

Lesson 7

Using the H.O. Sargent Award to Celebrate Diversity

Learning Objectives

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

1. Identify the history of the H.O. Sargent Award and describe the award.
2. Develop a plan for incorporating the H.O. Sargent Award into the FFA Program of Activities.
3. Develop a plan for utilizing the H.O. Sargent Award for promoting diversity.

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Tools and Equipment

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

References

National FFA Organization. (2005). *H.O. Sargent Diversity Award applications*. Indianapolis, IN: Author.

New Farmers of America. (1963). *Guide for New Farmers of America* (12th Edition). French-Bray Printing.

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

Wakefield, D. B., & Talbert, B. A. (2003). A historical narrative on the impact of the New Farmers of America (NFA) on selected past members. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 44(1), 95-104. <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2003.01095>

Interest Approach

Dr. H.O. Sargent was key in organizing the New Farmers of America. He is remembered for promoting diversity in agricultural education and FFA.

- This exercise is based on the Michelangelo Moment from e-Moments in the Life Knowledge curriculum. It is best done with the students individually or in pairs or groups.
- Have students create a sculpture depicting an activity or item promoting diversity.
- Example items for the sculpture include pen pal programs, community service activities, cultural awareness programs, membership recruitment campaigns, mentoring programs, and a wide range of other projects. The sculpture should show accepting differences, being role models, connecting people of different backgrounds/interests, and developing programs/activities that support diversity.
- Distribute the materials and allow students to complete them.
- Debrief the sculptures at the end of the exercise.

We will do an activity to explore ways to promote diversity here at our school and in our community. I am going to give you your paper and clay. Remember our class rules. You are to make a sculpture of an activity or item that promotes diversity. You have 15 minutes to complete this. At the end, we will have an art display where you will show your sculpture and explain what the activity or item is

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Objective 1

Identify the history of the H.O. Sargent Award and describe the award.

H. O. Sargent (1875-1936) was born in Alabama in 1875. He graduated from what is now Auburn University with the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Science. His Ph.D. degree was from George Washington University. From 1917 to 1935 he served the U.S. Office of Education as Federal Agent for Agricultural Education for African Americans. He is responsible for the inception of the New Farmers of America (NFA).

The NFA honored Dr. Sargent by naming one of its highest individual awards after him. The H. S. Sargent (Young Farmer Award) was given to the most successful former student who had been out of public school at least three years and not more than 10 years. The student must have completed four years of instruction in agricultural education either as a secondary student or in young farmer classes.

In 1995, "The National FFA Organization established the H. O. Sargent Award to remember the New Farmers of America (NFA) and to recognize their place in the history of the FFA. The overall purpose of the H. O. Sargent Award is to recognize success in achieving and promoting diversity in agricultural education and the FFA." The H. O. Sargent Member Award is open to all FFA members. The H. O. Sargent Non-Member Award "is available to any individual who is not an FFA member. The individual should support activities promoting diversity within agricultural education and the FFA. The individual should also be active in the community. Teachers of agricultural education are eligible to win this award." The H.O. Sargent Award can be given on the local, state, and national levels. The Local Program Resource CD-ROM has a certificate template.

Each chapter is encouraged to recognize one or more local recipients for the student award. Each state sets its own procedures for state-level competition and is encouraged to submit its state winner for national competition. Four finalists are selected on the national level. These finalists answer several open-ended questions, submit supporting letters, participate in an interview, and give a diverse presentation.

For the non-member award, each chapter is encouraged to select one individual as recipient. States may select one recipient from among local recipients and nominations by state staff. Three national recipients are selected from the state recipients. Examples of possible activities that non-member recipients conduct include:

- Supporting scholarships for minority students to attend FFA camp, Washington Leadership Conference (WLC), college, etc.
- Serving as a mentor or role model for a FFA member
- Encouraging under-represented groups of students to be in agricultural education (at both the secondary and post-secondary level) and the FFA.

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- Teaching a unit to the agricultural education classes on cultural diversity.

The New Farmers of America (NFA) was similar in organization, awards competition structure, and purposes to the FFA. When the FFA was founded, it was open to all races, but because of segregation, most African American students could not join. The NFA started in 1927 in Virginia with the New Farmers of Virginia. From 1928 to 1935, there was no national organization, although as early as 1929, meetings were held to discuss the formation of a national organization. In August 1935, at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, representatives from the state associations met and formed the New Farmers of America with a tentative constitution and by-laws. The NFA was in 18 states, primarily in the eastern and southern states. In 1965, when the merger with the FFA occurred, there were more than 1,000 NFA chapters with more than 58,000 members. It was not until the 1990s that information about the NFA, such as a listing of NFA presidents, was included in the Official FFA Manual.

Some of the unique aspects of the NFA included the following.

- NFA emblem had an open boll of cotton with two leaves attached at its base instead of an ear of corn as is on the FFA emblem. The ball of cotton represented important economic agricultural interests of many members. The emblem was black, not blue as the FFA emblem is.
- The four degrees of membership were: Farm Hand, Improved Farmer, Modern Farmer, and Superior Farmer.
- The National NFA Convention rotated sites at the beginning, but was located in Atlanta, Georgia at the time of the merger.
- Local officers could include a watchman (equivalent to today's sentinel) who was stationed by a straight stick of native wood about four feet long, a chaplain whom a Bible stationed, and song leader stationed by a baton.
- A contest was held for quartet singing.
- From its establishment in 1944, the FFA Foundation financed the award system for both FFA and NFA.



The NFA emblem is pictured here.

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Objective 2

Develop a plan for incorporating the H.O. Sargent Award into the FFA Program of Activities.

The following suggestions are made to develop a plan for incorporating the H.O. Sargent Award into the FFA Program of Activities (POA).

- Activities associated with the H. O. Sargent Diversity Award fit well into both the student development and community development sections of the POA.
- Assign the Student Development committee activity to promote the H.O. Sargent Diversity Award among members, to develop a recognition process, to recognize members at the annual banquet, and to apply to state-level competition. This committee should also compile descriptions of diverse projects/activities members conduct to create a “Best Practices” list for future efforts.
- Assign the Community Development Committee an activity to seek community members who have supported diversity efforts so they may be recognized through the H.O. Sargent Diversity Award. This committee should develop a recognition process, recognize recipients at the annual banquet, and submit application(s) to state-level competitions. This committee should also compile descriptions of diversity projects/activities non-members conduct to create a “Best Practices” list for future efforts.
- Make a conscious decision to involve diverse efforts in all FFA activities and events.
- Make sure students from diverse groups are involved in the planning of the POA.
- Invite community leaders to discuss community development activities for the POA that would promote accepting differences, being role models, connecting people together, and developing programs/activities that support diversity.

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Objective 3

Develop a plan for utilizing the H.O. Sargent Award for promoting diversity.

To develop a plan for utilizing the H.O. Sargent Award for promoting diversity the following suggestions are made.

- Publicize the diversity efforts of members and non-members, especially those of the H.O. Sargent Diversity Award recipients.
- Many schools hold a ceremony to recognize students who have excelled in academics and other non-sport (recognition for sports awards are typically at a separate function) areas throughout the school year. Discuss with the school administration adding the recipient(s) of the H.O. Sargent Diversity Award to the school-wide recognition program.
- During special months, highlight in the local and school news media how FFA members and people from the local community are promoting diversity. Examples include Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15), National American Indian Heritage Month (November), Black History Month (February), Irish American Heritage Month (March), Women's History Month (March), Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month (May), Older Americans Month (May), and others as appropriate.

Conclusion of Lesson 7

Many FFA members are motivated by recognition. The H. O. Sargent Diversity Award provides that recognition and is also a good tool for community relations.

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