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ENHANCING DIVERSITY

Benefits of Diversity

By Jamie Cano

To prepare our students for life and leadership, our educational philosophy must focus on the total, or holistic, development of students as people. Students develop in many dimensions in their Agricultural Education programs: intellectually, cognitively, socially, emotionally, culturally, and psychologically. To help our students learn and grow in all these dimensions, we must strive to immerse our students in an environment that is conducive to learning both inside and outside the classroom. Our responsibilities as educators include providing content and context, promoting professional and personal growth, supporting career planning, and the development of skills, and fostering the ability to negotiate a complex and dynamic social world.

Agricultural Education, building on our traditions of problem-solving and interdisciplinary collaboration, must educate with an eye to the future, to help our students meet the changing needs of society. We must be committed to an educational environment that fosters exploration, discovery, creativity, design, and invention. Overall, we must strive for our students to be at the forefront of enhancing the quality of life.

We must aim to prepare students for the complexity and diversity of our society – to recognize, value, and learn from heterogeneous cultures, communities, and perspectives. Our goal must be to develop a fundamental respect for different ways of living, working, and learning. Valuing diversity goes beyond a simple tolerance of different backgrounds and approaches: it recognizes, appreciates, and facilitates the processes involved in the exploration and discovery of the unfamiliar, allow-

ing for a variety of ways to think about and communicate ideas. Furthermore, valuing diversity makes for stronger affiliations within our community and enhances our ability to be effective in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. Our students must understand and respect people and ways of life that are different from their own.

Diversity expands and enhances what we already do. By increasing our comfort levels with differences, we increase our flexibility to learn in different ways to enrich our students' experiences, both educational and otherwise. Diversity encourages critical thinking and increases communication across cultural borders, and helps to forge relationships. Diversity of views and perspectives is important in any educational program, but especially in Agricultural Education programs, which rely so heavily on collaboration as a basis for innovation. Fostering mutual respect for our differences strengthens our total Agricultural Education community.

Learning to navigate a rich array of diverse communities is a life skill needed for any person in a world brought together through technology and ease of travel and communication. True exchange of ideas – a key to progress – requires sensitivity to and understanding of others' views, values, and ideas.

All of these things will not happen simply because diverse students are thrown together to work and play. We, as educators, must create the conditions that enable diversity to enhance – not hinder – intellectual and social growth among all students, both within and outside the classroom. The frequency and quality of interactions and the social milieu in which they take

place are vital. Environments that foster equal status interactions, afford opportunities to explore the existence of common goals, provide occasion for informal one-on-one interactions, and espouse social norms that endorse equality and group interaction are the ones that are most likely to experience the immense benefit that diversity can offer. In other words, we cannot just throw students with vast differences together without any support; we need to teach them how to negotiate those differences and use them to everyone's advantage.

In conclusion, we must be committed to the holistic development of our students, we must aspire for them to excel not only as professionals, but also as human beings, devoted to the principles of a multicultural and democratic nation. And finally, we must prepare our students to move through multiple communities in this increasingly complex and opportunity rich world, we must believe they will make a difference!



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How Do You Define Diversity?

By Billye Foster

Recently I was approached by a teacher educator with an idea for an article on diversity. The question was, “*Will an article focusing on socioeconomic differences be appropriate for the ‘Diversity’ issue? I had the impression that ‘they’ were looking for something on ethnicity.*” My response was, “How do you define diversity?”

As long as I have worked with diversity related issues (officially over 10 years—unofficially most of my adult life), I have always been amazed at the human need to categorize things. We seem immersed in the need to put names and labels on everything that surrounds us. Unfortunately the naming game often comes with negative repercussions! Throughout the process of gathering quality articles for this issue, I kept thinking about a recent experience in the agricultural education/FFA diversity game.

On December 2, 2004 eleven people met in Indianapolis to brainstorm ideas for a diversity resource for teacher educators, teachers and other support groups. Each person in the group had committed three days and two nights of their lives to addressing a challenge they were passionate about. Over the next three days emotions surfaced from a variety of directions, paradigms emerged and evolved, and the need for a reality check became apparent. In excess of 130 years of collective agricultural education experience slowly and steadily uncovered ongoing issues of concern facing the profession. As topics/focus areas emerged, passions for the profession and underrepresented groups noted the need for continued solicitation of com-

mitment to the concepts of diversity by the entire profession. Institutionalization of discrimination must be overcome.

To tell the truth, I attended that meeting under false pretense. When I received my invitation, my first reaction was anger. *Here we go, putting another band-aid on a gushing wound. When will these people ever “get it”?* I squelched my desire to say I would not attend and decided to go and wreak havoc. I thought I would “serve” these insensitive people a piece of humble pie. *Oh, how naïve we are when we judge others.*

I arrived at the hotel and went to the first meeting ready for bear. As we went around the room introducing ourselves, I made an effort to be last. When I finally got my chance to tell them all that I was tired of band-aids—turns out they were too! Collectively we agreed that true diversification must be found woven through the fabric of what we are—not just an odd assortment of pieces tagged on at random. Our job is to make all students and teachers feel welcome in all environments relating to agricultural education and the FFA.

Every day our classrooms should provide a safe, welcome place for *all* our students. Every CDE event should encourage *all* young people to achieve. If our current student body does not reflect the total community make-up, it is our job to find out how to reach out to the missing groups and make them feel welcome. Amazingly, even though I thought I was the only one “who got it”—it turned out that we were all on the same page, facing the same challenges.

Can we make a difference?

The real challenge facing our profession is to NOT QUIT. It is easy to look at staged posters and tactically designed curricula and think diversity is no longer an issue. True danger lies in that thought. For as long as people are treated differently because of race, gender, ethnicity, or any other thing that might set them apart, the challenge to overcome prejudice and privilege remains strong. If we become complacent, we can easily fall back into unacceptable behavior.

Change is hard. We all resist. Change is also rewarding. We all share in its benefits.

The articles contained in this issue reflect a variety of issues and challenges facing our profession regarding ways to enhance diversity. However, they also include a variety of valid ways to meet those same challenges.



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Leveling the Playing Field

By Daniel D. Foster

When I saw the call for manuscripts for *The Agricultural Education Magazine* on the theme of enhancing diversity, the first thing I thought about was a phrase from a popular church public service announcement... "Isn't it about time?"

Tools at Hand

Helping our students feel more welcomed and to understand they are of equal importance to our program regardless of race, creed, religion or economic status should be our priority. The best way to accomplish this is through time. In agricultural education time is available through the utilization of a tool we have always had—namely, supervised agricultural experience visits.

This ready tool, in our arsenal of agriculture teacher tricks, is the best tool for enhancing diversity and increasing the feeling of acceptance in our programs. Acceptance is exactly what our young people seek today. More than anything else, they yearn for acceptance from those around them. When you take the time to visit a student at their home or workplace, you are not just leveling but rather tilting the playing field in the student's favor. You are going on their turf, to the epicenter of their comfort zone and saying through your actions that you accept that student. You are taking the first step, as an instructor, to indicate a willingness to help the student succeed. You are opening yourself to *their* culture and exploring *their* world.

I have witnessed my program achieve the goal of all students being treated as equals through a commit-

ment to visiting each and every student. I have appreciated an improvement in my own instruction because of exposure to other cultures. At Willcox, I have visited families who are 7th generation ranchers, living and ranching continuously on the same property. I have visited migrant families from Mexico, where the only English speaking person in the family was my student, but I have also visited migrant families who have moved to the area to work in the greenhouse industry from England and Holland.

All of the visits were, of course, different, but all were also the same. Same in that every parent regardless of what they do or where they are from wants the best for their child. They want their child to succeed and they appreciate someone taking the time to visit with them about their child. Are you really reaching out to the families in your community? Do you care about your students as individuals? Are you trying to make a square peg fit a round

hole? Or, is your program dynamic and flexible enough to fit the needs of each student in their quest for success?

Top Ten SAE Visits

As I spent a few moments reflecting on the value of the SAE visit and its relationship to diversity, I thought of some visits that shaped my perspective:

1) *Flying High* – You reach a whole new level of trust when you put your life in the hands of your student. I was fortunate enough to have a student achieve a pilot's license the summer of his sophomore year, so his junior year fall visit was in the air. It not only gave me a wonderful view of the Sulphur Springs Valley and the bird's eye view of our agricultural industry, it changed my perspective on the future of my pilot! To say the sky is the limit for this dedicated young man is no longer true.

November - December 2006

Theme: Reflecting Wisdom

This will be a unique issue. The authors for this issue will be by invitation only. The authors will come from amongst the retired agricultural educators across America. The essence is for the retired agricultural educators to reflect on the past, and provide some wisdom for what the current profession should be doing. How should lessons from the past drive our profession today? What ought to be the foundation of agricultural education? What would I do different today if I could do it all over again?

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2) *Working the way through*- One of my first SAE visits is one I will never forget. I was visiting a ranching family that had ranched in the Willcox area since the mid-1800's. I had one of the daughters as a sophomore that year and her younger brother and sister were on the way up. I arrived at 5:30 A.M., was given a horse, and completed the visit at 4:00 that afternoon. A long day, but that time commitment gave me a fresh appreciation of all the ranch kids in the program.

3) *Driving for Success* – Walking 9 holes of golf is a great way to have time to talk to a student and parent about opportunities while enjoying yourself! It also allowed the opportunity for the student to teach me a few tricks and improve my golf game. This was especially good considering the student's career interest and SAE is in turf grass management. The reinforced concept is that all students seek a time for individual attention.

“We shall not falter, we shall not fail; give us the tools and we will finish the job.”

Winston Churchill

4) *Hunting for Student Success* – You quickly get to know yourself and the student when you have the chance to spend 3 days on a mule with a pack of dogs hunting mountain lions. We were working a ranch north of Willcox that had lost several calves from the recent calf crop to a mountain lion. SAEs in wildlife management can offer a variety of interesting perspectives!

5) *The House of Glass* – Willcox enjoys a unique twist in agricultural production with over 225 acres of hydroponic greenhouses surrounding the community. Many families from England and Holland have immigrated to work in this industry. With those students in the program, the learning opportunity about different cultures and the greenhouse industry has been wonderful. It was awesome to give the students the opportunity to brag or show off something they are proud to be a part of. Their perspectives regarding America changed as much as our perspectives regarding their home countries.

6) *Bridging the Language Barrier*- Willcox is located approximately 60 miles from Mexico. Forty percent of our high school is Hispanic. Unfortunately, the Willcox Agriscience Program does not reflect an equivalent percent Hispanic enrollment. It is an issue that I have been very concerned about. When visiting students' homes where the parents do not speak English, I have used a variety of sources of communication. Perhaps the best was taking the Spanish teacher with me to serve as an interpreter. Even though I still left those visits with more questions than answers, the looks on the faces of the families told me they appreciated the fact that I appreciated their children. I was very excited to see the National FFA develop a task force on engaging Hispanics in our Agriscience programs. They specifically identified that the strategies that

do NOT work include lack of individual encouragement and contact while utilizing a one size fits all concept. We provide individual instruction through the SAE visits.

7) *Great Meal*- As a bachelor Ag Teacher, one of the best things about SAE visits is the occasional meal! It always helps to have a student involved with a Food Science SAE plan. I was visiting a freshman at his place of employment. The student's family owned and operated a BBQ establishment. It was the responsibility of the young man to order the meat for cooking, prepare the smoker/fire for cooking and to run the smoker throughout the morning and afternoon/evening for the BBQ. This student really enjoyed ag, but did not think he had an SAE. I pointed out that his duties would fit in the Food Science area and he was very excited to combine the family business with his favorite class. This led to his family catering our annual banquet for 600 people at a rate of \$1.83/plate and a great meal that day! Student success over BBQ sauce, can it get any better?

8) *Growing a Future*- SAE visits may be the greatest thing to build pride and allow students to demonstrate pride. Another first visit was to a young lady who lived in town. Her parent's were not involved in agriculture and did not know the definition of an SAE much less what their daughters SAE was going to be. In fact, because they understood the importance of SAE to the program, they were contemplating removing their high achieving straight "A" daughter, as they did not want to set her up for failure. I started the young lady with a food science SAE from her interest survey. That concept did not pan out. But, because of the visit, because of keeping a student engaged in a program, a short time later this young lady was employed by our local resource conservation district. Through

that program she wrote a grant to start a community garden for our program. This past year she received her State Degree and was recognized as the Gila Southern District Star of Agribusiness. This garden is in its second production season and as the current student director graduates she is training another student to take over. Student success that was cultivated over time!

9) *Blaine's Triumph* – And sometimes the visits just create great stories for the classroom that provide laughs for years to come. I was visiting a student with registered Brangus cattle. I thought it would be cool to use the digital movie camera to record the student talking about his cattle for my freshman livestock evaluation unit. As Blaine walked up to his heifer, speaking with great confidence of her attributes, he was kicked in the stomach and hit the ground rolling. Fortunately, he was okay aside from a bruised ego. Needless to say, I still use the video in the unit and the sound picked up me laughing hysterically. Who says Ag Teachers are not sensitive? As we visit those students with actual production SAEs you show your students that you are willing to get your hands dirty in the building project of their lives.

10) *Every Single One*: The bottom line is that every single visit I have ever done has created a positive energy. It is what has kept me going as a teacher. It is what helps me feel that I am making a difference. Even the visit where I left not feeling like any progress had been made, that student left knowing that I cared enough for them to come to their home.

SAE visits are not just for students with expansive production enterprises or with livestock projects. SAE/Home visits are the vehicle we use to change students' lives. SAE visits are how we make students feel welcome. They are not optional. Without them,

we are nothing but a glorified science class with a club.

Total Student Success

Understand that our end goal of total student success is a holistic goal, a big picture concept that we have three tools to work with to accomplish: SAE, FFA, and Classroom instruction. The mistake we commonly make in regards to involvement in all three areas is to sell the student and not the parents on the value. It is critical that all strategic partners are educated on the value of involvement in all three components. This partner education can occur on many different levels during an SAE visit.

It is through the SAE area that we have truly changed the lives of students. This process allows the teacher to provide a dynamic program that changes to fit the needs of the students and help them achieve Total Student Success. SAEs and home visits have also provided the opportunity for the Agriscience Instructor to serve as a goodwill ambassador to the community for the entire school district.

It can not be overstated how valuable this component is to what can be accomplished. At the same time, it should not be underestimated regarding the amount of time and energy that is required to properly conduct this aspect of the program. A properly conducted and supervised student SAE program is not only beneficial, but is integral to the entire program. You see again, it is about time.

One of my favorite stories is of Sir Winston Churchill visiting with FDR requesting help at the beginning of WWII when the Nazi's were violently attacking Great Britain. He is quoted as saying, "We shall not falter, we shall not fail; give us the tools and we will finish the job." As agricultural educa-

tors we have been giving the tool to change the lives of students, the tool to recruit and retain a diverse student population and the tool to simply enjoy the profession that we are in. That tool is Supervised Agricultural Experience visits.

Agricultural Education is a diverse field. Our students bring a myriad of diversity through their choices of SAEs. In addition, they bring a richness and depth to the human component of our programs with their individual backgrounds and cultures. As educators we want our students to succeed, regardless of their background or uniqueness.

In order for agricultural educators to help students achieve Total Student Success we must have courage. It takes courage to interact with our students in an authentic way. It takes courage to realize that students want to know that you care, before they care what you know. It takes courage to show that you really care. The courage to deliver the total agricultural education program, the premier educational delivery system in the world.



Daniel D. Foster is a graduate student at The Ohio State University

Just Do The Right Thing!

By Alvin Larke, Jr., &
Patricia J. Larke

The Nike commercial, “Just do it”, captures the essence of anyone who wants to do something that is important. It simply states, “just do it.” Why can’t Agricultural Education just do it and embark on the essential programmatic changes to prepare Agricultural Education students to be able to embrace and participate effectively in a global society. We believe that they can, and it is time that Agricultural Education do the “right” thing. This is a global society with more than 7.1 billion people.

Technology has changed the landscape of the world and Agricultural Education as well. Having a prepared agricultural teacher education workforce is necessary to prepare students to live and work in a global society. We believe that “just do the right thing” requires that a person has the will and the skills to make it happen. Therefore, we proposed a culturally meaningful framework (CMF) to assist Agricultural Educators in providing venues for them to “just do the right thing.” As such, this article will discuss the five C’s of culturally meaningful framework.

Five C’s of Culturally Meaningful Framework

The culturally meaningful framework is undergirded by best research practices for effective educators (Larke, Elbert, Webb-Johnson, Larke, Brisco, In Press). CMF recognizes that effective educators share the following characteristics. They are committed, share co-responsibility in the learning environment, communicate with students, know their content but also

have a cultural understanding and have the courage to make a difference in the lives of students. We call them the five C’s of CMF. Each will be discussed in the next section.

Commitment: CMF educators have a high level of commitment. They have co-signed an agreement that supports an obligation to create an educational environment on college campuses or in the classroom where “learning” is non-negotiable, and not learning is not tolerated. These educators employ, invest and engage in practices that develop learning activities that are affirming, empowering and beneficial. These educators empower students to be bi-cultural and engage in cultural brokering (Freire, 1970). They teach their students that often, “life is not fair” and some within society benefit from “privilege.” Such a lesson is empowering, not demeaning or self-defeating.

Co-responsibility: CMF educators realize that student learning is a shared responsibility among adminis-

trators, teachers, parents/families, communities and students about the outcomes of student learning. These educators believe that shared parental/family, teacher and student involvement is essential. When students do not achieve, they are not blamed alone, teachers and administrators are not blamed alone, nor are parents/families blamed alone. Instead, the outcome of student achievement is shared among all of the entities. This collective group works as a team, even when others within the school do not. The obligation for student learning lies collaboratively among them.

Communication: For CMF educators, effective communication is essential. Since communication involves a receiver, sender and message, they believe that their role of receiving and sending messages between teachers, administrators, students and parents/families is critical in developing and maintaining classrooms and schools.

Communication involves more than the spoken word. Although most

Culturally Meaningful Framework

Commitment

Co-Responsibility

Communication

Cultural Understanding

Courage

communication involves talking, writing, and listening, these educators understand that non-verbal communication is important. They know that it is not okay just to say nice words, but that their actions must demonstrate words with kindness and sincerity. To say that they care for and love their students must be emulated in “real” behaviors that show genuine care and love.

Cultural understanding: CMF educators start where students are in a particular learning cycle. These teachers emulate behaviors that value the culture, language, and thus, the child. They are cognizant of Bullivant’s definition of culture that states that culture is the blueprint for the way a person thinks, feels and behaves in society (Gollnick & Chinn, 2004). In other words, culture shapes the way the student approaches learning and how the students uses his/her culture to negotiate meaning while learning concepts.

Courage: Finally, CMF educators exemplify courage. These educators alter, adjust and transform their teaching methodologies to accommodate the distinct and unique character of all students. Some educators are known for their nontraditional ways of involving students in the learning process. They often are viewed as unusual. These “different” approaches to working and teaching causes conflict among their peers and often produce isolation and loneliness. Yet, courageous educators continue to seek ways to motivate and teach to the dynamic value of cultural diversity. Teaching no longer is a job, but a calling.

Courageous teachers view their jobs as callings and sometimes use their spirituality to provide the discipline and tenacity necessary to endure. Courageous teachers feel that such investment is not only a worthy practice, but anything less is criminal.

Summary

Preparing educators at all levels, from preservice to inservice educators, to meet the needs of the changing demographic population is no longer an option but a requirement. Within most colleges and universities students are required to take a course on cultural diversity as a part of the university’s core curriculum. School districts, colleges, and departments of education must assume the responsibility of preparing all students, regardless of race, to enter into a diverse society and to become diverse in their thinking and behavior. When we think nationally and globally of the demographic shifts of our society, we must address multicultural education and global education issues that deal with such issues as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and, sexual orientation. As college professors and Agricultural Education teachers, we must provide adequate knowledge for the future generations.

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Sign Me Up!

By Becky DeShazo &
Ron Whitson

They were ready. Four eager young men. FFA members all. Their advisor, Mr. Cobb said they could do it. Long hours were spent in preparation and practice. They were determined to be number one. Yes, Mr. Cobb had prepared them well. His expertise in this contest was known far and wide. Banners and plaques were crammed into every corner of the Ag building. The day finally arrived. Between bounces of the bus, the boys crammed in last minute practices honing their skills. Mr. Cobb, coffee in hand, evaluated their attempts as he fought the old bus used for field trips.

They arrived at the State Agricultural College, eyes wide as they anticipated the coming victory. Never did they give a thought to the empty parking lot because Mr. Cobb was known for arriving early to events. After safely stopping the bus, Mr. Cobb admonished the boys that there would be no swearing or spitting and reminded them that this was their last opportunity to be prepared for today's contest. Swinging the door open wide, he left the bus to sign'em up. "What I can't sign'em up? You mean there is no corn shucking contest anymore?"

Mansfield and Crowley were typical of many communities with high school agriculture programs across our state and nation. The economy of our communities was driven by a strong agricultural base. Dairies, small grain farms, and related agricultural businesses were common. Friday night football, rodeos and small town cafes were mainstays of social life. Almost

all agricultural students shared a strong rural heritage. Many of them could trace their families back to the founding fathers of these communities. Anglo Saxons were the majority population.

This legacy drove the agriculture programs. It determined the curriculum. It influenced FFA activities. And, it guided the "traditional" direction of the Supervised Agricultural Experience Program. Perhaps, that is what compelled us to become agriculture teachers in these communities. We fit in. Others were like us. We felt comfortable.

Today, very few remnants remain of what Mansfield and Crowley once were. Gone are the dairies. Gone are the farms. No longer is cotton ginned. Grain elevators have given way to churches, schools and homes. Instead of an independent community, each has become a bedroom to the Dallas/Fort

Worth Metroplex. School buses bringing our students to school no longer weave thru country roads passing meadows of grazing horses and cattle. Instead, bumper to bumper traffic allows plenty of time to view the strip malls and apartment buildings along the way. Urbanization is now a way of life.

The wide open spaces of Texas are in the midst of transformation. The population of the state is becoming more centralized. The six largest population centers of Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Austin and El Paso dominate. Over half or 56.1 percent of students in Texas attend schools in an urban/suburban setting. African American populations make up 20.3% of urban and 15.4% of suburban school populations. Hispanics account for 59.9% of urban and 35.7% of suburban students. Asian/Pacific Islander populations are 2.3% urban and 6.2% suburban of student populations. White students make up 17.3% of urban and 42.3% of suburban populations.. And, Native Americans make up less one percent in both populations, according to the Texas Education Agency Policy Planning and Evaluation Division.

What effect does all of the data have on the local agriculture program? We didn't read the data and decide this was an issue. We lived the data. What worked in the past was not working for us as effectively now. We determined the need to explore this issue based on our experiences dealing with students. Classrooms now also contain talented, bright, intelligent learners from diverse populations with little or no rural backgrounds. We are finding these desirable students difficult to involve in the total agriculture program. Most do well academically but their involve-

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change
ourselves.*

Victor Frankl

ment stops at the classroom door. Perhaps, social and cultural barriers prevent them from taking advantage of the opportunities agriculture education offers. A lack of role models may cause reluctance. Many in this new population are missing out on the vast advantages available to them.

As we continue to experience population shifts, it will be vital to Agriculture Education and more importantly the increasing diverse population of students that we address this issue. This thought process led us to many unanswered questions. And it is our desire to seek the knowledge base to solve this dilemma. The very future of Agriculture Education may rest on finding answers to these questions.

- ◆ What changes need to be made to attract and retain quality minority students?

- ◆ What barriers prevent all students from becoming involved?

- ◆ What tools can we use to create a sense of belonging for all stu-

dents?

- ◆ How do we help students to understand that we live in a culturally diverse world?

- ◆ How can Agriculture Education and the National FFA Organization be a catalyst in preparing ALL students to meet the challenges of cultural diversity that are evolving throughout our nation?

We don't have the answers. We need answers. As a profession, we must understand the importance of this issue. We must work together to find solutions and then implement them. William James once said, "The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives." Unlike Mr. Cobb, we must be prepared for the change upon us. The diversity in our classrooms must influence our curriculum, FFA activities and Supervised Agricultural Experiences. We must remind ourselves we have a new legacy.



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Back to Basics: Traditions in Agricultural Education Lead to Diversity

By *Quintin Molina*

The stages and importance of diversity in agricultural education is becoming more important in the eyes of agriscience teachers in the state of Arizona. As I travel the state supervising student teachers, I find that on a consistent basis, the issue of diversity is the hot topic of discussion amongst the agriculture instructors. Most of the time the conversation starts with the question, “What is the University doing to recruit minorities into the agricultural education program, and, is it working?” The answer lies in the fact that the University is always focused on recruiting a diverse population of students into the program. The real question being asked is, does a secret formula that results in the increased recruitment and retention of minorities in every level of agricultural education exist?

I can recall sitting in my agricultural education program in Douglas, Arizona, a predominantly Hispanic community of roughly 14,000 people, where the high school was only 15 blocks from the U.S./Mexico border. Why was I enrolled in Agriculture? It was simple. My father was the instructor and had been for 11 years prior to my entering the program. Yes, I am half Hispanic, on my father’s side, and my mother is Caucasian. Needless to say, there was no real recruitment needed for me to enroll in agricultural education. Agricultural education was something I had been raised around and I was eager to participate in every facet of the program. I remember the population in my agriculture classes being as diverse as the community in which it was

based. We had Caucasians, Hispanics, Asians and students of African American descent participating in agriculture courses. I have no recollection of special recruitment efforts on my agriculture instructor’s part, and remember that the course content and curriculum seemed to be the biggest draw into our program in the early 1990s. Admittedly, however, I cannot say that the demographics were as equally represented when it came to the FFA aspect of the complete program. While a

“What is the University doing to recruit minorities into the agricultural education program, and, is it working?”

number of my peers could identify and share in the usefulness of the classroom and laboratory instruction, and could clearly see the application side shine through in the Supervised Agriculture Experience projects, they could not say the same for the FFA. Many of the students who participated in FFA

events above the local level came home lacking a significant understanding of the benefits FFA held for them and did not see many students to whom they could relate.

It would be hard to identify the one key factor that made me decide to pursue agricultural education as my major and future career, as so much of the total program was inspirational to me. After graduation from Douglas High School, I enrolled in the Agricultural Education Program at the University of Arizona and quickly realized that I was one of two Hispanic students in the program. The reality is that I never felt like a minority in the program, and never experienced preferential or negative treatment as a result. I completed my degree in May of 2000 and started teaching high school agriscience in June of that same summer.

I was provided with the opportunity to teach agriscience in an area of Arizona where the economy is driven by production agriculture. This is the point where I realized, that for many minorities, a negative perception of agriculture is the barrier to enrollment. Much of the Hispanic population in this area was farm employees and parents, wanting more for their children, deterred their students from entering the agriscience program. Even though I was Hispanic and teaching agriculture, recruitment and retention was difficult.

Truth be told, I feel that many of my Hispanic students enrolled in the course because they felt I could relate to them. However, they stayed because they enjoyed the hands-on, project based curriculum and assess-



education programs will only lead to temporary fixes. The focus must be placed on listening to our students and making note of what is working for other programs, successfully navigating the diversity gauntlet.

The essence of agricultural education has always been the ability to serve our student population, whether it was in preparation to take over the family farm or to start up an emerging biotech company, the student and community needs have always been an accurate guide to program development. These beliefs and concepts that are intrinsic to agricultural education will continue to bring students into our programs, and as our communities become more and more diverse, so will our agriculture classes. Continuing to focus on the items that make agricultural education successful may be the answer to the questions surrounding diversity in our agriculture programs.

ments. I was unsuccessful in the sense that few Hispanic students participated in FFA activities above the local level, and in doing so, never experienced the true potential of the FFA. The decision had to be made. What was more important, enrollment in the agriscience program or membership in the FFA? The decision became clear, enrollment was key, and the FFA membership would eventually follow.

There are no boiler plate answers or remedies to the diversity issues faced by agricultural education. If so, tell me why the enrollment of females in agriscience programs nationwide has increased at such a significant rate? The fact is this, it is hard to pinpoint the exact actions needed in order to increase minority enrollment.

Working with future agricultural educators is the way I spend most of

my time now. The advice offered to them is simple. Continue to strive to make your curriculum, courses and programs user friendly for a variety of individuals. This includes a welcoming educational environment or classroom free from any bias. Focusing on recruitment and retention of students in general is the key, as students are often attracted to the same opportunities, no matter what their ethnic background may be.

It is hard to go for more than a couple of weeks in Arizona without hearing about the fact that the Hispanic population will soon be the predominant population in the state of Arizona. The feeling amongst many agricultural educators is that this will play a key role in future legislation, which will directly impact our programs in the state. While this is true, knee-jerk reactions to the demographics of the agricultural



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Amichuth - Heot: To Learn - To Bloom

By Abigail Dambeck

I had never been to any place where it seemed as though the cattle used the sidewalks more than the residents of the town, or the horses took their time crossing the roads as if they existed solely for their benefit. These were just a few of the things that initially opened my eyes to the unique experience that lay ahead during my student teaching on the Tohono O'odham Reservation. Members of the Tohono O'odham tribe live on lands that have been inhabited by their people for over 2000 years. Thirteen weeks of commuting about seventy miles southwest from Tucson, Arizona to the community of Sells provided me with some time to absorb a few of the rewards and challenges of teaching the high school students that I came to understand and appreciate.

There is no question that the environment and students that I worked with and learned from were different from my background of teaching mostly middle class Caucasian children and adults as a nature instructor at a summer camp for two years. I had never encountered a place, as a teacher or a student, where going to school was a choice, and many students regularly made the choice not to attend. Despite this frustration, I realized early on that the critical choice for me occurred when I decided to take on the challenge of entering a new culture and helping students within a different worldview achieve their own successes.

Focusing on differences between cultures, differences in opinion, and worldview is easy. It is in our nature to recognize and place varying degrees

"I had never encountered a place, as a teacher or a student, where going to school was a choice, and many students regularly made the choice not to attend."

of significance on the differences in our world. Many times we allow these exceptions, that which we are foreign to, to come between ourselves and our ultimate goal--be it learning, taking on a new responsibility in the workplace, or finding a hobby to be passionate about. For this reason, I intentionally strived to keep from fixating on how different I was from these students and wondering what we were going to do to get past such an obstacle. I instead went into the classroom with a determined attitude and this expectation for both my students and myself: *learning was going to occur.*

From the beginning, there was resistance to my level of comfort with their diversity as a people and as indi-

viduals. They only saw someone different in front of their classroom; a new person, changing some of the things they came to expect in the agriculture classroom.

It was a struggle for them to see past the dissimilarities to recognize how much had stayed the same: that they were all there to learn and to develop as unique, valuable young adults. Ultimately, it did not matter if the person at the door calling them to class during passing period was me or their regular teacher; it made no difference in their grade if they chose not to complete their projects in the shop for me or for their regular teacher, the consequence was the same, and, the ultimate expectation was for students to take responsibility for the choices they made; learning occurred in some fashion no matter which option they chose. I attribute all of the successes these students had, from being able to make the effort to arrive to class on time on their own, to using a tractor to plow a field, to the fact that they learned (whether they realized or not) that diversity and the possibilities it presents are an opportunity for success, not a blinding obstacle in their way.

At one point in my time at Baboquivari High School, an individual asked me what the most valuable lesson was that I had learned. I surprised the inquirer and myself when I responded that learning to recognize and work with student behavior patterns was both the most valuable and the most difficult lesson I gained. The more I consider this response, the more I realize its truth. Teaching on the reservation exposed me to a host of factors which influenced my students' behavior that I could never have fully anticipated or prepared for, including:

a frequency of learning disabilities, low self expectations that seemed to permeate the students' attitude toward all types of learning, a more reserved and soft spoken demeanor than other ethnicities that I had encountered, and heavy drug and alcohol abuse. Wrestling with how to deliver subject matter suddenly became more and less complex.

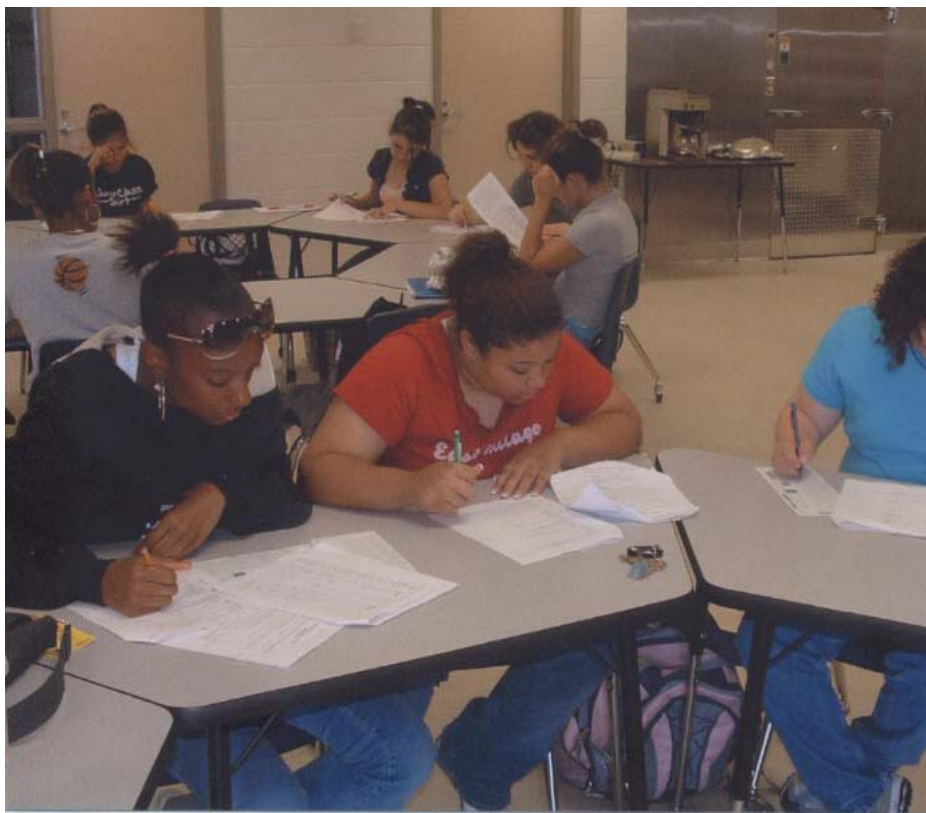
The real world that came crashing in on my remaining perceptions of how teaching and learning 'should' occur is what helped to make the actual delivery of lessons somewhat less complex because I realized that reaching the person, making an impact on a life, was the key to successful teaching. This realization allowed me to let go of having to have the perfect lesson plan, the flawless demonstration, and the most eloquent lecture. Getting to know my more reserved students (quite the challenge in itself), convincing those with low expectations that they were wrong about themselves, dealing with learning disabilities, and

I realized that reaching the person, making an impact on a life, was the key to successful teaching.

gearing lessons toward a more naturalistic learning style all involved acknowledging the underlying factors influencing student behavior; this was the part of my job that made planning and delivering my lessons more complex. I truly feel that overcoming the perception of teaching occurring in an easy to control environment with easy to predict responses is crucial to educators realizing the importance of being adaptable- a quality that is necessary if they are to be able to serve ev-

ery student who comes through the doors over the course of their teaching career.

With my time on the reservation complete, I look back on my experience with gratitude. I am unable to thank my cooperating teacher, the students and their families, and the staff of Baboquivari High School sufficiently for making student teaching an experience that has shaped my life so positively. Before this opportunity, I admit that it was hard for me to believe that teaching could be a rewarding and fulfilling career. I have gained a new confidence in education and in our ongoing ability to improve the means by which we serve all students. I would also like to note that no livestock were harmed during my commute or in the writing of this article.



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Agricultural Diversity: An Integral Part of Agricultural Education

By *Christa Dal Molin*

Agricultural Education is diverse. In any program, diversity can be found. According to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, diversity is "differing from one another: composed of distinct or unlike elements or qualities" (www.m-w.com). Agricultural education programs definitely differ from one another and are composed of distinct or unlike elements. Diversity in agricultural education can be found in many different areas such as from program to program, in differing course/program components, and gender/ethnic make-up of programs. While agricultural education is already diverse, there is a vast need to diversify its' programs further. Agricultural diversity is an integral part of agricultural education programs.

Agricultural Education programs differ from program to program. For example, there are programs that are in urban and rural areas, and single and multi-teacher programs, among others. There are many different types of programs in order to best fit each individual community. Two such programs are Payson High School and John Bowne High School. I have had the opportunity to teach in both programs and have been surprised at the diversity that each program offered. While these programs differ, they are still composed of many aspects that are similar. Both programs focus on providing students with quality agricultural education.

Horticulture, large animal care, plant physiology, biotechnology, animal reproduction, feeds and feeding, and agricultural mechanics represent part of the diversity that can be found in

any agricultural education program. Students may be interested in one subject (plants, animals, etc.) more than another, but the breadth and depth of agriculture is explored in agricultural education programs. It should be the goal of programs to increase students' agricultural literacy. In addition to courses that are offered during school, the National FFA Organization provides students with the opportunity to participate in many differing roles.

Agriculture Education, like the United States, is increasingly becoming more ethnically diverse. This diversity can be seen throughout agricultural education programs. I have had the opportunity to teach in a program where I was the minority. One of the most important things that I learned was that we must embrace our differences and celebrate our similarities. Agriculture can serve as the common ground or similarity for all students in agriculture programs. We can learn from the different experiences that our students have had and they can learn from ours.

Because agricultural education is already so diverse, why is there a need to continue to diversify our programs? We must continue to diversify our programs in order to meet the needs of all students: past, present and future. As globalization happens at an incredibly fast past, we must keep diversifying our programs in order to continue to do what we love: teach. If we, as agricultural educators, learn to embrace our differences and celebrate our similarities we can successfully diversify our programs and meet the mission of agricultural education.

One can diversify their program

by being a life long learner. If teachers continue to be educated about new advances in agriculture, programs can and will become progressively more diverse. We must continue to urbanize agricultural education programs because the United States is increasingly becoming more urban. Teachers can identify with their students by gaining their trust and by being themselves. Teachers must be share their experiences with their students and slowly gain their trust. This will enable students to feel that they can share their varying experiences as well.

By diversifying our programs, we will be ridding any misconceptions people may have about each other and about the various aspects of agriculture. Diversifying our programs is one of the keys to remaining a successful part of the education system.



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But We've Always Done It This Way!

By B. Allen Talbert

The play is one familiar to most agriculture teachers. Let's look in on two scenes.

Scene 1: FFA Chapter Banquet Planning Committee meeting. Those present include the advisor, committee chair, several seniors, and other committee members. The discussion topic: the menu.

Chair: "So what should be on the menu this year?"

Senior: "The local farm supply store has already agreed to sponsor pork chops again this year. We've had pork chops for every year that I can remember."

Others: "That's a great idea! It'll save us money and EVERYONE loves grilled pork chops!"

Scene 2: Agriculture teacher on telephone with state FFA advisor a few weeks after the banquet.

State Advisor: "How's your enrollment and FFA membership going?"

Teacher: "Not so good. It seems like I only have the 30 faithful who do everything. Our banquet this year had the lowest attendance ever and that's following a couple of bad years already. It just doesn't seem like today's students are interested in agriculture."

State Advisor: "Uh, yeah. Say, hasn't your area had a significant increase in families from a Middle Eastern descent moving in?"

What About Traditions?

Traditions abound in agricultural education. In most states, the agriculture teachers, state supervisors, teacher educators, and others in agricultural education proudly work together as a Team AgEd. The National FFA Organization just revised the official jacket so the colors would be truer to "the way they are supposed to be." Sure, new Career Development Events are added, but when was the last time a Career Development Event was dropped?

Yes, traditions can be good. The best traditions are those that bind us together and make us stronger as a group. These traditions are the ones that have been tested by time and proven to be true regardless of current circumstances or fads. Traditions can build community and fellowship.

However, traditions can also be a wall that excludes. If the traditions go against values held by the new students and FFA members, then community is broken and the new students are pushed away rather than brought into the group. Look back at the scenario at the beginning of this article. What does the menu decision say to students and their families who abstain from pork for religious reasons? Was any consideration given to those who might want a vegetarian option? Would it matter if this were a Friday during Lent?

Safety and Educational Needs Versus Personal Preference

Traditions can also be hurtful, harmful, or even illegal. In these cases, a tradition becomes so important that people forget common sense or becomes so much a part of the way of

doing things that people forget to question why it is still being done that way. Traditions, such as activities that meet the definition of hazing, that are illegal should be eliminated immediately and without question. Traditions that are hurtful or harmful should be eliminated or revised.

How does an agriculture teacher determine whether a tradition is necessary to continue? The first step is to determine if the item in question is needed for safety or educational reasons or exists just because of personal preference. If for safety or educational reasons, then the teacher needs to clearly explain the requirements and why they exist. For example, long hair can be caught in moving parts. A legitimate requirement is to require long hair to be secured up and under a cover. However, it is not appropriate for the agriculture teacher to require students to cut their hair shorter.

Traditions, or ways of doing things, can be grouped into four categories. These categories and questions to ask for each are explained next.

◆ Appearance and clothing. Do rules regarding personal appearance and clothes serve a safety/educational purpose or attempt to make everyone fit the same mold? Is a student's selection of clothing a matter of style or a disruption to the educational process? Items to consider include hair length, style, and color; footwear; jewelry and accessories; and clothing choices. Make sure that you are familiar with school rules and student code of conduct.

◆ Food. Do menu choices include or exclude? Look at the food choices from several viewpoints.

Would a diabetic be able to eat? Are religious restrictions taken into consideration? Is the meal price prohibitive for certain groups of students?

◆ **Activities.** Are there activities that appeal to various student interests or are all activities related to production agriculture? Do any activities exclude either males or females? Are any activities considered hazing, harmful, or hurtful? Are activities planned during times that accommodate various student schedules? Is transportation provided? Does the cost prohibit some students from participating?

◆ **Spoken and written words.** Are jokes or speech inappropriate or offensive? Does what you write or say pass the “smell” test? For example, if someone from the group you are talking about were standing in front of you would they be offended? Part of the FFA Code of Ethics (National FFA Organization, 2006) states “Appreciating and promoting diversity in our organization.” Do your words and actions reflect this belief?

Proactive Diversity

The best agriculture teachers tend to be proactive rather than reactive. How you approach diversity should be no different. But, what does proactive diversity look like? Sleeter and Grant (1994) provided a framework that is helpful in being proactive toward diversity in the classroom.

An initial stage is to screen the materials used in the classroom to eliminate stereotypes along with racist and sexist language. In addition, the teacher should try to use materials that show females and people of color within agriculture in a positive light. Although a positive step, this stage is the minimum that should be done.

A more active approach is to

work to eliminate prejudices, help student and others develop positive relationships, and promote tolerance of differences. This stage may make the teacher and the students uncomfortable. It is in this stage that traditions are challenged, changed, and maybe even dropped. Students who are a part of the majority will want to know “Why do we have to be the ones to change?” In the scenario at the beginning, they may ask “Shouldn’t we be supporting the pork farmers in the area?”

A true proactive approach goes beyond individuals and aims to change education and society so that equality of all is promoted. It is at the beginning steps of this stage that the agriculture teacher may be the only person asking the tough questions. These questions include the following.

◆ Are educational opportunities not only available to all students, but also actively encouraged for all students?

◆ What is the FFA chapter doing to promote economic well-being and entrepreneurship among all groups in the community?

◆ In many schools, agricultural education has the reputation of being a home for those students who have no home. In other words, the agricultural education program was able to provide learning opportunities for students who did not engage in other parts of the school. Is this still true? Does it also include those who speak limited English?

◆ Does the school mascot need changing because it disparages a group of people?

◆ Are students from minority groups not in college-preparatory courses?

◆ Are racism and sexism overtly or covertly displayed within the Agricultural Education program, school, or community?

The next step is up to you. The agriculture teacher can be a powerful, positive, promoter of diversity. You are a role model for your students and others in the community. Choose to be an active player for proactive diversity!

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Multiple Intelligences Within Agricultural Education

By Kattlyn Wolf &
Jack Elliot

Developed by psychologist Howard Gardner, the theory of multiple intelligences asserts that there are at least eight ways that people have of perceiving and understanding the world. The labels identify a distinct “intelligence” or set of skills individuals utilize in problem solving situations. It is important to note that although most individuals tend to be stronger in one or more multiple intelligence categories, everyone has all eight intelligences. It is the difference and combinations that makes each and every student different, and why as educators, we must learn to teach to the student, not the class. Multiple intelligences can be an excellent way of embracing and fostering the diversity of our students.

Intelligence is defined by Gardner as a group of abilities that:

- ◆ Is somewhat autonomous from other human capacities;
- ◆ Has a core set of information-processing operations;
- ◆ Has a distinct history in the stages of development we each pass through; and
- ◆ Has plausible roots in evolutionary history.

Gardner has categorized and defined intelligence into the following eight categories:

- ◆ Visual-Spatial—The ability to

THE LABELS
IDENTIFY A
DISTINCT
“INTELLIGENCE”
OR SET OF
SKILLS
INDIVIDUALS
UTILIZE IN
PROBLEM
SOLVING
SITUATIONS.

visualize objects and spatial dimensions

- ◆ Verbal-Linguistic—The ability to use words and language

- ◆ Interpersonal—The capacity for person-to-person communications and relationships

- ◆ Musical-Rhythmic—The ability to recognize tonal patterns and sounds

- ◆ Naturalistic—Thinks by finding patterns in the natural world: cycles, seasons, processes

- ◆ Body-Kinesthetic—The wisdom of the body and the ability to control physical motion

- ◆ Intrapersonal—The spiritual, inner states of being, self-reflection, and awareness

- ◆ Logical-Mathematical—The capacity for inductive and deductive thinking.

Consciously or not, the ability of a student to learn, in a particular subject area, is relative to their strengths in a particular multiple intelligence. All teachers can identify with these statements, “I have a fantastic young man who can weld and build anything, but has a hard time getting up in front of the class,” or “My chapter president gets perfect grades, but some of the other students have a hard time working with her,” or “He is such a hard worker on the farm, but not so hard in his math class.” As educators, we all recognize that students learn differently, but sometimes do not directly recognize the “how.” Agricultural Education has the premier educational delivery system to cater to all students’ learning styles and multiple intelligences.

Given that traditional schooling and testing usually only addresses verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences and given that agricultural education classrooms usually include very diverse learners, it became apparent that a list of activities within all of the intelligences would aid educators in reaching all of the students in their program.

Visual-Spatial—The ability to visualize objects and spatial dimensions,

and create internal images and pictures. Students strong in this intelligence tend to think in pictures and need to create vivid mental images to retain information. When you think of an apple, do you see the word, or do you create a mental picture of an apple?

- ◆ Draw and label the parts of the flower

- ◆ Create an FFA/agricultural education program brochure

- ◆ Evaluate a soil map/topographical map/profile

- ◆ Landscape class - drawing/reading plans - Interpret landscape design

- ◆ Agricultural construction - reading blue prints

- ◆ Plant/tool/breed identification - compare classes

- ◆ Velcro diagram of wholesale/retail cuts

- ◆ Product displays in agricultural business

- ◆ Interactive computer software

Verbal-Linguistic—The ability to use words and language. Students strong in this intelligence have highly developed auditory skills and are generally elegant speakers. They tend to think in words rather than pictures.

- ◆ Memorize and deliver the FFA Creed

- ◆ Agricultural Issues Forum, Agricultural Sales and Marketing, and Agricultural Communications CDEs

- ◆ Write and deliver 6-8 minute prepared speech

- ◆ 2 minute extemporaneous speech

- ◆ Community/school board presentations

- ◆ Create a radio program

Interpersonal—The capacity for person-to-person communications and relationships. Students strong in this intelligence try to see things from other people's point of view in order to understand how they think and feel.

- ◆ Role playing as customer vs. salesperson

- ◆ Problem solving: Identifying alternatives (agricultural mechanics CDE team activity)Peer teaching: Oxy-Acetylene set-up; horticulture laboratory (grafting, etc.); agricultural mechanics

- ◆ Chapter planning (P.O.A.); team activities; CDE's; LDEs; etc.

- ◆ Interviewing, shadowing career professionals

Musical-Rhythmic—The ability to recognize tonal patterns and sounds, as well as a sensitivity to rhythms and beats. Students strong in this intelligence may be sensitive to environmental sounds (e.g. crickets, bells, dripping taps).

- ◆ Creed rap

- ◆ Mig welding - listen to the sound

- ◆ Finding studs in a wall

- ◆ Engine troubleshooting

- ◆ Interpretive dance to agricultural themes

- ◆ Public speaking - intonation

- ◆ Agricultural issues – singing part of the presentation to the tune of a popular song

- ◆ Citizenship - different inspiration songs

- ◆ Meiosis square dance

- ◆ FFA history - music of the decades

Naturalistic—Thinks by finding patterns in the natural world: cycles, seasons, processes.

- ◆ Time line of domestication of the horse

- ◆ Definitions of "Nature" in different cultures/groups

- ◆ Rainforests and bio-diversity debates

- ◆ Dissecting owl pellets

- ◆ Greenhouse micro-environments

- ◆ Plant collection/classification and bug collection/taxonomy

- ◆ Food chain diagram Planning and planting an organic vegetable garden then marketing the produce

- ◆ Hydroponics: from cuttings to nursery

- ◆ Judging contests

◆ Gestation through birthing process

Body-Kinesthetic—The wisdom of the body and the ability to control physical motion. Students strong in this intelligence interact with the space around them to remember and process information.

◆ Wood/metal fabrication projects

◆ Mechanical drawing

◆ Flower arranging

◆ Taking a soil sample

◆ Acting out parliamentary procedure

◆ Giving oral reasons - role playing

Intrapersonal—The spiritual, inner states of being, self-reflection, and awareness. Students strong in this intelligence try to understand their inner feelings, dreams, relationships with others, and strengths and weaknesses.

◆ Keep a journal of living processes (plants, animals, shop processes) - that is, what happened today

◆ Role play: “Walk in someone else’s shoes or something”

◆ Poetry: what does it mean to be a veal calf; describe life on a farm (thinking all sides)

◆ Personal goals: set long term goals and/or short term goals

◆ Explain to past: explain modern conservation practice to 1900s farmer; describe to a 1920s farmer the dust bowl; assign decades to individual

students; assign perspective of under-developed and developed countries on farming

◆ Develop your philosophy on genetic engineering (now, try to write a philosophy as Christopher Reeves might view it)

Logical-Mathematical—The capacity for inductive and deductive thinking and reasoning, as well as the use of numbers and the recognition of abstract patterns. Students strong in this intelligence think conceptually in logical and numerical patterns making connections between pieces of information.

◆ Ear notching swine

◆ Calculate cubic yard cement for project and calculate cubic yard for mulch

◆ N-P-K calculation problems

◆ Use engine trouble-shooting guide

◆ Record books/programs

◆ Spreadsheet calculating depreciation

◆ Plot commodities market for the year

◆ Planning fund-raising activities

◆ Plant/species classification and genetics

◆ Nutrition calculations

The important point for agricultural educators is that by teaching strong content driven lessons that are reinforced by application (SAE) and encouraged by motivation (FFA), we

have the capacity to reach all students all of the time in every class. We recognize that each and every student is an individual, and we take that into account in our instructional delivery. Agricultural Education is the premier educational delivery system, and has tremendous capacity to reach the lives of a diverse student population.



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The Agricultural Education Potluck: A Microcosm of America

By Chastity Warren &
Antoine Alston

One of the greatest social traditions utilized within the office, church, and home in order to encourage camaraderie is “Potluck”. In “Potluck” everyone brings something different to the dinner table, adding to the overall variety and culinary quality of the overall meal (Wikipedia, 2006). Agricultural Education in America is a lot like “Potluck” in that many individuals from a variety of racial, culture, and gender backgrounds have contributed to the overall academic quality and vastness of the programs that exist today. The current FFA membership profile is a testament to this with 38% of FFA members being female and women holding more than 50% of state leadership positions. Over 77% of the membership is Caucasian; 17% is Hispanic, and 4% is African American (National FFA Organization, 2006).

Just like The National FFA Organization, America is an even bigger version of “Potluck” with an ever greater array of diversity. The United States is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse nations in the world (Spears, Oliver, & Maes, 1990). Even so, the differences among people can be delighting, puzzling, disturbing, and sometimes even overwhelming (Macionis, 1997). According to Spears et al. (1990), these circumstances hold implications for education even in places where the local population is not very diverse. According to the United States Census Bureau (2000), Caucasians account for 75.1% of the population, with African Americans encompassing 12.3%, individuals of Hispanic

or Latino origin account for 12.5%, Asians, Native American, and Pacific Islanders collectively are 4.6% of the population. Since the United States is a multicultural society, citizens need to understand and respect one another, both as individuals and as members of ethnic minority distinct groups (Grant & Sleeter, 1989).

Diversity is defined as those human qualities that are different from one’s own and outside the group to which one belongs. Diversity can be divided into two categories, primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions are the following: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities or qualities, race and sexual orientation. Secondary dimensions of diversity are those that can be changed and include, but are not limited to: educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, and work experiences (Macionis, 1997).

The concept of diversity directly impacts the agricultural industry in the United States because the agricultural industry is not representative of the diverse population present within this country. In order for the United States to sustain its current agricultural rank, recruitment of a more diverse workforce must be enhanced. The field of education and agribusiness as a whole must acquire an understanding of the motivational factors and rewards that would attract women students and students of different ethnic minority groups to pursue an agricultural career (Zoldoske, 1996).

There are numerous barriers that exist that hinder the process of ethnic minority and women inclusion in ca-

Diversity can be divided into two categories, primary and secondary dimensions.

reer and technical education (CTE), particularly agricultural education. According to Talbert & Larke (1995), barriers include a lack of mentors or role models, stereotypes, teachers, guidance counselors, the perception of agriculture itself, sexual harassment and last, but not least the glass ceiling conceptual theory. Boyer (1990) described the “glass ceiling” theory as a barrier, which is in place that supposedly keeps women and minorities from achieving any position, but token positions at the highest echelons of corporate America.

Klauke (1989) suggested that prejudicial issues in relation to ethnic minorities and women by school systems should be addressed. In addition,

teaching materials should be examined for racial, cultural, or gender biases (Klauke, 1989). Only when students observe staff commitment to providing a fair and representative environment will they feel a sense of school ownership (Klauke, 1989).

Furthermore, teachers and staff should become familiar with the ethnic minority groups represented in their classrooms, while they promote an atmosphere of acceptance and cooperation (Klauke, 1989). Additionally, according to Foster (2001) acceptance by peers, community, and administrators combined with the challenge of balancing family and a career are some of the barriers women endure in CTE.

Luft (1996) stated secondary agricultural education teachers could make a greater effort to specifically recruit ethnic minority and female students interested in agricultural occupations. Perhaps program revisions are necessary to attract culturally diverse students. It is suggested that FFA advisors encourage and strive to increase ethnic minority and female membership. Luft (1996) also recommended that secondary agricultural teachers be provided in-service opportunities to improve their cultural diversity teaching practices. According to Luft (1996), to help improve the extent to which cultural diversity is addressed in the future by secondary agricultural teachers, pre-service teacher education students should also be required to take courses dealing with teaching the culturally diverse, with strong encouragement to implement the practices into their teaching. Courses designed to prepare agricultural teachers to serve the culturally diverse populations should contain content recommended by experts in multicultural education (Luft, 1996).

Agricultural education teachers' main priority is preparing students for

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entry into jobs in the industry of agriculture and agribusiness (Gordon, 2003). There is a sufficient lack of agricultural teachers, especially ethnic minority and women teachers in agricultural education. The lack of ethnic minority and women teachers creates a domino effect; the lack of ethnic minority and women teachers influence the lack of ethnic minority and female students enrolled in agricultural education classes (Talbert & Larke, 1995).

Given the significance of agriculture to the United States' economy, ethnic minorities and women will miss career opportunities available to them in the field of agriculture, which constitutes a vital sector of the economy that will otherwise be unavailable to them (Gordon, 2003). Ethnic minorities and women today face an uncertain future regarding their participation in agricultural education.

Multicultural education, role models and mentoring are all examples of strategies that could be utilized to in-

crease the enrollment and participation of ethnic minorities and women in secondary agricultural education (Gordon, 2003). Foster, Pikkert and Husmann (1991) also stated such strategies as changing current societal attitudes against ethnic minorities and women teachers in agriculture, increasing salaries, increasing acceptance by administrators, improving teacher education programs, building support networks, and increasing recruitment efforts are all effective when trying to increase the enrollment and participation of ethnic minorities and women in CTE, particularly agricultural education. Until ethnic minority and women students' perceptions change and barriers to enrollment are removed, greater ethnic minority and women participation in Agriscience education should not be expected (Talbert & Larke, 1995).

Strategies must be developed to encourage the involvement of ethnic minority populations and women in the field of agricultural and extension education, if the profession is to truly be representative of the various sectors of the United States' society (Marshall, 1989). If strategies are not developed, ethnic minorities and women will miss out on opportunities of employment and promising careers in agriculture, thus not being able to make their respective contribution to America's "Agricultural Education Potluck".

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Strategies must be developed to encourage the involvement of ethnic minority populations and women in the field of agricultural and extension education.

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