

A Supporter's Guide to Agricultural Education and FFA

Thank you!

Whether you currently support FFA or are thinking about, *thank you* for considering it! Our partners who offer their time, expertise or financial contributions are our greater assets.

What is Agricultural Education?

Take a look at the three-circle diagram at the top of page 1 in the Handbook. Imagine a box around the diagram. *That* is agricultural education. Inside the box are three circles which are exactly the same size and which overlap one another perfectly. None of them fully exist without the other two.

What about the agricultural education classroom?

The classroom is the first of the three components of agricultural education. Agriculture instructors must have a degree in Agricultural Education from a university or college. You can get a good idea of classes offered by looking at the diagram on page 5 of the Handbook. Students choose a Pathway and take courses that apply to their career field of interest during high school. Programs must offer agriculture courses in order to have FFA. FFA is *intra-curricular*, so this means that some FFA activities also happen in the classroom.

What is SAE?

Supervised Agricultural Experience. An adult monitors the activities and work of students in an agriculture-related field. Think broadly when you think of the definition of "agriculture." The industry is *anything* that deals with the science, business, technology and production of agriculture, food and natural resources. There are over 300 agricultural careers that exist today, and each year, we fall short of filling open agriculture career positions by 5,000 qualified graduates. To be involved in FFA, a student must have a working SAE. A student's SAE program is ideally based around a career area of interest. Students may own and operate their own business, work for others, conduct research or explore a multitude of agricultural career options. Some SAE programs are paid, while others are completely volunteer. You can partner with students by providing them connections, ideas for SAEs and helping them get started.

I hear lots about FFA!

FFA is the most visual segment of agricultural education, and usually the part that students enjoy most! Here are some of the parts and pieces of FFA:

- Career Development Events (CDEs): Competitive events that build students' skills in specific agricultural career areas. Examples include soil evaluation, floral design, welding, landscaping, livestock evaluation, ag sales, and many, many more.
- Leadership Skills Events (LSEs): Competitive events that build skills students will use no matter what career they have. Examples include parliamentary procedure, public speaking, agricultural demonstration and many more!
- Volunteer Activities: Each chapter (local high school program) has its own Program of Activities, which often includes school and community volunteer activities. These happen all throughout the year and often align with other celebratory weeks such as Farm Safety and Health Week (September) or National FFA Week (February). Chapters really enjoy collaborating efforts with other organizations/businesses in the community, so if you have a service activity idea, don't hesitate to share it with your local agriculture instructor.
- Leadership Conferences: Nebraska State FFA Association often hosts leadership workshops and/or conferences at various locations throughout the state.
- Proficiency Awards: Students can fill out award applications for their SAE. Proficiency awards measure student aptitude in skills and knowledge of growing their program.
- Sponsorship: The Nebraska FFA Foundation exists as a non-profit organization which raises funding for FFA events, awards and activities.

Of course there are more questions to be answered, but hopefully this provides you with a solid start! Work with your local agriculture instructor and FFA advisor to get more information about your local program. And visit Nebraska Agriculture Education and Nebraska FFA Foundation at their web sites listed on the back of the Handbook for more information.