

Vision For Ag Ed Program Begins Field Tests

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.)

— A statewide program to improve ag literacy for students in kindergarten through high school and to provide work skills for high school graduates and adults who enter the agricultural and related fields begins the first of several "field tests" this month.

In its third year, the program, Vision for Pennsylvania Agricultural Education, was funded this year with a \$55,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The project is being conducted in partnership with Penn State University, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and the Pennsylvania Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association.

The project is being administered through the Solanco School District and is coordinated by Mimi Lufkin, project director from Christiana.

The program was envisioned three years ago to "impact all students and their understanding of agriculture and food systems," noted Lufkin. This "ag literacy" is sorely missing, according to many proponents in grade and high schools.

In meetings conducted in the past three years with teachers, students, and industry representatives, many agreed that programs are limited and don't address the need to improve all students'

understanding of where food comes from.

And that's important to Pennsylvania's multibillion dollar economy that depends on the driving economic force of agriculture.

"Two percent of the population in the country are involved in production agriculture," said Lufkin. "But a much broader, larger section — 20 percent — are involved in some field related to agriculture. So we need to design school-based programs that serve that broader base."

Lufkin noted that one of the driving forces behind the Vision program was the School To Work reform movement begun half a decade ago to better prepare students for the everyday work world.

Many students weren't receiving the proper work and life skills to survive in a world with many ag-related enterprises.

One program being conducted at Chambersburg High School examines service-oriented, people skills involved in sales and marketing. The program used its annual FFA citrus sale as an application of ag business skills. Students examine all aspects of marketing fruit from advertising and inventory to cash flow and profitability.

This program has been formulated to assist schools in designing programs that help students "apply what they're learning in an experiential way," noted the project director.

Lufkin said that field testing at several sites begins this month and will continue through the 1998-1999 school year. Those initial field test sites are Chambersburg Area School District, Gettysburg Area School District, Shippensburg Area School District, Berlin Brothersvalley Area School District, Crawford Central School District (Cochran Junior and Senior High Schools), and Conewago Valley School District.

Lufkin was instrumental in helping to coordinate the research and write up a curriculum development and program planning handbook that serves as a guideline for ag educational supervisors in elementary, high schools, and adult education settings. In addition, the handbook is designed to such a way that it can be used by community groups to design non-formal agricultural education programs. The book outlines a 12-step process to "design an ag education program to meet students' needs," she said.

The handbook was written under the guidance of students, teachers, industry representatives, and others to take into account the real-world needs of the communities in which the programs are based. The handbook "provides local schools and community groups with a step-by-step process for developing new or redesigning existing agricultural education programs that meet their communities' needs," according to a Vision flier.

Ag educational programs vary tremendously throughout the state, according to Lufkin. "A lot of it is driven by the teachers themselves," according to Lufkin, and depends heavily on their personality and their style of teaching in addition to individual program goals.

Importantly, the Vision program puts these questions in the minds of students even in kindergarten. "Kids should start to learn something about ag when in kindergarten," Lufkin noted.

Lufkin is familiar with similar projects conducted nationwide. A former high school agriculture teacher and a consultant for the ag education unit with the California Department of Education, Lufkin lives in the Solanco School District.

Serving on the project steering committee at Solanco are Arba Henry, ag instructor, and Dr. Elizabeth Logan, superintendent of

the Solanco School District.

In a paper entitled "The Perfect Partnership," Lufkin outlined three things that must change if educational programs are to continue to grow in Pennsylvania: one, that the state must broaden its mission to include more nontraditional students in ag education; two, that the state must build more flexibility and rigor into the programs; and three, that educators must "move our programs into the mainstream of public education and be sure they connect or lead to outcomes perceived to be valuable by our clientele."

The Vision program serves as a "road map" into the 21st century, Lufkin noted in the paper. "The Vision for Agricultural Education Project is the vehicle that will take us into the next century."

For more information, contact Lufkin at (717) 529-6635.

Lehigh Marketing Club To Hold Classes

The Lehigh Valley Grain Marketing Club will be taking a new marketing class this winter. "Agricultural Marketing in a Multinational Environment", a class that builds on your agricultural marketing experience will start at the end of January. This is an opportunity to learn and discuss ways to put all the pieces together to get the most for your product.

Keystone Farm Credit will host these sessions.

Through past study and experience we all know that world events affect the bottom line. "Agricultural Marketing in a Multinational Environment" will help you evaluate what U.S. and world economic and political events mean to your operation. Almost any event, in any country, that has an impact on national, regional or global politics, monetary policy, agricultural production or policy affects U.S. agriculture revenues. In addition, the actions of multinational firms play an important role in the prices you receive for your crops and livestock.

Dr. Jim Kendrick, from the University of Nebraska, will be teaching this video taped class.

"We will learn to identify and track events that affect U.S. and local agricultural marketing," says John Berry, agriculture marketing agent. Dr. Kendrick will show how to analyze the beginning of an event and how it might develop. We will also discuss the politics involved that might alter the evolution of these events.

The meetings will start January 19, 1998 at 6:00pm at Keystone Farm Credit, Fogelsville and continue every Monday evening for 15 weeks. In addition to these classes, the Lehigh Valley Grain Marketing Club will host speakers that will give their insight into grain markets during the monthly breakfast at the Starlite restaurant, Fogelsville. The breakfast meetings will be held the second Tuesday of each month, beginning at 7:00am. Everyone is invited to attend all meetings of the Lehigh Valley Grain Marketing Club.

Farm Show Special Issue Next Week

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been changed for the January 9 Issue.

These deadlines are as follows:

January 9th Issue

Section D Classified Ads — 5 p.m., Tuesday, 1/6.
Farm Equipment Ads — 9 a.m., Wednesday, 1/7.
All Other Display Ads — 9 a.m., Monday, 1/5.
General News — Noon, Wednesday, 1/7.

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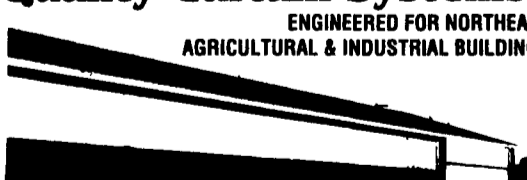
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