

Rationale to Codify the Integral Nature of FFA

Background

Historically Agricultural Education has thrived by implementing teaching methods that utilize three interconnected educational components to develop the three domains of educational learning as identified in *Bloom's Taxonomy*.

- ◆ Agricultural Education develops the student's cognitive mental skills (*Knowledge*) through classroom instruction.
- ◆ The FFA student organization component develops the student's affective skills, a growth in feelings or emotional areas (*Attitude*), through structured leadership and career development activities and events.
- ◆ The student's psychomotor skills, commonly called manual or physical skills (*Skills*), are developed through the supervised agricultural experience program (SAE).

It is the student's involvement in all three Agricultural Education components: classroom instruction, FFA and SAE, that challenges the student and develops the three skill domains.

Internationally respected leadership authority, family expert, teacher, organizational consultant, and author, Dr. Steven Covey relates that 'skill, attitude and knowledge' are the important factors in the acquisition of habits of character. Agricultural Education is successful in developing learning and character habits by presenting relevant and challenging classroom instruction. Through that instruction students gain the knowledge they demonstrate at FFA activities and competitions, and also apply that knowledge as they conduct their supervised agricultural experience program outside the regular classroom hours.

References:

1. Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc.
2. Krathwohl, D. R., Bloom, B. S., & Bertram, B. M. (1973). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook II: Affective Domain*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc.
3. Simpson, E. J. (1972). *The Classification of Educational Objectives in the Psychomotor Domain*. Washington, DC: Gryphon House.
4. Covey, Steven (1997), *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey Leadership Centre.

Situation

Students receive specific instruction related to leadership development as a part of agricultural education course work. FFA is the instructional vehicle used to develop the student's understanding of concepts related to community service, conducting meetings, participating in committees, citizenship, problem-solving and effective communication; and apply those concepts in competitive and cooperative activities. The out-of-classroom experiences provided through the FFA are essential in completing the "learning by doing" component of Agricultural Education instruction and reinforce the affective skills, that are so important to positive character development.

Legislative and Policy Support

- ◆ In 1950, the 81st Congress of the United States recognizing the importance of the FFA as an integral part of the program of Vocational Agriculture (now Agricultural Education), granted a federal charter (PL 81-740) to the FFA.

- ♦ The United States Department of Education recognizes the educational programs and philosophies embraced by the National FFA Organization as being an integral part of vocational and technical education instructional programs. (Policy of the United States Department of Education For Career and Technical Student Organizations)
- ♦ In 1986 the Illinois General Assembly declared “it is in the best interests of the people of the State of Illinois that a comprehensive education program in agriculture be created and maintained by the State’s public school system in order to ensure an adequate supply of trained and skilled individuals and to ensure appropriate representation of racial and ethnic groups in all phases of the industry. It is the intent of the General Assembly that a State program for agricultural education shall be a part of the curriculum of the public school system K through adult, and made readily available to all school districts which may at their option, include program in education in agriculture as a part of the curriculum of that district.” (Public Act 84-1452, passed by the Illinois Legislature and signed into law on September 19, 1986)
- ♦ Public Act 84-1452 further states “A committee of 13 agriculturalists representative of the various and diverse areas of the agricultural industry in Illinois shall be established to at least develop a curriculum and overview the implementation of the Build Illinois through Quality Agricultural Education plans of the Illinois Leadership Council for Agricultural Education and to advise the State Board of Education on vocational agricultural education.” The Building Illinois through Quality Agricultural Education plan which serves as the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Education and was developed by the committee of 13 agriculturalists, speaks to the integral nature of the FFA student organization and Supervised Agricultural Experience to the comprehensive agricultural education instructional program at the high school level.

Rational for Action

- ♦ Barriers are being set in place, preventing the highest quality of instruction from being delivered through high school Agricultural Education programs.
- ♦ The barriers being set in place artificially limit student access to educational and character skill development opportunities that are a natural extension of the classroom instruction.

Requested Action

Revise the Illinois School Code by making the following addition to 105 ILCS 5/2-3.80(a)

“Districts choosing to offer a secondary agricultural education program eligible for state and federal funding consideration must assure that, at a minimum, the following are available to all students; an instructional sequence of courses approved by the Illinois State Board of Education; a state and nationally affiliated FFA chapter integral to instruction, not treated as an extracurricular activity; and a mechanism for assuring the involvement of all secondary agricultural education students in formal supervised agricultural experience (SAE) activities/programs.”