

THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

Vol. XVIII

FEBRUARY, 1931

No. 6

EDUCATION FOR FARMING AND FARM LIFE

The Federal Vocational Education act passed by Congress February 23, 1917, states that the controlling purpose of vocational education is to fit young men and women for useful employment. Vocational education in agriculture is a part of the total education of our rural population. It does not concern itself entirely with teaching facts and skills, but also provides preparation for enjoyable living in the country. Agricultural education is designed to help make farming more profitable and farm life more meaningful.

Under the stimulation of Federal and state financial support opportunity for instruction in agriculture may be provided for farm folks through the establishment of a department of agriculture in the high schools at a relatively low cost to local communities.

Need for Education in Agriculture

The young folks on the farms in Minnesota are entitled to educational opportunities equal to those of any young folks in the city. The farm boys and girls who have rather definitely decided to engage in one or more of the occupations of farming as a life activity have a right to receive special preparation to better fit them for the work of their choice. As a class the farmers have been rather slow to recognize the value of scientific methods and to accept the value of instruction as a basis for progress and improvement in farming techniques. Young men have depended too largely on learning to farm through vicarious experience or by the apprenticeship methods. The idea of learning to farm from books or other scientific literature has not met with much favor among farmers in the past. The modern farmer, however, has come to recognize the value of independent study as a helpful supplement to the information gained through practical experiences. The thoughtful farmers now believe that genuine progress in agriculture does not come from imitation but from study and experimentation. Permanent relief from the ills of present day agricultural conditions is more likely to come through education than through legislation.

The pioneer farmers naturally had to learn to farm through the wasteful trial and error method. In the days of our grandfathers there was little information available about the science and art of farming. Years of scientific investigation and cumulative experiences have made available a body of principles and techniques that were unknown a few years ago. Farm folks can now learn in a year or two under the direction of a teacher of agriculture a multitude of things that would otherwise require many discouraging years if they had to learn them in the school of experience. Why not save our young folks twenty or more years by teaching them what the pioneers have found out by experience and what the scientist has found out by experimenting? The happiest and most successful farmers of the future will surely be those who have fortified themselves with the best information in the science and the art of farming. To be good farmers we must think good farming.

Vocational Education in Agriculture

The primary objective for instruction in agriculture on a vocational basis is to furnish opportunities for special preparation and guidance for proficiency in farming to rural folks who have entered or plan to enter upon the work of the farm.

The program for vocational education in agriculture in Minnesota includes instruction for groups out of school as well as for students in school. There are at least four types of work emphasized by the teachers where efficient departments of agriculture are maintained in the secondary schools. These four types of work may be designated as follows:

1. All day instruction
2. Part time instruction
3. Evening school instruction
4. Community service activities.

In addition to the instruction provided in connection with each of the types of activities furnished by a department of agriculture provision is made for practical application of what is learned to home farm conditions. Thus the boy or the farmer may study about better feeding of cows and then go home and feed the cows better. There is no cold storage information in the agriculture classes.

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Published monthly by the Division of Agricultural Education, University of Minnesota, University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Entered as second class matter at the post-office at St. Paul, Minn., under the act of August 24, 1912.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized August 2, 1918.

THE STAFF

A. V. STORM A. M. FIELD
V. E. NYLIN

Students do not spend time on learning things that possibly may be used *some* day. They use the information at once.

All Day Instruction

By all day instruction is meant the regular classes in high school where students take one or more courses in agriculture as a part of the requirement for graduation. The content of the courses in agriculture is based on the needs of

proximately 35,000 farm boys of high school age not in school. The part time work is organized so as to provide instruction for these young people at a time when they are most free from farm work. Many students who left school because they were not interested in the academic subjects are finding great satisfaction and profit in the practical instruction provided in the part time school.

Evening Schools

When a department of agriculture is established in the high school Dad goes back to school. Many teachers of agriculture organize and conduct evening school classes for adult farmers. This makes it possible for farmers to study their own problems and to learn the latest information available concerning the various farm enterprises that are practiced on the home farm. In addition to the practical instruction given in the evening schools, the classes furnish social opportunities for the farmers during the win-



Members of Corning Creamery Adult Evening School, Austin, Minnesota

This group has attended evening schools every year since 1923. The average attendance to date is 34.

the individual student and the home farm and is designed to help the boys and girls to learn to *know* the things they need to know, and to learn how to *do* the things they need to do in order to make their activities on the farm more profitable and enjoyable. The home farm becomes the laboratory where the students, in co-operation with their parents and under the guidance of the teacher of agriculture work out the theory and practice necessary for successful operation of the home farm.

Part Time Schools

The part time instruction is designed to reach farm boys who are not in school. It is estimated that Minnesota has ap-

proximately 35,000 farm boys of high school age not in school. The part time work is organized so as to provide instruction for these young people at a time when they are most free from farm work. Many students who left school because they were not interested in the academic subjects are finding great satisfaction and profit in the practical instruction provided in the part time school.

Community Service

In addition to the teaching duties teachers of agriculture use a portion of their time in carrying on worthwhile com-

munity work. This service finds expression in promoting such activities as boys' and girls' club work, local fairs, poultry culling demonstrations, better sire campaigns and community activities of every description. No rural community should be without this all the year leadership which is so much needed by the young people and which is so effectively given by the teacher of agriculture.

How to Start a Department

The procedure necessary to establish a department of vocational agriculture in the local high school is not difficult. About all that is necessary is for the local school authorities to decide to add this service department to the school offerings. Then write to the State Department of Education, St. Paul, for information and application blanks. The Department of Agricultural Education, University of Minnesota, maintains a teacher of agriculture service bureau where suitable and promising young men, well prepared in agriculture, may be secured. And do not forget that three-quarters of the salary of the teacher of agriculture is paid from Federal and state funds. This leaves only twenty-five per cent for the local community. There is no longer any reason why farmers should not have their industry represented in the instructional program in every high school in Minnesota.

The Cost of a Department

One of the first questions that arises is naturally one that concerns the cost of the department of agriculture. Although the cost is an important item it should not be the deciding factor. Schools located in rural communities can not afford to be without a department designed to serve the dominant occupation of the school patrons. It is not possible to state what the cost will be in any school because this will depend, in part at least, on the equipment already at hand. One of the departments established last year made a satisfactory start on as little as \$463. Another school gave the inventory of equipment at the end of the first year as \$663.06. Some of the items were already owned by the school so can not be charged to the initial cost of the department. When we consider the liberal Federal and state aid for the salary of the teacher and when the initial cost is thought of as distributed over several years, the cost of a department of agriculture should not be regarded as a limiting factor.

A.M.F.

THE CURRENT TRENDS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF TEACHING

Dr. Harl H. Douglass, University of Minnesota, enumerates the following common principles found in current plans for teaching. Teachers of agriculture will recognize in these statements many of the fundamental principles which underlie the organization for teaching agriculture in the secondary schools.

1. Large unit assignments superseding small daily assignments, so often called "spoon feeding."
2. Assignments in terms of definite and challenging goals.
3. Opportunity for freedom and initiative on the part of the learner in planning the achievement of goals, that is, the completion of the learning units.
4. Adapting teaching to the needs of the learner with respect to what he already has achieved in the subject or unit being taught.
5. Provision of opportunity and encouragement for each learner to attend himself by carrying his learning activity into higher levels.
6. Provision for learning activities and goal which may be accomplished with reasonable effort by less able pupils.
7. Provision for diagnosis of error and difficulties and for remedial teaching aimed at the improvement of inadequate or inaccurate learning.
8. Opportunities for all learners to grow in independence in learning and study as rapidly as each is individually capable.
9. The correlation of subject matter around problems of non-school life.
10. Socialized class procedure.
11. Objective testing.
12. A lessened emphasis upon recitation and a corresponding increased emphasis upon learning activities.—*The League Script*, Minneapolis, January-February, 1931.

A system of vocational education in the public schools will help rather than hinder, general education. It will supply in a concrete, practical way the motivation which, as far as the majority of boys and girls are concerned, has been so far either highly artificial or sadly lacking.

JOHN DEWEY.

Marketing of Farm Products is the title of a new book that should be of interest to teachers of agriculture. The authors are L. J. Norton, assistant professor of economics, University of Illinois, and L. L. Scranton, assistant professor of agricultural education, North Dakota Agricultural College. The price is \$2.00 and it may be secured from either of the authors.

FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA



NEW CUTS OF THE F. F. A. EMBLEM AVAILABLE

New cuts of the F. F. A. emblem have been provided and can be secured through the Executive Secretary. The cuts are of the same size as the original ones prepared for letterheads and similar printing. Instead of the cut being in the form of the half-tone, it has been changed to a line cut which is suitable for use on all kinds of paper and thus eliminates the expense of having line cuts made for newspaper and mimeograph work.

EXCHANGES

The following statements by two teachers of Agriculture in Illinois are taken from the January, 1931 issue of the Fan-Mill, a news letter published by the state department of education in Illinois. The plans are suggestive of procedures that should be helpful in stimulating more interest in the study of agriculture.

INTEREST IN OUTSIDE READING

To try to create a greater interest in outside reading of an agricultural nature, especially along the line of the boys' projects, is taken care of by taking about thirty minutes each Friday afternoon. Each member of the class gives in his own words the substance of one or more articles which he has found in some agricultural magazine or bulletin. I have found this of more value during the time the boys are planning their projects. Because he is going to be called upon to state to others the substance of the article read, the boy is more careful in his reading. It seems he pays more minute attention to his reading and this is an important factor in enabling the boy to remember what he reads. Another very important point gained is the ability to stand and speak clearly and in an organized way to the members of the class. It is interesting to watch the improvement as we carry this practice along. Four things especially are gained: Confidence in himself, ability to put his thoughts in clear English, a more retentive memory for his reading, and facts about agriculture.

L. A. McKEAN, LeRoy.

METHODS IN TEACHING

A person who is successful in this day and age must be able to pick the important from the non-important and then be able to remember them. I had a small class in Animal Husbandry this fall and decided after the first month to try a different method of teaching.

Our text is built upon the job analysis plan and fits in nicely with the method I am trying. Part of the period is devoted to study and the rest to recitation. During the study period the students have a notebook to write down a minimum of five important things which they find under each job. I was very much surprised at the difference which this made in the attitude of the students in regard to their work. It gave them a real goal or something specific to look for, not only that, but they must write it down in their own words. Thus, a thing is presented, not only through reading, but by writing, hearing and telling. By this multiple sense appeal and by the experience gained in the selection of important things, I am satisfied that this class is doing forty per cent better work than it did the first month under the old method of study.

D. H. HAMILTON, Paris.