Philosophy of Agricultural Education

Agriculture remains an ever-changing aspect of human life; it adjusts itself to best fit the current situation we find ourselves in concerning global population, food distribution, and governmental regulations. Although new advancements in genetics and technology have given us the ability to drastically increase production in agriculture, there are many uninformed activists that do everything in their power to resist the change. As the years pass, you see more kids further removed in generations from the farm in which their ancestors established. This, along with the decline in small-scale farming, has put a strain on agricultural production. Large corporations try to control the market for whatever they may be producing, and have to rely on trans-genetics and other controversial methods to meet production demands; from this has stemmed many misconceptions within the general public.

As this influx of populous migrates from rural to urban/suburban areas, people forget how big of a role small-scale agriculture has played in feeding this nation. Agricultural Science spreads the idea that agriculture has always been there and will always be, even if in a different form. We must teach our youth that, even in the middle of a metropolis, agriculture is everywhere. The first time many of these young people are exposed to this kind of material is occurring at the high school level; agricultural science teachers must inform them on the controversial topics in current events to ensure the common misconceptions of the general public do not consume them. This also gives them a chance to use what they’ve learned in a math or science class, as well as in your own classroom, and incorporate that into some sort of practical application.
In addition to what they gain from your classroom, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects give the students a chance to build on the knowledge and skills they have learned. Not only will this enhance their learning experience, but can provide them with experience in entrepreneurship, internships, research, and more. This will instill the importance planning and meeting set goals in order to achieve excellence, but avoid overemphasis on the unreachable goal of perfection.

The variety of SAEs available to students allows opportunities that every student can benefit from. Selection of the ideal project differs with each student and their learning abilities. This stresses the importance of planning effective SAEs that your students will enjoy instead of reluctantly completing. The agricultural science teacher must show devotion and excitement in order to promote the same emotions in their students. Competition at both local and neighboring stock shows, the National Convention, and Proficiency Awards are some excellent ways to express to the students how highly you value them and their work. Other students may be motivated solely by the direct incentives of the project such as profit and gaining valuable work experience.

A large time commitment is required in order to perform at these levels, and many agricultural science teachers fail to meet this standard. Many teachers view SAEs as only outside-of-the-classroom activities; this is where they made a mistake. Successful SAEs require efficient planning and use of classroom time in addition to putting in the hours after school. This involves assisting with record keeping, research, and planning which will allow the student to be better prepared when working on his SAE outside of the classroom.
Last, but certainly not least, we have the FFA. The FFA is a dynamic youth development organization within agriculture education that prepares students for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success (National FFA Manual 2016). Although it isn’t required for all students within the agricultural science program, the FFA provides them with a vast number of opportunities in the form of Leadership Development Events (LDE), participation in fundraisers, and official FFA meetings.

Students are given the opportunity to develop skills through LDEs. Events are help in which the students travel to compete with the schools within the district in areas such as public speaking, judging, quiz-teams, and more.

Participation in FFA meetings also teaches students on professionalism and parliamentary procedure. Through holding any officer position, the students will improve on skills related to working in conjunction with peers, planning, communication, and leadership roles. This type of participation, in addition to SAEs, rewards students in the form of different degrees, scholarships, and awards.

These three components of an agricultural teaching program give agricultural science teachers the tools needed to go above and beyond in their students’ high school career. To give them the skills that could be applicable for the rest of their lives, to provide them with the opportunity to further their devotion to agriculture and the vision of the Future Farmers of America, the teacher must find an equilibrium within the three components that work for their program. To cure this widespread misconception of production agriculture must start with our nation’s youth. They will be the key to supporting and feeding the new world and its exponentially rising population.
References