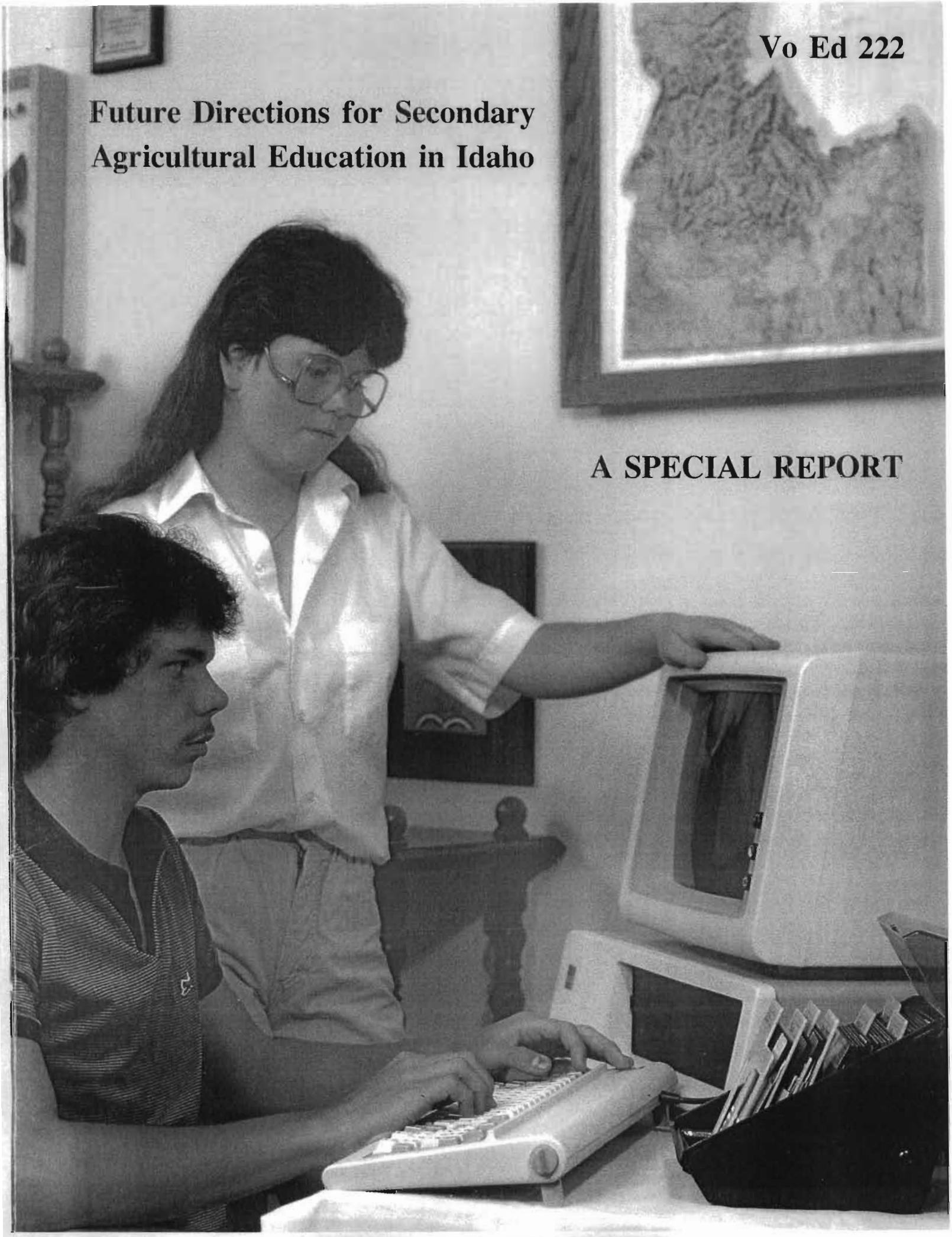
Vo Ed 222

Future Directions for Secondary Agricultural Education in Idaho



A SPECIAL REPORT

Vo Ed 222

Future Directions

for

Secondary Agricultural Education

in

Idaho

A Joint Project Conducted by:

The Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, under contract from the Idaho Division of Vocational Education

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Cover and design by Mark Wardle, Printing Graphic Artist,
Agricultural Communications Center, University of Idaho, Moscow.

Preface

The educational reform movement continues to have its impact on all aspects of education on a national and statewide basis. Since the first national report, **A Nation at Risk**, which dealt with the educational crisis in the United States, a myriad of national and state task forces and special committees have followed with their findings.

American education is in a state of change. Forces, both internal and external, are causing educators and the various publics to look at traditional values of the American educational system.

This report, **Future Directions for Secondary Agricultural Education in Idaho**, is both an internal and external look at Idaho secondary agricultural education. This report describes the present situation and offers specific recommendations for the future direction of vocational agriculture programs in Idaho.

This report is the effort of a select group of Idaho vocational agricultural educators who were charged with taking an internal look at the traditional program in Idaho vocational agricultural education. The committee members were:

Gary Abercrombie, Aberdeen
Art Allen, Arco
Fred Beckman, Weiser
Marc Beitia, Malta
Eldon Betz, Meridian
Terry Crawford, Culdesac
Gordon Gillman, Lava Hot Springs
Wayne Ills, Hagerman
John Mundt, Boise
Glenn Orthel, Twin Falls
Milt Osgood, Middleton
Lou Riesenberg, Moscow
Perry Robinson, Rexburg
Dan Sample, Kuna
Kent Scott, Malad
Jim Sorensen, Kimberly
Jim Summers, Preston

Additionally, a select group of individuals representing the industry of Idaho agriculture were charged with taking an external look at Idaho vocational agricultural education. The committee members were:

Bob Cameron, Cameron Sales, Rupert
Dwight Horsch, Farmer, Aberdeen
Ray Poe, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, Pocatello
Dale Rockwood, Farmer, Idaho Falls
Jerry Tlucek, Farmer, Melba
Rick Waitley, Idaho Cooperative Council, Meridian

The report which follows is a composite of their individual and collective effort. It is intended that this report will be utilized by and be a benefit to: policy makers, administrators, agricultural educators, parents, members of advisory committees and the industry of agriculture.

The Present Situation

Idaho, An Agricultural State

The basic and most prominent industry in Idaho is agriculture. Agriculture and allied industries supply more than half of Idaho's gross product and employ more than one-third of its labor force; while nationally, agriculture accounts for one in five (23 million) jobs. Further, over 20 percent of the nation's gross national product can be tied to agriculture.

Idaho produces approximately 95 agricultural commodities which makes it a very diversified agricultural state. This intense and diverse production agriculture industry is supported by an equally diverse allied agribusiness industry; ranging from agricultural sales and service, processing and distribution to agricultural marketing, management, mechanics and engineering. The allied industries of agriculture are the major employers of the state.

Secondary Schools

Agricultural education programs are in 75 of the state's 122 public secondary schools. The secondary school enrollment, grades 9 through 12, in these 75 schools, according to 1985-86 enrollment data, is approximately 31,791. The 75 schools with agricultural education programs are classified by size as follows:

Secondary Schools with Agricultural Programs

Class of of school	Number of schools	Number programs
A-1	21	9
A-2	27	15
A-3	32	24
A-4	42	27

During 1985-86, there were approximately 3,904 vocational agriculture students, 12.28 percent of the total student population, enrolled in and served by the 75 secondary schools that offered agricultural education programs.

Since 1984, there has been a decline in the number of students enrolled in vocational agriculture and the number of members in FFA. However, from 1981-1985, there was a steady increase in the percent of FFA membership.

Agriculture Enrollment/FFA Membership, 1981-86

Year	Enrollment	FFA membership	% FFA membership
1981	4,649 (est.)	3,954	84.8
1982	4,485	3,952	88.1
1983	4,531	4,046	89.3
1984	4,197	3,904	93.0
1985	4,109	3,840	93.4
1986	3,904	3,492	89.4

Secondary Agricultural Education Programs

The 75 programs have 80 secondary vocational agriculture instructors. There are three two-instructor programs and one three-instructor program. The programs in Idaho are diverse in nature with the instructional emphasis focusing on community needs. The youth organization, Future Farmers of America (FFA), and the supervised occupational experience (SOE) programs are integral components in most secondary agriculture programs.

The backgrounds of students enrolled in the programs are broad and varied. A majority of the students enrolled do not live on commercial farms. The majority of these students reside on small acreages or within the residential areas of Idaho's towns or cities.

Most students participate in an SOE program consisting of production enterprises; however, in recent years there has been a tremendous increase in the number of placement and work experience programs. These programs are varied and include many agricultural jobs and some which are not agricultural in nature.

Eighty-nine (89) percent of the vocational agriculture students are members of the FFA and participate in a variety of activities offered by the program at local, district, state and national levels.

Secondary Agricultural Education Program Philosophy

Secondary agricultural education is an organized program of instruction provided through and in harmony with public schools. It is a 4-year community based program which prepares students for careers in the specialized areas of production agriculture, agricultural business, supply and service, agricultural mechanics, agricultural processing, horticulture, agricultural resources, forestry and environmental management.

Vocational agriculture programs are structured so as to provide preemployment, entry-level and advanced skill and knowledge development for the students enrolled. The curriculum consists of a core for all programs and includes units of instruction which are systematically sequenced so as to build on learned competencies. Upon completion of the program, a student should be able to enter production agriculture or secure an entry-level job in agriculture or related agribusiness. Many students will elect to further their education at the post-secondary level, either at a vocational/technical school or a 4-year degree granting institution.

All students enrolled in vocational agriculture shall have an approved supervised occupational experience (SOE) program. SOE programs in realistic on-the-job settings provide students the opportunity to put into practice skills and competencies acquired in the traditional school setting. All students with the help of the instructor and their parents shall select either a production agriculture, entrepreneurial or a cooperative program with a farmer, rancher or agribusiness. All students will be expected to keep neat and accurate records of their program. The instructor shall provide on-site instruction and supervision periodically throughout the year.

All students enrolled are expected to become members of the Future Farmers of America (FFA). FFA is an internal and external learning laboratory which is an integral component of instruction in secondary agricultural education. Vocational agriculture/FFA includes instruction in leadership through public speaking, parliamentary procedure, committee work and community service activities. FFA contests and other student participation and recognition activities are related to the vocational agriculture program.

Secondary agricultural education is a learning-by-doing concept, and meaningful SOE programs and FFA activities allow putting learned classroom and laboratory knowledges and skills into practice.

The program is a year-round educational concept, and extended service for instructors is a necessary requirement in order to meet the objectives of the program. Local program advisory committees shall be involved in local program operation, future planning and direction.

Secondary Agricultural Education Program Objectives

- Develop agricultural competencies and the basic background knowledge to become successful in agriculture and related occupations.
- Develop entrepreneurial, business and management skills needed by students preparing to enter agriculture and related occupations.
- Develop an understanding of career opportunities in agriculture and the preparation needed to select and enter an agricultural occupation.
- Develop career objectives and job-seeking, employability and job-retention skills.
- Develop the ability to advance in an occupation through a program of continuing education and life-long learning.
- Develop communication skills and abilities which are essential in any occupation.
- Develop the abilities needed to exercise and follow effective leadership in fulfilling occupational, social and civic responsibilities.

A Process for Learning

It is recognized that high school students are a diverse group, varying in background, ability, aptitude and aspiration. A wide variety of educational approaches are needed to accommodate those differences; no single prescription can be effective for everyone. Vocational education is an alternative that builds upon the general and academic education foundations and responds to diverse learning styles. Vocational agriculture can be justified in the secondary curriculum on this basis alone.

The following aspects of vocational education characterize it as a learning process:

- Applied and small-group learning activities reinforce basic communication and interpersonal skills and promote their transfer to other settings.
- Individualized instruction.
- Abstract principles can be taught in concrete ways.
- Cooperative learning; students help each other.
- Academic course work is applied.
- Problem solving is incorporated — emphasis is on reasoning and critical thinking skills.
- Development of students' competence and confidence in their abilities by applying both knowledge and skills to the tasks at hand.
- Immediate feedback is given on how well students are performing.
- Activities are interesting and relevant to students' lives; thus, a source of motivation.

The above is from: Selland, Larry G. **Vocational Education: An Educational Process.** Idaho Vo Ed News. Fall 1985.

Minimum Program Standards

Overview of Present Situation:

Current program standards for vocational agriculture were approved by the State Board for Vocational Education on August 10, 1979. Since their adoption, alternate delivery systems have been developed and implemented in vocational agriculture. Funding, high school graduation requirements and the background of students entering the agricultural program have shown significant change. Coupled with technological advances in agriculture and methods of instruction, the current standards are outdated.

Trends:

Instruction in vocational agriculture is moving toward a competency-based curriculum and is designed to meet the needs of each community. Vocational agriculture instructors are continually striving to upgrade their teaching methods and their instructional materials and equipment. There is a recent movement away from 12-month instructional programs. Vocational agriculture instructors are showing increased interest in professional development and inservice activities; likewise, instructors are demonstrating an increased interest in the utilization of advisory committees for program planning. The opportunities for employment in agribusiness is approaching seven times that found in production agriculture.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. For approval and full state vocational funding, the following should be adopted as minimum standards for secondary agricultural education programs:
   a. A part-time or full-time instructor teaching vocational agriculture shall hold a valid Idaho Standard Secondary Certificate endorsed for Vocational Agriculture.
   b. The development of the vocational agriculture curriculum, and the relevant instruction thereof, shall be based on the needs of the students and community.
   c. The program shall include a youth organization (FFA) as an integral component and include a comprehensive plan of activities and objectives.
   d. Each vocational agriculture student shall have a supervised occupational experience (SOE) program coordinated with a practical sequence of events leading to the occupational objectives of the student.
   e. Facilities, equipment and instructional materials shall be of acceptable quality and in adequate quantities to facilitate the instruction relevant to current practices in the agricultural industry.
   f. The program shall have an active advisory committee composed of members representing the various segments of agriculture in the community.
2. An approved vocational agriculture program shall be operated as a 12-month instructional program. Failure to provide a 12-month instructional program shall result in a prorated reduction of state vocational funding.
3. Any vocational agriculture program operating on less than a 10-month basis shall not be eligible for state vocational funding.
4. The maximum effective student/teacher ratio shall be 70:1. If the student/teacher ratio exceeds 70:1, consideration shall be given to employing another part-time or full-time instructor.

Curriculum and Content

Overview of Present Situation:

The curriculums of the vocational agriculture programs currently operating in the state are unique to the individual programs. Most vocational agriculture programs are striving to meet the needs of the community which they serve. The content of the curriculum changes with the advancements of agricultural technology. The **Idaho Vocational Agricultural Education Core Curriculum and Instructional Guide** places heavy emphasis on production agriculture and agricultural mechanics. The FFA organization and the SOE program are both integral components of current instruction. Very few programs have access to laboratory facilities for horticulture, animals, crops or forestry.

Trends:

The curriculum content is continually upgraded to accommodate advances in the agricultural industry, but the overall emphasis is still placed on agricultural mechanics and production agriculture. In recent years, more attention has been given to agribusiness management instruction. The use of the computer as a teaching tool has shown a marked increase. Because fewer vocational agriculture students are coming from agricultural backgrounds and because the opportunity for field trips is being reduced, there is an ever increasing need for laboratory experiences. National studies conclusively show that agricultural employers value human relations, interpersonal communication and leadership skills much higher than technical abilities in their potential employees.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. More attention must be given to agribusiness management instruction in all subject matter areas.
2. Human relations, social skills, job placement, leadership development and interpersonal communication skills should have considerable emphasis in a vocational agriculture curriculum.
3. Career information, exploration and planning should be components of the secondary agricultural education curriculum.
4. Greater emphasis must be placed on "hands-on" instruction and applied learning.
5. To make instruction more relevant to the student's needs, consideration should be given to the utilization of the following types of laboratories:
   a. Livestock facility
   b. Crop farm
   c. Forestry or tree farm
   d. Horticulture greenhouse

Delivery Systems

Overview of Present Situation:

The majority of the vocational agriculture programs in Idaho are offered as Agriculture I, II, III and IV. A two period block of instruction is usually included in either Agriculture III or Agriculture IV. A student who completes the program is offered approximately 900 hours of instruction with each agricultural class being a prerequisite for the next. Each class is normally a full year in length.

Most high schools in the state conduct classes for either six, seven or eight periods. Beginning with the graduating class of 1988, students will be required to have a minimum of 42 semester credits, 30 of which must be in required subject areas in order to graduate from high school.

Trends:

Recently, there has been an emphasis on additional academic classes required for high school graduation, leaving less time for electives. Likewise, students struggling to meet the "C" average in the core curriculum and higher percentages of students dropping out of high school have resulted in significant declines in enrollment in vocational agriculture.

Vocational agriculture has traditionally offered alternate delivery systems to help meet the diverse needs of the student population. Currently, there is a trend toward open entry/open exit in vocational agriculture programs.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. Each high school should conduct an instructional program in which each student has access to a minimum of two class periods each semester for elective courses.
2. Ways must be developed to allow students to pursue elective courses that will cross-credit for selected graduation requirements.
3. Local secondary agricultural education programs need to develop a comprehensive instructional delivery plan which may include the following options:
   a. A program consisting of a general 4-year, broad based agricultural education curriculum.
   b. Semester based courses with specific emphasis in a subject matter area. Semester courses could be animal science, small and large engine repair, crop and soil science, leadership development, horticulture and agribusiness management.
   c. Multi-year programs offered in specific subject matter areas. In this case, students could receive specialized instruction in one facet of the agricultural industry. More than one option would need to be offered. Besides the traditional vocational agricultural program, multiple years of instruction could be offered specifically in agricultural mechanics, animal science, forestry, horticulture or agribusiness management. For programs with more than one instructor, each could specialize in a specific subject matter area.
   d. A variation to Alternative C could consist of a traditional vocational agriculture program for the first 2 years and then specializing the instruction for the remaining 2 years.
   e. Units of instruction may be offered in alternate years. This option may be beneficial to programs with low enrollments.
4. Students should be allowed open entry/open exit in a vocational agriculture program.

Young/Adult Farmer and Agribusiness Education

Overview of Present Situation:

At present, no viable public young/adult farmer or agribusiness education program is offered in the state. There is a vital need for such a program throughout Idaho. As farm foreclosures increase, the number of displaced farmers increases. The need is great for educating and retraining some of these farmers. Generally, vocational agriculture instructors lack the necessary expertise, financial resources and time to implement such programs.

Trends:

Several states in the West and many throughout the nation have started young/adult farmer and agribusiness education programs. The programs are offered primarily through the public educational agencies in each state; however, some are offered through the private sector.

In some cases, vocational agriculture instructors are being asked to better utilize their facilities, equipment and resources by providing the opportunity for community education programs.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. Leadership for instituting the young/adult farmer and agribusiness program should come from the administrative levels of the College of Agriculture and the State Division for Vocational Education.

2. The implementation of the program should involve agricultural extension personnel, vocational agriculture instructors, College faculty and staff and State Division personnel.

3. In those schools where it is deemed necessary, feasible and applicable, vocational agriculture instructors should facilitate and/or teach adult education courses.

Funding and Enrollment

Overview of Present Situation:

There has been a decline in the purchasing power of the state and federal support for vocational agriculture programs over the past several years. The prospects of the economy improving along with higher funding levels are not bright for the near future. Because local and state funds are both being used to finance the vocational agriculture programs, the number of students enrolled in the program is very important to justify the use of these financial resources.

Increased graduation requirements, the "C" average in core requirement and attendance requirements have had detrimental effects on enrollment which has reduced the total level of available funds. The current depressed agricultural economy has discouraged young people from entering secondary agricultural education programs which has and/or will eventually depress funding levels.

Trends:

Public education is under increasing attacks from those who hold the position that private education is the solution to all of the problems in the public school system. There is a steady decline in the level of funding for secondary agricultural education programs from the federal level. The depressed economy and growing distrust of public education is causing a shortage of funding for education in general. This increases the possibility of year-round secondary agricultural education programs being shortened or eliminated. Student enrollment is declining, which if not curtailed, could eventually result in termination of local secondary agricultural education programs. Special interest and/or special projects have been added to enhance vocational education, but additional funding has not been provided which has reduced the amount of resources available for established vocational agriculture programs.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. Funding be increased for secondary agricultural education programs so the needs of the students in the state can be adequately met.
2. Since financial resources are directly or indirectly related to enrollment, steps must be taken to increase enrollment utilizing counselors, administrators, faculty, industry and local patrons.
3. Secondary agricultural education courses be allowed to meet graduation requirements in other discipline areas that are adequately covered in the curriculum of vocational agriculture programs.
4. Efforts be made to increase the level of state and federal funding because of the importance of agriculture to the state and national economies.
5. Agriculture instructors and programs continue to remain visible and contribute to the welfare of their local communities.
6. Alternative funding be developed to maintain special interest and/or special projects rather than using funds that would be used for established vocational agriculture programs on the local level.
7. Year-round programs shall be funded to ensure students learning through an extended classroom environment and supervised occupational experience (SOE) program.
8. Utilize business and industry, where possible, on a local or regional basis to help fund equipment and provide training stations for students and instructors.

Summer Programs

Overview of Present Situation:

Because of recent cutbacks, legislation and regulations, vocational agriculture summer programs are in jeopardy of being eliminated or curtailed. Summer programs at present are used for instructor professional improvement, preparation of curriculum materials, facility maintenance and organization, assistance at county fairs, etc. Some programs are not requiring students to have a summer supervised occupational experience (SOE) program while others require students to have SOE programs year-round. Because of cutbacks in funding, some local school districts have elected to reduce the agricultural education program from 12 months to 11 or 10 months, thus reducing their effectiveness.

Trends:

Most students in vocational agriculture participate in an SOE program during the summer months. In the past, most SOE programs consisted of production enterprises; however, in recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of placement and work experience programs. National data show that many secondary agricultural education programs are offering students credit for summer SOE programs. There is an increased emphasis in vocational agriculture to ensure what is taught in the classroom be tied to real problems experienced by students and must be practiced in the right setting; reinforced, supervised and organized in a sequential manner.

Because of the changes in student populations and the need to experience realistic situations, many of the practical applications of vocational agriculture occur in the summer months. They cannot be duplicated in the classroom or laboratory. The vocational agriculture instructor must increasingly use farms and agricultural businesses to reinforce the learning taught in the classroom. The application of objectives for many problems taught must be completed on farms and in businesses, and the instructor and the agricultural industry needs to be involved in the learning process of the student.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. Vocational agriculture instructors should be employed for 12 months.
2. Students meeting established criteria should be granted high school credit for completion of a supervised occupational experience program for the summer months.
   a. Students enrolled in summer SOE programs should have the opportunity to develop skills in the areas of their interest.
   b. Supervision of these programs is to be provided by the vocational agriculture instructor.
   c. Definite goals and learning objectives shall be established by student, agricultural instructor, parents and cooperating agribusiness employers.
   d. A vocational agriculture instructor in cooperation with parents and/or cooperating employers shall monitor and record the progress of the student toward objectives.
   e. Individualized and group instruction shall take place on farms, in agribusiness firms, in group meetings, on tours and during field days.
   f. Guidelines for credit should be established by the local school district.
3. Vocational agriculture instructors should teach those courses which best utilize those resources only available and appropriate during the summer months.
4. Agricultural education instructors should conduct leadership training for students and supervise FFA activities.
5. Instructors should attend educational courses, field days, conferences and other inservice activities to keep pace with new technology.
6. Instructors should supervise student participation in county and state fairs.
7. Agricultural education instructors should develop comprehensive summer program plans, including the scope and sequence of individual student summer program plans.
8. Vocational agriculture instructors should cooperate with agricultural agencies, industries and businesses in planning summer educational programs.

Future Farmers of America (FFA)

Overview of Present Situation:

FFA is an essential and integral element of vocational agriculture programs in the state of Idaho. FFA is an intracurricular learning component of a vocational agriculture program. It is an instructional strategy used to develop leadership, community awareness and responsibility, cooperative work ethic, and is a vehicle for positive competitive interaction in the personal growth of the individual FFA member. FFA is an effective tool in recruiting students into the vocational agriculture program.

Trends:

Membership in the FFA has decreased because of declining enrollment in vocational agriculture classes. Since the implementation of the 90 percent attendance policy, more FFA activities are being held outside the regular school day. The resulting scheduling conflicts have decreased individual participation in FFA activities.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. FFA should continue to be a vehicle for personal growth in areas of leadership, community awareness and responsibility, cooperative work ethic and positive competitive interaction.
2. FFA should continue to be used as an effective recruitment tool for vocational agriculture programs.
3. FFA activities should provide positive public relations and recognize students in all areas of award programs.
4. FFA should emphasize the applied learning concept.
5. FFA should continue to encourage participation in relevant local, district, state and national activities and contests.
6. FFA should involve community resource persons — parents, alumni, etc. — whenever practical.
7. Each FFA chapter should have a comprehensive plan of activities and objectives.

Instructor Recruitment and Preparation

Overview of Present Situation:

In order to maintain and enhance secondary agricultural education programs, it is imperative that the best possible candidates be recruited and educated to teach vocational agriculture. Most of the current vocational agriculture instructors have completed a secondary vocational agriculture program. All secondary agricultural education instructors have completed bachelor degree programs in agricultural education and are certified. The University of Idaho provides the only state-approved preservice program in agricultural education. Colleges and institutions throughout the state, along with industry, provide inservice education for secondary agricultural education instructors.

Trends:

Recently, at the national and especially at the state level, there has been a shortage of secondary agricultural instructors. Most students majoring in agricultural education continue to come from vocational agriculture programs. The curriculum content for agricultural education majors will continue to be broad based.

Inservice education for secondary agricultural instructors has increased in recent years. The University of Idaho has made inservice courses more accessible to agricultural instructors throughout the state. The secondary agricultural education instructors will continue to have an active role in determining the inservice courses.

The humanities requirements for entrance into the state colleges and universities has increased and vocational agriculture is not accepted as partial fulfillment for these requirements.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. Recruit more and better potential agricultural education majors.
2. Upgrade the agricultural education curriculum to meet the needs of tomorrow's vocational agriculture instructor.
3. Vocational agriculture instructors must have a more active role in determining which inservice courses are offered.
4. The University of Idaho, other colleges and universities and industry continue to bring practical inservice courses to the instructors.
5. State colleges and universities should reconsider their entrance requirements dealing with humanities and fine arts. Two credits of practical arts and two credits of humanities, or four credits of humanities/fine arts, should be acceptable standards for admission.

Image and Communication

Overview of Present Situation:

The vocational agriculture programs in Idaho have provided a positive learning environment for over 50 years. Secondary agricultural education has allowed students to acquire the basic skills needed for success in the world of work. The success of the vocational agriculture programs in Idaho has been because of the accomplishments of the students involved.

Trends:

The negative aspects of the agricultural economy has reduced student interest in secondary agricultural education. The perceptions that vocational agriculture leads only to farming and ranching is reducing student interest in the secondary agricultural education programs. There is a growing perception that the vocational agriculture program is for a small, specialized student population. The image of the agricultural education instructor as a professional is being enhanced. There is an increase in frustration resulting from confusion over the proper implementation of the policy and reporting procedures caused by recent changes in legislation.

Recommendations for the Future:

1. Identify means of enhancing the image of a career in agriculture.
2. The educational system and community be informed of the potential contributions of secondary agricultural education to the total education of the student.
3. Efforts be made to inform students, community and school personnel that vocational agriculture educates students for more than farming and ranching.
4. To improve the image of secondary agricultural education programs, a minimum standard should be adopted for continuation of a funded program.
5. Improve communications among the State Division of Vocational Education, local school administration and the vocational agriculture instructors on policy changes and reporting procedures.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U S Department of Agriculture, H. R. Guenthner, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83843. We offer our programs and facilities to all people without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.


JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP
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