**Home School Agricultural Education**



**North Carolina Agricultural Education  
North Carolina FFA Association**

**What is Agricultural Education?**

Agricultural education is a systematic program of instruction available to students in middle and high school desiring to learn about the science, business, technology of plant and animal production and/or about the environmental and natural resources systems. Agricultural education first became a part of the public education system in 1917 when the U.S. Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act. More recently North Carolina Agricultural Education opened its doors to allow students in charter, private and home school to become part of this dynamic program. Today, nationally over 1,000,000 students participate in formal agricultural education instructional programs annually offered in grades seven-adult throughout the 50 states and three United States territories.

Agricultural Education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems. Getting a food product from farm to fork requires many different people with many different specialties and skill sets. Students in agricultural education explore a variety of career fields, from biology to business management. Students receive the knowledge and leadership skills they need to succeed in any career path they choose after high school.

Agricultural education prepares students for 255 unique careers in the agricultural industry including production, financing, processing, marketing, or distribution of agriculture products, as well as the vast network of supporting careers that provide the supplies and services and management and conservation of our natural resource systems. Students may enter the workforce directly from high school or pursue higher degrees through technical schools and four-year universities. Samples of career opportunities include:

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| * Agricultural Economist | * Animal Nutritionist | * Biochemist |
| * Ecologist | * Food Process Engineer | * Geneticist |
| * Marine Scientist | * Nutrition/Dietician | * Plant Pathologist |
| * Rancher/Farmer | * Soil Conservationist | * Wildlife Biologist |

Agricultural Education is committed to equipping young people with the skills they need to be successful. From technical knowledge to employability skills, agricultural education is committed to educating and developing future leaders.

**Agricultural Education’s Unique Model of Learning**

Since its early inception, agricultural education programs have utilized a unique and effective model of learning that is built on the three core areas. The three unique areas are: classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience programs (SAE), and the FFA student organization activities and opportunities. The agricultural education program is designed for delivery through a balance of these three core educational strategies.

* Classroom/Laboratory Instruction – quality instruction in and about agriculture that utilizes a “learning by doing” philosophy.
* Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Programs –a student-led, instructor supervised, work-based learning experience that results in measurable outcomes within a predefined, agreed upon set of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources(AFNR) Technical Standards and Career Ready Practices aligned to a career plan of study. The student works with their instructor, parent, employer or supervisor to implement and grow through SAE experiences that teaches responsibility, financial stewardship, independence and lifelong skills.
* FFA Student Organization Opportunities – FFA activities are an integral part of the agricultural education program which develop leadership and personal growth. FFA provides experiences to help members develop employability skills and prepare for real-world success.

A quality agricultural education program has a balanced utilization of these three core educational strategies.

**What are the program outcomes?**

The major program outcomes for students enrolled in an agricultural education program are as follows:

1. Opportunity to explore career options available in agriculture-related fields and to assist them in planning for a future career.
2. Technical skills training for success in an agriculture-related career.
3. Connectivity of school-based instruction with work-based and experiential learning.
4. Leadership and personal development training needed to succeed in an agriculture-related career including teamwork, problem solving, and communications.
5. Competitive advantage for students to succeed in an international economy.
6. Commitment to community development and service through projects that require interaction with parents, agribusiness leaders, civic organizations, etc.
7. Development of skills necessary for lifelong learning in agriculture leading to career advancement and success.

**Where can I find Agricultural Education Curriculum?**

The North Carolina Agricultural Education State Staff works with teachers and content experts to produce curriculum materials or identify adopted materials for courses in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Standard Course of Study. These courses are validated by business and industry and are available for charter, private and home school students. Curriculum is available on the North Carolina FFA Website at [www.ncffa.org](http://www.ncffa.org) under resources. All curriculum is passcode protected. To gain access, contact the State Agricultural Education office at 919-513-1205 or contact Joshua Bledsoe at [joshua\_bledsoe@ncsu.edu](mailto:joshua_bledsoe@ncsu.edu).

Additionally, courses are available online through various public and private sites. One example is the Nelson Academy of Agricultural Sciences Online. For more information about the Nelson Academy you can contact April M. Garris at 336.669.3616 or at <https://allagonline.com/> Middle school curriculum can also be found at: <http://www.growforit.org/curriculum>. The recommended period of instruction is 30 or more hours per semester/year for middle school students and 90-100 hours per semester/year for high school students.

**How Can I Join the FFA?**

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

The FFA is a national organization of middle and high school agricultural education students. The FFA offers students the opportunity to develop leadership, personal growth and career development skills through awards, competitive activities, events, and scholarship programs. The North Carolina FFA Association has over 21,000 members statewide in over 320 FFA chapters and home school programs.

The requirement to be a member of the North Carolina FFA Association and National FFA are simple. A student must be enrolled or receiving instruction in agricultural education, must have an on-going supervised agricultural experience program (SAE) and must pay annual FFA membership dues of $12.00 for high school students (National FFA dues are $7 and NC FFA dues are $5) and $8.00 for middle school students (National FFA dues $7 and NC FFA dues are $1). Instruction for completing a home school FFA membership application can be found on the membership page on [www.ncffa.org](http://www.ncffa.org).

Home school students meeting the requirements above are eligible to become members of the NC FFA Association and National FFA Organization. There are three avenues that home school students can choose to become involved in the FFA:

1. Students taking agricultural education courses can join the NC FFA Home School FFA Chapter (NCSU Agriscience Academy). Members in this chapter are eligible to participate in any FFA activity above the local chapter level. In team events they can compete for individual honors but cannot join with other home school FFA members as a team.
2. Home school students can become part of a local FFA chapter in a public, private, or charter school that offers agricultural education and has an FFA chapter if agreeable by the FFA chapter advisor and the appropriate school/school system administration. Parents/guardians should check local school systems for guidelines on access to public schools by home school students.
3. Local home school students can join together to form a home school FFA chapter. Home school chapters must be approved by the North Carolina Agricultural Education State Staff, must have a designated adult serve as advisor, must meet on a set schedule through the year, must have a chapter program of activities and must provide an annual report to the State Agricultural Education Leader. Home school FFA Chapters have all the rights and privileges of regular FFA chapters.

**What can I do in the FFA?**

The National FFA Organization provides many opportunities for its members. As a part of the National FFA Organization, the North Carolina FFA Association provides additional programs, awards, honors and opportunities for its members. Information about FFA opportunities can be found at [www.ncffa.org](http://www.ncffa.org) or [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org). Below are some examples of those opportunities available.

* FFA Degree Programs– FFA members can advance in the organization by obtaining degrees. Each degree earned requires a higher level of participation and involvement. The degrees of advancement are: Discovery, Greenhand, Chapter, State and American.
* Proficiency Awards – Members can participate in this award area based on their Supervised Agricultural Experience Program. There are over 40 agriculturally-related areas from which members can choose. Applications are then judged at state and national levels.
* Scholarships – Each year the National FFA awards students nearly 2 million dollars in scholarships for their academic success and participation in FFA activities.
* Camping Programs – Each summer, FFA members gather at the North Carolina FFA Center to participate in teambuilding activities and premier leadership and personal growth workshops. The North Carolina FFA Center is located at White Lake in Bladen County.
* Leadership Conferences – Throughout the year the FFA presents workshops that promote premier leadership, personal growth and career success. One major conference designed by National FFA is the Washington Leadership Conference. This is held each summer in the nation’s capital. In North Carolina, we offer several conferences including our MEGA Conference held in late winter and our annual State Leadership Conference held at the North Carolina FFA Center in the summer.
* Agriscience Fair – Each year members compete in state and national agriscience fairs to showcase their experimental and analytical projects.
* Career and Leadership Development Events – North Carolina FFA conducts over 40 different career and leadership development events that allow students to display skills they have developed through instruction in agricultural education. Some of these events are team events and some are individual. Many of these events start at the local level and require competence to advance to higher levels. These events require students to perform hands-on skills and proficiency in the various areas of the agriculture industry.
* Conventions – The highlight of the year for the North Carolina FFA Association is the North Carolina FFA State Convention held annually in Raleigh in June. Thousands of FFA members come together to conduct the business of the association, award and recognize members for excellence, develop leadership skills, learn about agriculture careers and celebrate excellence. The National FFA Convention is the largest youth convention in the world with over 69,000 members in attendance in Indianapolis, Indiana. A sea of blue FFA jackets converge each year in October to conduct the national business of the organization. This life-changing event brings together members from all across America to celebrate student success.

These are just a few of the many opportunities available for FFA members today. For more information on North Carolina FFA, sign up for the NC FFA Listserv: <https://ncffa.org/subscribe>

**Who manages Agricultural Education and FFA in North Carolina?**

The Agricultural Education State Staff Team based in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University leads the Agricultural Education/FFA program in North Carolina. If you are interested in learning more about agricultural education and FFA for home school students please contact:

**Joshua Bledsoe**

State Agricultural Education Leader &

State FFA Advisor

North Carolina State University

4158 Broughton Hall, Campus Box 7654

Raleigh, NC 27695-7654

Telephone: (919) 513-1205

Fax: (919) 513-3201

Email: [joshua\_bledsoe@ncsu.edu](mailto:joshua_bledsoe@ncsu.edu)