



Lesson 4

Making FFA More Open to Students from Diverse Groups

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson, the learner will . . .

1. Describe the demographics of FFA members.
2. Develop strategies to open FFA meetings and activities to students from diverse groups.
3. Develop strategies to make activities within the Program of Activities more open to students from diverse groups.

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Tools and Equipment

Computer, Projector, Students laptops, Paper, Microsoft Word, and PowerPoint.

References

National FFA Organization. (2004). BLAST-OFF training: Building relationships. Indianapolis, IN: Author.

National FFA Organization. (2005). Local program resource guide [CD-ROM]. Indianapolis, IN: Author. Select the SAE component icon.

Talbert, B. A., Croom, B., LaRose, S. E., Vaughn, R., & Lee, J. S. (2022). Foundations of agricultural education (4th edition). Purdue University Press.

Interest Approach

We become comfortable with things with which we are familiar. This is true of most cultures and people. This exercise is designed to help students realize that different ways of doing things are not “bad” or “wrong,” but just different from how they are used to doing things.

- This exercise is best done with each student individually doing the tasks.
- Have students do the task as you describe what to do. We will do an exercise to demonstrate how differences can be just “differences” and not wrong ways of doing things. Please do each of the tasks as I give you the instructions.
- Example tasks include:
 - From a picture displayed on the projector or drawn on the whiteboard, the students must draw the picture with the opposite hand they usually use.
 - Have students who wear an Apple watch/Fitbit or other watch place it on the opposite arm, have them quickly set the time, or, if possible, set the timer and start it.
 - Have enough shirts for each student (you will need enough male shirts for the female students and enough female shirts for the male students). Give each student a shirt to put on and have the students button on the shirts. (Shirts typically have buttons on opposite sides for male and female shirts.)
 - Have students cross their arms. Then, tell them to cross them and cross them the opposite way.
 - Do the following, giving the instructions in Spanish (or a different language if students speak Spanish). (Get out a sheet of paper. Draw a circle in the middle. Draw a square to the left of the circle. Draw a triangle to the right of the circle.) “Salga una hoja de papel. Dibuje un círculo en el centro. Dibuje un cuadrado a la izquierda del círculo. Dibuje un triángulo a la derecha del círculo.”

Debrief the exercise. Students may have been frustrated by the tasks, but others do these tasks every day the way described. The different way of doing things is just that; “different,” not “incorrect” or “wrong.” This exercise has helped you realize that there are many ways of doing

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things. Sometimes, we assume that when something is different, it must be wrong. This exercise has helped you understand that this is often not true.

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Methods/Content

Objective 1

Describe the demographics of FFA members.

Members of the FFA are diverse in many ways, including race, ethnicity, disability status, gender, socio-economic class, and other observable or unobservable characteristics. Here are the 2019-2020 demographics from the National FFA.

From research literature and National FFA Organization statistics:

- Approximately 46% female and 54% male. Chapter, state, and national officers are more than 50% female.
- Approximately 60% farm or rural, 20% Town, 12% suburban, and 6% urban.
- Approximately 64.3% White, 5.3% African American, 15.2% Hispanic, 5.5% other ethnicities and 9.5% Undisclosed.
- FFA members have many disabilities, including ambulatory, vision, hearing, educational, emotional, and others.

Objective 2

Develop strategies to open FFA meetings and activities to students from diverse groups.

FFA meetings and activities must be open to all members and potential members. However, they should also invite members of agricultural education students who are not members and want to participate in the activities.

- Do recreational activities appeal to all students, not just those from farms or rural backgrounds.
- Have snacks and meals that appeal to all students, not just those from the majority.
- Plan programs or guest speakers on non-traditional agricultural topics that may appeal to non-farm or non-rural students.
- Opening and closing ceremonies can be confusing to many students. Instruction should be given on the “how” and “why” of conducting an FFA meeting.
- Consider the time and day of the week of FFA meetings and activities. Do they conflict with religious special/holy days or practices? Are they at a time that attracts students from diverse groups? Will transportation or work responsibilities prevent some students from participating?

The development of the FFA calendar and Program of Activities must be done with input from students from diverse groups. If the officer team is homogenous, all from the majority, it will be difficult for them to plan meetings and activities that will appeal to students from diverse groups. Representation from diverse groups at planning meetings is valuable and should lead to greater involvement of students from diverse groups in FFA meetings, activities, and the officer team.

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Objective 3

Develop strategies to make activities within the Program of Activities more open to students from diverse groups.

An FFA chapter Program of Activities (POA) can quickly become a historical document that does not change from year to year. FFA members may rationalize that if an activity was successful in the past, it should be successful for them this year. However, students from groups different from the majority may feel left out and do not see activities appealing to them. With this in mind, the following suggestions may help open the FFA POA to more members and potential members.

- Determine the activity's primary purpose and let other aspects be subject to change. For example, is it critical that only a specific type of music be played at the annual FFA banquet, or is it only done because the students organizing the banquet prefer that type of music? Are dress requirements given for safety and professionalism reasons or because that is what the teacher or students organizing the activity/event prefer? Is the day of the week and time of day required for an activity or is it for the convenience of those organizing the activity/event?
- Consider structuring FFA dues so that all agricultural education students can and will join the FFA. Both the ability to pay and the motivation to pay are issues that need to be explored.
- Participate in Career Development and Leadership Development Events that appeal to diverse students.
- Plan community development activities that benefit all sectors of the local community, such as volunteering at a food pantry/ soup kitchen, caring for a common space in the community, reading to those in extended care facilities, volunteering at the local animal shelter, delivering meals to those in the fields or unable to leave their homes, game night at a nursing home, planning a community trivia night (this event can be done virtually), and others.
- Plan student development activities that appeal to FFA members of the entire age range and leadership ability range, such as FFA camps, student night in the school, mock competitive event practices, and guest speakers, and invite State officers to complete a workshop.
- Plan student development activities that can be participated in by students with low incomes (or provide scholarships) such as state camps, Washington Leadership Conference, PALS programs, or plan an Elementary Agricultural Literacy event (this event can be done online).
- Plan activities that can be participated in by students with varying levels of time commitment. For example, how can activities be planned so athletes can participate? What about students who need transportation to/from school? What about students who work or have family responsibilities after school and on weekends?
- Review the requirements and application procedures for scholarships and awards. Do they encourage all eligible and qualified students to apply, or are some discouraged by confusing procedures or non-essential requirements/questions?

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- Review the process for electing chapter officers and electing/selecting committee chairs. Do all eligible and qualified students have an equal and fair opportunity to apply and be elected/selected?

Conclusion of Lesson 4

Agricultural Education and students in Agricultural Education should promote diversity and work for equality and justice.

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