

Frequently Asked Questions Agricultural Education and the FFA

As a part of the overall educational program, agriculture education is designed to provide students with competencies to make them aware of and prepared for the world of work. Agriculture is a dynamic, rapidly changing industry that has an exciting future. The “New Agriculture” consists of the intriguing new frontiers of biotechnology. While the primary thrust of the program is for those students who are preparing for employment in agricultural occupations requiring less than a baccalaureate degree, agricultural education has a long tradition of preparing students who continue their education in agriculture at the postsecondary level. The program concentrates on the development of essential technical skills that are vital to the success of people entering a career in agriculture. Just as important as the technical skills are the skills developed in leadership through the comprehensive nature of the program. Since its inception, agricultural education has trained youth in the skills necessary to assume leadership positions in agriculture. As agriculture addresses controversial issues such as genetic engineering, leadership training takes on increasing importance among our youth. People will be needed who not only have an understanding of the technical aspects of the issues, but who also have an understanding of the ethical and philosophical issues.

Agricultural Education is composed of three distinct, yet interrelated components. A basic component is classroom and laboratory experiences. In the classroom, students learn concepts and theories dealing with a broad spectrum of agricultural and agribusiness topics. The classroom is followed by the laboratory mode of instruction where concepts and theories are carried through to their application. Here, the students are taught “hands-on” skills that ensure that the skills learned are practical and usable.

Both classroom and laboratory instruction are put to use in the Supervised Agricultural Experience Program (SAEP) component of the program. In this approach, students work and learn in a real-life situation where they obtain on-the-job skills. SAEP can vary from the traditional home projects to entrepreneurship or cooperative work experience in production or agribusiness.

The third component, the FFA organization, provides an avenue for developing leadership skills. As an integral, intracurricular component of the agricultural education program, the FFA has numerous systems to deliver instruction in leadership. In addition, FFA provides incentives for improved student performance through its awards program. Teachers of agriculture have always stressed the problem solving and decision making approach to teaching. Through this approach, students are better equipped to cope with changes that are constantly occurring, not only in agricultural industry but also in life in general. The strength of the program lies in the flexibility and dedication of teachers whose philosophy is, “We don’t just teach agriculture, we teach students.

Are Agricultural Education classes available to all students in public schools?

Agricultural Education classes are available to any student in high school that has an Agricultural Education Program. At present Agricultural Education is taught in 175 high schools throughout Georgia.

Does Georgia have any middle school exploratory classes available for middle school students who have an interest in agriculture?

Georgia has approximately 30 middle school programs, offered for grades 6-8. The curriculum is designed to explore all areas of Agricultural Education including career exploration.

Since FFA is an integral part of the high school agricultural education classes, is a Middle school student eligible to join the FFA and participate in the many career development events offered on the high school level?

The middle school students that are in an Agriculture exploratory class are eligible for membership in the FFA and compete in many of the career development events that are designed for the middle school students.

Is it possible for a home school student to be a FFA Member?

At present Georgia has made no provisions for these students to become FFA Members. North Carolina was the first state to allow home schooled students to become FFA Members. The home school student has to purchase his or her Agriculture Curriculum from North Carolina, and each student has to have a supervised agricultural experience project. We are at present studying this possibility.

What are the proper procedures to follow in getting a new Young Farmer Program in my county?

The first step is to get approval from your local system to add this position. Then get a list of at least 75 potential members, their addresses, and phone numbers who would support the Young Farmer Program if it were approved by the state. You must also get the support of your Legislators that represent your county and must have a full time (12mo.) Agricultural Education Program. These new programs must be approved and funded through the legislature process.

How can a school system get funding for a New Agri-Science Program?

School systems must first make application through the local plan process and follow the guidelines that have been approved through the State Board of Education. The grant that is received covers equipment and supplies; the county must agree to furnish a new facility or renovate an existing facility that meets the specifications.

Are state funds available to upgrade my Agricultural Education Laboratory?

Funds have been requested in the past but none have been approved through the budget Process.

Can I be a FFA member even though I am not currently enrolled in an Agricultural Education Class?

Members must be enrolled in at least one agricultural education course during the school year and/or follow a planned course of study: either course must include a supervised agricultural experience program.

What is the amount of the local, state, and national dues for a FFA member?

State and national dues are eight dollars. Local chapters set their own dues.

Can I be a FFA member after high school graduation?

You may retain your membership until November following the fourth National FFA Convention after your high school graduation. However, you must continue to pay your state, local, and national dues.

My child is in the ninth grade; will he or she participate at the Jr. or Sr. level in career development events?

Your child may select either division but cannot participate in both.

What are career development events?

Career development events are educational activities organized by State and National FFA. The FFA offers over 25 events or contest in which the student can participate. Some events are for the individual and others are team oriented.

I have a special needs child; can he or she participate in agriculture education classes and FFA?

Yes, all students enrolled in a public school offering an agriculture education program is eligible. If they are enrolled in agriculture education they may also participate in the FFA and any of the career development events, which would be appropriate.

Will Agri-Science classes count as a science unit toward graduation requirements?

Yes, it can count as a third science if your school system has a state approved AgriScience program.

Would my child be able to attend any summer programs?

Georgia has two active summer camps for FFA members. One is located on Lake Jackson near Covington and Camp John Hope is located near Fort Valley. On the national level the Washington Leadership Conference is also available to FFA Members.

Must I live on a farm for my child to take agriculture classes?

No, the agriculture curriculum offers a wide range of subject matter. Classes are offered in business management and leadership, Agri-science, horticulture, natural resources, forestry, livestock, mechanics, and international agriculture as well as production agriculture.

What opportunities for employment would be available for the agriculture education student?

There are over 200 agriculture careers that supply over 20 percent of our nation's workforce.

What is an SAE project?

It is an independent project conducted by the student and supervised by the teacher. This project is conducted outside the classroom. The student is also required to keep records concerning his project. Through this project the student develops and applies his newly acquired agricultural knowledge and skills.

Is my child required to have an SAE project?

It is highly recommended. It will enable your child to receive the fullest benefits possible from his agricultural education and FFA experiences. It gives your child the opportunity to develop and expand the skills learned in the classroom.

What would be the benefits of my child joining the FFA?

It provides opportunities to practice what is being learned in the classroom, in real-life situations, and encourages development of leadership skills. Students have the chance to meet new friends, earn awards, be part of a team, travel, and have fun.

Can my child use his SAE project for a FFA Proficiency award?

Almost every possible SAE program is covered by one of the proficiency award areas. A student should check with his FFA advisor for a complete listing and the requirements for each proficiency award. Entrepreneurship and placement are two general categories of the proficiency awards.

Can my child receive a scholarship through his FFA activities?

Scholarships are available for college as well as technical schools. Students can compete for over \$1.5 million in scholarships.

My child has earned his Greenhand Degree in the FFA, are there other degrees he can earn?

The Greenhand Degree is the first of four degrees that can be earned. A student may work toward the Chapter Degree, State Degree, and the American Degree, respectfully.

Who supervises FFA meetings and activities?

Agriculture Education teachers are responsible for the planning and supervision of local organizational activities. The advisor plans activities around state and national FFA guidelines.

Why was the name changed from Future Farmers of America to just FFA?

FFA members felt that "Future Farmers" misrepresented what agriculture had become today. Fewer people actually work on a farm and more careers have opened in ag-related areas.

Will agriculture classes help my child pass the state graduation test?

The latest data collected on students taking Agri-Science courses scored eight points higher on the science section of the graduation exam than students taking a traditional third science class.