

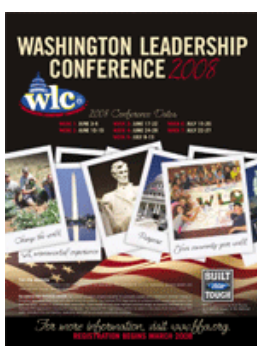


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Engaging ALL Students in ALL Parts of the Program

Amber Striegel - Managing Editor

Whether it's your fourth day on the job or your 4,000th, when you step into the classroom, the goal remains the same—to engage every student in every aspect of the agricultural education program. From coursework and labs to SAEs and FFA, it is up to you to make sure **all** of your students—not just the bright and bold—have an equal opportunity to become engaged with and involved in all three parts of the circle.

Because we know this can be a challenge, we have devoted this issue of *FFA Advisor's Making a Difference* to helping you explore ways to engage your students. Below is a quick overview of what we have in store.

Check out [“Putting the ‘Culture’ in Agriculture,”](#) where we talk to two teachers who have incorporated their state's native culture into the agriculture classroom. We also discover how one teacher leaves the t-shirts and trinkets behind when she travels to foreign countries, and instead brings back cultural items and ideas she can share with her students.

Read about how teachers who have multicultural students embrace the diversity and incorporate it into their curriculum in the article, [“Overcoming Cultural Barriers.”](#)

Discover how teachers at three urban schools have engaged their students in agriculture—often in ways where they least expected it—when you read, [“Agriculture for Everyone: Urban and Rural Ag Ed Programs Engage Non-traditional Students.”](#)

Read [“Enhancing Diversity in Agricultural Education: The San Antonio Project”](#) to learn how Toyota and Texas A&M have changed the face of agriculture at three San Antonio schools by increasing the enrollment and



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involvement of Hispanic students with their “Enhancing Diversity in Agricultural Education” pilot program.

José Bernal, an agriscience teacher and FFA advisor at Amphitheater High School in Tucson, Ariz., gives his perspective on engaging all students in his editorial [“Engaging All Students in All Parts of Agricultural Education.”](#)

Dr. Kyle McGregor, an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Services and Development at Tarleton State University, discusses the importance of educating new teachers on how they can engage their students by being prepared and using their gifts in his editorial, [“Teaching Teachers how to Engage All Students.”](#)

Finally, for some quality discussion on this important topic, read this month's [“Question for the Profession”](#), and click on the link at the bottom of the article to give us your opinion of how the three-circle model of agricultural education fits in to today's program

We hope you are enjoying the new online *FFA Advisor's Making a Difference* and continue to read it every month—and encourage your peers to take a look at it, too. If you have any questions or suggestions on anything you've read or would like to see in the magazine, please [click here](#) and send us an email.

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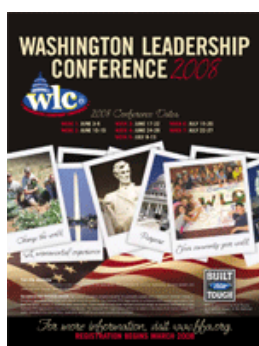
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Putting the "Culture" in Agriculture *Innovative educators find unique ways to engage students*

By Manda Newlin

Young people today face more distractions than ever. Technology, entertainment, sports and friends all scramble to grab a slice of their attention. As an agriculture educator, you're likewise challenged to reach and engage students in your program.

One approach that's working across the country is to design projects that combine cultural heritage with agriculture. Three educators shared with us the ways they're studying, celebrating and preserving native cultures in their classroom.

Read on to learn about these innovative initiatives – and discover ways you can “import” cultural experiences to your students.

Exploring their roots

At Waiakea High School in Hilo, Hawaii, agriculture students are learning about their heritage as they work with taro, an important endemic plant. Their efforts are led by Terence Moniz, FFA advisor.

Taro, one of the earliest cultivated plants, is a starchy staple much like the potato. More than just a food source, this tuber has special significance to Hawaiians.

“Hawaiians say the original taro plant was the stillborn child of the progenitors of the Hawaiian race,” Moniz explained. “Wakea and Papa had a son by the name of Haloa. Well, Haloa died and they buried him in the field. Haloa then sprouted into a taro plant and would become the ‘big brother’ of all the Hawaiian race.”



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At one time, ancient Hawaiians grew more than 300 varieties of taro, but only about 80 remain, Moniz said. "Here at the school, we have been able to ascertain 44 varieties in our small area through friendships and community partnerships that we've made along the way."

Those include a friendship with Jerry Konanui – a *Kupuna*, or one of the last remaining pure Hawaiian people – and Dr. Susan Miyasaki, a researcher at the University of Hawaii.

Given taro's status as a food staple and an emblem of Hawaiian heritage, Moniz has incorporated the plant into his agricultural curriculum. Supporting university research, his students steam and prepare taro in two ways: poi-style (mashed) or potato-style (cubed). They also learn both modern and cultural methods used in planting, preparing and processing taro. In this hands-on way, students are effectively reconnecting with their heritage.

"Almost 80 percent of the kids here today have some Hawaiian ancestry. But being in a city school district, they are so disconnected from their culture. This kind of brings the culture back," Moniz said.

It also provides Moniz a means to share important lessons with students.

"Once you've got them up here, you reach them and you teach them."



Students in Moniz's program not only grow taro, but also learn the cultural methods to prepare the poi.



These Waiakea agriculture students are in a mala (dry-land taro patch), showing off their finished packaged product.

"We talk about rigor and relevance and relationships in the classroom," he noted. "This gives a lot of relevance to what they're learning about fertilizer applications, planting methods and the like."

Interestingly, the taro project is exposing students to the political process as well. Native Hawaiians currently are at odds with university researchers over whether to permit genetic modification, which is intended to save the plant from dangerous diseases. As the state legislature struggles to resolve the clash, Moniz has brought the discussion into the classroom.

"It definitely stimulates interest in learning not only about their culture and this taro project, but it's kind of the hook to get them involved more in FFA," he said. "Once you've got them up here, you reach them and you teach them."

Students with taste

Up in Alaska, students are exploring native and world cultures by way of their taste buds.

"We just finished working on a series of lessons on dairy foods," said Fairbanks FFA Advisor [Marilyn Krause](#).

"Members learned everything from milking the cows to making dairy products and cheeses. (They) learned that various kinds of cheeses and dairy products come from multiple cultures around the world."

As part of the project, the group hosted a taste-test event, where students sampled 40 different types of dairy products. They learned that each country or culture raises different kinds of animals that produce milk, cheese and more.

Krause said her students' supervised agricultural experiences provide more opportunities to explore native cultures. "In the past I have had a project on native teas of Alaska. One young lady learned how the teas were made in the Athabascan culture from Alaska's nature, what the teas were used for medically,

Culture + Agriculture = The Perfect Blend

"I believe it is important for students to learn about native cultures as part of their study of agriculture, as understanding agriculture lets us understand the people we are living with and other countries," Krause asserted. Try these tips to connect your students with native and international cultures.

Start small. "Even if it's just looking at where beef cattle come from," Wimmer said. "Or you can infuse more of the global cultures."

Reach out. "Ask students not only to present their projects to your classroom, but also to present it in other appropriate classes (such as economics or history)," Krause advised. "Some of our students are then given extra credit for these wonderful projects by their other teachers as well as getting credit in our program."

Use your resources. "I definitely say you need to talk to the elders, whether they are a tribe of Native American Indians or the *Kupuna* or other resources," Moniz suggested. "Once you get them in, they can bring that culture that we're missing."

Redefine success. Here's how Wimmer determines when cultural projects are effective: "Are the students enthusiastic? Do they get involved? Do they act like they care? Do they keep asking questions?"

By blending culture and agriculture in the classroom, "It's another way to form a connection

and then she made the teas for other students to taste test,” she explained. “To learn all of this information, the student spent many hours working with the elders of the native community.”

with your students and build more rapport,” Wimmer concluded.

Another student, who has a parent from Africa, prepared Dwarf Nigerian goat meat in her native way for her fellow students to sample.

As a group, students learn about perhaps the *brightest* spot in their state's history.

“Each year we celebrate the finding of gold in Alaska and the effects it had on this territory becoming a state. This is done in the form of a float in the Golden Days Parade,” Krause said. “Students costumed in the period clothes ride the float while others walk the parade route.”

Krause knows these projects succeed in connecting students with their culture and community when word spreads beyond the classroom.

“The best way for me to measure the success is how much conversation the projects raise in the community and in the schools. The dairy-tasting event brought lots of conversations within our town and high schools—enough to have a newspaper article written about the event in the young section of our town paper,” she noted.

Bringing the world home

You may not think of Lost Springs, Kan., – a rural community of about 1300 people – as a cultural hotbed. Think again.

[Gaea Wimmer](#),

agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Centre High School, travels the world to experience different cultures. But instead of returning with a suitcase full of T-shirts, key chains and trinkets, she brings home worldly knowledge that helps her students understand their own ancestry—and discover new ways of life.



Gaea Wimmer tries her hand at calligraphy in Japan.

In this close-knit Midwestern community, many residents have an Eastern European background. So to learn more about her students' heritage, in 2005 Wimmer participated in a five-week program in the Czech Republic.

"I studied at the Czech Tech University with the Fulbright-Hays program out of Kansas State University," she explained. "One of the reasons I got chosen was because I teach in an area with a high population of Czechs."

Her primary purpose was to integrate Czech culture into the classroom and help students understand their origins. Since the trip, Wimmer has her students compare and contrast the population, land volume, type of crops grown, climate, units of measure and even food items of Kansas and the Czech Republic.

"We have certain foods that people eat around here based on their ancestry or traditions," she said. "A lot of the moms and grandmas make *kolaches*, and the students just think that's normal. I tell them it's a Czech dish I ate when I was there, to draw it all back to where that food came from."

Just last summer, Wimmer participated in the 12-day [Toyota International Teacher Program](#) in Japan. As a result, she plans to incorporate her new knowledge into her animal science curriculum.

"Kansas is big on feeder cattle, and in Japan they raise *Kobe* beef. So we'll look at the differences in the beef industry—how long they feed them and what they feed them," she said.



FFA students celebrate the finding of gold in Alaska by participating in the Golden Days Parade and dressing in period costume.

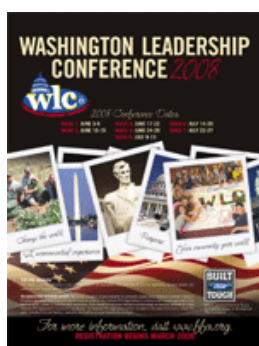
If she has her way, Wimmer one day will travel to Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Australia and South Africa to learn about those cultures. Her overall goal is to impress upon her students the global nature of agriculture.

"It's important for them to understand that throughout the world, there's agriculture," she said.



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Agriculture for Everyone: Urban and Rural Ag Ed Programs Engage Non-traditional Students

By Robin Niehaus

[Dr. Paul Lichtman](#) teaches agriculture and environmental sciences at Uniondale High School on Long Island, N.Y. The 50 students in his program are all African-American or Hispanic, and 12 of their sophisticated agriscience projects earned top awards at the 2007 National FFA Convention.

[Mr. Jeff Maierhofer](#) is one of two teachers who lead the 190-student program at Seneca High School in a rural community 75 miles outside Chicago, Ill. With 18 percent of his students coming from farms, the national award-winning program covers the business, science and mechanics of agriculture.

Back in New York City, [Ms. Christine Mulholland](#) turned a paved courtyard into a rooftop horticulture lab just one block from Times Square. Her 60-student program provides hands-on opportunities for growing and marketing organic crops and flowers.

The programs led by Lichtman, Maierhofer and Mulholland may appear considerably different, but all three aim to attract students not traditionally involved in agriculture and exhibit the following themes:

1. Engage students in hands-on opportunities,

Uniondale High School Agriscience Students Take Top Honors

The most prestigious of student research contests across the nation is the [INTEL International Science & Engineering Fair](#). Qualifying for this contest is the benchmark to how most research programs are measured. A student would participate in an INTEL Regional Fair in the hopes of qualifying for the International Fair. To qualify for this international contest, a student must win a national regional competition. Earlier this month at the Long Island Science and Engineering Fair ([LISEF](#)), two Uniondale High School students' agriscience projects were named as both first place and category winners and were named INTEL ISEF finalists. They now advance to the international fair in Atlanta, Ga., May 11-17, 2008.



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2. Connect learning to life outside of the classroom; and
3. Reach out to other teachers for support and idea-exchange.

Agricultural education programs today are more diverse than ever. Nearly three in four students do not come from farms, and approximately 40 percent of FFA membership is female. Additionally, minority populations are becoming more involved in agricultural education; 12 percent of FFA membership is Hispanic, and another 4 percent is African-American. The industry of agriculture offers opportunities in more than 300 careers, and educators are constantly striving to help students see the relevance in agriculture, regardless of their backgrounds. Some teachers have found that the keys to engaging diverse groups in agriculture lie in science, experience and outreach.

Chris Bustos received a gold medal at the 2006 National FFA Agriscience Fair and a silver medal at the 2007 NYS Agriscience Fair and was named a 2008 INTEL ISEF finalist for his project titled, *"Rescuing our Natural Land: Fighting Insect Invasions Through a Natural Ant Repellent."*

Jonathan Suncar received first place and a gold medal at the 2006 National FFA Agriscience Fair, a gold medal at the 2007 National FFA Agriscience Fair and was named a 2008 INTEL ISEF finalist for his project titled, *"Making Your Enemy Your Friend: A Novel Approach to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Using Noxious Weed Extracts."*

Engaging through Science

"Agriculture is the place to be for everyone," says Dr. Lichtman, whose own introduction to the vast science opportunities associated with the industry came through witnessing the FFA Agriscience Fair at the New York State Fair. He recognized an opportunity for his students to learn and compete and, consequently, transitioned his program into one with an agricultural science focus, turning botany classes into plant science and zoology into animal science.

While his students, who are located in the middle of New York City, may seem unlikely candidates to pursue opportunities in agriculture, their journey mirrors Lichtman's, whose interest grew from a non-traditional background as well. It was with the help of other agriculture educators in upstate New York and at John Bowne High School, another inner-city New York agricultural education program, that his passion for the industry and a broader program in FFA has grown.

"They've been great," says Lichtman. "The conventional meetings I attended as a science teacher were nothing like agricultural education meetings. They have been wonderful."

Lichtman calls himself a "scientist in residence" who helps students start science-based projects to address a community or global good. Through these projects, Uniondale students have developed their own plant growth regulators and completed genetic testing to understand implications on the animals that may eat those plants. Other projects have examined how to make contaminated soil

useful again through a symbiotic relationship with other organisms rather than additional chemicals. Last year, Uniondale became the first high school laboratory to earn a USDA Biosafety Level 2 Designation because of their facilities and equipment.

Not only do these students achieve success in the lab and classroom, but they're earning national FFA awards, and many are continuing on to some of the nation's top schools to study plant genetics or agribusiness. Lichtman has embraced opportunities to take his students to MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture, National Resources and Related Sciences) conferences, which continues to encourage his students that minorities have a place in agriculture.

Engaging through Experience

"The best way to get a student engaged is to grow things," says Christine Mulholland, who teaches two horticulture classes at Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School just one block from Times Square in New York City. "Once they have that experience, they get hooked. They get emotionally attached."

Mulholland suggests a variety of ways to pique students' interest in agriculture but says that growing basil seed has proven a successful starting point. Not only is it simple to grow, but making the connection to pizza increases students' interest.

The organic garden is flourishing in Mulholland's third year at the school, and many students are drawn to the class as they learn about her hands-on approach. "It was a cement slab that took a life of its own," she said. Her students work with the plants from start to finish, managing the propagation, growth and consumption of the produce. This year, her classes hope to donate the fresh foods to soup kitchens, and they have hopes of one day contributing to the farmer's market.

"There are a lot of great themes that can be extended from this," Mulholland said. They connect production to the business of agriculture as they consider production costs and marketing options. Other classes have begun to use the gardens, as well, sometimes as an inspiration for an art class. On a broader level, Mulholland makes the program relevant by connecting with her classes about how their experiences can support New York City's initiatives to make the city green by 2030.

Engaging through Outreach

More established programs in rural areas may approach non-traditional students differently than those in urban areas. While 18 percent of Seneca, Ill., agriculture students come from farms, advisors Jeff Maierhofer and Kent Weber also work to engage students who aren't traditionally involved as more and more students come from non-farm

backgrounds. Even after being recognized eight times as a Model of Innovation national finalist and once as a national winner, many community members still perceive the FFA as a group of “*Future Farmers*.” How do Maierhofer and Weber combat this misperception?

Their approach is simple: reach out.

For Seneca, that means introducing elementary students to agriculture and providing opportunities to explore a broad scope of the industry in the classroom. Freshmen receive an industry overview, diverse careers are introduced throughout the program, and classes tour the Ag Progress Show and major agricultural corporations.

Additionally, the program reaches out to the public with consistent messages in news releases and through community events such as Operation Prom and Full Speed Ahead. Operation Prom stages a fake rescue scene in the high school parking lot to promote safe choices around the prom season. Full Speed Ahead will this year clean 37 miles of state highway in one hour. (The program started with 30 miles and continues to add one each year.)

Reaching out also means diversifying curriculum. “I was 100 percent farm boy when I became an agriculture teacher, and now my favorite class to teach is horticulture,” says Maierhofer. Developing his expertise has meant taking advantage of training offered through NAAE (www.naae.org) curriculum support from the Illinois FCAE system (www.agriculturaleducation.org) and reaching out to local industry to learn best practices in working with greenhouses.

Embracing the Opportunity

With less than two percent of the American population living on farms and 300 careers available in the agriculture industry, engaging these “non-traditional” students in agricultural education is more important, and perhaps more challenging, than ever. Agriculture educators have the opportunity to expand the thought processes of students, schools and communities through hands-on opportunities, broader community connections and partnership with other programs. Exploring and embracing the diversity of agriculture has become not only a way to increase program variety and enrollment, but also a necessity.

“As ag teachers, we must embrace the change,” Maierhofer said. “It has to be made, or you’ll be obsolete.”

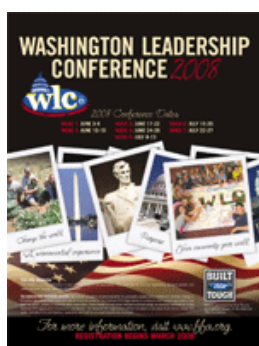
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Overcoming Cultural Barriers

By Deb Brandt Buehler

Even the most rural areas of the United States are experiencing growth in the diversity of their communities. As a result, educators are faced with the challenge of building relationships with and among students of different cultural backgrounds.

"I start the school year by telling my students that I'm from a different place. I point out that my language may be different from theirs," explains [Robert Bollier](#), agricultural science educator at Cheraw High School. Originally from Arkansas, Bollier has taught in his home state as well as Oklahoma, Texas and South Carolina. He's taught Native American, Hispanic and African-American students. "I begin by talking about stereotypes," he says, "creating a conversation around the words we use that might be different." This conversation continues throughout the school year. For example, when Bollier's class raised chickens, students learned that while South Carolinians call the young birds biddies, in Arkansas they are called chicks.



Robert Bollier with students.

Bollier seeks other ways to learn more about his students. "Visiting them at home is another strategy that gives me insight into their lives," he says. "It's a learning experience for me," Bollier continues. "I see

our diversity as good and want to help the students see that too."



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[Honey Key](#), an agriculture science educator at Mansfield High School in Texas, agrees. “Students come to my classes from throughout the district,” she explains. “Four high schools send their students to our campus for elective courses. As a result, the students don’t know one another when a new class begins.” Key uses several strategies to help students learn about each other. “From intentional icebreaker activities to assigning different students to return graded papers, I look for ways to help individuals connect.”

Like Bollier, Key believes that building a personal bond with students is critical. “It is imperative to get to know all of the students individually. Even if the students don’t see the relevance of relationship, I know they will come back later for more support or assistance. My goal is to help students leave high school with broader experiences to take into the world.”

Focus on Relevance

Key and Bollier use engaging and relevant approaches to instruction. Bollier conducted a student survey to learn more about his student’s goals. In the survey, 48 students expressed an interest in careers in veterinary medicine. So, in response, Bollier developed a small animal care class. During the class each student has an opportunity to bring their own pet to school. Students report on care, feeding, grooming and the needs of their particular pet. “One student brought her pet rat to school. Other students had never considered the possibility of a rat as a pet,” exclaims Bollier. “I used this as another opportunity to explore our diversity.”

“I like to engage students in building and using personal skills,” adds Key. Working with individuals on choosing their course plans, Key identifies content classes that will build skills relevant to their individual goals. “I point out how an agricultural business class contains content that is relevant to someone who thinks they want to be a small business owner, even if the business is automotive repair. I help them see the connections between course content and their personal plans,” states Key. She is always looking for ways to extend the content and make it relevant. During Black History Month, her students explored the impact African-Americans have had on agriculture in the U.S. During FFA Week she adds cultural facts to the week’s events and daily announcements.

“We host a Cultural Leadership Fair, inviting students who don’t usually consider agricultural classes as a resource to them. Last year a student attended who was originally from Africa,” shares Key. “She immediately realized that there were opportunities to support her interests and build her experience in classes and through becoming an FFA member.”

“I have a student from India in my FFA program,” adds Bollier. “I invited her to give a talk about life in India. I want

to encourage students to teach one another about their own cultures.”

Both teachers concluded that maintaining high expectations for all students is integral to the process. Delve far enough into any student's family history and you'll find that cultural differences abound. But it is up to you to engage each student in all aspects of agricultural education—from the classroom to their SAE to their FFA involvement. And while it can be a challenge, Bollier and Key have proven that they have the chops for it.

We want to know how you have overcome cultural barriers in your classroom. [Click here](#) to tell us!

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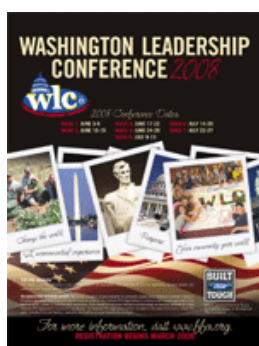
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Enhancing Diversity in Agricultural Education "The San Antonio Project"

By Andrea McNeely

To many, FFA is the face of the next generation of American agriculture. The faces you see in the agriculture classroom today should represent the faces you'll see 10 years from now, at the local Co-op or in the corporate boardroom.

Unfortunately, many of our FFA chapters do not reflect the true make-up of the American workforce. In its most recent survey, only 19 percent of FFA members were non-Caucasian, while the estimated



Southwest High School students pose for their FFA Today! video shoot.

percentage of non-whites in the workforce is around 27 percent.* To ensure that there will be enough people ready and willing to fill the jobs available in the industry of agriculture in the future, FFA membership among non-traditional students must increase.

In 2004, the National FFA Organization, Toyota and Texas A&M University set out to learn how an agricultural education program could be changed to meet the needs of non-traditional students. Together, they launched an "Enhancing Diversity in Agricultural Education" pilot program in three San Antonio-area schools.

Four years later, the results are astounding. The pilot schools, situated in communities with large Hispanic populations, have seen their percentage of Hispanic FFA members increase by as much as 350 percent, with overall



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enrollment in agricultural education programs increasing by as much as 722 percent.

The success of the program, according to its co-director, Grady Roberts, PhD, of Texas A&M University, lies in its focus on the particular needs of each school's community.

"We can't make generalizations about Hispanic or other minority communities. Hispanic students in different parts of the country are going to have different needs. It's important to tailor the agriculture program to meet those needs."

Once needs are identified, several additional components must fall into place in order to attract and retain students of all ethnicities. (In San Antonio, a series of informal meetings between teachers and parents and community leaders via alumni/booster organizations served as the needs assessment.)

First, students must be given opportunities to participate in FFA and agricultural education experiences. The project directors used funds from Toyota's grant to send students identified as "opinion-leaders" to local livestock shows and fairs, leadership conferences, the state FFA convention and the national FFA convention.

The project directors used funds from Toyota's grant to send students identified as "opinion-leaders" to local livestock shows and fairs, leadership conferences, the state FFA convention and the national FFA convention.

Once students returned from these activities and began talking them up in the hallways, other students in school took interest.

Second, it is important to establish a group of key stakeholders. Support from parents, school administrators, alumni and boosters is crucial to the long-term viability of any agricultural education program. Stakeholders in the San Antonio project were offered opportunities to attend FFA and agricultural education experiences alongside the students. Seeing first-hand what students are learning and achieving almost always inspires a commitment to the growth and continuation of the program. The formation of the local FFA alumni affiliate also contributed in providing a way for parents to connect to the agriculture program and FFA chapter. Prior to this they had no way to become involved. Involvement from local stakeholders also ensures that the program stays rooted in the needs of those who make up the school's community.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, teachers must be given training, resources and support to build a successful, diverse program. Teachers in the pilot program participated in professional development opportunities such as LifeKnowledge Curriculum Integration, Texas Agricultural Science Teachers Professional Development Conference and the Washington Leadership Conferences Advisor Program. They were also provided training on FFA awards

and degree programs as well as SAE development workshops. Each gave the teachers the skills they needed to engage students of differing needs and goals.



The Southwest High School FFA officers gave a presentation for visiting Toyota and Texas A&M representatives.

The National FFA Organization hopes to expand the program nationwide in the near future. You don't have to wait for the project to be implemented in your state, though, to begin using some of the lessons learned in Texas to increase diversity in your own program. Roberts says, "The first step is to create an environment that embraces people of all backgrounds, get the students in the agriculture class, and then through whatever means you have available, get them involved. These students will influence and encourage the others."

**SOURCE: Table 1-7 in the United States Department of Labor," Chapter 1: Counting minorities: a brief history and a look at the future," Report on the American Workforce, August 2001, pg. 23.*

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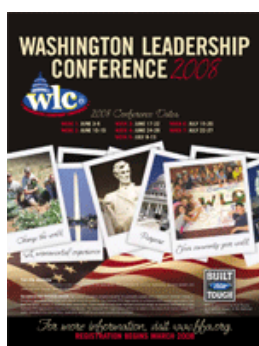
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Engaging all Students in all Parts of Agricultural Education



By [José Bernal](#)

Agriscience teacher and FFA advisor

Amphitheater High School, Tucson, Ariz.

Every agriscience teacher must be abundantly clear about the vision and mission of his or her agriscience program. Equally transparent should be the responsibility we agriscience teachers have towards the industry of agriculture and the development of youth.

When I began my career as an agriculture teacher, motivating students was just as challenging as it is now. What is different thirty years later? Nothing! We still promote leadership, agriculture and hard work. So how do we recruit, retain and maintain a consistently productive student clientele?

We must constantly engage students by meeting their needs!

Let me tell you a little bit about myself. I teach in an urban program located in the center of Tucson, Ariz.—a city that is quickly approaching 1,000,000 people. Our student population consists of 60-70 percent Hispanic students, many of whom do not speak fluent English. The majority of our students come from low-income families that are highly mobile. Our marketing tool is livestock and livestock-related activities.

Amphi High School was able to keep its Agriscience program because I was allowed to think “outside of the box.” FFA would, of course, continue to be an important part of the total program; however, the **SAE had to be the engaging force**. As our school population was changing, our program kept pace and changed right along with it.



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The Goal Must Always be to Engage ALL Students

The tendency is to choose those students who we feel fit the mold and continue to work with and develop their interests. **Do not fall into that trap!** The reality is that circumstances will not allow us to reach everyone that first time. Our job is to stay the course until they become engaged or are no longer within our reach. **Never give up!** Most students (and their parents) want to succeed. Both the program and you as the teacher gain credibility and respect when efforts are made for full inclusion.

But the underlying question is, "How do we engage our students?"

You must provide all the students in your program the same opportunity not once, not twice, but as many times as it takes to get them involved. Remember, we are competing with a number of other attractive offers for their time: TV, video games, cell phones, sports, the couch, girlfriends/boyfriends, work schedules, other electives and family.

Engaging all students requires inclusion. One cannot participate if the activity becomes exclusive!

One date on the FFA calendar, one line on the school and/or class marquee, a monthly newsletter, an ad in the school announcements, and a reminder in class are not sufficient to convince students that they belong and should participate. Remember, most of our students today are far removed from traditional agriculture. To help them prevail over the "farmer" stigma, they must rise above the sometimes negative connotation of belonging to the FFA. We are requiring these students to cross cultures in order to feel they belong. We must empower our students to overcome all these obstacles and become totally engaged in our total program.

Here are some tips on engaging students:

- Always welcome and reward engagement, even if it is trivial. As the saying goes, "Learn to crawl, before you learn to walk," right?
- Encourage students to use as their SAE anything that vaguely resembles work and/or agriculture; as long as they are developing skills, commend them for it.
- I engage students by allowing them to earn a one-half credit of elective for carrying out a year-long SAE.
- Agricultural skill development engages students; however, growing "die-hard" fans of the *industry* of agriculture is more engaging.
- Don't intimidate new students by requiring the FFA Official Dress in order to participate. Persuade them first. Once they are satisfied and encouraged, they will ask you how to get it.
- Fun, excitement and relevancy engage. Avoid monotony as you deliver the standards. Remember, we cannot teach the standards to an empty classroom!

- Being positive engages. Conversely, gender, religious and race-related comments often disengage.
- Engage students by promoting 21st Century soft skills (leadership, responsibility, accountability, flexibility, adaptability, initiative, self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, and productivity) along with The Pillars of Character.
- Engage students by allowing them to carry out community service SAEs.
- Engage students in FFA activities by conducting them during the school day. Students no longer have to worry about transportation and other scheduling conflicts.
- Winning is fashionable, but not always engaging.

I wish I could tell you that 100 percent of our students were engaged and that the above recipe works 100 percent effectively, but I cannot. I can tell you, however, that my biggest challenge will always be student engagement, and these tips are a good start in the struggle to engage. My humble advice to you is, “think outside the box,” and aim at engaging students, parents and the community.

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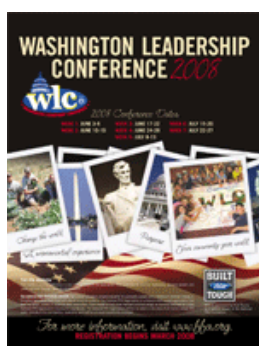
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March 2008

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Team Ag Ed

Engaging All Students | Cover Story: Putting the 'Culture' in Agriculture | Agriculture for Everyone
Overcoming Cultural Barriers | Enhancing Diversity in Agricultural Education
Teaching Teachers How to Engage All Students | Engaging all Students in all Parts of Agricultural Education

Teaching Teachers How to Engage All Students

How do you equip your students with the skills they will need to engage their students in all aspects of agricultural education?

Dr. Kyle W. McGregor

Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Services & Development Tarleton State University

The production of new agriculture educators has become a tricky business of late. Those who do what I do and those in support roles of agriculture educators know of the importance of new professionals entering our discipline and the importance of their retention. In the face of a nationwide epidemic shortage of secondary agriculture educators, the focus of recruitment, development and retention of teachers of the science of agriculture has once again come to the forefront.

I know what you're thinking: *What a scary way to lead an editorial on how to equip future agriculture educators to engage all students in their programs!* Frankly, I am a realist and the description above is the paradigm we currently operate in nationally. Therefore, when asked how we prepare all teachers to engage all students, we must be aware of variables such as teacher shortages, alternative certification, teacher efficacy and job satisfaction, student culture, school district and community expectations, etc.

I recently adopted a new credo for the courses I teach in agricultural education. "Assess what you value and value what you assess," which is simply a fancy way of saying keep your eyes on what is most important for young teachers to be good at, and try not to overwhelm them with the massive knowledge-base of agricultural education. After finding what we really value in our young teachers, we practice it and offer feedback on their performance in all areas of the classroom/laboratory, SAE and FFA.

That is, if we value our young teachers engaging their future students in diversified SAEs for a diversified student



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population, they will propose, conduct, keep record of and evaluate Entrepreneurship, Placement, Exploratory, Improvement, Service, Supplementary and Research-based SAEs. If we value our students' utilization of brain-based teaching techniques, we model for them, have them practice use of the techniques and offer feedback of their efforts. Finally, if we value core concepts germane to their role as an FFA advisor, they will engage in selected activities actively, not as an observer.

If the expectation is that our new professionals engage all students, should we not truly engage them first in all valued components of the program?

What is more motivating, more exciting than being an educator with the ability to teach any core academic concept in the context of one of the most dynamic and diversified industries in the world? Few educators have the benefit of a practical application to almost everything they teach. Our future teachers tend to come to the table with a passion for agricultural education because of the levels of engagement inherent to the variability of teaching and learning that can occur in an agricultural education classroom and laboratories. Much like the three components of agricultural education, a key to the success of new teachers is to instill an understanding and passion for becoming an educator and holding sacred the classroom and laboratory experience.

Consistently, I speak with teachers with three to five years of experience, and so much of their stress and disillusionment with their position has to do with additional responsibilities, extra-curricular activities and management tasks. Conversely, most view the role of teacher of students as the component of their job that brings the most joy. Hence, the formula for student engagement is to make a teacher that is most prepared and gifted in the areas that will bring the most efficacy and overall reward along with the skills to survive the additional tasks faced on a daily basis.

In closing, we must know the variables creating the climate for the preparation of future agriculture educators. These young educators must have practiced experiences in all valued aspects of the classroom/laboratory, SAE and FFA. And, if they are to be truly prepared to engage all students, they are to be skilled educators first. Agricultural education's leadership is doing its part to enhance teachers' abilities to engage students with efforts such as the Delta Conference, the 10x15 Initiative and the CASE Project. Great change and opportunity await us in agricultural education; what a great time to be in the game!

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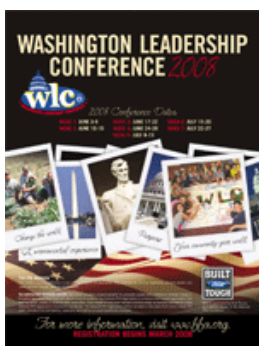


March 2008

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Question for the Profession



"Are the three circles of agricultural education for all students or just for some selected students?"

By Nina Crutchfield
Local Program Success Specialist National FFA Organization

Think long and hard before you answer that question. Do you **really** believe in agricultural education for every student that walks through your door? Or do you focus your time and energy on the few that are easy, and let the less-motivated students sleep, doodle, etc., so they don't interrupt you? I had a great teacher tell me early in my career that he believed that every kid could learn, and he was a good enough teacher to teach them. I always admired him for that philosophy and confidence but didn't adopt it until years later. We've all vented at meetings, conferences and on the sidelines at FFA activities about how we're the "dumping ground": *"My classes would be so great if I didn't have all the 'low-level' students;" "Those counselors must hate me because they never send me any 'good' kids."* The reality is that parents aren't keeping the good ones at home! They're sending us the best that they've got, and it's our responsibility to try to reach them all.

If we truly believe that agricultural education is a great program, why shouldn't every walk of student grace our door? Why do we take the easy road and only teach instruction to those that learn easily? Why do we only have a few students with SAEs? Why do we only collect dues from a handful of our students? I know we're not scared of a challenge. I know we're not faint of heart when it comes to hard work. I know we're not quitters. So, why don't we pull up our boot straps and start teaching *every* kid, regardless of abilities, potential or motivations? Why don't we require *every* student to have an SAE, not just the livestock kids or the ones that work at the local feed store? Why don't we provide leadership opportunities for *every* student in our program?

Understand that I'm a realist. I've had an entire welding class that was either receiving special education or had been at one point. I've had the greenhouse management class that behaved so poorly, I was afraid to actually let



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them see the greenhouse. I've had the biotechnology class where the only motivator was lunch. It's not easy to teach every student, every day. But we didn't sign up for "easy." This is a philosophy shown from us as undergraduates but has been dulled by daily struggles just to survive in the classroom.

Going back to that wise colleague of mine, you'll notice that he said, *"Every student could learn, and I'm a good enough teacher to teach them."* He didn't say every student could learn **every thing**! That realization hit me about year seven of teaching. It was at that point that I started hitting the ground running because I understood that every student could learn **something**, and I'm a good enough teacher to teach them. I can teach **every** one of them **some** technical content, **some** experiential learning exercises and **some** leadership. Every student could come away from agricultural education having learned something that would improve their life now or in the future.

This month's theme is "Engaging Students," and the question I pose to you is, **"Do you believe there are three circles of agricultural education for all students or just for some selected students?"** Please post your comments on to the NAAE Communities of Practice at <http://naae.ca.uky.edu:8080/clearspacex/thread/1180> on the "Question for the Profession" community.

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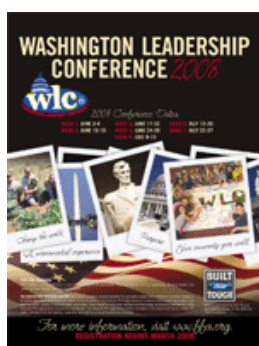
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March 2008

Teacher Resources

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Floral Design Education Center

The floral education center on the Ritter Floral School website contains a **multitude of floral designs** with step-by-step pictures and instructions for each. This would be a great site for floriculture students to follow the design process from the empty container to the finished display. This could also provide the opportunity to teach the various design techniques and forms without having to create every example. The page is very long, so scroll down to get to the individual design links. <http://www.floralschool.com/floral-ed-center.htm>

Delta 2008

Wondering what happened to that "young" teacher who went to the Delta Conference in Texas last summer, or what lit the fire under the "old dog" who also attended? Find out for yourself by attending the 2008 Delta Conference. Dr Kyle McGregor and Tarleton State University are once again offering the opportunity for teachers from across the nation to gather for a week of intensive work on becoming a more effective teacher. If you're wondering if Delta is right for you, read these [comments](#) from last years participants, then decide. Information on the cost, dates and agenda can be found at <http://www.tarleton.edu/~deltaconference>.

The conference is open to any teacher with a minimum of one year of experience. Conference dates are June 22-27, and the application deadline is April 10. Spend a week in Texas this summer and join the growing family of "Delta Teachers" impacting student learning across the nation!

USDA Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Mini-Grant: Final Call for Applications

Approximately 250, \$300 awards are available in spring 2008 to support your "Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program." Applications will be processed on a first come, first served basis, and recipients will be notified via e-mail. Applications must be received by the May 1, 2008, deadline to be considered for funding. The application success rate is 96.4 percent, with 250 awards presently available for distribution. This will be your last opportunity to receive funding under this USDA grant.



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USDA-CSREES Youth Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Mini-Grant

Do you conduct an annual training program for 14 and 15 year olds who wish to work for hire in agriculture operations operating tractors and machinery?

Do you currently teach a safe tractor and machinery operation program?

Do you certify participants with a written, skills and driving exam?

Do you issue the USDOL WH-5 Certificate of Training to those who pass all exams? A plan is in the works to start a new Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program in 2008 to meet the USDOL regulations for youth farm workers. If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, then you may be eligible for a \$300.00 grant to purchase supplies and materials to support your efforts.

To learn more and to apply for support funds, visit <http://www.ystmomg.psu.edu>.

To learn more about the National Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program, go to <http://www.nstmop.psu.edu>. To learn more about the Gearing-up Safe Tractor Driving Program, go to <http://www.gearingup.info>.

USDA Economic Research Service State Fact Sheets

Want to bring the **expansive and diverse impact of American agriculture** to life in your class? Take your students to the [state fact sheets](#) provided by the USDA Economic Research Service. These include current data on population, per-capita income, earnings per job, poverty rates, employment, unemployment, farm and farm-related jobs, farm characteristics, farm financial characteristics, top agricultural commodities, top export commodities and the top counties in agricultural sales. Start with the U.S. summary then have students view individual states to see the diversity of products, growth or loss in population by county, as well as all the economic factors listed. Make sure they take a look at the link to "farm and farm-related data" for each state. It provides a good graphical display of where the jobs are in the industry of agriculture and where the growth has been over the last 20 years. This is great information for a multitude of uses in the classroom.

Another Good One from Howstuffworks.com!

As gas prices approach [GASP!] \$4.00 a gallon, show your students this video on the research being done on [E85 and our conversion to ethanol](#). Howstuffworks.com is a great site full of videos, animations and graphics showing, well, how stuff works! If this is your first visit, make sure you have plenty of time to browse. It's a captivating website for students and teachers, alike.

The Future of Education

While we're looking to the future, take some time to view the two PowerPoint videos here: [What if](#) is a thought-provoking look at past thoughts on changes occurring in education. [2020 Vision](#) is a speech given to the graduating class of Arapahoe High School in the year 2020. This one will really have you thinking! Developed by the technology director at the Arapahoe school district outside of Denver, Colo., these are great pieces to get the "outside-the-box" thought process started when doing long-range planning in not only the agriculture program, but also for the entire school. While you're at the Fischbowl site, make sure you watch [Did you Know/Shift Happens](#) if you haven't seen it already. Get ready to do some serious thinking about the future of education.

2008 CDC Disease Detective Camp

The National Center for Health Marketing's Global Health Odyssey and the Office of Workforce and Career Development are pleased to offer the 2008 CDC Disease Detective Camp (DDC). DDC is an academic day camp at CDC headquarters in Atlanta, Ga., for students who will be high school juniors and seniors during the 2008-2009 school year. Over the course of a week, campers will take on the roles of disease detectives and learn how CDC safeguards the nation's health. Activities vary by day and may include short lectures by CDC experts, a mock press conference in the CDC press room, work in a CDC training lab, a look behind the scenes of CDC, and other hands-on activities. Campers will learn the methodologies used to track diseases in populations, basic lab procedures used in an infectious disease lab, and how public health research is applied at CDC.

The CDC Disease Detective Camp will be offered twice during the summer of 2008: July 7-11 and July 21-25. Both sessions will offer the same activities and will last from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. There is no cost associated with attending the camp, but each camper is responsible for bringing or buying his/her lunch.

The deadline for applications is April 25, 2008. For more information on the camp and the application process, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/gcc/exhibit/camp.htm>.

Questions? Contact Judy M. Gantt, at jgantt@cdc.gov or 404-639-0831.

How to use All-Weather Paintstik for Tail Chalking Cows Video

A new video is now available from LA-CO Industries that features the correct application of tail paint for heat detection in dairy herds. This informative video contains both an English and Spanish version. Companion brochures explain application of tail paint, as well as the economic reasons why proper heat detection is important to any dairy herd in today's economy. This brochure is also available in

English and Spanish. These classroom materials are available in quantity from LA-CO Industries, Inc. You may order these materials by emailing us at customer_service@laco.com or calling our toll free number, 1-800-621-4025.

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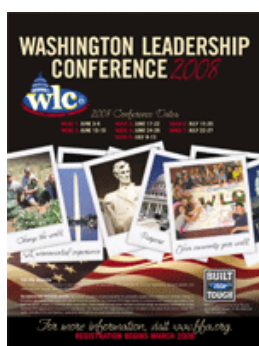
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March 2008

FFA Buzz

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New—Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Medal

A new medal will be made available to those who fill out the SAE survey which will be posted in the June *New Horizons* magazine. Please have your students fill out the SAE survey at <http://www.ffa.org/saesurvey>. The survey results will assist us in obtaining sponsorship, promoting awards and recognition programs, and gathering statistics to promote agricultural education.

Living to Serve Grant Opportunities

Sponsored by the National FFA Organization through grant funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Living to Serve program will provide more than \$130,000 in grants and awards to chapters or members nationwide.

Grant applications for the next round of LTS project funding are now being accepted. Visit www.ffa.org/ltsgrants or click "Apply for Grants" on the home page.

LTS grants are available for the following FFA programs: Washington Leadership Conference (WLC), Partners in Active Learning Support (PALS), National Days of Service (NDoS), and the H.O. Sargent Diversity Award. In addition, the Million Hour Challenge program is now offering more chapter awards, now for different service categories.

Find out more about these great opportunities and the Living to Serve state grants. Visit the website, or contact the Living to Serve program staff at 317-802-4413 or lts@ffa.org.

Convention News—Chapter Housing is Open

Advisors need to login to *myFFA* for hotel listings and the Chapter Housing Request form. For more details or if you have questions, contact Ellen Williams at ewilliams@ffa.org.

Ford Driving Skills for Life Program

Ford Motor Company and the Governor's Highway Safety Association are offering a **\$2,500 cash award** to the top 10 chapters that create and submit a *Driving Skills for Life* promotional project. This offer is only available to chapters that participated in the 2007 Agriscience Fair. If any



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member of your chapter participated, the chapter is eligible for an award.

Why you should apply:

- This is a great way to raise funds for convention. (The award will be paid in advance of the 2008 National FFA Convention.)
- This project could easily be integrated into your chapter's Program of Activities.
- It's \$2,500!!

For more information on the *Driving Skills for Life* campaign, visit <https://www.drivingskillsforlife.com/> or you can contact Aimee Wright at awright@ffa.org.

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