Learning Leadership Skills: An Essential Component of Global Education

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Introduction/Purpose: The Purpose of the FFA® LifeKnowledge Initiative is to provide quality instructional materials so secondary level agricultural teachers can infuse premier leadership, personal growth and career success into every facet of agricultural education at the middle school, high school and postsecondary levels.

A second purpose is to provide secondary level agricultural teachers with additional practical learning strategies and corresponding instructional materials to empower agricultural students to live the mission of the FFA every day. These 275 lesson plans, available on CD-Rom address specific skills and knowledge, and will transform how premier leadership, personal growth, and career success are taught in agricultural education classrooms throughout the world. A minimum of 4,500 copies of the 3-CD-Rom set will be distributed for free to agricultural teachers that attend a training seminar.

Major Points: Thirty-six writers from the field of education were hired to write lessons. Each lesson went through seven phases of review, including trial uses in actual classrooms by agricultural teachers representing a wide range of experience levels. In addition, nine university educators, 212 high school & middle school teachers and numerous National FFA Organization staff were involved in the development and evaluation process.

All lesson plans were built around the following principles for student learning: We learn best:
• When the environment encourages respect and risk-taking.
• When we have experiences that elicit or build upon prior knowledge and experience.
• When the knowledge we acquire answers questions both meaningful and relevant to us.
• When we rehearse or review knowledge in multiple ways.
• When we assess growth and use feedback for improvement.
• When we create products/services that add value to others.

Instructional materials in each lesson plan include:
Learning objectives, transparency masters, quizzes/tests, vocabulary lists, role modeling and scenarios, age appropriate activities and self-assessment or behavioral assessment instruments.

Conclusion: Examples of some lesson sequences that have been identified include, but are not limited to:
• Integrate key lessons into technical agricultural courses
• Multi-week course on leadership, personal growth, and career success
• Multi-week course on developing a program of activities
• Multi-week course on service learning
• Student officer training course
• Fundraising and goal setting units

Educational Importance: “This is the premier tool for any teacher wanting to change the lives of students while also improving the way they teach.” Agriscience teacher, Ohio.

“This project has the potential to have the biggest impact on improving agricultural education within the global community than any educational effort up to this point in time.” Professor, University of Arizona.