

Safety education material needs to be assessed for suitability for use in the agricultural education classroom. Much of the material currently available is outdated, industry oriented, and printed in black and white. These materials need to be updated and improved to include the use of multimedia.

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## **TEXAS JUNIOR FFA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

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### **Introduction**

Texas currently has 5,596 Junior FFA members in 462 chapters. To be a Junior FFA member, the student must be involved in the local FFA Chapter and pay dues of \$2.50 to the Texas FFA Association. These members are expected to participate in the local program of activities and manage an SAE. The Junior FFA program is more than a way for pre-high school-aged students to show livestock. Each Junior FFA chapter must receive approval through the Texas FFA Association, elect Junior officers and hold meetings for the Junior chapter. Additionally, to be in good standing, the Junior members must actively participate in the creation, adoption and implementation of the local program of activities. However, beyond the chapter level, little had been done to promote involvement in the Junior FFA organization.

To accentuate the leadership capital for the future of the organization, the Texas FFA Association State Officers, with support from the state Agricultural Education Staff, instituted the First Annual Junior FFA Leadership Conference. This conference was implemented as a day camp, complete with leadership development, educational programs and physical activities.

### **How It Works**

The expenses of the program were covered by State Junior FFA dues and a \$10 per member registration fee. These expenses included the rental of a dining hall and campsite, one mid-day meal, snacks, T-shirts for each participant, decorations, and State Officer expenses.

The State Officers and State Agricultural Education Staff met during the FFA Convention in July to develop guidelines and a program for the conference. Dr. Steve Forsythe, State FFA Executive Secretary, developed a rough draft for the program and created a method for publicizing the event. The officers then finalized the program and activities for the day.

A summer camp near Kerrville, Texas was selected and reserved as the site for the Conference. Officers organized into teams to develop T-shirts, finalize the activities, manage the publicity and registration and develop the final format of each session.

The officers met the afternoon prior to the conference to review the program and practice each of the sessions. Several advisors and parents were recruited to help monitor registration and each session during the day. Over 70 Junior members, advisors and parents attended the first-ever Junior FFA Leadership Conference.

### **Results**

The State FFA Officers and State Agricultural Education Staff believe the program was successful. The goal of bringing everyone together for a full day of education about Agricultural Education and FFA in Texas was accomplished. The Junior FFA members attending the conference developed an understanding of FFA history, tradition, and opportunities. These students were able to see positive role models in the State FFA Officers. An excitement for becoming an FFA member in high school and participating in the full range of FFA activities was created. The conference attendees set long and short-term goals and created an action plan for accomplishing those goals.

The theme for the one-day camp was “Step by Step – Past, Present and Future.” The campers had a great time talking with state officers, meeting Lt. Governor Rick Perry, making new friends from across the state, and learning about Agricultural Education and the FFA experience.

### **Future Plans**

Planning has begun for the Second Annual Texas Junior FFA Leadership Conference. Several changes will be made for next years' conference, centered on better meeting the maturity and conceptual needs of elementary and middle school students.

The lack of a rigid, well timed schedule created some conflict with the younger students who lacked the maturity and time management skills to return at scheduled times. Next year, the conference will incorporate a tighter

schedule, with each group session beginning and ending at uniform times.

Another concern was that State Officers managing the program were not adequately trained to deal with the younger students. To better prepare them, the officers will receive additional training to deal with the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of Junior FFA members. Additionally, several people with elementary teaching experience or training will be involved to assist the group leaders with students during the activities.

Changes to the program are also being made. It was suggested the program focus less on recreation activities. Too much effort was made to make the program fun and physically entertaining and not enough effort was spent dealing with educational or goal setting activities. Next year the program will incorporate entertainment and recreation, but will focus on helping Junior FFA members achieve a balanced approach to life through experiential hands-on activities.

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## **MORE POWER!!! [GRUNT, GRUNT] ANOTHER TOOL FOR THE PRE-SERVICE TOOLBOX**

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### **Introduction**

Pre-service teacher education students are introduced to and encouraged to develop a wide array of teaching tools to add to their instructional arsenal. Due to the diversity of our curriculum, variability of delivery methods is essential to the success of student learning.

Educational reform initiatives (A Nation at Risk, 1983; The Unfinished Agenda, 1984) have called for educators to develop methods for students to learn more effectively and efficiently. Responding to the need of increasing “science literacy”, agricultural education accepted the challenge of integrating science concepts into the agriculture classroom. However, adopting to change has been a slow process. Whent (1992) reported that agriculture teachers were reluctant to adopting the concept of science integration into existing agriculture programs for fear of threatening the program. Although Thompson (1998) recommended that undergraduate students should receive instruction on how to integrate science into the agriculture classroom. The National FFA Organization has recognized the importance of agriscience and has adopted programs to promote scientific agriculture in secondary agricultural education (Duval, 1988).

The agriscience fair as a career development event has gained acceptance in various states and at the national level. This activity recognizes students studying the application of scientific principles and new technologies. To reach the national level, students must participate at the state level.

### **Methodology**

Idea of conducting a state level Agri-Science Fair at the Oklahoma State FFA Convention was discussed with approved by the state FFA advisor. A service-learning grant was obtained to provide funding for the project to cover the costs of duplicating fliers, and entry information, mailing expenses, travel, and awards. Lab time was dedicated to teaching the concept of integrating agriscience activities into the traditional agriculture classroom. The agriscience fair activity was introduced to the students and their role and participation was presented. Pre-service students enrolled in AGED 3203 would serve to mentor high school students interested in developing an agriscience project. A web page was developed to provide information and ideas to agriculture teachers and FFA members. Two high school agriculture programs accepted an invitation to have AGED 3203 students visit their classes and conduct presentations on developing agriscience fair activities. The national FFA guidelines were adopted for the state level competition. Entry forms and guidelines were mailed out to all agriculture programs in the state. Service learning funds paid for transportation costs, printing & postage and awards. AGED 3203 students practiced developing their own topics into agriscience fair activities utilizing the steps of scientific investigation. Presentations were made during lab times and peer evaluations were conducted. A web page was created with various links to existing science fair sites to provide ideas and answer questions.

### **Results**

Eight student entries were received. As a part of their final exam activity, AGED 3203 students interviewed each agriscience fair participant and evaluated the seven displays. As a follow up, all AGED 3203 students prepared reflection papers describing the individual entries and their strengths and weaknesses. Suggestions for improving each research project were solicited as well as methods for individual future teachers to integrate such an activity into their own agriculture programs. FFA participants were presented with plaques during a special session of the state convention. 38 agriculture teachers attended a workshop for developing agri-science fair projects during the 1999 summer conference for agricultural education instructors. The activity will be continued as regular career development event for the Oklahoma State FFA Association. Six Oklahoma entrees competed at the national agriscience fair at the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Four entries from Oklahoma placed in the top three of their respective categories and divisions.