
Program Evaluation

Effective Agricultural Education programs in secondary schools require careful planning and evaluation. The process of program planning is necessary to identify goals and objectives for the program. Program planning involves advance decision making and resource allocation. Agriculture instructors have limited resources of time, money, students, and facilities. Decisions regarding utilization of these resources must be made in the most efficient manner possible to maximize the benefits to the students, program, school and community.

Once target goals and objectives have been specified and the program has been implemented, there is a need to evaluate the program to assess the extent the program's goals and objectives have been accomplished. Agriculture education instructors have a number of resources available to assist in program evaluation. Those resources to be addressed in this section include the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) and the *Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement*. Additional information can be found in two publications of the National FFA Organization. They are the *Agriculture Teacher's Manual* and *Local Program Success Guide, Second Edition*.

Missouri School Improvement Program

The Missouri School Improvement Program is an ongoing process to enhance learning, improve educational opportunities, and increase the effectiveness of the educational programs and services provided to students. Preparation for the on-site visit by a MSIP review team includes administration of the advance questionnaires for students, staff, board members, and parents; the district's self-study; and the gathering of documentation in relation to the MSIP standards. The instructor will be most involved in the gathering of documentation.

Following the on-site review, a report will be generated which will (1) provide a comprehensive picture of the operation and quality of education provided by the district and (2) constitute the baseline information upon which a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) can be developed. The State Board of Education will determine a level of classification for the district based on the final report and the ongoing implementation of the CSIP.

The vocational education standards for MSIP are included in the Differentiated Instruction Report (7.3). Documentation to support the standards listed in this section should be prepared by the agricultural education instructor and organized according to the outline of the report. In addition, the instructor should insure that the agriculture facilities meet the safety standards of the School Services Report (8.10). The instructor can also partner with other district personnel to meet standards such as those for community education in section 7.6.

Materials that have been developed on the state level in Missouri that assist with the MSIP documentation include: *Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement*, 2001; "Agricultural Education Safety Checklist", 1993; "Guide to Developing a Written Evaluation Plan for Vocational Education Programs"; and "Third Cycle Documentation File Requirements".

During the school year prior to the MSIP review, it is suggested that the local instructor (1) conduct a self-study using the *Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement* and have a second study conducted by an administrator and/or advisory committee, (2) survey the facilities using the “Agricultural Education Safety Checklist” and develop plans to meet all safety requirements, (3) meet with the local advisory committee and seek their input on issues addressed as a part of the review, and (4) prepare all documentation needed for the review. Completing these tasks the previous year reduces the stress of trying to do everything at the last minute.

During the school year of the actual review, the instructor needs to update the documentation file and any other information. The facilities should be thoroughly cleaned and organized, and all safety equipment should be inspected.

In the year(s) following the on-site review, the instructor will need to carry out the recommendations made and re-evaluate the self-study on a regular basis. He or she will also need to work with the administration and advisory committee to carry out both short-term and long-term goals as outlined in the evaluation plan, which was developed using the “Guide to Developing a Written Evaluation Plan for Vocational Education Programs”. Those goals should definitely include actions to meet the goals of the district’s CSIP for vocational education.

The feedback and recommendations given during the school review process will only be as good as the information that the instructor prepares. Instructors should prepare material that is going to help him or her do a better job of teaching students. We need to remember that the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) is an ongoing process to enhance learning, improve educational opportunities, and increase the effectiveness of the educational programs and services provided to students.

Standards and Quality Indicators

Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement is an evaluation tool that was developed through the joint efforts of instructors, teacher educators, and state staff. It includes thirteen standards which each describe a characteristic of a successful agricultural education program. With each standard is a series of quality indicators that serve as questions to help define or measure the standard. Program improvement is a gradual process, and the standards and quality indicators provide the framework for that improvement. The goal is not necessarily to meet all standards during the first evaluation, but meeting all standards should be a part of the long-term goal.

It is recommended that long-range planning should span a five-year horizon. The five-year plan should be more than just a dream; it should encompass realistic goals and practical strategies designed to achieve the goals. It should be based on an assessment of community needs and anticipated educational, sociological, and agricultural changes within the context of the local school district. It will include both short- and long-term goals, as some goals may be accomplished in a relatively short period of time, while others may require a number of years to accomplish. It should include target dates for accomplishing each specific goal.

The local agricultural education advisory committee should be fully involved in the development of the five-year plan. Its members should assist in identifying community needs and in establishing reasonable and attainable goals for the program each year. Specific program goals may be developed from existing lists for state and national programs, but those should be modified to address local conditions. Teachers should utilize the *Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement*, the MSIP report, and the district's CSIP to provide direction for the planning process.

Long-term planning should be viewed as a continuous process with three major phases: planning, reviewing, and revising. The agriculture instructor, in conjunction with the advisory committee, should review program accomplishments every year. They should consider each short- and long-term goal to make revisions, additions, or deletions to the plan. An annual report should also be presented to the local Board of Education to assist them in their evaluation of vocational education. All entities working together make for a strong and successful program of agricultural education that meets the needs of the students and the local community.

Written Evaluation Plan

All elements of the evaluation process should be outlined in a written evaluation plan. This written plan is required to meet MSIP standards. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides the document "Guide to Developing a Written Evaluation Plan for Vocational Education Programs" which should be followed.

Resources

The District Supervisor of Agricultural Education should be consulted for the latest information on MSIP.

Documents and forms that are helpful in preparing for the Missouri School Improvement Program review may be accessed at:

- <http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/>
- <http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divvoted/msip.htm>

A Department of Elementary and Secondary Education statement concerning articulation agreements and dual credit courses is provided on the following page.

Division of Vocational and Adult Education
Articulation Agreements and Dual Credit
Definition of Terms and MSIP

For the purposes of clarifying what constitutes articulation agreements and dual credit, the following definitions will be used:

Articulation agreement – is a written, formal document that specifies the process by which a high school student may earn college credit through successful completion of certain high school courses when students achieve learning outcomes, skills, and abilities comparable to those covered in a college course. The process allows high school students to move smoothly into postsecondary education without experiencing delay or duplication of courses. Generally, the college credit is not awarded until the student is enrolled at the college issuing the articulation agreement and until the student has satisfactorily completed a designated number of credit hours or terms. Because the courses involved are at the high school level, the student pays no tuition.

Dual Credit – provides the opportunity for high school students to enroll in courses approved by a postsecondary institution for college credit. The student is able to receive credit toward a high school diploma for such courses and upon graduating from high school receives college credit from the postsecondary institution involved and other colleges and universities, which accept transfer credit from that postsecondary institution. Dual credit courses are generally advanced level courses and are open to students who qualify for admission for college-level work. The high school student generally pays tuition, though it may be reduced, for dual credit courses. In order for the course to meet the dual credit criteria, the post-secondary institution may dictate the textbook, syllabus, grading system, teacher qualifications, and other course requirements.

MSIP

For the purposes of meeting MSIP Indicator 7.3.3, acceptable evidence of either a written articulation agreement or dual credit arrangement must be provided. The dual credit arrangement must be in a vocational education program area or course of study and must be available for each vocational program/course. A dual credit arrangement for general studies is not acceptable for meeting Indicator 7.3.3.