“See Me--See You” --well, not always...

Dealing with Differences

Special Double Issue Printing
September/October 2007, Volume 80, Issue 2
Inside
Eighty Years and Counting...

By Billye Foster

How many people will look at the cover of this issue and think, “What is this? I thought this was the diversity issue!” I guess I’ll never know the answer to that question, but I can explain the image.

The cover photo was taken off the deck of my home in Tucson at 5:35 AM on Sunday, the 19th of August 2007. Just the day before I had attended the funeral of Dr. Clinton Jacobs, a long-time member of the Agricultural Education community in Arizona. Prior to that I had spent the past several months, along with the rest of the Magazine Managing & Editing Board, battling a management level dilemma with the magazine. Saturday afternoon, the world was looking fairly brown to me.

Fortunately, my husband tired quickly of my whining and said, “Why don’t you think about the good things for awhile?” It was then that I picked up the draft of this issue and went out to the deck to brood alone. First, I started reading the articles...OK, they were good. Some even inspirational, but so what, I still didn’t know what I was going to put on the cover. Besides, I was still waiting to see the past two issues in print. I flipped through the draft, made a few edits and notes in the margins, then I flipped it shut and laid it on a table next to me. I sat there watching another amazing Arizona sunset.

As evening gently slipped down like a mysterious veil, my mood gradually cooled. It was then that I picked up the draft again. The empty cover slot glared at me, but for some reason I could only look in the top right-hand corner...July/August 2007, Volume 80, Issue 1.

Volume 80--the beginning of eighty years of serving our profession. Suddenly, I knew I needed a special cover shot--something unique, something that heralded the coming of a new era. Then it fell into place--the rising sun. Of course, it would be perfect, and you should know Arizona boasts as many beautiful sunrises as sunsets.

The more I thought about it, the more it made sense. Our profession continues to move into new and exciting eras. That is part of the reason we have an issue devoted to diversity. From the 1965 merger of the New Farmers of America with the National Future Farmers of America, to 1969 and the official admitting of girls into FFA, to 2007 and educators and students working together to make agricultural education and the FFA the world’s premiere educational experience, we continue to move into new and exciting eras.

As you enjoy the issue, take time to reflect on your own growth and challenges over the years. Take a moment or two and share some stories with that special student who may someday take your place in the profession. Remember, look into the heart of that potential educator--not just the surface layer. Our profession is too important to trust it to appearances only.

I believe it is important for you, as members of this profession, to know that when we say it is like a family--we mean it! The Magazine’s challenges have been overcome and it is back on schedule. This is primarily due to the fact that the parent organizations of the profession, NAAE (National Association of Agricultural Educators), AAAE (American Association of Agricultural Educators) and NASAE (National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education) stepped up and brought help when help was needed. Their collective efforts gave the Magazine the solidarity needed to move forward.

What is diversity anyway? I like to think of it as reaching out to those who are separate or different than ourselves and forging new relationships. Each of those new connections helps create a stronger whole. Just as the leading organizations in our professionconnected to strengthen this magazine, so must we all work to include all students and educators in the heart and soul of our world. Our profession needs the solidarity it will provide.

Billye Foster is an Associate Professor at The University of Arizona and is Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine.
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Dealing with Differences

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Life is an adventurous journey in which we all partake. We experience a myriad of activities and opportunities that help us grow as professionals. How we differ from one another is one of those opportunities that allow us to ‘grow’ into our own uniqueness. How we think, feel, perceive and interact with others in various contexts are characteristics that make each of us unique. Sometimes we do not fully understand our diversity and because of this we tend to underestimate the importance of how we differ and how our differences shape us into who we are today.

Traditionally, diversity tends to refer to one’s ethnicity or race (Kottler, 2004). While these are extremely important to understand, our diverse culture involves a set of multiple identities for most individuals (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). Each of us are not only strongly influenced by our ethical/racial background, but also the culture of gender, religion, socioeconomic status/class, geographical location, first language, sexual orientation, political affiliation, profession, and similar identities (Kottler, 2004). While all of these characteristics define our uniqueness as individuals, it seems that as a profession we continue to struggle with attracting individuals of minority populations into secondary and postsecondary agricultural education programs.

Let’s take a closer look at this. For decades agricultural education teachers have been challenged with trying to build the minority population in their classrooms. Minority students, who are generally defined as male and female students from Black, Hispanic, and Asian ethnic groups, are important to the success of providing diversity to agriculture programs.

In 1988, it became apparent that minorities were not enrolling in agriculture classes when the National Research Council reported that enrollment in secondary agricultural education programs was predominantly white males (Talbert & Larke, 1995). While the growth of white females accelerated in the late eighties, the minority population remained low. Today, the lack of minorities enrolling in high school agriculture courses still exists implying that there is not a need for minority students to enroll in collegiate agriculture programs of study. The Agricultural Education profession has attempted to promote the importance of welcoming minorities to enroll in agriculture courses by following The Strategic Plan for Agricultural Education (2005) which boldly states, “Agricultural education envisions a world where all people value and understand the vital role of agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources systems in advancing personal and global well-being.” How then can we
make agricultural education an important area of study for students of minority populations?

Promoting the need for minorities to enroll in agricultural education programs is not a new concept. According to Wiley, Bowen, Bowen & Heinsohn (1997), several research studies have reported that low levels of minority involvement in the food and agricultural sciences begin during the high school years (Larke & Barr, 1987; Rawls & Thomas, 1994; Bowen, 1994). In addition, Scanlon, Yoder, and Hoover (1989) found that negative images toward agriculture remain as major barriers to minority enrollment in secondary agricultural education programs (Bowen, Bowen, & Heinsohn, 1997). According to Orthel, et al. (1989), most minority students correlate food and agricultural science careers with more traditional views of agriculture as primarily farming which tends to promote a more negative view of agriculture. To overcome this negative image of agriculture, it is essential that minority students be exposed to all aspects of agriculture including leadership, food and science, and experiential settings.

In many situations, high school students (including those of minority populations) are not informed in a systematic way about the food, fiber and natural resources system because many high schools lack the necessary resources to develop an awareness of and appreciation for agricultural science-science related programs (Dolce, 1984). Furthermore, many science teachers have limited knowledge of the food, fiber and natural resources system (Bowen, Bowen, & Heinsohn, 1997) and, therefore, are not aware of the close relationship that exists between the science and agriculture fields of study. Because of this, the image of agriculture continues to be negative, thus not attracting students to study in this important field. Further, according to Wiley, Bowen, Bowen & Heinsohn (1997), many colleges tend to generalize their recruitment strategies based upon a more traditional approach such as addressing students who are of the majority in a grouping, thus overseeing any minority students who may be interested in the agriculture program. These types of approaches create a more limited perspective of the recruitment needs of the university agriculture programs and therefore do not attract minority students.

In contrast, some university agriculture programs have attempted to apply major recruitment efforts in an attempt to attract minority students to their programs (Wiley, Bowen, Bowen, and Heinsohn, 1997). However, low enrollment figures suggest that these efforts are not successful. For example, in the fall of 2006 approximately 2 percent of the undergraduate students had declared one of the three agriculture programs as their academic major at Southern Arkansas University (SAU). This low percent has remained stable depicting that minority enrollment in agriculture has not increased nor decreased.

In order to attract more minority students in agriculture programs, we must understand how all individuals in our culture are unique. We need to have a plan that encompasses promoting diversity in every program at every level across every state in this country. We must embrace the importance of diversity and ‘teach’ this verbiage to our preservice and student teachers in agricultural education programs. In addition, we need to make our preservice and students teachers aware that a diverse curriculum is essential and should be catered to the diverse needs of a wide array of students. It is essential that we welcome all individuals in our agriculture programs and be accepting of ways that are not considered traditional. We must continue to recruit and retain those individuals in minority populations to join the agricultural education profession and make time for minority gatherings at state and national meetings.

We must continue to make a strong effort to seek out minority individuals and invite these individuals to find a home in agricultural education. We can successfully do this by first understanding the importance of having a diverse student population coupled with a diverse curriculum. How we respond to diversity will be a challenge but should not be viewed as a problem. The time for action is now; our job is not only to help those in our current job role, but to also help the world become a more equitable place for all people of all backgrounds and experiences.

References


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success in your dreams. If I would have listened to the people who told me not to join FFA, I would have been somebody who I did not choose to be. You see, just because someone tells you something doesn’t mean you have to listen to them. Be yourself and give yourself something better, which is keeping your focus on what you want to do instead of what others expect. You have the potential to do anything you want. If you believe you can achieve!

November/December 2007

Theme: “If reality is illusion, where does Agricultural Education fit?”

--Words of Wisdom

Invited authors

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Theme Editor: Brenda Seevers

Articles due to Theme Editor: October 15, 2007
Dealing with Being Different--Believing IS Achieving!

By Jordan Craig

One day an agriculture teacher and a group of students went to tour a furniture manufacturing plant where some of the finest furnishings were made by hand. The tour included a visit to a wood mill next door, which is where the wood came from that was used by the craftsman. There, a young man watched with curiosity as a worker began to sort through a large pallet of wood. He would take a piece, carefully inspect it, and then place the wood into one of two piles.

The young man noticed that the larger pile had a sign marked discard, which meant that it would not be used for making furniture even though it looked as if it were perfectly fine. The smaller pile of wood was marked good. This puzzled the onlooker.

The young man walked over to the worker pointing to the smaller pile and said, "At this rate it must take you a whole day to find enough wood just to make a cabinet. What's wrong with these pieces here in the discard pile?" The worker replied, "These pieces of wood may all look alike to you but I can recognize that a few of them are quite different. The ones that I have placed in the reject pile are from trees that grew in a valley where they were always protected from the storms. There grain is rather coarse. They are only good for lumber. The ones that I have chosen to use came from high on the mountains. From the time they were small they were beaten by strong winds, violent rain storms, and exposed to harsh direct sun light. This toughens the trees and gives them a fine grain. "I save these pieces for choice work. They are too good to be used for ordinary lumber."

As the saying goes: Rough weather builds strong timber. The same holds true with this statement: Without friction there is no heat.

Many of us have experiences like this one everyday. We routinely judge people and put them into a pile of their own. We see that they are different than others and automatically categorize them. I watched a student walk up to an ag teacher one day and say, "I would like to join ag." Instantly people looked at him and started criticizing him. They told him he shouldn't join ag because he wasn't country enough. They told him you don't live on a farm, you don't drive a truck, and you don't even own a pair of boots. "What are you doing, joining FFA?"

The student didn't let that discourage him, he joined FFA anyway and little did he know that FFA would change his life forever. That student was me. When I first joined FFA, I was the only one like me. I was one of the only black students in my FFA chapter. I felt like I was different because I was the one showing animals and I wondered why am I here? Why did I choose this organization? I thought to myself, there are always people different than myself. I am not going to let this stop me. That is why I enjoy meeting people, we are all diverse.

My favorite thing is to meet new people and to create relationships. My first state convention, I was nervous and scared and I was a band member. I was with people I had never met and knew nothing about. I was afraid, but as the week progressed I gained friendships and made relationships with people that I never thought I would. I saw the people receiving awards and being recognized for their achievements and I wanted to do things just like them--I wanted to be successful.

When I attended the convention that week I made a promise to myself. I told myself that I wanted to be like those people on that stage. I started believing in myself. Whatever I want to do, I can. Just because I am different doesn’t mean that I can’t do it. Sometimes one has to take a stand for one’s self and be independent. We must always remember to accept others for their differences and overcoming and fully understanding those differences make us stronger. Being different does not make one settle for less--it should push one to strive for more. Everyday we face decisions and the outcome of those decisions will shape our futures. We have the ability to create a future for ourselves and influence others to be better today.

The opportunities for success are everywhere; in your career, in school, and at home. Do not let “differences” that you face keep you from persevering towards the goals you wish to achieve. Rather, learn from the hard times and create new opportunities that will lead you to

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The origins of school-based Agricultural Education are deeply rooted in the traditions of rural life and production agriculture. The Smith-Hughes Act declared the purpose of Agricultural Education to be, “fit for useful employment; that such education shall be of less than college grade and be designed to meet the needs of persons over fourteen years of age who have entered upon or who are preparing to enter upon the work of the farm or of the farm home” (Smith Hughes Act, 1917 as cited in Hillison, 1996, p. 10).

The development of supervised experience projects by Rufus Stimson was designed to encourage students to apply various agricultural production techniques on their home farms (Moore, 1988). The Future Farmers of America stemmed from the Future Farmers of Virginia, which was started in an effort to provide personal development opportunities for rural farm boys (Talbert, Vaughn, Croom, & Lee, 2007).

As a result of the recent 10x15 Long-Range Strategic Goal, there is a recognized need to increase the number of Agricultural Education programs in urban areas. It is no surprise that urban areas are rapidly expanding and opening new schools to keep up with the increasing student population. With a strong foundation in production agriculture, is our current delivery model for Agricultural Education appropriate to engage and involve urban students?

Eight years ago, I relocated to Orlando, Florida, to begin a teaching career in an urban district. I was raised in Washington Court House, Ohio, population 13,600. I grew up on a small hog and grain crops farm and attended a rural high school of 800 students in grades 9-12. While I have faded memories of my high school experiences in Agricultural Education, I do remember a curriculum that focused primarily on FFA and animal science. My SAE was swine not really relevant for my students to learn all the breeds for every species of livestock animal, so what would I include in my animal science unit? Also, most of my students had limited funds, minimal parental involvement, and lived in housing subdivisions, so what kind of SAEs should I encourage? A majority of my high school peers had SAEs consisting of production and I participated in parliamentary procedure and dairy foods CDE. My high school experiences really shaped my beliefs regarding curriculum, FFA, and SAE in my own program. During my first year of teaching, I felt a bit lost, especially related to curriculum and SAE. It was fair animals or work experience on farms, but that was not realistic for my high school students.

Differing agriculture curricula is found in schools across the United States. In many states, there has been a transition from teaching Ag 1, Ag
and also complete an identification test to judge a class of rabbits. Specialty animals CDE that requires students to participate in SAE. Currently, California holds a specialty animals CDE that requires students to judge a class of rabbits and complete an identification test to involve in SAE. I acquired additional ideas for projects. One teacher required every student to complete either an agriscience fair project or community service. Another middle school teacher provided specific options for her students. Seventh grade students could conduct research on an agricultural career or document the care provided for a pet(s). Eighth grade students could continue with pet care, maintain their lawn, or complete a home improvement project. Providing project ideas such as these could have helped increase the participation of my students in SAE.

Also, my idea of maintaining SAEs at home was altered. Most of my students kept their projects on the school campus. Several of the students engaged in a more collaborative SAE project such as planting a garden on the school grounds or raising fish in the aquaculture tank. Speaking to several urban teachers who had high levels of student involvement in SAE, I acquired additional ideas for projects. One teacher required every student to complete either an agriscience fair project or community service. Another middle school teacher provided specific options for her students. Seventh grade students could conduct research on an agricultural career or document the care provided for a pet(s). Eighth grade students could continue with pet care, maintain their lawn, or complete a home improvement project. Providing project ideas such as these could have helped increase the participation of my students in SAE.

Agricultural Education is relevant for all students – rural, suburban, and urban. I encourage you to evaluate some of the “traditions” that we hold in Agricultural Education related to curriculum, FFA, and SAE to determine the relevance and applicability for urban students. What should we continue and what are needed changes as we look to expand Agricultural Education in urban schools?

References


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The Hidden Diversity Factor

by Ann Gibson Horne

Last week I sat in a room with a group of newly elected State FFA Officers. As we were going through paperwork and other necessary details, one of our adult staff members told the group that if they hadn’t already provided it, they would need to give us copies of their auto and health insurance policies, and that it was their responsibility to maintain both throughout their year of service. One boy dropped his head and quietly said that the health insurance information he had turned in with his application was no longer valid because his dad had lost his job and the family no longer had any health insurance and he didn’t know when they would have it again. You could tell he was embarrassed, and to be honest I was surprised because although I didn’t know him well, he had always seemed to be one of the kids whose family was financially comfortable. What surprised me even more, though, was two of the other kids immediately telling him that he should check into the state’s insurance plan for children in low-income families because they were on that and it covered them even though they had graduated from high school. By this time next year I will know them and their families well, but at this point I would not have thought any of them came from low-income families.

When talking about diversity, most people immediately think of race or gender. You can walk into any agriculture classroom and measure with just a glance the balance of male to female or Hispanic to white students. There’s another area of diversity, though, that we often overlook and that can’t be measured just by looking at the students sitting in our classrooms. It’s class, or socioeconomic level. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of children living in poverty increased from 11.7 million in 2001 to 12.1 million in 2002 (1) and the official poverty rate in the U.S. has increased every year for the last four consecutive years. The United States, a country most people think of as affluent, had the highest level of poverty in the industrialized world in 2001. (2) As agricultural educators, it’s critical that we think about this issue and the impact it has on our students.

Traditionally, our classrooms have been filled with a higher-than-average number of students from low-income families. You can look at this as an example of counselors using us for a dumping ground, or you can think about it from the viewpoint that maybe these students gravitate to our programs because they feel like they can accomplish something there that will help them later in life. A lot of students from low-income families don’t even consider the possibility of college. They hope to graduate, get a job at a factory or in a greenhouse or as a welder or a truck driver or at the chicken plant or whatever, get married, have a family, and live a quiet, peaceful life. They may see no relevance between Advanced English Literature and their life, but they do see a connection between what they learn in our classes and what they experience every day. It’s up to us as teachers to recognize their potential, and encourage them to pursue advanced training and certification or

Even basic activities take on new meaning when a student is unable to afford the minimum materials.
college or whatever best suits their needs and potential. Too often counselors and others relegate students they don’t consider “college material” to an inferior status and leave them to fend for themselves while they help the Ivy League-bound fill out their applications. They don’t realize that welders may very well earn more than college professors, or that the reading level required for someone in the John Deere service technician program is higher than that for a bank president. Often, the Agriculture teacher/FFA Advisor is the one person who encourages students — and their parents — to think about college or professional training.

FFA provides students with many opportunities to travel and experience new things. One of the reasons early agriculture teachers came up with the idea of a student organization was to expose farm boys to the world outside their small communities, and thousands of leaders in all walks of life have resulted from that first gathering in 1928. But we all know that everything costs money. Whether it’s going to summer leadership camp, state or national FFA convention, or state fair, there are expenses involved. For many students, cost is not an issue. Their parents see the value of the experience and are more than willing to pay for it. Other students have parents who may see the benefit, but simply aren’t able to come up with the money. More and more new teachers come from middle-class families, where they grew up comfortably able to participate in any activity they wanted. It’s hard for them to recognize students who don’t participate not because they don’t want to get involved, but because they can’t afford it and are too embarrassed to say so. We have always prided ourselves as a profession on really knowing our students — we visit their homes to look at their SAE projects, we take them on trips, we are involved in their lives outside of the classroom. It seems, though, that in the modern days of trying to do everything we need to, SAE visits are often overlooked, and in too many cases the ag teacher may not make it out to every students’ home. It’s really critical that we try to do this and meet every student’s parents or guardians. (Note to younger teachers – a pay-off to this is often better behavior in the classroom!) Often, the kids you need to visit the most are the ones who are the hardest to visit, because they are embarrassed for you to see their homes or because their parents work inconvenient shifts, but you need to keep trying. Another tactic that one veteran teacher told me about is riding the school bus routes and just seeing where all the kids live. He was amazed to discover that he had kids living in homes that ranged from having four-car garages to having no indoor plumbing. This is more and more true as the divide between the “haves and have-nots” gets wider and wider. Another thing you have to think about is that a family may have the outward appearance of being financially stable but in truth be

But we all know that everything costs money. Whether it’s going to summer leadership camp, state or national FFA convention, or state fair, there are expenses involved.

So, what can you, as an agriculture teacher, do to help these kids? A big first step is just realizing that you need to stop and think when you’re planning activities about how much it is going to cost and whether you have kids who need to participate but may not be able to afford to pay their share. From there, here are a few suggestions:

1. Never publicly single out kids who can’t pay. In my experience, the kids who truly can’t afford to pay their share are so embarrassed that they would rather say they have some other reason for not participating than to admit they need money. Sometimes, kids who have the money just don’t want to pay it because they would rather spend it on CDs or movie tickets. Don’t ever ask the entire group, “Is there anybody who isn’t going to be able to pay their own way on this trip?” Just let it be known in your chapter that money is never an issue if the kids really want to participate and that they should come to you privately to talk about it. You will have to determine
whether they really can pay or not. If you don’t know a family well, talk with the principal, counselor, or teachers who have been in the school a long time. You might also talk to their church leaders for information. When you spend as much time with students as ag teachers do, it’s important that you know about their family situations.

2. Try to have the chapter pay for as many things as possible for all the kids. One of the very best ag teachers I know has fundraisers each year to raise money to pay the members’ expenses at state and national convention, state fair, livestock shows, leadership camp, meals on CDE trips, etc. The kids pay very little or nothing at all to participate, even those who can afford to. The secret to the success of this is that when she has her hamburger supper/auction fundraisers, the whole community turns out to support them, and most of the parents who could afford to pay their kids’ way always seem to bring more auction items and pay very high prices for what they buy – all a way to even things out.

3. Get the kids in Official Dress as often as you can. It builds pride. It also helps level the playing field. One of the great things about our FFA Official Dress is that everyone looks the same; it’s not a fashion show when you go to FFA functions. You can buy a white shirt and a pair of black pants at Nordstrom’s or Wal-Mart, and the difference is not that noticeable in a crowd. Many chapters buy matching shirts for their judging team members. Anything that can help kids fit in and feel included is a plus.

4. Never just give kids money. It’s much better for their self-esteem and their work ethic if they can earn it. Many teachers require students to pay at least a portion of their registration fees as a non-refundable deposit to avoid all those extras signing up who really don’t plan to go, and that’s a good policy. Just make sure all the kids have a way to earn the money if their parents can’t pay it. Whether it’s money to pay their FFA dues or a registration fee, you can usually find people in the community who need small jobs done and are more than willing to pay a good worker to do them. If the chapter is paying all the expenses for an activity, make sure that the members involved were also enthusiastically involved in fundraisers and other chapter projects. Some teachers use a point system where students can exchange points earned for dollars to pay for expenses on trips.

5. Find people in the community who are willing to quietly pay for a student to attend a leadership camp or buy an FFA jacket with no one ever knowing. There are also people who will help kids with SAE projects. Many folks whose children showed livestock but are now grown welcome having FFA members come in and work out plans so that the students can afford to show one of their animals, and you may have local farmers who need summer workers. There are more people out there who will help than teachers often realize. There are a lot of us who wouldn’t be where we are today had it not been for someone helping us out somewhere along the road, and it’s a good thing to be able to turn the tables and be able to help someone else.

I hope that some of the ideas in this article help you in working with students from low-income families. Remember, of course, to always consider your individual situation and adapt these ideas to what your students need. And don’t forget to use your common sense; don’t send a kid to work for someone you don’t know well and trust. Try to always be fair to all your students – even though being fair does not always mean doing the same thing for everyone. Keep students’ financial information to yourself, or perhaps share it when needed with your advisory committee or scholarship committee when decisions are being made. But most importantly, remember that we are here to help ALL of our students reach their full potential, and that their success is the reason we do what we do every day. You never know, you may be preparing a future state or national officer. I know that I’m thankful that the FFA Advisors of my new state officers took the time and made the effort to make sure they were able to participate and take advantage of all the opportunities available in our great organization. It just shows that you never know the potential locked inside of those freshmen entering your classroom. Do your best to bring it out, for every student who enters your classroom.


Ann Gibson Horne, Ed.D., a former high school agriculture teacher and university teacher educator, is a Program Advisor for the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, Agricultural Education Division.

The Agricultural Education Magazine
Why Diversify the Agricultural Education Classroom?

By Paula E. Faulkner & Connie D. Baggett

Diversity! When the word “diversity” is present, people usually think of race and ethnicity. Yet, there are so many other factors associated with its meaning. While the list of its definitions is countless, its meaning can be quite basic. Diversity includes different races, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic levels, sexual orientations, religious affiliations, and disabilities. Valuing diversity builds understanding and helps people learn to appreciate this new diversity, by building interpersonal relationships and institutions that are structured on domination and subordination (Castania, 1996).

In recent years, agricultural education has increased its diversity initiatives by recruiting and retaining diverse populations for its programs. By including a diversity of students, particularly those with disabilities, in agricultural education classrooms, students are provided the tools needed to live in an increasingly diverse society. The issue was addressed by Wakefield and Talbert (1999) who found that agricultural education programs are not adequately preparing students for diversity.

Inclusionary practices are used to provide students with and without disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a regular educational setting. With federal legislation such as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 and 2004, and The No Child Left Behind Act, today’s schools, including agricultural education programs, are able to provide an environment that encourages students to work and play with individuals with different abilities.

Although research concerning the long-term benefits may be sketchy, there is some evidence of the positive effects of inclusive education on students who do not have disabilities (Education World, 2007). While research continues to be conducted concerning the benefits of inclusionary practices, agricultural education classrooms should recognize that inclusionary practices helps students and teachers build understanding, appreciation, and tolerance of individual differences, which ultimately creates a better environment and society.

The following tips are provided (Pearce, 1996) to help set up your agricultural education classroom to promote inclusion.

- **Develop classroom rules.**
  Clear rules and consequences should be explained to students at the beginning of school and posted to reinforce throughout the school year.

- **Focus on structure.**
  Have a routine put in place so that students know your expectations.

- **Teach students to learn.**
  Be explicit when teaching study skills.

- **Work with specialists to develop/modify your curriculum.**
  Solicit and incorporate the assistance from mathematic, science or other teachers/staff in your school.

- **Collaborate with special education teachers.**
  Special education teachers will be able to provide input concerning instructional techniques, accommodations, and the federal legislation for students with disabilities.

- **Ask for help!**
  Always ask for help. This is the only way colleagues will be able to provide support and assistance.

- **Get your entire classroom involved.**
  Tell students what they should expect in their inclusive classroom.

- **Use cooperative learning,**
Diversity means we all bring unique pieces, but also remembering we all live in the same fragile environment.

peer tutoring, and other group work.
Encourage students on higher ability levels to work with their lower ability peers.

• Help students develop friendships.
Many teachers find that connecting students with special needs and regular education students helps develop friendship and acceptance.

• Know when to change course.
Flexibility is the key. To be successful in meeting the needs of students, you must consider each student’s needs individually.

When all is said and done, teachers have a responsibility to provide the best learning environment for their students and set the tone for this environment. This environment should make all students feel welcome and appreciated. Teachers must recognize differences among students in a positive manner. Teachers should also build upon the similarities among students and help all students build character, self respect, and self confidence.

References:

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“The only normal people are the ones you don’t know too well.”

—Rodney Dangerfield

Understanding who we are and why we see things the way we do is the first step toward making diversity part of our lives. This article will focus on three activities teachers can use at the beginning of the school year to give themselves and their students the opportunity to learn more about each other.

Activity 1--Looking for Hidden Bias

Most of us harbor hidden biases. You might think you have moved past that kind of thing, but researchers call it “mental residue.” It is the thoughts and ideas embedded in our minds. Things we grew up with, or learned and tried to unlearn—but weren’t quite successful. Unfortunately these hidden biases can still affect or influence our reactions to others. Learning about them is the first step to removing them.

Psychologists and researchers from three universities--the University of Washington, the University of Virginia and Harvard University--have created a simple on-line test to determine hidden bias. Their work is called “Project Implicit” and the tests are called Implicit Association Tests.

If you have a computer and access to the Internet, you can participate in the study and receive a print-out of your results.

• Go to the Project Implicit website
  http://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit
• Select “Demonstration”
• Select “Go to the Demonstration tests”
• Select “I wish to proceed”
• First, select and complete the “Race IAT” IAT stands for Implicit Association Test—in other words the test looks at the way we associate images.
• Next, select and complete the “Skin-tone IAT”

Now what?

Once you have everyone’s results, post them on the board anonymously. Remember, this exercise is not designed to make students feel guilty or “wrong.” Instead we want to use this as a tool to help students understand more about the world they live in and those that share it with them.

A simple exercise would be to chart the hidden biases revealed and discuss, in general, possible reasons that would cause these reactions.

After the reasons are listed, move on to discuss ways to overcome these biases and prevent them from being passed to yet another generation. (Allow 30-45 minutes for discussion.)

Activity 2--The Power of Words

This exercise was taken from the Teaching Tolerance website, and The Power of Words Curriculum. Complete lessons are available at http://www.tolerance.org. Search the site for “The Power of Words.”

Create a one page handout as follows:

• Title: Ethnic Stereotypes
• Directions: Draw a line connecting each name on the list below with that person’s occupation. You may use each occupation only once, there will be some left over.
  • Column 1--Names
    Jamal Jackson
    Eli Goldstein
    Mohammed Al-Saaidi
    Alison Running Bear
    Jiang Wu
    Consuela Garcia
    Faiza Shirazi
    Naomi Herschlberger
    Steve Smith
    Twila Sue Poole
    George White Feather
    Latisha Johnson
    Jorge Enriquez
    George Williamson
    Machiko Matsumoto
    Bubba Ray Deere
  • Column 2--Occupations
    Middle manager
    Flight Attendant
    Truck Driver
    Massage Therapist
    Corporate vice president
High school teacher
Computer Programmer
Farmer
Secretary
Professional basketball player
Rancher
Oil company executive
Agricultural field worker
Entomologist
Hotel Maid
Homemaker
University professor
Forest ranger
Lawyer
Waitress

• Break into small groups
• Share responses and look for patterns. Suggested discussion questions:

Did many people connect certain names with the same occupations? If so, which names and occupations did your group associate with each other? Why?

This is a great activity for helping students develop an awareness of stereotypes associated with various ethnic or regional groups.

Activity 3--Service-Learning

Service-learning combines community service with classroom curriculum to the benefit of both the community and the students.

Allow your students to survey the community and look for “needs,” then introduce LIFEKNOWLEDGE 2 lessons H.S-7, “Using your community as a learning lab,” or HS-105, Involvement in Community.”

Next, let your students select a social issue that needs to be addressed in your community. Working with them, allow them to design a community service project to address their identified issue. Implement the plan and complete the service project. Upon completion of the project allow class time for students to share and reflect on the benefits and challenges of the project.

Research shows that service-learning can reinforce skills learned in the classroom and improve students’ interest in school. Another benefit shown notes when woven into the curriculum, community service becomes an effective tool for teaching tolerance and reducing bias.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (www.nwrel.org) has provided research-based educational materials for 40 years. According to their reports, service-learning:

• reinforces values of justice and compassion;
• helps students develop a keener awareness of diversity;
• improves students’ feelings of connection to their community.

By combining lessons learned in the classroom with service-learning, teachers increase the likelihood that students will gain a more nuanced understanding of social issues, and that they will learn to empower—not “help”—marginalized communities.

For more information about how to implement service-learning in your class, including a “Multicultural Service-Learning Planning Sheet,” visit the ABCs of Service-Learning, online at www.teachingtolerance.org/service.

In closing this issue’s Inclusion Corner, I hope you will find ways to incorporate some of these activities in your classes. The students you teach today, are the leaders and creators of tomorrow’s world.

Your students fall into the category we now call “Millennials.” There world is different than the world of any generation that came before them. They have never known life without cell phones, computers and chat rooms. They want to learn! We know this generation as a group has an appreciation for diversity. As a teacher, you can help them expand their natural appreciation and help them understand that only in a world where we are all appreciated for ourselves as individuals, not the group we belong to or the way we look or the car we drive, can we hope to find a safe and happy existence.
“These kids these days just don’t understand what we had to go through when we were younger! We worked hard on farms and to make ‘ends meet’,” says my grandpa. “Things have changed, Pa we don’t learn how to just take care of tractors and we can do much more than just run a tractor. We learn what makes cattle different colors, or how to get in front of a crowd of a thousand people and not be nervous when we a giving a speech,” I would say!

From your great-grandpa to your grandpa and all the way down to the young students who are in agriculture classes today, there is a night and day difference in the types and variety of topics that are taught. Back in the early 1900’s when the Smith-Hughes Act started the implantation of agriculture classes in the school systems, the classes that were taught ranged from engines to wood-working. These classes were fit for the times, and they were classes that the students could really get involved with. When you look at the agriculture classrooms today and the one of the 1940’s, it is just the same as looking at a new John Deere® as compared to a John Deere Model “G”©; furthermore, there are tons of new areas being covered and being introduced that our grandparents would have never thought about.

These classes that were taught were ones that focused on ways of making more productive farmers instead of students like today. This was done by having agriculture mechanics classes that focused on the engine and implement repair, plumbing, electricity, and much more. Along with these were the production classes that they were exposed to, which were connected straight to the farm. Whether it was crop science or animal production, they always focused on making the farm a more improved working environment.

Looking at the make-up of this curriculum, you can tell that it strictly worked off of an entrepreneurship farm – where the student works with what they already have. This goes to show that all of these types of topics covered are there to teach the students not only how to be a more productive farmer, but also to show them how to update the farm-place in a more efficient way. They would bring things from their farms, which would give the class a demonstration from which they could all learn. These demonstrations ranged from tearing-down a tractor engine to bore the cylinders, to shearing a ewe.

Starting in the 1960’s, the FFA introduced Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs to the Agriculture Education classroom. This connected the students to a workplace, instead of just staying on the farm, which exposed them to new areas of agriculture. SAE is a program that is based on both entrepreneurship and placement work. Along with this was the introduction of having a record book which helped both the farmer and the worker keep records of their actions and tasks for the future. This was also placed into the FFA structure in order to allow students to compete with their projects at the state and national levels. These areas range from small animal care to diversified horticulture.

Along with all of the new implementations of the Agriculture Education field, there were also several new classes that were added to the programs. Instead of just “plain” animal production of the 40’s, there are now classes such as, poultry science, beef cattle production, aquaculture, PALS (Partners and Active Learning Support), and many more. These classes are just a reflection of the ever-growing agriculture industry and how it is becoming more efficient everyday. Here in Arkansas, who would have thought that catfish farming would be one of the signature aspects of Arkansas agriculture, or that Arkansas would house many of the leading agriculture businesses in the world right here in our Natural State – Tyson Foods©, Riceland©, and many more. All of these areas of agriculture are mirrored in our classrooms and FFA chapters.

Today it is common for a student to go sign up for classes, and in-
stead of signing up for animal production and agriculture mechanics, they are joining leadership, corn production, or even small engines. These classes are all based off of the early century’s curriculum, but the only difference is that they are a reflection of the diversification of agriculture. No matter what your grandparents tell you, I can guarantee you that when they were younger, their grandparents told them the same thing; furthermore, they were the kids who did not care or appreciate things, just as they tell us today. As long as agriculture continues to change, people and industry will change with it. Agricultural Education is just as diverse as the people in industry make it; if we take this curriculum and continue to implement new classes, then we will continue to show the world that American Agricultural Education is the KEY TO THE FUTURE!

Kory Dedmon is an Agricultural Education preservice teacher at Southern Arkansas University

WHAT DO YOUR STUDENTS LOOK LIKE?
HOW DO THEY FIT YOUR PROGRAM?
HOW DOES YOUR PROGRAM FIT THEM?
A Look at Diversity from the Past

found by Billye Foster

love to dig! You know, in closets and old cupboards, anywhere you can find pieces of the past. I have always been fascinated by the connection between what happened then and how we behave today.

My first thought was, “This is the diversity issue—so find an article about the merger between NFA & FFA!” I thought I had experienced a near genius moment—but finding that article was more difficult than I imagined. The merger became official July 1, 1965. However, it was not until the November 1965 issue that I found this article on one of the last few pages. I suppose humankind has always been slow to adopt change. Enjoy this piece from the past, you may find more than one nugget of wisdom within.

I have mentioned some of the activities which I consider assets to our F. F. A. as results of blending. I am certain that throughout Southeast United States other states will be making similar steps in the future. We feel that our organization has been greatly strengthened by the combined talents, contributions and cooperation of the two groups.
In Shakespeare’s Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark famously asks the question, “To be or not to be?” When it comes to the value and importance of embracing diversity in career and technical education (CTE) programs, in general, and agricultural education programs, in particular, the question is very much the same: To be or not to be? Do CTE educators choose to embrace diversity and enable their programs to survive or do we choose, instead, to believe that we are living in a non-pluralistic society and, as a result, condemn our programs to certain extinction?

**Facts about diversity**

The schools of the 21st century are already a racially and ethnically diverse place. Currently, 36% of the children in U.S. public school are racial and ethnic minorities. By many estimates half of all school age children will be racial and ethnic minorities by the year 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The workforce of the 21st century is diverse as well. Currently, racial and ethnic minorities comprise 28% of the U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). It is projected that nearly one third of the U.S. population will be ethnic and racial minorities by 2020. More recent statistics confirm this trend. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2005 that Texas is a majority-minority state. Texas follows on the heels of Hawaii, New Mexico and California. Five more states will soon be majority-minority states—Maryland, Mississippi, Georgia, New York and Arizona (Reese, 2005).

Ethnic and racial diversity are a fact of life in the 21st century workplace.

If one considers that the workplace of the 21st century is truly a global workplace, then racial, cultural and ethnic diversity are a fact of life in ways we could only imagine a few short years ago. As Thomas Friedman suggests in The World Is Flat, the economy of the 21st century is an economy without borders where workers must deal with fellow workers from every continent. *Now, that’s diversity!*

Ethnic and racial diversity are only part of the diversity equation. The Equal Employment Opportunity law defines diversity in terms of gender and race, as well as, age, ethnicity, national origin, religion and disability (Carnevale and Stone, 1995). When one considers that the workplace of the 21st century is a global workplace, it is obvious that the workplace is diverse in terms of race, gender, age and religion. Less obvious may be disability diversity. According to the Survey of Income and Program Participation 32.1 million people or 18.7% of the U.S. population between the ages of 15 and 64 have a disability. Nearly nine percent of these disabilities are severe (McNeil, 1997).

Diversity in schools and the workplace is a given in the 21st century. Educators can choose to recognize this reality and prepare students for success or ignore it at their own peril and that of their students. Educating students to work successfully in this environment is the job of every career and technical educator just as it is their job to teach technical skills.

**Designing curriculum and instruction**

Providing appropriate diversity education begins with curriculum and instruction. It also involves instructional personnel, student recruitment activities and the make-up of the FFA leadership team. With regard to curriculum, the literature is well populated with reports on what students need to know, be and do in order to be successful in the new workplace. The list of skills as reported by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills is typical. It includes:

Core subjects and 21st century themes...
- Learning and innovation skills
- Creativity and innovation skills
- Critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Communication and collaboration skills
- Information, media and technology skills
- Information literacy skills
- Media literacy skills
- Information and communication technology literacy
- Life and career skills
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Initiative and self direction
- Social and cross-cultural skills
- Productivity and accountability

This list, like all such lists, includes references to “cross cultural” and “collaboration” skills. Any agriculture instructor will look at this skill list and recognize that agricultural education and the FFA are well positioned to address these skills. The LifeKnowledge curriculum, alone, provides the curriculum instructors need to meet many of these skill demands. However, many instructors will suggest that in the struggle to teach recordkeeping, plant science, animal science, agricultural mechanics and more, the time to teach LifeKnowledge skills is sparse. Perhaps our priorities in terms of curriculum and instruction need to be readdressed. We undoubtedly need to give greater attention to these “soft” skills.

Instructional practices can also contribute to success in diversity...
education. Academic integration projects can increase equity. Berryman et al. (1992) report that integration helps offset stratification and discrimination in schools. Engaging in thematic units of instruction that cut across broad curricular areas can bring students together who might not otherwise mingle. Team teaching and the formation of smaller learning communities can do the same.

For additional ideas about bringing diversity to curriculum and instruction visit:
- The National Coalition for Equity in Education at http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu
- EdChange at www.edchange.org
- The National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language learning at www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/ncrcdsl/edall.htm

**The face of agricultural education**

In addition to curriculum and instruction, agricultural education instructors must also work with administrators and teacher trainers to examine who teaches agricultural education in the K-12 system. Only 15% of the K-12 public school teaching force is non-white (Reese, 2005). While we have made significant inroads in gender equity within the agricultural education profession, much remains to be done in terms of bringing people of color into our ranks. The racial and ethnic make-up of the teaching profession should reflect the make-up of the general population.

**Student recruitment and FFA leadership**

The structure of agricultural education programs, particularly with regard to student recruitment strategies and student leadership, must also be examined. In terms of recruitment, it is again important to set as a goal that our programs reflect the diversity of our own schools. In designing recruitment strategies, student leaders should be charged with researching the racial, ethnic, gender and disability diversity of their own school. The data gathered from this research should then serve as a basis for designing a recruitment program. What strategies will be necessary, for example, to ensure that the racial make-up of the local agricultural education program reflects that of the school? The literature includes many strategies, but they certainly include using children of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds for actual recruitment activities. Children want to belong to organizations that have other children who are like them.

The structure and make-up of the student leadership of FFA chapters should also be examined. Does the leadership team reflect the diversity of the school? While chapter elections often define the make-up of the executive committee, it is possible to expand the team by strategically selecting FFA committee chairmen for standing and ad hoc committees. Children of various backgrounds will bring different perspectives to the leadership team that will improve recruitment activities and the general quality of the organization.

**Diversity in a larger context**

Thus far, this article has addressed diversity as a matter of ethnicity, gender and special populations. Ultimately, however, diversity is a much larger issue. Hayles (1996) suggests that diversity is “all the ways in which we differ”. Ultimately, embracing diversity involves valuing those who have differences of thought. It involves embracing all children regardless of their dress, hairstyle, race, ethnicity or other differences. It involves reflecting on the overt and covert policies and practices employed in agricultural education programs and asking: Do we erect barriers that prevent certain groups of students from participating in our program? If so, what can be done to remove those barriers?

**Live or die?**

Embracing diversity is not an
option. As was suggested at the beginning of this article, U.S. schools and the workplace of the 21st century are diverse places. If agricultural education programs are not diverse places as well, and if as educators we do not do all we can to prepare students to thrive in an atmosphere of diversity, then we have condemned our programs to certain death and our students to certain failure. We must make a choice: Live or die. To be or not to be….that is the question.

References:


How can you be sure All of your students’ multiple intelligences are being tapped? Try out this simple inventory for Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence. If you are utilizing at least 6 of the list below, you aren’t doing too bad!

• choral speaking
• declarizing
• storytelling
• retelling
• speaking
• debating
• presenting
• reading aloud
• dramatizing
• book making
• nonfiction reading
• researching
• listening
• process writing
• writing journals

Do you use the E-moments introduced in Strategies for Great Teaching, by Mark Reardon and Seth Derner?

The LIFEKNOWLEDGE series of lessons has E-moments (Engagement moments) embedded throughout but these tools can also be used in any lesson or laboratory you teach. Reaching the multiple intelligences of all your students is one way to make an inclusive classroom.

John Mulcahy is a CTE administrator in Peoria, Arizona. Before becoming an administrator John was a teacher of agricultural education in Washington and Arizona for over 20 years.
During our annual AATA (Arizona Agricultural Teachers Association) conference in July, one of our veteran teachers was asked to address the body about the need to increase diversity in our FFA chapters. As he discussed the importance of serving a variety of students in our programs, I began to ponder if our chapter was on the right track.

What does diversity entail? – Race, Socioeconomics, Learning Abilities. After reviewing the school demographics, I quickly realized that our Agriscience classes’ enrollment nearly mirrored those of the schools, in all categories.

Below is a list of items that have worked in several chapters, increasing the opportunity for diversity in agricultural education programs:

**Treat all students as human beings**

Once students enter the public school system, they are given a student identification number, along with a schedule that tells them where to be and when. Some feel as if their entire identity is at jeopardy. As teachers, we should focus on the students as if we were in their shoes. Mix things up and keep them excited about coming into your classroom. Greet the students at the door with a smile and handshake. Show the students that you generally care by asking about their weekends and attending their sports and musical events. When your students turn in their student information sheets, read them; refer to their interests as often as you can throughout your lessons, SAE visits, and FFA activities.

**Recruitment**

Most agricultural education programs have that one key recruitment activity that has been perfected by years of practice. Take the positive aspects of that activity and apply them to several, smaller activities that will address the need of a variety of students. For example, target the academically successful students by explaining how your program can benefit and prepare them for college admissions and scholarships. Visit the band and choir kids, offering the opportunities they have for performing at local events and auditioning for the National FFA Choir and Band, as well as the talent show.

**Encouragement**

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Learning tells us that all students need to belong. What an amazing opportunity we have to nurture that sense of belonging in all of our students. After determining their interests and/or talents, approach the students and ask them to join the aquaculture team or to develop and maintain the chapter website. We also need to remember to provide encouragement in the classroom. Expect each student to do their best and praise them when they do. As you visit each student for their SAE’s, provide advice as to how they can improve their projects. It is important to remember that all students want to succeed.

**Classroom**

Create an environment that is welcoming to all students. It is important to be aware of the various cultural and religious differences that our students have. Make sure that all posters, quotes and pictures are non-discriminatory. Also, as students use their creativity while participating in learning activities, display those items along the walls in your classroom. This shows that you appreciate their efforts. Finally, when a student is at a loss when it comes to starting an SAE, guide them through the appropriate steps to choose an SAE area and encourage them through the entire process.

The above are simple tasks that a teacher can do everyday to increase the chances of their students feeling comfortable, successful and important. As a result, all students, whether they are African American or Mexican American, a jock or a musician, all will enjoy being a part of your agricultural education program.
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During the annual conference of the Central Region at Des Moines in April 1928, representative of the Meredith Publishing Company of that city expressed a desire to give some sort of assistance to the cause of agricultural education. It occurred to certain members of the conference that the company might be willing to assist with a teachers’ publication. The company’s managers were approached and before the close of the conference a proposal for publishing was submitted to a committee from the conference, headed by Z. M. Smith of Indiana. The conference unanimously approved the proposed arrangement and authorized a continuance of the committee, instructing it to bring the matter before the professional people of the other regions.

The committee then outlined a proposed set-up for the management of the project.

An editing-managing board was tentatively suggested, to serve for one year, and from its numbers there was chosen an editor, a consulting editor, and a secretary-treasurer. The chairman of the regional committee then submitted to each member of the executive committee of the American Vocational Association the proposal of the publishers and the committee’s proposal as to managing personnel for the first year. All members but one of the executive committee responded and all who answered were favorable to both proposals.

The committee then proceeded to sound out the state supervisors of agricultural education. All of these men responded and none objected to the arrangement. Most supervisors were enthusiastic in its support, and the estimates as to probable number of subscribers from their own states indicated that the project would succeed.

The original Board of Editors included: Paul W. Chapman, State Director of Vocational Education for Georgia; R. W. Gregory, Itinerant Teacher Trainer for Indiana; R. W. Heim, State Director of Vocational Education for Delaware; J. H. Pearson, Nebraska State Supervisor of Agricultural Education; H. M. Skidmore, Teacher Trainer, Agriculture, University of California, Davis; W. F. Stewart, Head of Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University; Z. M. Smith, State Director of Vocational Education, Indiana; H. M. Hamlin, Associate Professor of Agricultural Education at the Iowa State College; and F. E. Moore, State Director of Vocational Education, Iowa.

The 2007 Managing & Editing Board

Allan Sulser, NAAE President, Agricultural Education Teacher, Utah
Heather Dye, State Supervisor, Agricultural Education, Nevada
John Ricketts, Assistant Professor, Agricultural Education, the University of Georgia
Jamie Cano, former Editor, Associate Professor, Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University
Billye Foster, Editor, Associate Professor, Agricultural Education, the University of Arizona
Jay Jackman, NAAE Executive Director, Business Manager for the Magazine, Kentucky
Larry Case, Chief Executive Officer and Advisor, National FFA Organization, Alexandria, VA.
Tony Small, Education Division Director, National FFA Organization, Indianapolis, Indiana
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In an effort to continue to improve the quality of the magazine and cover the rising cost of production, *The Agricultural Education Magazine* will increase subscription rates for the first time since June 1994 when rates increase from $7.00 per year to $10 per year. Beginning in January of 2008, subscription rates will increase as follows:

- **Domestic rate** $15 (including mailed copies and password access to issues archived on the web)
- **Domestic rate** $12 (hard copies only)
- **Domestic rate** $10 (digital access only--password entry)
- **International rate** $22
- **Institution bulk rate** $7

*The Agricultural Education Magazine* has served the profession of agricultural education for eighty years. It has documented the history and evolution of an educational system with humble beginnings in Des Moines, Iowa that is now recognized as the premiere educational systems in the world. The Editing & Managing Board offer our thanks to the subscribers and practitioners that have helped make this publication an integral part of the profession.