

Agricultural Education in North Carolina *The Rationale for a Year-round Program*

An effective agricultural education is comprised of three core elements: ***Classroom/Laboratory Instruction; Supervised Agricultural Experience; FFA Student Organization Activities.*** To be effective and maximize opportunities for students enrolled in agricultural education, secondary agricultural education programs in North Carolina **must** be offered on a 12-month/year-round basis. This position has been supported historically by educational and agricultural leaders and policy-makers. On March 4, 1976, the State Board of Education approved a resolution which stated: “***...AND WHERE POSSIBLE, that vocational agriculture teachers be employed and work with their students on a 12 month basis.***” This position was supported in 1983 by the North Carolina General Assembly in Chapter 115 C-302 of General Statutes of North Carolina which states: “***Provided, that local boards shall not reduce the term of employment for any vocational agriculture teacher personnel position that was 12 calendar months for the 1982-83 school year for any school year thereafter.***” In 2004, the North Carolina General Assembly in **SECTION 7.20.** G.S. 115C-302.1(b) indicated further support. The ratified bill signed by the governor on July 20, 2004 states: “***However, local boards shall not reduce the term of employment for any vocational agriculture teacher personnel position that was 12 calendar months for the 1982-83 school year for any school year thereafter. In addition, local boards shall not reduce the term of employment for any vocational agriculture teacher personnel position that was 12 calendar months for the 2003-2004 school year for any school year thereafter.***”

The rationale for conducting agricultural education programs on a 12-month/year-round basis emerges from the unique “year-round” educational opportunities made available to agriculture students. These opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- 1. Supervised Agricultural Experience (Workbased Learning Experience):**
Since it's beginning in 1917, one of the three core elements of an agricultural education program has been Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE). SAE is a model of the school-to-work transition/workbased learning approach to education. All agricultural education students are expected to have a year-round, workbased learning programs that are monitored by the agriculture teacher. These experience programs may be implemented as apprenticeships, job shadowing, agriscience projects, cooperative education, field trips and/or supervised agricultural experiences. Agriculture teachers are expected to conduct on-site visits with employers, students, parents/guardians and other partners involved in the students' workbased learning experience throughout the year.

2. **Student Organization Activities (FFA):** FFA began in 1928 and is one of the three core elements of an agricultural education program. These activities require the agriculture teacher to focus a great amount of time and energy on FFA if the students are to truly benefit. Many state FFA activities are scheduled in the summer months to reduce days away from school for students and teachers. They include: State FFA Convention, State FFA Leadership Conference, State FFA Camp. Also, strong FFA chapters have chapter and FFA alumni activities being conducted at the local level year-round, including the summer months.
3. **Facility/Laboratory/Project Maintenance:** Agricultural education facilities and laboratories require year-round maintenance and oversight. Furthermore, quality agricultural education requires the use and maintenance of live animal and plant projects (ie. aquaculture, biotechnology, greenhouse, floriculture, forestry, animal science projects, etc.). Both of these factors provide an excellent opportunity for the agricultural education program to serve the local community's educational and agricultural needs on a year-round basis. As science becomes more and more a part of our curriculum, it is vital that laboratories and live projects be maintained on a 12-month basis.
4. **Community-Based Adult Education:** Leadership and delivery of community-based adult education programs in agriculture is expected to occur during the summer months. These activities might include technical assistance for community agriculturalists and/or classes/seminars for adults on the upgrading their skills and knowledge in such areas as floral design, landscaping, agricultural mechanics, internet, etc. Furthermore, the summer months provide the agriculture teacher with a much needed opportunity to gather data and assess the needs of the students, community and agricultural industry to enhance the local agricultural education program's instructional program. These activities provide much needed connectivity between the community and the agricultural education program and enhances the value of the school's facilities and faculty to the community it serves.
5. **Professional and Instructional Improvement:** Throughout the summer months, agriculture teachers have the opportunity to participate in various professional and instructional program enhancement activities and workshops. Different workshop topics are offered in various locations around the state topics related to agricultural technology and improved teaching methodology. Agriculture teachers are expected to participate in the Annual Agricultural Education Conference conducted in the summer. This time is also critical for the agriculture teacher to modify, revise and update curriculum for the next year and to articulate their curriculum with the community college and/or university system.

If the agricultural education is to be successful and effective it must be a 12-month/year-round program; anything less than year-round does not and will not effectively serve the students, communities and agricultural industry. **For more information regarding agricultural education in North Carolina, contact the State Agricultural Education Office at 919-515-4206.**