is shown in Table I.

TABLE I. COLLEGE TRAINING OF STATE FFA PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTESTANTS AS COMPARED WITH THE COLLEGE TRAINING RECEIVED BY CLASSMATES WHO WERE NOT CONTESTANTS

ITEMS	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Attended agricultural college	17	33.3	6	14.0
2. Attended non-agricultural college	21	41.2	11	25.5
3. No college training	<u>13</u>	<u>25.5</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>60.5</u>
Total	51	100.0	43	100.0

The fact that all but 25.5 per cent of the contestants went on to college is an indication of their desire for more educational training; whereas, 60.5 per cent of the non-contestants did not further their education beyond high school. It is of interest that of the contestants attending college a greater percentage have gone into non-agricultural studies. Such evidence would indicate

more varied interests and abilities on the part of the contestants.

The scholastic standings in high school would be indicative of the individuals' abilities. A comparison of the academic ranks of the two groups in high school is shown in Table II.

TABLE II. HOW THE CONTESTANTS AND NON-CONTESTANTS RANKED WITH RESPECT TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN HIGH SCHOOL

RANKING	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. In upper one-fourth of class	40	78.4	15	34.9
2. In second one-fourth of class	10	19.6	23	53.5
3. In lower one-half of class	$\frac{1}{51}$	$\frac{2.0}{100.0}$	$\frac{5}{43}$	$\frac{11.6}{100.0}$
Total				

The fact that 78.4 per cent of the contestants ranked in the upper one-fourth of their class reveals the tendency for the public speaking contestants to be selected from the top portion of the class. The five minute question and answer period required in the contest after delivering the speech necessitates a mentally alert individual.

A comparison of the two groups in respect to the amount of college education received is shown in Table III. The fact that 42.1 per cent of the contestants received a four year degree and 21.1 per cent received a higher degree illustrates the fact that the contestants are less likely

to terminate their education before receiving a college degree. A majority of the contestants studying in the non-agricultural area were in engineering curriculums and related technical fields which require men of reasonably desirable scholastic abilities.

TABLE III. AMOUNT OF EDUCATION RECEIVED BY THOSE ATTENDING COLLEGE

AMOUNT OF EDUCATION RECEIVED BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Two years or less	10	26.3	5	29.5
2. Three years	4	10.5	3	17.6
3. Bachelor's degree	16	42.1	6	35.3
4. Bachelor's degree plus	8	21.1	3	17.6
Total	38	100.0	17	100.0

#### OCCUPATIONAL AND MILITARY STATUS

A comparison of the contestants and non-contestants in regard to occupational status since graduation from high school is illustrated in Table IV. These figures indicate that fewer contestants go into farming, but it is noteworthy that 13.7 per cent pursue related agricultural occupations. Included among the related agricultural pursuits indicated by the respondents were vocational agriculture instructor, veterinarian, and administrative positions in agricultural businesses.

The fact that such a large proportion of those persons entering non-agricultural work were college trained for

their present positions indicates that many of our more intelligent farm boys are leaving agriculture. About eleven per cent more of the contestants entered the non-agricultural occupations than did the non-contestants.

TABLE IV. PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF CONTESTANTS AND NON-CONTESTANTS

OCCUPATIONS	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Farming	13	25.5	26	60.4
2. Related agricultural occupations	7	13.7	4	9.3
3. Non-agricultural occupations	15	29.4	8	18.6
4. Attending college	11	21.6	4	9.3
5. In military service	5	9.8	1	2.4
Total	51	100.0	43	100.0

Another aspect of the study of this section is that of previous occupations of the two groups shown in Table V. One noteworthy factor contributing to changes in occupations was that of time spent in military service. The general pattern followed by the speakers was to enter related agricultural occupations and then proceed to administrative work; whereas, more of the non-contestants tended to enter and remain in the physical labor category of lower paying jobs. The frequency of occupational change is less for the contestants, indicating possibly more success and satisfaction in their chosen vocations.

**TABLE V. PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF SPEAKING CONTESTANTS AND NON-CONTESTANT CLASSMATES**

OCCUPATIONS	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Farming	13	16.5	28	34.4
2. Related agricultural occupations	11	13.9	7	8.6
3. Non-agricultural occupations	18	22.8	18	22.6
4. Attending college	15	19.0	7	8.6
5. Military Service	<u>22</u>	<u>27.8</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>25.8</u>
Total	79	100.0	81	100.0

One indication of leadership ability is denoted in the comparison of the rank attained in military service as shown in Table VI. The fact that one contestant received the rank of major and that 17.2 per cent of the contestants were lieutenants indicates greater leadership capabilities on the part of the contestants.

**TABLE VI. MILITARY SERVICE AND RANK HELD BY THE CONTESTANTS AND NON-CONTESTANT CLASSMATES**

HIGHEST ARMY RANK OR OTHER SERVICE EQUIVALENT	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Private or PFC	8	27.6	4	19.0
2. Corporal	6	20.6	11	52.4
3. Sergeant	7	24.1	4	19.0
4. Lieutenant	5	17.2	1	4.8
5. Captain	1	3.5	1	4.8
6. Major	1	3.5	0	0.0
7. Cadet	<u>1</u>	<u>3.5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
Total	29	100.0	21	100.0

One other contestant is now attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, which requires individuals of high leadership potentialities. The point that a greater proportion of contestants held the rank of private and private first class is clarified by the fact that nearly all served a brief term of service in accordance with present day military requirements. Military rank as shown in Table VI has been equated to army rank standards since some of the respondents served in military branches other than the army.

#### LEADERSHIP AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The primary aim of the speaking contest is to train boys for roles of leadership. Accordingly, the writer was interested in the civic responsibilities assumed by members of the two groups. The contestants have a definite edge over the non-contestants in organizational memberships, as Table VII amply illustrates.

Less than 8 per cent of the responding contestants are not members of any civic group, whereas twice that proportion of the non-contestants hold no such memberships. The writer interprets such evidence to mean greater leadership possibilities for the contestants.

**TABLE VII. ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS OF CONTESTANTS AND NON-CONTESTANTS SINCE GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL**

	NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1.	Six or more organizations	18	35.3	6	14.0
2.	Five organizations	7	13.7	4	9.3
3.	Four organizations	11	21.6	6	14.0
4.	Three organizations	4	7.8	8	18.6
5.	Two organizations	5	9.9	8	18.6
6.	One organization	2	3.9	4	9.3
7.	No organizations	4	7.8	7	16.2
	Total	<u>51</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>100.0</u>

In support of the evidence revealed in the foregoing paragraph, the superiority in leadership capabilities is brought out in Table VIII. A person's true leadership ability is evident if he can be elected to organizational offices. Here a definite trend toward superior leadership is shown by the contestants.

The non-contestants averaged 1.7 offices held per respondent whereas the contestants averaged 2.6 offices each. One former contestant indicated having held eighteen separate offices thus far.

**TABLE VIII. OFFICES HELD IN ORGANIZATIONS SINCE GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL BY CONTESTANTS AND NON-CONTESTANT CLASSMATES**

ORGANIZATIONAL OFFICES HELD	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Six or more offices	9	17.6	2	4.7
2. Five offices	7	13.7	3	7.0
3. Four offices	2	3.9	2	4.7
4. Three offices	4	7.8	6	14.0
5. Two offices	9	17.6	4	9.3
6. One office	4	7.8	12	28.0
7. No offices	<u>16</u>	<u>31.6</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>32.3</u>
Total	<u>51</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>100.0</u>

A comparison of what the two groups did with their leisure time in the category of hobbies is revealed in Table IX. The interests of the two groups parallel each other quite closely. However, 19.6 per cent of the contestants listed reading as a hobby, and only 13.8 per cent of the non-contestants indicated this activity as a hobby.

**TABLE IX. HOBBIES OF STATE PFA PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTESTANTS AND NON-CONTESTANT CLASSMATES**

HOBBIES	CONTESTANTS		NON-CONTESTANTS	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Sports participation	40	78.4	36	83.5
2. Sports (spectator)	2	3.9	1	2.3
3. Music	9	17.6	2	4.7
4. Shop and mechanics	5	9.8	6	13.9
5. Reading	10	19.6	6	13.9
6. Miscellaneous	30	58.8	13	30.2
7. No hobbies	5	9.8	5	11.6



More active and varied interests were indicated on the part of the contestants by the fact that they averaged 1.9 hobbies per person and the non-contestants averaged 1.5 hobbies each. Those responding in the sports participation category referred mainly to hunting, fishing, camping, and various organized athletics such as basketball and volleyball. Any respondent listing more than one of these activities was tabulated as participating in one hobby; for example, hunting, fishing, and camping would be considered one sports participation hobby.

#### PREPARATION FOR THE SPEAKING CONTEST

As another phase of this problem the writer studied the methods used in preparation of the speeches for the state contest. The first step in preparation is the selection of a speech topic which should be broad enough to be of national interest and appeal. The speech should deal primarily, and not incidentally, with some phase of agriculture.

The topic of soil conservation was used by one-third of the speakers, indicating a possible over-emphasis of this subject. This fact would also lead one to believe that soil conservation has created a great deal of interest and that vocational agriculture students are aware of its problems as well as benefits.

In order to determine the speech background of the contestants an analysis of the speaking experience they

had prior to the state contest is shown in Table X. The fact that a slightly greater number of contestants did participate in other speech work such as declamation and debate indicates that a student's speaking ability is not the only reliable criterion to be used in the selection of a contestant.

TABLE X. SPEAKING EXPERIENCE OF CONTESTANTS PRIOR TO FFA SPEECH PARTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE	NUMBER	PER CENT
1. Did have previous experience	27	52.9
2. Did not have previous experience	22	43.1
3. No reply	<u>2</u>	<u>4.0</u>
Total	51	100.0

The variation in the methods employed by the contestants in selecting their topics is illustrated in Table XI. These figures definitely establish the fact that most topics were selected through use of democratic means. The speakers were given an opportunity to develop their own speech and the individuals who assisted him acted in an advisory capacity only. Three respondents stated that they selected their topic by drawing the name of the subject from a hat. This means was tabulated under the heading of "Other methods".

TABLE XI. METHODS USED BY FFA PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTESTANTS  
IN SELECTING SPEECH TOPICS

METHODS	NUMBER	PER CENT
1. Selected one phase of agriculture in which the contestant was very much interested, without assistance	26	51.0
2. Selected topic in cooperation with FFA Advisor	18	35.3
3. Was assigned topic by FFA Advisor	3	5.9
4. Other methods	4	7.8
Total	<u>51</u>	<u>100.0</u>

The degree of interest that the contestant had in the subject selected is revealed in Table XII. A direct relationship between interest in the subject and what is achieved in speech making is indicated. Normally an individual who does his best is vitally interested in his subject matter.

TABLE XII. DEGREE OF CONTESTANT INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT  
SELECTED PRIOR TO WRITING THE SPEECH

DEGREE OF INTEREST	NUMBER	PER CENT
1. Was genuinely interested	43	84.3
2. Was not genuinely interested	4	7.8
3. Uncertain or did not know	3	5.9
4. No reply	1	2.0
Total	<u>51</u>	<u>100.0</u>

The fact that 86.3 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had made an outline of their speeches prior to the

actual writing illustrates considerable thought and preparation in the formulation of the contents of the speeches.

Most of the chapter representatives were entered on a voluntary basis is revealed in Table XIII. The fact that 41.2 per cent of the contestants won a local contest over other volunteers indicates much interest in the contest. This leads the writer to believe that true leaders would welcome the opportunity for experience in public speaking in order to improve their abilities.

TABLE XIII. METHODS USED TO SELECT CONTESTANTS TO REPRESENT FFA CHAPTERS IN STATE FFA PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTESTS

METHODS USED	NUMBER	PER CENT
1. Only one to volunteer	16	31.4
2. Won in local elimination over other volunteers	21	41.2
3. Won elimination contest in which entire class participated	10	19.6
4. Was assigned to prepare a speech by FFA Advisor	3	5.9
5. No reply	$\frac{1}{51}$	$\frac{1.9}{100.0}$
Total	$\frac{1}{51}$	$\frac{1.9}{100.0}$

Another aspect, that of frequency of presentation of the speech before local groups in preparation for the state contest, is shown in Table XIV. It is well to note that less than one-fourth of the contestants did not present their speeches before any local meeting.

TABLE XIV. FREQUENCY OF PRESENTATION OF SPEECHES AT LOCAL MEETINGS OF ORGANIZATIONS PRIOR TO THE STATE FFA PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST

	<u>NUMBER OF TIMES PRESENTED</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PER CENT</u>
1.	Presented one time	2	3.9
2.	Presented two times	19	37.4
3.	Presented three times	7	13.7
4.	Presented four times	2	3.9
5.	Presented five times	4	7.8
6.	Presented six or more times	3	5.9
7.	Did not present speech before any group	12	23.5
8.	No reply	<u>2</u>	<u>3.9</u>
	Total	<u>51</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Each presentation would lead to a better informed public and more desirable publicity for the local FFA chapter. The people at the meetings would be impressed by the contestants' leadership abilities and tend to support the FFA activities to a greater extent.

The assistance received from various individuals in preparing their speeches is illustrated in Table IV. All respondents indicated having received some help from one source or another. The influence of the vocational agriculture instructor is verified by the fact that only one contestant did not list his instructor as helping to any degree. The fact that the parents were ranked quite frequently indicates that interest and cooperation from

the home are very common. Most contestants did not limit their acquisition of help to only one individual, but obtained advice from a variety of sources.

**TABLE IV. CONTESTANTS' EVALUATIONS OF VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS' ASSISTANCE IN SPEECH PREPARATION**

INDIVIDUALS	RANKING			
	1	2	3	4
1. Vocational agriculture instructor	38	6	4	0
2. Speech teacher	6	18	10	1
3. Parents	3	10	10	10
4. English teacher	1	10	7	6
5. County Agent	0	0	1	5
6. Classmates	0	0	5	4
7. Other individuals	0	2	2	1
8. No reply	2			

#### BENEFITS DERIVED FROM FFA SPEECH CONTEST

In order to determine whether the contestants benefited from participation in the speech contest they were asked to evaluate the contest in three ways, culturally, socially, and economically. Table XVI illustrates their ranking of the cultural benefits. The fact that all respondents indicated they received some degree of cultural benefits would show the value of the contest in that category. Confidence in speaking ability is one necessity of leadership and is developed to a considerable degree through

participation in speech work. Another aspect is that nearly all contestants listed more than one benefit derived, namely, a wholesome, well-balanced cultural background.

**TABLE XVI. CONTESTANTS' EVALUATION REGARDING CULTURAL BENEFITS DERIVED FROM SPEAKING CONTEST PARTICIPATION**

BENEFITS DERIVED	RANKING					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Has built up confidence in speaking before groups	22	4	5	3	1	1
2. Has made membership in organizations more valuable	1	1	4	4	4	4
3. Improved the use of English	0	3	2	9	5	7
4. Helped develop a more fluent speaking ability	5	9	7	3	5	2
5. Learned to express ideas with clarity and force	3	11	9	2	2	2
6. Provided new interest in values of speaking	4	3	5	6	6	7
7. Provided new incentive for self-improvement	0	5	4	4	6	2
8. Other benefits	2	0	0	1	0	0

In ranking the social benefits only one respondent indicated the speaking experience to be of little value. Helping to make more acquaintances and ease of meeting the public consistently rated high. These two qualities are vitally needed in order for a person to become a good leader.

The final appraisal, that of economic benefits derived by the contestants, is revealed in Table XVII. The most commonly expressed benefit is that the experience of participation in the speaking contest has helped in the contestants' present day work.

**TABLE XVII. CONTESTANTS' EVALUATIONS REGARDING ECONOMIC BENEFITS DERIVED FROM SPEAKING CONTEST PARTICIPATION**

ECONOMIC BENEFITS	RANKING						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Broader knowledge of different businesses	2	8	3	2	2	3	1
2. The experience helped in present work	12	4	1	3	3	0	1
3. Broader outlook on business opportunities	6	3	3	4	2	3	0
4. Skills acquired have made membership in various organizations more beneficial to others	2	5	4	4	3	0	1
5. Skills acquired have contributed toward obtaining a better job	2	2	4	2	3	2	2
6. Participation in contest gave a better background for present job	3	6	2	0	1	5	0
7. Experience in speaking was stated as a personal quality in making application for employment	4	0	4	1	1	1	4
8. Did not help economically at all	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
9. No reply	3						



The fact that less enthusiastic response was received in this evaluation by the younger contestants leads the writer to believe that the economic values are not quickly determined. All the respondents indicating that it did not help them economically have recently graduated from high school and have not yet become established in their life work. The older contestants consistently listed more benefits of economic value. Although not as emphatically presented, there is a definite indication that training in public speaking has given the contestants some vital economic values.

The economic values received from participating in the FFA Public Speaking Contest are not always clearly apparent to the contestants. Their awareness of the values of public speaking experience is sometimes overshadowed by motivating factors which are more obvious. One such factor which should be of secondary importance is the award of One Hundred Dollars which is presented to the winner of the state speaking contest each year. The long time values, which help the contestant equally well in the cultural, social, and economic areas, should be stressed to all aspirants in the state FFA Public Speaking Contest.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This problem was designed to obtain some information on contestants in the State FFA Public Speaking Contest. A comparison of the contestants and non-contestant classmates was made to determine the difference in certain characteristics between the two groups which the writer thought would illustrate the values of public speaking experience. Comparative aspects studied concerning the two groups are: formal education beyond high school, high school academic rank, present occupational status, former occupations, highest military rank attained, hobbies, and organizational memberships and offices held. Information also was obtained to ascertain the kinds and amounts of preparation made for the contest, assistance received, methods of selection of the representative contestants, and the social, economic, and cultural benefits derived from participation in the contest. The benefits were measured by a ranking of various advantages by the responding contestants. The information obtained from the questionnaires is used as a basis for the findings, summary, and conclusions made by the writer.

The contestants were found to rate above the non-contestants in all areas studied. The fact that 74.5 per cent of the contestants went on to college after graduation from high school as compared to only 39.5 per cent of the non-contestants substantiates the tremendous

superiority on the part of the speakers. Another comparison shows that of the individuals in both groups going to college the contestants received a greater amount of college training and were more apt to complete their training. Contestants were of higher academic caliber in high school than their non-contestant counterparts, indicating the brighter students would possibly be more successful in public speaking.

More non-contestants chose the occupation of farming than did the contestants, who have more of a tendency to branch out into other varied occupations. The contestants are more apt to work in the related agricultural occupations, where the element of leadership is used to a greater extent, than the non-contestants. The non-contestants seemed to be more unsettled in the selection of occupations and worked at an average of 1.88 other jobs as compared to 1.55 previous occupations for the contestants.

The contestant group showed superior leadership ability in the military service, having a larger proportion of its individuals in the upper ranks. There also was a greater percentage of speakers in the armed forces. Another aspect of leadership superiority is illustrated by organizational memberships and by offices held. The contestants averaged four organizational memberships each, whereas the non-contestants averaged slightly less than three. A more vivid example of the superior leadership ability of the contestants is the fact that the speakers are officers in organizations more often than the non-contestants.

The contestants showed a more varied use of leisure time and devoted more effort to the finer arts as illustrated in the study of hobbies. Music and reading represent more of the hobby interests of the contestants than of the non-contestants.

The typical contestant does not necessarily need previous experience in other speech work to enable him to do an acceptable job in this contest. The fact that 43.1 per cent of the speakers had no previous training illustrates the point that the contestant does not need to be from a select group in order to be successfully trained in speaking.

The methods of selecting the topic and the speaker were usually carried out in a democratic manner, giving the students the opportunity to express themselves. Such selection procedure is mute testimony to the fact that most contestants were genuinely interested in their topics and desired experience in their development.

More than two-thirds of the contestants presented their speeches before other groups and organizations. Less than one-fourth of the speakers did not present their speeches before any group prior to the state contest.

The vocational agriculture instructor contributes the greatest amount of assistance to the speakers in preparation of their speeches. The respondents also indicated that the parents' influence was of considerable value and quite common.

The experience of participating in the contest does benefit the speaker culturally, socially, and economically. There was a definite recognition of the cultural and social aspects. Some of the more recent high school graduates did not seem to recognize the economic benefits as readily, but the older contestants did.

The opportunity to participate in the State FFA Public Speaking Contest is open to all members of the Future Farmers of America. Although this problem reveals the fact that the experience of public speaking has helped the contestants, the writer does not contend that all their success is due to this one activity. However, the speakers do represent a group having a notable degree of selectivity, and public speaking experience definitely contributes to their success in whatever role of responsibility they assume.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Participation in the State FFA Public Speaking Contest is beneficial to the contestants. The methods of preparation for the contest are fairly adequate. However, there are some areas of preparation which the vocational agriculture instructor can improve in order to better accomplish the real purposes of public speaking. A greater percentage of participation would be realized if the students are acquainted with the true values to be derived from speaking in public. The continuous development of leaders in agriculture is essential in order to keep the business of farming stabilized. Democratic ways of teaching and guiding students are important for better motivation and interest in the preparation of speeches. Accordingly, the writer submits the following recommendations:

1. More of our public speakers should be encouraged to stay in farming and related agricultural occupations. In order for farming and farm life to progress with the rest of the nation, the leadership abilities received by speakers must be directed to the betterment of farming.

2. The vocational agriculture instructor needs to encourage more students to participate in public speaking. Definite benefits are received by the contestants which have carry-over value in later life. The students should understand the real values received from the experience of public speaking. The social, cultural, and economic improvements for the participants are more valuable than the mere winning of a contest.

3. The contestants should be allowed to select their topics by a democratic method. Genuine interest in the subject will develop and the student will work more for self-improvement if allowed to pick his own topic.

4. The chapter representative could be selected by a democratic method, usually by an elimination contest. More students will participate and make more self-improvement if they know that they all have an equal opportunity to win.

5. The chapter representative should present his speech before many local meetings and organizations. This procedure not only gives the contestant more experience and poise, but also creates a better relationship between the FFA and people in the community. The contestants' leadership qualities will be exercised and improved by speaking in public.

6. Many different individuals are needed to aid in final preparation of the speech presentation. However, this assistance should be limited to an advisory capacity. Much help may be in the form of encouragement and interest on the part of others.

Vocational agriculture instructors in South Dakota are continually improving in their training of students for public speaking. However, there is still a great deal to be done in recognizing and developing the abilities of the vocational agriculture students in leadership activities. Increased emphasis needs to be placed on public speaking in order to develop a better end product, that of rural and agricultural leaders.

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**A P P E N D I C E S**

**APPENDIX A****Letter of Transmittal**

February 5, 1958  
Scotland, South Dakota

Dear Voc. Ag. Teacher:

For my graduate research problem I am writing a paper involving the participants in the State FFA Speaking Contest. I hope to determine whether or not the experience of participating in the contest has helped the student in his activities after graduation.

In order to obtain this information I need to contact as many of the contestants from 1954 on back as I can. I have obtained all the known participants in the past from Mr. Urton's office and the chapter they represented. However, I imagine many of them have moved and changed addresses. Listed on the accompanying enclosure are the contestant's names from your chapter that I have record of participating in the State FFA Speaking Contest. Could you check your permanent records or with your students and people in your community for their present address and occupation.

In order to get a comparison, could you also pick a classmate in Vocational Agriculture of each contestant from your permanent records at random and give his name, address, and occupation.

I would appreciate it a great deal if you can give me this information and return it to me by March 1.

Sincerely yours,

Loren G. Kaaten  
Voc. Ag. Instructor  
Scotland, South Dakota

APPENDIX B

_____ Contestant	Address	Occupation
_____ Classmate	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____ Contestant		
_____ Classmate	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____ Contestant		
_____ Classmate	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____ Contestant		
_____ Classmate	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____ Contestant		
_____ Classmate	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**APPENDIX C****Letter of Transmittal**

Scotland, South Dakota  
1 April 1958

Dear Sir:

Enclosed you will find a "Questionnaire to Former Contestants in State FFA Public Speaking Contest".

I am making a study of the State Speaking contest contestants to determine whether or not the experience of participating in the contest has helped the student in his activities after graduation.

Do not hesitate in expressing your honest opinion as it will be handled in a confidential nature. The information you furnish will be for statistical purposes only and will not be used individually.

The results of the questionnaire you return will be used in a study for graduate work at South Dakota State College. I will greatly appreciate the time you spend on the questionnaire, kindly return it to me in the enclosed addressed envelope.

I wish to thank you in advance for supplying me with the requested information.

Sincerely,

Loren G. Kasten  
Vec. Ag. Instructor  
Scotland, South Dakota

## APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE TO FORMER CONTESTANTS IN STATE FFA  
PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATION

1. Year graduated from high school: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of years enrolled in high school vocational  
agriculture: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever attended college? \_\_\_\_\_ How many years?  
\_\_\_\_\_

College course studied: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree earned: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you now attending college? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Check proper blank regarding your over-all grades in  
high school:

Upper one-fourth of your class \_\_\_\_\_

Second one-fourth of your class \_\_\_\_\_

Lower one-half of your class \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL

1. What is your present occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
2. List occupations, including farming and military service  
which you have followed since leaving high school:

OccupationLength of Time

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you serve in the armed forces? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Highest rank you held in the armed forces: \_\_\_\_\_

LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES

1. List the organizations of which you are, or have been a member since graduation from high school, such as: professional organizations, farm organizations, any county, state, school, church, or veterans organizations.

Please limit the list to the six most important.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. \_\_\_\_\_

2. List the offices you have held since graduating from high school, such as professional organizations, farm organizations, any county or state offices, school board, church, veterans and service organizations, or any other activity which consumes considerable time and is of benefit to the public.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. \_\_\_\_\_

**PREPARATION FOR THE CONTEST**

1. What was the general topic of your State FFA Contest Speech? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did you participate in public speaking, declam or debate activities in high school previous to entering the State FFA Public Speaking Contest?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ yes; \_\_\_\_\_ no.
3. Did you make an outline of your topic before writing the speech? \_\_\_\_\_ yes; \_\_\_\_\_ no.
4. How did you select the subject of your speech? (Check one)
  - a. Selected one phase of agriculture in which I was very much interested, without assistance. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Selected a topic in cooperation with FFA Advisor. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Was assigned topic by FFA Advisor. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Were you genuinely interested in this subject before writing the speech? \_\_\_\_\_ yes; \_\_\_\_\_ no.
6. How were you selected to represent your school? (Check one)
  - a. I was the only one to volunteer. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Won in local elimination contest over other interested volunteers. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. The whole class was assigned to write a speech and I won the elimination contest. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Was assigned to prepare a speech by my advisor. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you give your speech before local meetings of any organizations prior to the state contest?  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes; \_\_\_\_\_ no. If so, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Number, in order of their importance, the persons who helped most in preparing the speech: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (1 is of most importance)

- Vocational agriculture instructor \_\_\_\_\_
- Speech teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Parents \_\_\_\_\_
- English teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- County agent \_\_\_\_\_
- Classmates \_\_\_\_\_
- Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

HOW THE FFA PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST HAS HELPED YOU

Please check one or more ways in which participation in the contest has helped you in each category: (Rate as in item 8, above)

Culturally:

- 1. Has built up confidence in speaking before groups \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Has made membership in organizations more valuable \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Training improved the use of English \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Helped develop a more fluent speaking ability \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Learned to express my ideas with clarity and force \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Gave new interest in the value of speaking \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Participation has given me a new incentive for self-improvement. \_\_\_\_\_



- 8. Didn't help me culturally at all \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Socially:

- 1. Helped make new acquaintances \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Easier to meet the public \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Training helped in social activities \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Speaking ability has given me social prestige \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Didn't help me socially at all \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Economically:

- 1. Broader knowledge of different businesses \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. The experience helps in my present work \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Broader outlook on business opportunities \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Skills acquired have made membership in various organizations more beneficial to others \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Skills acquired have contributed toward obtaining a better job \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Participation in contest gave me a better background for present job. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Experience in speaking was stated as a personal quality in making application for employment \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Didn't help me economically at all \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

HOBBIES

- 1. List the hobbies and recreation in which you participate:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX E****Letter of Transmittal**

Scotland, South Dakota  
1 April 1958

Dear Sir:

Enclosed you will find a "Questionnaire to Classmates of Former State FFA Public Speaking Contestants".

Your name was given me as a classmate of one of the speakers in the State FFA Public Speaking Contest. In order to get a comparison I need your help. The information you furnish will be for statistical purposes only and will not be used individually.

The results of the questionnaire you return will be used in a study for graduate work at South Dakota State College. I will greatly appreciate the time you spend on the questionnaire; kindly return it to me in the enclosed addressed envelope.

I wish to thank you in advance for supplying me with the requested information.

Sincerely yours,

Loren G. Kasten  
Voc. Ag. Instructor  
Scotland, South Dakota

## APPENDIX F

QUESTIONNAIRE TO CLASSMATES OF FORMER STATE FFA PUBLIC  
SPEAKING CONTESTANTS.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATION

1. Year graduated from high school: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of years enrolled in high school vocational agriculture: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Have you ever attended college? \_\_\_\_\_ How many years? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Colleg<sup>e</sup> course studied: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Highest degree earned: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are you now attending college? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Check proper blank regarding your over-all grades in high school:  
 Upper one-fourth of your class \_\_\_\_\_  
 Second one-fourth of your class \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lower one-half of your class \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL

1. What is your present occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
2. List occupations, including farming and military service which you have followed since leaving high school.

OccupationLength of Time

- |    |       |       |
|----|-------|-------|
| a. | _____ | _____ |
| b. | _____ | _____ |
| c. | _____ | _____ |
| d. | _____ | _____ |
| e. | _____ | _____ |

3. Did you serve in the armed forces? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Highest rank you held in the armed forces: \_\_\_\_\_

LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES

1. List the organizations of which you are, or have been, a member since graduation from high school, such as: professional organizations, farm organizations, any county, state, school, church, or veterans organizations. Please limit the list to the six most important.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. List the offices you have held since graduating from high school, such as professional organizations, farm organizations, any county or state offices, school board, church, veterans and service organizations, or any other activity which consumes considerable time and is of benefit to the public.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. List the hobbies and recreation in which you participate:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_