

# Hershey's Ag Integration Program May Serve As Statewide Model

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Lancaster Farming Staff  
**HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.)** — "It's apparent that we have moved out of the ages where we had connections with agriculture. We have found through the years that kids really don't understand where their food comes from," said Norman Miller, director of the new agricultural science program at Milton Hershey School.

Because of this, the school has recently undertaken a major enterprise in all its courses across the board — integrate aspects of agriculture in not just one course, but all the courses, including English, Math, History, and other subject areas.

The new program is spearheaded by Miller. It helps tie in academic and residential programs into a seamless web to promote the understanding of agriculture and related fields in all aspects of learning.

The program, which uses elements of ag science, includes the use of approximately 500 acres next to the centralized campus, according to a memo distributed in mid-July to all Milton Hershey School employees from Robert L. Sloane, vice president of operations.

Kindergarten through 12th graders will be actively learning, through hands-on experience, how important agriculture is to their daily lives. The existing curriculum will not be altered, according to Miller, but will be enhanced by using aspects of agriculture to teach basic concepts of science, math, and communication.

Centers will be able to assist

teachers in teaching and in providing instructions and hands-on experience to all Milton Hershey School students. These areas include:

- Dairy and Animal Center. This center will examine milk production, but also show the different milking breeds and how they are important to agriculture as a whole, according to Miller. Also, a production dairy will show how milk is produced, stored, and shipped, and will act as a training center for a multitude of agricultural concepts.

- Environmental Center. This will examine the importance of wetlands and streams to overall water quality, and to promoting the environment, including the health of wildlife.

- Horticultural Center. The many working aspects of the large array of vegetable operations and fruit orchards, including some aspects of the Agway Northeast Research Center and the research involved in a variety of plant genetics, will be examined.

- Farm and Technology Center. This center will serve teachers and students as a way to learn about the mechanics of agriculture, from fixing and maintaining machinery to other types of "shop" work.

Many of the concepts that the program is modeled on came as a result of the experience in the national Ag in the Classroom instructional program and teaching at Penn State the last two years in summer sessions. This week-long program ran five separate weeks to accommodate teacher schedules, from July 11-15 and July 25-29, according to Beth Moore, workshop coordinator.

According to Moore, 76 teachers participated in the program, which focused on the important issues in agriculture and ways teachers can successfully integrate aspects of agriculture into the classroom. This was the second time the workshop, made available through the Pennsylvania Foundation for Better Living, was held.

"We work as closely as possible with Milton Hershey, share projects and receive some of their lessons," said Moore. Last year, two teachers attended from Hershey, and one came back this year as a presenter.

The program involves kindergarten through fifth grades, said Moore. She has received positive feedback from teachers about the program.

"New York has an ag in the curriculum program from K through 6 that's integrated," said Miller. "They're already established in that. Pennsylvania has been behind. And it's our intent to move that forward, not only in our school system, but in the schools of Pennsylvania and also to coordinate that through the nation."

Miller said that plans are under way at the school to develop a nationwide curriculum for schools to incorporate this model of a program.

"This thing will grow," he said. "It's the idea of planting the seeds

in teachers' minds to show them that there are different alternatives to teaching kids how you can relate a subject with a hands-on application of an agricultural concept."

As an example, one course, for fifth graders, is called "egg people." Students cut the top of a fresh egg open, make scrambled eggs out of the raw material, and then draw a face on the shell. Dirt is placed in the egg shell, and grass seed is planted on top. The grass seed grows, and students cut the

"hair" and maintain the "egg person."

"We are moving so far away from our agrarian base that we as adults and leaders think that everybody is coming up to speed with what we know," said Miller. "But it's not being taught in the systems. We need to realize how illiterate our kids are when it comes to food."

"The future is not necessarily ag production for our kids, it's about agriculture."



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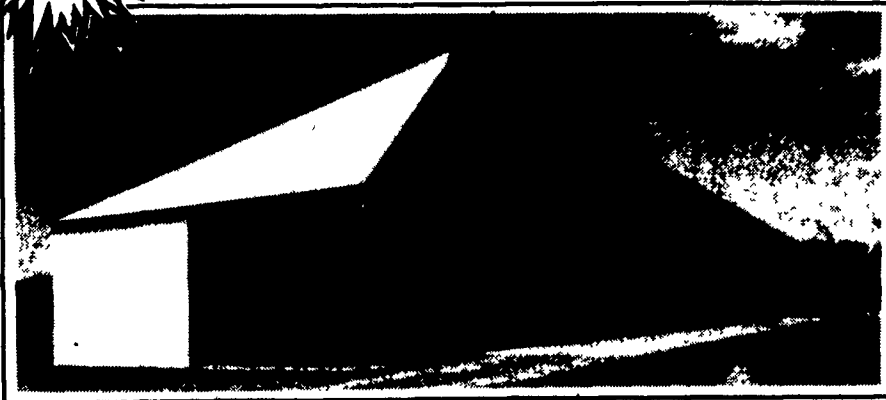


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