

# Lesson 8

Being Crafters of History

## Learning Objectives

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

1. Identify key historical points in agricultural education and FFA history regarding diversity.
2. Develop skills necessary to become active promoters of diversity.
3. Develop a personal philosophy regarding diversity in agricultural education and FFA.

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## Tools and Equipment

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

## References

*Monsanto: Diversity and High-Performance Relationships Workshop*. (2002). Vienna, VA: SCENDIS.

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

National FFA Organization. (2005). *Official FFA manual*. Indianapolis, IN: Author.

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

Diversity implies differences but means combining differences and similarities to develop a community or come together. This can be vividly pictured with M&Ms (chocolate candies). One of the first things noticeable about M&Ms is the differences in shell colors. However, upon further examination, the candies have more similarities than differences (hard coating, chocolate center, “M” printed on the coating, etc.)—the differences and similarities of M&Ms combine to create unique candy.

- This exercise is best done after teaching the other diversity lessons. Students should do the activity individually.
- Provide enough M&Ms so that each student has at least one of each color. Students should not eat the M&Ms until they are instructed to do so.
- Pass out the M&M’s. Instruct the students to write down answers for the questions associated with each color. They can only eat the M&Ms of a color after they have told the class their answer for that color. Depending on the time available, ask all the students all the questions or select appropriately
- Colors and questions are:
  - Blue – Tell something about yourself that is like everyone else in your community.
  - Purple – Tell something about yourself that makes you unique.
  - Red – Tell something you have done or could do to support or promote diversity.
  - Yellow – Tell the one activity or hobby you enjoy most.
  - Brown – Tell the school subject you enjoy most or do your best in.
  - Orange – Name something that you believe unites students at your school.
  - Green – Tell something about yourself that is different from how your friends are.

We will do an activity to get to know each other better. I will give you an M&M of each color. Please do not reach for the M&Ms until I tell you to. I will ask you questions about each of the colors. Please write down your answer for each color. I will call out a color, and a student will give their answer, and then that person can each have that color of M&M.

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M&Ms are unique in some ways (shell color) and have similarities (hard shell, chocolate center, printed “M” on the shell, etc.). These combine to make M&M’s what they are. This is also true of Americans. As groups of people, we have many differences, yet we are similar in many ways. Our differences and similarities unite to make Americans such that the U.S. motto “E Pluribus Unum” means “from many, one.” We will explore today that becoming one does not mean losing the differences.

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## Methods/Content

### Objective 1

Identify key historical points regarding diversity in agricultural education and FFA history.

Agricultural education and FFA have not always promoted diversity in a positive manner as part of public education. Segregation between students of color and White students into separate schools was a fact for agricultural education/FFA from its beginning. It lasted at least 50 years until integration in the 1960s and 1970s. Females were not a recognized part of FFA until 1969 on the national level.

What can agricultural education students of today do about this? First, you should learn about and remember history so that past injustices will not be repeated in the future. Then, you should be observant of things today and work to change injustices to become “crafters of history” rather than people who allow injustices to continue. The relevant history of agricultural education/FFA includes the following.

- 1932: Puerto Rico is chartered as an association.
- 1965: NFA and FFA merger. Discussions on mergers started before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed.
- 1969: Females could officially become FFA members. Several states had been admitting female members for years by only placing the student’s first initial on the membership enrollment form.
- 1991: Virgin Islands is chartered as an association.
- 1999: First edition of the Official FFA Manual printed in Spanish.
- 2002: First edition of the Student Handbook printed in Spanish.
- 1990s: Membership for younger agricultural education students in grade 7 is recognized nationally. Many states had middle school agricultural education before this. In 2000, the Discovery Degree was added for grades 7 and 8 members.
- 2020s: Sign language interpreters are provided at the National FFA Convention sessions.
- 2020s: Provisions are made for home-schooled students to participate actively in agricultural education and FFA.
- 2020s: Career Development Events (CDE) provide accommodations for students with disabilities.
- 1960s to 2020s: SAEs and proficiency awards were expanded to include areas other than production agriculture. In 2025, there were almost 50 proficiency awards.
- From the 1990s to 2020s, Agriscience education has become an emphasis area for FFA. Programs include the Agriscience Research Proficiency Awards, Agriscience Fair, Agriscience Student Scholarship and Recognition Program, and Agriscience Teacher of the Year Program.

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## Objective 2

Develop skills necessary to become active promoters of diversity.

Agricultural education students should develop skills to promote diversity on four levels: Personal (Me), Others (We), Doing (Do), and Service (Serve).

- Me: Understand yourself. What are your beliefs and attitudes? Are these areas in which you might want improvement? What is your culture? What is the society that you like in?
- We Understand others and accept that people have individual differences. This skill enables you to learn about other cultures.
- Do: Gaining experiences with other cultures and practicing tolerance. Experience may be gained through studying and traveling in other countries or participating in cultural activities/events in the United States. Tolerance means to recognize and respect the beliefs and practices of others. Tolerance means that in our society, people are free to express their beliefs and have different ways of doing things. Tolerance does not mean you must agree with or support all beliefs and practices.
- Serve: Help others understand and accept different cultures and societies and fight injustices. A person practicing service skills helps people go from where they are to where they want to be without condemning them or having a self-righteous attitude.
  - When interacting with people different from yourself, ask and listen rather than just assume. How do you want me to refer to your ethnicity? Are the words that I am using hurtful or inappropriate? Have I said or done something offensive that I should change?
  - Do not expect an individual to represent their ethnic group. People within an ethnic group are just as different as people in separate ethnic groups.
  - Do not assume the worst of a group. Do not use absolutes such as “All” or “Never.”
  - Differences do not mean deficiencies or problems that must be corrected.
  - Be proactive. Do not listen to hateful speech without acting. If friends are using hateful speech, ask them to stop. If they will not, walk away. Correct false statements that are made about others or groups of people.

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## Objective 3

Develop a personal philosophy regarding diversity in agricultural education and FFA.

We all have philosophies that guide how we think, do, and relate with others. By writing out your diverse philosophy, you will better understand what you believe in and why. This will help you to make decisions, especially in stressful or uncomfortable situations. Your assignment is to write your diversity philosophy about awareness and tolerance.

Most of us fit into one of five categories regarding diversity awareness. These are:

- Naïve Offenders – these people are unaware of their biases and prejudices. As such, they may cause pain to others without knowing that their words or actions are hurtful. Although this is not a philosophy, being aware that you are a naïve offender may help you develop your philosophy for the future.
- Perpetuators—These people know they have biases and prejudices but continue to exhibit them. Their behaviors reinforce and reward those who are hateful and hurtful toward people different from themselves. Although this is a philosophy, it is not one you should follow. If you see these tendencies in yourself, overcoming past bad habits will take time and effort.
- Avoider – these people are aware of biases and prejudices around them but are silent to stop them. They hope that by ignoring problems, the problems will go away. People with this philosophy support diversity but, when faced with injustices, may be frightened by the perceived or actual consequences of addressing them.
- Change agents – these people are aware of biases and prejudices and work to bring about change. They speak up when they hear inappropriate words or conversations. They act against discrimination and work to make things better.
- Fighters—These people are active in finding biases and prejudices and working to overcome them. Fighters may confront someone even if the bias or prejudice is not real; they just perceive bias or prejudice. Fighters run two risks. First, they may confront people so strongly that they turn them off, and their message is unheard. Second, they may develop a “martyr” attitude and begin to believe that only they are fighting for diversity and everyone else is doing nothing.

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Most of us fit into one of five categories regarding tolerance. However, we may be more tolerant of some differences than others. The categories are:

- Appreciation – you see people with differences as more positive than the group you belong to. You may look up to people with differences, prefer to be in their company, and look to them for advice.
- Acceptance – This difference does not matter to you. You are comfortable in their company and value them. You are “accepting” of most of your friends’ differences, so this is the category you would fit in with them.
- Tolerance – You do not appreciate people with this difference but accept them in school and the community. You may not feel comfortable around them, but you respect their right to be different.
- Avoidance – for this difference, you do not understand the people with the difference and feel uncomfortable around them. You try to avoid them. Although this is a philosophy, it is not one you should follow. Try to understand the difference, even if you do not support it.
- Repulsion – You feel strongly that the difference is not normal (habit, lifestyle, appearance, actions, beliefs, etc.) and that people with those differences should be discriminated against. Although this is a philosophy, it is not one you should follow. If you see these tendencies in yourself, overcoming past bad habits will take time and effort.

## Conclusion of Lesson 8

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

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### **M&M Activity**

Blue Tell something about yourself that is like everyone else in your community.

Purple: Tell something about yourself that makes you unique.

Red: Tell something you have done or could do to support or promote diversity.

Yellow: Tell the one activity or hobby that you most enjoy doing.

Brown: Tell me which school subject you enjoy most or do your best in.

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