
Program Philosophy and Objectives

The philosophy of a local agriculture department developed within the guidelines of the state and local school philosophy must be clearly defined and understood by the instructor(s), school administration, parents, and students. It will include responsibilities to the community, the groups to be instructed, the areas of instruction, and direct the objectives of the program. The philosophical base should embrace the importance of the relationship of knowledge taught to the effective use and application of such knowledge as this gives the program stability and a sense of direction. The following example of a philosophy for a comprehensive high school agriculture program is offered to provide teachers and students with a clear and understandable view of the program:

Sample Philosophy for a Comprehensive High School

The agriculture teachers of Model High School are dedicated to the development of an educational environment that will help each person grow into creative, sensitive, and thinking adults. Agricultural Education is a part of the career development continuum, which includes education for agricultural occupations ranging from career motivation, career orientation, and career exploration through career development. The goal is to teach students who pursue entry-level jobs and entrepreneurship in agriculture. Students will develop an awareness that work is society's way of creating, preserving, changing, and improving their environment. Provisions will be made to allow for individual differences in all cooperative, on-the-job, and classroom experiences. Adult education is an important part of the total program.

It is essential to help each person develop self-understanding and the ability to evaluate themselves, and, as a result, to initiate change when necessary. The teacher strives to instill in students self-respect and personal values, which will help them become more effective and happy persons. The teacher acknowledges and encourages student participation and interaction in accomplishing needed change while encouraging students to accept responsibility for their actions.

Student participation and interaction is provided through planned leadership activities in FFA. The FFA provides opportunities for cooperation, citizenship, and leadership development at the local, state, and national level. Students gain experience in decision making, learn to accept responsibility for their actions and participate in activities that may lead to more purposeful use of leisure time.

The development of wholesome, community-school relations is essential in the establishment, planning, and evaluation of the Agricultural Education program. SAE visits and parent conferences must be used to interpret the needs of the students as well as visits to employers and prospective employers. By nurturing a close relationship with students and by observation of both their work and classroom achievements, students will achieve a critical awareness and respect for their community, country, and its democratic principles.

The second example is a short philosophy, which states the purpose and aim of the agriculture program in broad terms. If an outsider can read your philosophy and understand the end goals and direction of your program, the length is of secondary importance.

Any City High School Agriculture Program Philosophy

The purpose of the Any City High School agriculture program is to provide a sound, broad education in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector, which meets the needs of the secondary students, and adults in the Any City School District. Instructional areas will include leadership, agricultural experience, careers in agriculture, animal production, plant production, agricultural construction, agricultural structures, agricultural power and machinery, soil and water management, farm management, agribusiness, forestry, and horticulture.

The Missouri philosophy of career and technical education shows the emphasis, aims, and goals of career and technical education in Missouri:

Missouri Career and Technical Education

This We Believe...

That every individual should have equal access to career and technical education regardless of race, creed, socio-economic status, or place of residence. Every person in the State of Missouri should be provided career and technical education opportunities so they can achieve the fullest measure of their physical and mental abilities.

That every individual should have access to quality programs of career and technical education, which will provide the skills and knowledge necessary to enter and progress in an occupation. Persons who have already entered the labor market should have available to them counseling and placement services in addition to occupational upgrading.

Every individual should have an opportunity to develop positive attitudes toward the social significance of work and should be provided experiences that will develop and expand occupational aspirations.

Persons of all ages should be provided with opportunities to further their personal career development through a variety of activities. Career development activities should provide information and experiences, which lead to understanding of the significance of work and to occupational awareness.

Program Objectives

Program objectives should reflect the needs of students, the community, the industry of agriculture, and the goals of the school. Program objectives should provide the instructor, students, parents, administrators, and community members with an indication of the purpose and goals of the agriculture program. After the objectives have been specified, further planning can be completed to guide the program's activities designed to fulfill the stated objectives. Program objectives in effect provide a target for program accomplishments.

Program objectives should meet the following criteria (Phipps and Osborne, 1988, p. 67):

1. Are compatible with democratic values.
2. Based on human needs and on the needs of our culture.
3. Based on the agricultural needs of the community, state, and nation.
4. Not contradictory.
5. Stated in terms of changed behavior of people.
6. Are attainable.
7. Clearly stated.
8. Specific enough to enable others to determine when they have been accomplished.
9. Comprehensive and challenging to the teacher(s), students, and the community.
10. Address all components and phases of the Agricultural Education program.

Such lists should be revised as necessary to meet local conditions. Understanding of the state and national objectives for Agricultural Education and general education is prerequisite to the development of objectives, which are appropriate for a local agriculture program. Successful agriculture programs recognize that they function as part of the overall program of the local school; therefore, the objectives of the program should reflect the contribution of Agricultural Education to the overall goals of the school system.

The following mission statement provides an indication of the general purpose of secondary agriculture programs in the United States. However, the statement was intentionally written to be somewhat vague to encompass the wide variation in program emphasis throughout the country. The national mission statement, developed in 1989, is as follows:

The mission of Agricultural Education is to provide a total dynamic educational system.
We aspire to excellence as we recruit, prepare, and support individuals in agricultural careers.
We serve the people and inform them about agriculture, its needs, opportunities, and challenges.
We value:

- Providing instruction in and about agriculture.
- Serving all populations.
- Developing the whole person.
- Responding to the needs of the marketplace.
- Advocating free enterprise and entrepreneurship education.
- Functioning as part of the total educational system.
- Utilizing a proven educational process, which includes formal instruction, experiential learning, leadership, and personal development.

In addition, the following national goal statements were developed to provide more direction for teachers and administrators in guiding Agricultural Education programs in the future. Therefore, the national goals for Agricultural Education are:

1. To update instruction in agriculture and expand programs about agriculture.
2. To serve all people and groups equally and without discrimination.
3. To amplify and expand the “whole person” concept of education, including leadership, personal, and interpersonal skills.
4. To develop education programs that continually and systematically responds to the trends and demands of the marketplace.
5. To provide the stimuli that will foster the spirit of free enterprise and develop creative entrepreneurship and innovation.
6. To provide leadership and cultivate strong partnerships in the total educational systems.
7. To elevate and extend our standards of excellence in classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised experience, and student organization.

Recognizing the major goals of Agricultural Education will help provide direction in program planning. Each teacher, as the manager and supervisor of a local Agricultural Education program, will also be asked to develop a list of objectives for the local program. Examples of the types of program objectives, which should be developed for a local Agricultural Education program, are as follows:

Sample Program Objectives

1. Recognize the influence of research on the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector and other aspects of our society, such as medicine and consumer products.
2. Assess the interrelationships of agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources with other segments of society.
3. Become familiar with the influence of public policy on the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector.
4. Develop an appreciation of agriculture for vocational and leisure interests.
5. Promote creative interests of students.
6. Promote meaningful and practical applications of the content of other subject matter areas, such as mathematics and science.
7. Provide guidance regarding the opportunities in occupations requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources.
8. Assist in improving the economic efficiency of the agriculture, food, fiber and natural resource industry and individuals with careers in the industry.
9. Promote balance and meaning in the total educational program of the school and individuals.
10. Assess the contributions of agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources to society.
11. Assist present and prospective employees in agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector to improve their efficiency.

Sample Program Objectives for Agricultural Education

Objective 1: Develop agriculture competencies needed by individuals engaged in or preparing to engage in a career in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resource sector.

- A. Begin and advance in a career in the agriculture, food, fiber, and, natural resource sector.
- B. Effectively manage an agriculture enterprise or business.
- C. Recognize and apply the principles of soil science, plant science, animal science, management, and mechanization as they relate to careers in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector.
- D. Perform the managerial and operational activities necessary to enter and progress in a career in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector.

Objective 2: Develop an appreciation for career opportunities in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector and the preparation needed to enter and progress in these careers.

- A. Recognize and appreciate the importance of agriculture to the nation's economy and its impact on the daily lives of all citizens.
- B. Determine the types and numbers of occupational opportunities in agriculture.
- C. Evaluate information concerning careers in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector.
- D. Review information in relation to personal characteristics, aptitudes, and interest for careers in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources industry.
- E. Obtain exploratory work experience in selected occupations.
- F. Appreciate the need for pursuing a program of continuing education to keep abreast of and advance in occupations.

Objective 3: Develop the abilities in human relation skills essential in careers in the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector.

- A. Appreciate the dignity of work and the need for every individual to make contributions toward his/her occupation, and to the advancement of his/her family, community, and nation.
- B. Establish and maintain effective relationship with associates.
- C. Use effective verbal and written communication skills.
- D. Appreciate and develop desirable personal behaviors and work habits.

Objective 4: Develop the abilities needed to exercise and follow effective leadership in fulfilling occupational, social, and civic responsibilities.

- A. Associate with and become a functioning member of a community organization.
- B. Identify and participate in desirable activities for developing and improving leadership.
- C. Initiate activities that improve agriculture and the community.
- D. Develop and maintain desirable relationships between groups.

Objective 5: Provide educational opportunities for persons outside the scope of the traditional secondary agriculture program who are starting a new or supplemental career in agriculture or to provide additional education for those persons who are wishing to supplement prior training in agriculture.

- A. Provide informal classes or learning experiences on topics of interest to adults in the community.
- B. Supply the latest information regarding the agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources sector to the community.
- C. Provide assistance in financial management to adult farmers/agribusinesses.
- D. Identify and participate in useful leadership activities through an active Young Farmers/Young Farm Wives program.