



LOUISIANA AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Background, Model, and Solutions

Louisiana FFA Association
244 John M Parker Coliseum
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Louisiana Agricultural Education

BACKGROUND

Passage of the Smith Hughes Act in 1917 funded 21 agriculture education departments in Louisiana and resulted in a total enrollment of 323 boys. In 1929, Louisiana received charter number 44 from the National FFA Organization and elected officers for the upcoming year. Currently, Louisiana has 207 FFA chapters with approximately 10,600 active FFA members taught by 250 FFA advisors.

Developments shaping food, fiber, and natural resource systems

Representatives of the food, fiber, and natural resource industry were asked to identify the most important trends and developments over the next 30 years that will shape the future of agriculture and the food, fiber, and natural resource systems. Five trends emerged as most important:

1. Accelerating globalization of markets.
 - Economic globalization with increasing population and falling trade barriers is taking us toward a more competitive international marketplace for agricultural products in which more countries will produce more kinds of foods and market them on an international scale.
2. Growing public demands for environmental protection and safe foods.
 - As production increases worldwide, pressures will grow everywhere to protect prime farmland from urban sprawl, conserve soil, safeguard water quality and fisheries, use water more efficiently, protect remaining wildlife habitats, and ensure a safe and healthy food supply.
3. Increasing reliance on technology.
 - Advances in computers, communications, information, biotechnology and other areas of technology will greatly affect education, agriculture, and the operation of the food, fiber, and natural resource systems.
4. Decline in public understanding of agriculture, food, fiber and natural resource systems.
 - The general population is increasingly cut off from both direct experience and education related to agriculture, which has serious repercussions in terms of ill-informed consumer behavior, public opinion, regulation and political decision-making.
5. A more highly trained and diverse workforce.
 - A more diverse, highly trained workforce will be needed to manage the development of food, fiber, and natural resource systems so that they will be competitive in the global marketplace and successful in an industry whose structure is changing.

Agricultural Education Contributions:

- Provides contextual learning, applied academics, and real life applications
- Students earn IBC's, drop out less, and have higher graduation rates
- Prepares students for college
- Teaches respect for land and environment (stewardship)
- Provides curriculum to students of all academic levels
- Provides life skills training missing in other academic offerings

Agricultural Education's Contributions to the Workforce:

- Prepares students for careers and the workforce (there are over 300 careers relating to the agriculture industry)
- Teaches skills that are highly sought after and are transferrable to virtually any industry
- Provides highly skilled workers trained to deliver economic vitality

Agricultural Education's Contributions to Students:

- Students develop a sense of responsibility, self-reliance, and leadership skills
- Emphasizes citizenship, ethics, service learning, and patriotism
- Agricultural awareness
- Entrepreneurship and work ethic development
- Increases the number of graduating seniors receiving scholarships
- Builds morals, values, and self-esteem

Agricultural Education's Contributions to the Community:

- Promotes environmental awareness
- Promotes agricultural community awareness and ownership
- Increases community service projects and service learning projects
- Provides school based businesses that address needed services for the community
- Involves and adds value to the local economy through experiential learning activities that can generate thousands of dollars in the local economy

“If you eat, you need agriculture. If you wear clothes, you need agriculture. If you take medicine, live in a house or write with a pencil, you need agriculture.”

By Jaclyn Ryan, 2015 Virginia Teacher of the Year

“I like the fact that anybody can be successful in my class,” she said. “If it’s a child that learns with their hands and likes to make things or work on engines, they’re successful in my classroom. ... No matter if they’re academically strong or not, they can be successful in my class.”

By Marcy Mahler, 2017 Louisiana Middle School Teacher of the Year

MODEL



Agricultural Education is composed of three distinct, yet interrelated components. A basic component is classroom and laboratory experiences. In the classroom, students learn concepts and theories dealing with a broad spectrum of agricultural, mechanical and agribusiness topics. The classroom is followed by the laboratory mode of instruction where concepts and theories are carried through to their application. Here, the students are taught “hands-on” skills that ensure that the skills learned are practical and usable. Both classroom and laboratory instruction are put to use in the Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) component of the program. In this approach, students work and learn in a real-life situation where they obtain on-the-job skills. SAE can vary from the traditional home projects to entrepreneurship or cooperative work experience in production or agribusiness. The third component, FFA, provides an avenue for developing leadership skills. As an integral, intra-curricular component of the agricultural education program, FFA has numerous systems to deliver instruction in leadership. In addition, FFA provides incentives for improved student performance through its awards program. The strength of the program lies in the flexibility and dedication of teachers whose philosophy is, “We don’t just teach agriculture, we teach students.” The optimal benefit of the program is received when a student is an active participant of all three parts of the program. A program that is developed to include the three components with equal weight is said to have a balanced approach and therefore, is providing optimal opportunities for all students.

SOLUTIONS

The National FFA Organization is the largest youth-led organization in the nation. Years ago, “FFA” stood for Future Farmers of America. In 1988, the name changed to the National FFA Organization to represent the vast changes in the organization. Today, the National FFA Organization has over 600,000 active members across the United States.

Each agriculture program in Louisiana is unique in its own way. Regardless of a student’s interest, Agricultural Education instructors motivate students to understand key concepts through the use of authentic (hands-on) teaching methods. Furthermore, Agricultural Education programs are flexible and are designed to fit the needs and interests of the community surrounding them. The Louisiana Agriculture-Technology pathway strives to advance agricultural knowledge, vocational skills, and college preparedness. There are hundreds of agricultural related courses schools can offer inside the pathway including Agriculture I-III, Forestry, Agriculture Business, Animal Science, Horticulture, Carpentry, Welding, Floriculture, Leadership Development and many others.

There are numerous Industry Based Credentials (IBC’s) offered in the Louisiana Agriculture Technology pathway. IBC’s prepare graduates for entry into high-wage, high-demand occupations statewide. More information about IBC’s offered in agricultural education can be found at <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/jump-start-graduation-pathways>

Louisiana currently certifies agriculture teachers at LSU, McNeese and Louisiana Tech. Graduates of these programs are certified in agricultural education for grades 6-12. There are also alternative certification programs in agricultural education available.

Interested in creating an agricultural education program in Louisiana? Please contact the Louisiana FFA office to receive more information.

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