**Philosophy of Agricultural Education**

 I have always heard people say, “One decision you make can change your life forever.” This applies to me because after signing up for Principles of Agriculture in high school, and joining the FFA, my life was changed forever. Day one of class, I realized how many opportunities agriculture had to offer. I was unaware of the variety of possibilities that students could have while being enrolled in agricultural education classes. This is a huge issue for our country today. The importance of the entire agricultural industry is overlooked. Many people do not realize that they would be naked and starving without the agricultural industry. The population is rising at a very fast rate, yet the number of farms throughout our country is decreasing. This is a major concern because so much of the land is being developed for residents and commercial real estate.

 It is imperative that the future of our country becomes educated about agriculture and its contribution to society. Most students are not exposed to agricultural science classes until high school. We must have dedicated agricultural educators that are passionate about the industry to plant a seed about agriculture in students, like my agricultural science teacher did for me. If agricultural educators are enthusiastic, more students will be engaged and learning will take place. I was not able to apply everything I had learned in school in daily life until I joined my FFA chapter. I was able to apply what I learned about major turning points in agriculture to the history of America. I was able to apply skills that I learned in math, science, English, speech, and many more.

 FFA provides a variety of opportunities to develop leaders, personal growth, and career preparation. “Students whose lives are impacted by FFA and agricultural education will achieve academic and personal growth, strengthen American agriculture, and provide leadership to build healthy local communities, a strong nation, and a sustainable world” (National FFA, 2015). Through Leadership Development Events such as: chapter conducting, job interview, radio broadcasting, creed speaking, quiz team, skills team, and many more, students are able to demonstrate what they have learned in agricultural science classes in real life situations. Chapter Conducting teaches students how to properly conduct a meeting, which is very beneficial. Job Interview successfully prepares students for real life interviews by having a multiple step process. Radio Broadcasting prepares students for journalism and being familiarized with current events. Creed Speaking helps students speak in front of others. Quiz Team allows students to test on what they have learned through the FFA. Skills Team allows for students to demonstrate a skill that they have. Each and every leadership development event is extremely beneficial in helping students grow personally, while becoming leaders and professionals. I myself competed in many of these events while I was in FFA. I participated in Chapter Conducting, Radio Broadcasting, Creed Speaking, Quiz Team, and Skills Team. Each and every event taught me something new that I can apply today. I learned to work together in teams, and or individually as well. Career Development Events allow students to apply what they have learned in the classroom practice. These events at help students prepare for a career in the field of agriculture. I was able to apply what I learned in the classroom by joining the Livestock Evaluation team. Leadership Development Events and Career Development Events are extremely beneficial to students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to situations.

 Aside from just Leadership Development Events and Career Development Events, students are also able to implement what they have learned in agricultural science classes in Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs). SAEs bind together to create the full experience by hands-on real-life projects. There are four different kinds of SAEs: entrepreneurship, placement, research and experimentation, and exploratory. While I only did entrepreneurship SAEs during my FFA career, there are so many ways to benefit from SAEs, from getting a job in the agricultural industry, doing research and experiments to becoming aware of careers in the agricultural industry. While doing entrepreneurship SAEs, I learned an abundance of essential skills. I learned about responsibility, time management, recording finances, knowledge and care of animals, character, and so much more. With every SAE, students must keep a record book documenting the amount of time and money invested into the project. This was one of the most beneficial aspects of having an SAE for me. Classroom and laboratory instruction, FFA, and Supervised Agricultural Experiences make up the full Agricultural Education experience. Without one of these components, the Agricultural Education experience is incomplete.

 I believe there is something for everyone who has an interest and passion for agriculture. There are so many ways to develop as a person, as a professional, as a team member, and so much more. I can confidentially say that I would not be who I am today without my agricultural education. My agricultural science teachers in high school impacted my life in such a way that I am going to school to be able to do the same. I am looking forward to teaching others about agriculture and its importance.

Resources

National FFA Organization-Home. (2015). Retrieved September 13,2016, from https://www.ffa.org/