

Mission statement

The mission of the agriculture education department at Northwestern High School is to prepare and support individuals for careers, build awareness, and develop leadership for the food, fiber, and natural resource systems. The desire to complete this mission is accomplished by:

Providing instruction in and about agriculture, food, and natural resource systems

Serves all populations

Developing the whole person

Responding to the needs of the economic and educational marketplace

Advocating free enterprise and entrepreneurship education

Utilizing a proven education process that included formal instruction, experimental learning, leadership, and personal development

Philosophy and beliefs

Agricultural Education is an active part of the curriculum for many high schools in Indiana. This program area combines the home, the school, and the community as the means of education in agriculture. The courses provide students with a solid foundation of academic knowledge and ample opportunities to apply this knowledge through classroom activities, laboratory experiments and project applications, supervised agricultural experiences, and the FFA. The vision and mission of Agricultural Education is: that all people value and understand the vital role of agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resource systems in advancing personal and global well-being; and that students are prepared for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in agriculture.

The goals for Agricultural Science and Business students focus on providing learning experiences which will allow them to:

- demonstrate desirable work ethics and work habits.
 - apply the basic agricultural competencies and the basic background knowledge in agriculture and related occupations.
 - analyze entrepreneurial, business, and management skills needed by students preparing to enter agriculture and related occupations.
 - expand leadership and participatory skills necessary for the development of productive and contributing citizens in our democratic society.
 - gain effective social and interpersonal communication skills.
 - be aware of career opportunities in agriculture and set career objectives.
 - acquire job-seeking, employability, and job-retention skills.
 - advance in a career through a program of continuing education and life-long learning.
 - apply the basic learning skills in reading, writing, thinking, mathematics, communicating, listening, and studying.
 - recognize the interaction of agriculture with governments and economic systems at the local, state, national, and international levels.
- recognize how new technologies impact agriculture and how agriculture impacts the environment.

It is important to understand and reaffirm that vocational-technical experiences do not preclude students from going on to higher education, and in fact, participation actually enhances the opportunity. A growing number of students are combining both college preparation and workplace experiences in their high school preparation. Agricultural Science and Business and the FFA programs have a long history of successfully preparing students for entry level careers and further education and training in the science, business and technology of agriculture. The programs combine classroom instruction and hands-on career focused learning to develop students' potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success.

Agriculture touches the lives of each and every one of us every day. We all come in contact with agriculture as it affects our diets, our home and its surrounding , and in the overall landscape of our being.

Traditional farming is very important as evidenced by these Howard County statistics from the 2002 Census of Agriculture:

There are over 600 commercial farms

The average farm has assets of over \$800,000 (not including livestock) that adds to the tax base.

The value of products sold in 2007 was over 95 million dollars

While traditional farming is very important, much of the emphasis of the department is now geared away from these topics and now focuses on the expanding role of agriculture in our lives.

Examples of some careers in agriculture can be found at the following web sites:

http://www.nationalffa.org/collegiate.cfm?method=c_job.CareerSearch

<http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/USDA/careers/index.html>

There are approximately 22 million people who work in agriculture related fields as reported on the website www.agday.org.

Research

Executive Summary of Understanding Agriculture : New Directions for Education Provided by the National Research Council, 1988

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Agricultural Education must become more than vocational agriculture. Major revisions are needed within vocational agriculture.

Agriculture is too important a topic to be taught only to the relatively small percentage of students considering careers in agriculture and pursuing vocational agriculture studies. with this

in mind the NRC developed the idea of "agricultural literacy" the goal of education about agriculture. The NRC envisions that an agriculturally literate person's understanding of the food and fiber system includes its history and current economic, social, and environmental significance to all Americans. As a complement to instruction in other academic subjects, it also includes enough knowledge of nutrition to make informed personal choices about diet and health. Achieving the goal of agricultural literacy will produce informed citizens able to participate in establishing the policies that will support a competitive agricultural industry in this country and abroad.

Some Conclusions and Recommendations

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through twelfth grade, all students should receive some systematic instruction about agriculture.

The subject matter of instruction about agriculture and instruction in agriculture must be broadened.

Special applied science courses on agricultural topics should be available as optional science courses for those students who wish to go beyond the traditional science course curriculum.

Students who have opportunities to join organizations like the National FFA can gain experience and knowledge by participating in special projects.

Ongoing efforts should be expanded and accelerated to upgrade the scientific and technical content of vocational agriculture courses. The "vocational" label should be avoided to help attract students with diverse interests, including college bound and those aspiring to professional and scientific careers in agriculture.