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HOW BOYS HEAR ABOUT AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS AND WHAT CAUSES THEM TO ENROLL

What methods of bringing the vocational agriculture departments of Minnesota to the attention of prospective students are most effective? What methods have been most effective in causing the final decision to enroll in vocational agriculture? The students now enrolled in thirty-one departments have testified on these points. We know how they first heard of their respective departments and what caused them finally to enroll. The purpose of the present discussion is to summarize and interpret this evidence.

Four hundred nineteen boys recalled how they first heard of the vocational agriculture department. Two hundred twenty-seven boys decided to enroll as a direct result of their first contact. One hundred sixty boys did not decide to enroll as the result of their first contact, but have indicated what caused them finally to enroll. A considerable number of statements by boys were not clear and their records could not be included.

The first contacts, i.e., the ways by which the boys learned of the agricultural departments are shown in Table I. Also this table shows how many of these boys decided to enroll as the result of first contacts. The third column shows how general the methods of first contact were, i.e., in how many departments they are found.

As might be expected the personal talks of the teacher with prospective students furnished more first contacts than any other method. More than half these contacts caused the boys to decide immediately to enroll. In one department sixteen students enrolled in this way. The comments of some of the boys show that the teacher talked with them on registration day. Some of the one hundred sixteen boys finally decided to enroll after a later talk with the teacher.

The present and former students in the agriculture department are shown to be very active in informing prospective

Table I. How Boys in Thirty-one Minnesota Departments First Heard of the Department in which They Are Enrolled

	Number of boys	No. of boys for whom first contact was also cause of their decision to enroll	No. of departments whose boys had this kind of first contact
Talk with teacher of agriculture	116	61	23
Contact with present and former agriculture students	86	42	28
A course in 7th or 8th grade agriculture ...	48	30	17
Brothers	39	18	17
Saw agriculture listed on school program ...	25	16	13
Talk with superintendent of schools	21	18	9
Boys' and Girls' Club Work	19	9	7
Articles in periodical	19	12	8
Talk with principal of high school	9	6	6
Parents	9	5	6
Speech of teacher of agriculture	9	4	7
Teachers other than the teacher of agriculture	6	4	6
County agent	2	0	2
Rural school visits by teacher of agriculture	2	1	2
Letter from teacher of agriculture	2	1	2
Visit to school	2	0	2
Talk with some other person	5	0	5
Total	419	227	

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students. In one department nine boys learned of the agriculture department as the result of this activity. Some boys infer and some state directly the good reputation their teachers of agriculture have in the classroom. It would seem that good teaching is one of the most effective methods of getting information about the department to prospective students.

In twenty-eight of the thirty-one departments were boys who first heard of the department through present or former students. Brothers are not included under the heading of present and former students but are tabulated separately. Practically all are present or former students, however. If we include brothers we find that present and former students are the most important agency in the first contacts of prospective students.

A surprising number of boys had not heard of the agriculture department until they entered high school and saw agriculture subjects on the school program. The fact that sixteen of the twenty-five boys who are in this group also regarded this contact through the program as the important cause of their decision to enroll shows that the school program serves as a recruiting agency of some importance. Thirteen different departments were represented in this group. It would seem that thorough publicity measures in any given community would make impossible very many first contacts through the school program.

The importance of the superintendent as a means of first contact ranges from nothing to very important. In one school eight boys first heard of the department through the superintendent. This agriculture department was new and the enrollment problem therefore was crucial. Boys in nine departments indicated the superintendent as means of first contact.

The influence of the principal is much like that of the superintendent. In one school three boys indicated the principal

as first contact and also deciding factor. In only six schools was this influence indicated. The question naturally arises whether the teacher of agriculture has done all he could to win the active support of the superintendent and principal. This may be a field which needs cultivation.

Boys' and girls' club work is effectively utilized as a means of first contact in seven departments. In one department seven boys first heard of the department in this way. As will be shown in Table II, club work is more frequently the important cause of the decision to enroll than it is the means of first contact. It also is probable that some of the "talks with the teacher of agriculture" credited as means of first contact were made possible through club work.

Forty-eight boys first heard of the agriculture department through courses in 7th and 8th grade agriculture. In one department six boys first heard of the department in the grade agriculture class. Boys in seventeen departments first heard of the department in this way. Thirty of these boys decided to enroll when they learned of the department.

Articles in periodicals, chiefly newspapers, were effective in a few communities. In one department, nine boys were reached in this way. Eight departments used this method with some degree of effectiveness. Speeches by teachers of agriculture were productive of results in seven departments. To really judge the value of articles and speeches as means of first contacts we ought to know how often these are used and how they are used.

The other methods listed in Table I are of minor importance. They include teachers other than teachers of agriculture, county agents, rural school visits, letters, visits by boys to school, talks with other persons. We do not know whether these methods are ineffective or rarely used. Probably some of them should be used more.

The Most Important Causes of Enrollment

It is essential that prospective students learn about the agriculture department but often other influences must be brought to bear upon them so that they will decide to enroll. Each student was asked to indicate what more than anything else caused him to enroll. Table II gives the answers.

The four columns of Table II need explanation. It was pointed out in Table I many boys decided to enroll because of their first contact with the agriculture

department. The first contact was, therefore, the cause of enrollment. These boys are indicated in the second column. Another group of boys did not decide to enroll at the first contact. Something which happened later caused them to enroll. Some of them gave more than one cause but indicated the most important cause. Only the most important cause was tabulated. These boys are indicated in the first column.

The best measure of the influence of the causes listed in Table II is the third column, which is derived by adding together the first and second columns. For example, 50 boys (column 1) said that talks with the teachers of agriculture were the most important causes in their decisions to enroll. Sixty-one boys (column 2) first heard of the agriculture department by means of talks with teachers of agriculture and these talks also caused them to enroll.

One hundred eleven boys (column 3) therefore, enrolled because of talks with teachers of agriculture. This third column really indicates the full influence of the causes listed. The fourth column is important because it shows the number of

departments in which each cause has operated.

Altogether the most important cause of enrollment for each of 387 boys is included in Table II. It happened in a considerable number of cases that the cause was not clear. Such records were eliminated.

The importance of the teacher's personal contacts with prospective students is brought out more clearly in Table II than in Table I. As a factor in securing enrollment the personal contacts of the teacher of agriculture are twice as influential as any other cause. In one department 21 students indicated talks with the teacher as the most important cause. In 26 of the 31 departments there are boys enrolled because of talks with the teacher.

Contact with present and former students is the next to the top in importance. In one department, seven and in another eight students enrolled through student influence. This influence is not as widespread as personal contact of the teacher but did operate in 22 departments. Practically all brothers who were the important cause of enrollment were also

Table II. The Most Important Causes in the Decisions of Boys to Enroll in Vocational Agriculture. Thirty-one Minnesota Departments

	These numbers of boys gave these causes as the most important in their decision	Numbers of boys for whom the causes listed were means of first contact and also deciding factor	Totals of first two columns	Numbers of departments whose boys experience these as most important causes in their decisions
Talk with the teacher of agriculture	50	61	111	26
Contact with present or former agriculture students	13	42	55	22
Brothers	4	18	22	12
A course in 7th or 8th grade agriculture	21	30	51	19
Boys' and girls' club work	31	9	40	15
The nature of the school program	21	..	21	8
Talk with superintendent of schools	2	18	20	10
Parents	5	5	10	8
Speech of teacher of agriculture	1	4	5	3
Desire to make stock judging team	5	0	5	2
Difficulty with other courses	3	0	3	3
Letter from teacher of agriculture	2	1	3	3
Talk with some other person	2	0	2	2
Saw agriculture listed on school program	..	16	16	9
Articles in periodicals	..	12	12	4
Talk with principal of high school	..	6	6	4
Teachers other than the teacher of agriculture	..	4	4	4
Rural schools	..	1	1	1
Total	160	227	387	

present or former students. If number of brothers are added to number of present and former students, 77 students are enrolled through student influence.

Teachers of agriculture teach elementary agriculture in the seventh or eighth grades in such a way that at least 51 students elected to enroll in vocational agriculture. Nineteen departments are represented in this group. That some teachers are more successful than others in drawing students in this way is shown. In one department nine students gave this as the important cause; two other departments have five students each. Perhaps the number of grade agriculture enrollments in vocational agriculture is a good measure of the teaching of elementary agriculture.

Boys' and girls' club work stands fourth as a cause of enrollment. Forty students in 15 departments gave club work as the important cause. In five departments a total of 25 boys gave this as the important cause. Some teachers have obtained very good results from club work as a recruiting agency.

Twenty boys have decided to take agriculture owing to the nature of the school program. Various explanations such as "no other subject I could take" or "I thought agriculture would be more interesting than ancient history" were given. Most of these cases are in the smaller high schools.

The superintendents of schools have caused a total of twenty boys to enroll in ten different departments. In one new department the superintendent caused eight boys to enroll.

The remaining causes listed are of minor importance. Some are minor because infrequently utilized. Among these might be classed rural school visits, talks with principal. Some of these causes are more effective as publicity measures for first contacts than as causes of enrollment, for example, articles in periodicals and letters. Such measures usually require a follow-up to cause enrollment.

A count was made to determine the number of different causes of enrollment in each department. This count helps to answer the question whether teachers of agriculture have a well balanced recruiting program or are depending on relatively few ways of recruiting. The causes of enrollment in any one department range from 2 to 8 in number. The median department has five causes of enrollment. The conclusion drawn by the writer is that while many departments have a fairly diversified program, most departments could further diversify to advantage. There is a tendency to emphasize one method of recruiting. It seems likely

that there is some one method of recruiting best adapted to each department because of local conditions or the personality of the teacher of agriculture. F. W. L.

The United States Department of Agriculture Extends Aid to Agricultural Teachers

Some valuable aids to teachers are indicated in the following statement by Mr. E. H. Shinn:

"The United States Department of Agriculture is a veritable source of information for agricultural teachers and extension workers. The Division of Agricultural Instruction, Extension Service, makes available to teachers and students material for their use derived from the vast amount of information accumulated from time to time by the United States Department of Agriculture, the state agricultural colleges and experiment stations.

With the aim of extending aid to agricultural teachers, co-operation is carried on with the following agencies: (1) The Federal Board for Vocational Education, (2) heads of teacher-training divisions in land grant colleges, (3) state departments of education, (4) agricultural departments in state teachers colleges, (5) teachers of agriculture in secondary and elementary schools, and (6) teachers of nature study.

The services rendered are included under the following headings:

I. Publications comprising (a) studies and analyses of farm enterprises made in co-operation with the Federal Board for Vocational Education and published by the board, (b) courses of study in elementary agriculture for rural schools made in co-operation with State Department of Education and published by the latter, (c) lessons on different crops and animals published by the department.

II. Illustrative material consisting of (a) lantern slides prepared and distributed for use in teaching agriculture, home economics and school gardening, (b) printed charts of live stock and farm crops, (c) various kinds of prints on different agricultural subjects.

III. Classified lists of (a) publications of the United States Department of Agriculture for the special use of teachers, (b) texts and references for teachers of agriculture, home economics and nature study, (c) illustrative and other material prepared for use of agricultural teachers including list of sources of useful material outside the department.

Teachers desiring such services should communicate with the Division of Agricultural Instruction, Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C."