

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

CASE STUDY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL TRAITS OF MEDAL WINNERS IN THE SHILOH SCHOOL ACADEMIC PENTATHLON

By

David L. DeLong

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JANE E. RABB, Ph.D. CHAIRPERSON

The academic pentathlon is introduced as an annual invitational question-answer competition for students in grades 5 through 8 in Stanislaus County, California. The activity is conducted in a modified format of the television game show Jeopardy. Subjects included are English, geography, history, mathematics, and spelling. This study examines 59 case studies of medal winners in the event. The research focuses on the problem of why some students with a 2.0 GPA in the classroom are motivated to earn a medal in this prestigious contest. The researcher seeks to determine what motivates these medalists in a center-stage setting under these circumstances.

The relevant body of research reviewed includes an overview of the basis of motivation and the purpose of academic competitions. Educational theories suggested by such noted social scientists as Piaget, Vygotsky, and Erikson explore the theoretical and conceptual foundations of motivation. Contributions by Freud, Woodsworth, and Maslow

are among the content theories of motivation discussed. Cognition and the process theories, most notably Classical Organization and Social System, are covered in the literature.

Qualitative research techniques were applied to each case study as a means to analyze the relationship between medal winners and 17 student traits. There were 8 academic traits and 9 personal traits examined. Data obtained from teachers via a survey checklist rated the medalists on each trait, based upon their classroom performance. The hypothesis for this research was that personal traits are more important than academic traits in student medalists. This hypothesis was confirmed by applying correlational analysis to the medalists and the 17 student traits. The results supported the proposition and further concluded that students find motivation in a multitude of different scenarios.