

Key Elements to Justify the Value of an Agricultural Education Program

Purpose:

This resource is intended to provide assistance to help document the value of an agricultural education program. It will provide an effective way to communicate evidence to influential partners and community members that have a direct interest in an agricultural education program. In addition, all agricultural education programs should have an improvement plan in place that is based on making progress on Ohio's quality program standards. While there are many facets of an agricultural education program that could be considered, the 10 elements that follow are those that position an agricultural education program as a key part of a school district's mission.

1. Understand why an agricultural education program exists today.

Agricultural education programs have been an integral part of the public school system for at least 93 years. The Smith Hughes Act of 1917 formally established agricultural education as a means of preparing young people for jobs in agriculture. Over the years, the number of students served has grown and the types of agricultural education programs has increased but preparing young people for success in agriculture, food and natural resource related careers still remains the program's primary purpose.

Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources systems.

- *The complete agricultural education program will target students through high quality classroom and laboratory instruction.*
- *Develop premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through FFA.*
- *Enhance career skills through Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Programs.*

2. Install an active industry-based advisory committee.

The advisory committee can be an effective resource in strengthening an agricultural education program. Per Ohio Administrative Code, advisory committees are required for workforce development programs such as agricultural education programs. A program advisory committee makes recommendations on program design and program improvement. It should be comprised of business and community members who, as a result of their work on the advisory committee, will know more about the program than anyone else and should be in a position to support and document the strengths of the program.

An advisory committee should include business and industry representatives, school administrators, and local supporters of the agricultural education program. Empower an advisory committee to do the following:

- Review all features of the program including goals, facilities and curriculum.
- Identify industry trends related to employee knowledge and skills, technology development and business economic patterns.
- Assist and identify places for internships and cooperative work placement.

- Encourage cooperation, communication, and a better understanding of agricultural education programs among employers, students and the general public.
- Serve as a communication link within the community.

3. Know how much revenue is generated from state career technical funding?

It is important to be aware of the amount of state Career-Technical Education (CTE) funding received by a school district and how it can be spent within a CTE program. By staying current with state CTE funding information and current policy, a school district will have the knowledge to accurately budget and approve acceptable expenditures for CTE programs. The current model for career technical education is not based on a weighted funding model. The current flat rate model is based on the amount a school district received for career technical education in FY2009 with a .0075 increase for FY2010, and an additional .0075 increase for FY2011.

The current flat rate funding model will only be used through FY2011. How CTE programs will be funded in the next biennium budget has yet to be determined. Below are two links that will provide more information on the amount of state CTE funding received by a respective school district as well as recommendations as to how these funds can be used.

The State Auditor's Bulletin 2000-16 provides a list of acceptable and unacceptable expenditures using state CTE funds. [Read more on Acceptable Uses of State CTE Funds](#)

FY2010 and FY2011 CTE Weighted Funds Certification Letter shows the amount of CTE funds that a school district received in a given year for both Category 1 (work force development programs including agricultural education programs) and Category 2 programs (including both Family Consumer Science and Career Based Intervention programs). [Click here to Access a School District FY2010 CTE Weighted Funds Certification Letter](#), [Click here to Access a School District FY2011 CTE Weighted Funds Certification Letter](#)

For guidance on how to interpret the CTE Calculations Letter, use this [guide](#). To determine the estimated amount of state CTE funding a specific CTE program within a school district generated in FY2009, use this [worksheet](#).

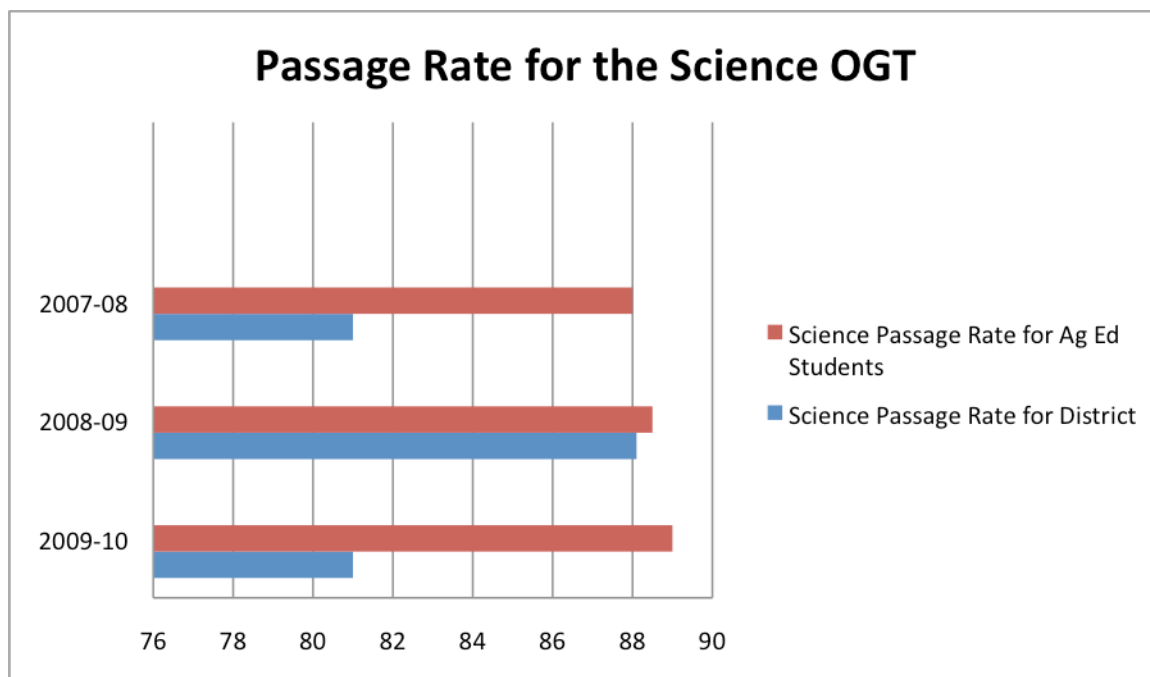
4. Develop a program Course of Study that shows how the agricultural education program supports the learning of academic content, especially areas within STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

Agricultural education programs are not just about technical knowledge and skill development in agriculture, food and natural resources. Agricultural education programs provide the opportunity for student to learn science, mathematics, and English Language Arts in the context of their agricultural education program. In some cases students can earn core academic graduation credit for what students learn in the agricultural education program. The course of study for the program should contain both the technical and related academic content standards. All courses of study should be based on the Agricultural and Environmental Systems Content Standards document which contains industry-validated content that students should know and be able to do. This includes related content standards for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science.

[Click here to Access Agricultural and Environmental Content Standards Document](#)

5. Identify the success students are having on related academic state assessments.

If a purpose of the agricultural education program is to help students learn academic content then it is important to demonstrate that students are in fact doing so. How well the program does in achieving this goal can be documented using Ohio Graduation Testing (OGT) data in all content areas. Trend data is much more descriptive than a report using only one year of data so it is recommended to collect and present three years of testing data. This information can be presented in a chart/graph that allows interested parties to develop a clear picture of the academic achievement of students enrolled in an agricultural education program when compared to the rest of the district. It is common for students within an agricultural education program to perform at a higher level on the OGT when compared to the rest of the district. Below is an example of a table that illustrates science OGT performance of students in an agricultural education program in comparison to overall district performance.



Note: OGT district data can be collected from the state district report card. Agricultural education student data can be collected through building principals/guidance counselors.

6. Develop a Program of Study for the program aligns with related college programs.

It is expected that agricultural education programs should serve all students with respect to their career and college aspirations. However school districts and communities often place a priority on how well students are prepared for college. All agricultural education programs must have an approved Program of Study in place, including an articulation agreement with a participating college, by FY2013. The program of study should illustrate how the secondary courses align with postsecondary courses and what college credit is earned while in high school.

- [Learn more about Program of Study development](#)
- [Learn more about Ohio Tech Prep](#)

7. Demonstrate that the program prepares students for college and careers.

Back to the mission, agricultural education programs are all about preparing young people for career success. Every year, placement information on program concentrators is reported to the State of Ohio. While program level information cannot be obtained from ODE at this time, the information can be easily compiled from the original data that was submitted.

Placement Rates for Students in the Agricultural Education Program

Class	4 yr University	2 yr/Tech School	Armed Forces	Career World after HS
2009 (19)	57% (11)	42%(8)	0	0
2008 (8)	50% (4)	50% (4)	0	0
2007 (14)	21.5 (3)	50% (7)	7% (1)	21.5% (3)

8. Demonstrate how the program supports district graduation and attendance goals.

Attendance and Graduation Rates are two important state report card indicators. Illustrating the extent to which the program is helping the district in meeting these goals can be valuable. Below is an example of how graduation rates can be documented.

Graduation and Attendance Rates for the Agricultural Education Program

Class	Graduation Rate of District	Graduation Rate of Ag. Ed. Program	Attendance Rate of District	Attendance Rate of Program
2009 (19)	100%	100%	96.3%	98.9%
2008 (8)	99%	100%	96.2%	97.9%
2007 (14)	100%	100%	94.3%	96.3%

Note: District graduation rate data was collected from the district report card. Graduation Rate of Ag. Ed. Program data was collected from the local agricultural education department.

[Click here to access School District Report Card at the Ohio Department of Education](#)

9. Describe the economic impact of the agricultural education program on the community.

Another area to provide evidence of the strength of an agricultural education program is through the data analysis of the financial component of student's Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs. SAEs not only provide a student with the opportunity to further develop important 21st century learning skills outside of the classroom but they also can have a significant economic impact to a community. Below is an example on how to provide SAE financial information to interested parties.

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Programs

	Total Hours Work Experience	Total Net Profit (after exp, before taxes)	Total Earnings (before expenses)	Economic Impact (x7) from Total Earnings
2009	15,442	\$132,862	\$170,807	\$1,195,649
2008	12,755	\$90,236	\$105,326	\$737,283
2007	14,589	\$108,775	\$154,085	\$1,078,595

Note: This SAE data was collected by the local agricultural education department. The above data was based on one agricultural education program.

10. Enhance community engagement.

Maintaining closer communications between the school and the local community can be strengthened by developing a local FFA Alumni affiliate and/or an Adult Agricultural Education Program such as the Ohio Young Farmers. Promoting your school district through these types of programs can generate greater support for the in-school agriculture education program along with the entire school district. It is important to remember that an FFA Alumni affiliate and Adult Agricultural Education Program is not the same and should not be used in the same manner as a required program advisory committee. Yet, a local FFA Alumni affiliate and an Adult Agricultural Education Program can provide a means to further the agricultural education program by increasing community ownership and involvement in the program.

A local FFA Alumni affiliate facilitates involvement and support of former members and those interested in FFA and agricultural education. An alumni affiliate can help enhance the personal development aspect of FFA. Members serve as mentors, coaches, employers and extra hands for the teacher. Alumni members serve as advocates for FFA and agricultural education on the local, state and national levels. [Read more on how to organize a FFA Alumni Affiliate](#)

The Ohio Young Farmers, Inc. (OYF) is an organization that provides an adult education program for the local community. The main purpose of the organization is to improve the economic and social position of Ohio's farm and agribusiness families through education in the fields of agriculture and agribusiness. Through the programs offered, educational opportunities will allow members to build business skills as well as leadership and service opportunities for living and working in a local community. Your local OYF programs are a great way to build community ties and support systems for the local agricultural education program. [Read more on the Ohio Young Farmers, Inc.](#)