

## *Who will raise your food?*



### **With the average age of the Colorado Farmer and Rancher reaching 60, who will be raising your food 20 years from now?**

Agricultural Education is a school-based program designed to promote experiences, leadership, career awareness and knowledge in agriculture, food and natural resources. Agricultural education has been around in public schools since the 1920's; currently there are approximately 115 programs of agricultural education in Colorado high schools serving over 6400 students. These rigorous courses offer students hands-on learning opportunities that are aligned to state education standards. Additionally, there are two approved middle school programs in Colorado, and several programs which offer middle school agriculture classes as a recruitment into agricultural education in high school.



Supervised agricultural experiences allow students to apply their knowledge base to an individual learning experience where they plan, carry out and reflect on an agriculture experience related to an agricultural career interest. These can include entrepreneurship, internships, research and service learning opportunities. Students can participate in traditional agricultural practices such as raising livestock or work in progressive science labs to cultivate safer products for consumers.

Finally, the FFA is a student organization that provides programs and opportunities to students to practice leadership skills such as communication, cooperation, team-work, and technical agriculture skills in competitive career development events such as livestock judging, parliamentary procedure, or land classification (soils) judging. The National FFA Organization is the largest youth-led organization in the nation. Years ago, "FFA" stood for Future Farmers of America. In 1988, the name changed to the National FFA Organization to represent that agriculture means much more than farming. Agriculture provides necessary resources for all, and is vital to a healthy community. Today, over 600,000 members across the United States, including Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, are working hard to advance our nation's most valuable industry—agriculture.

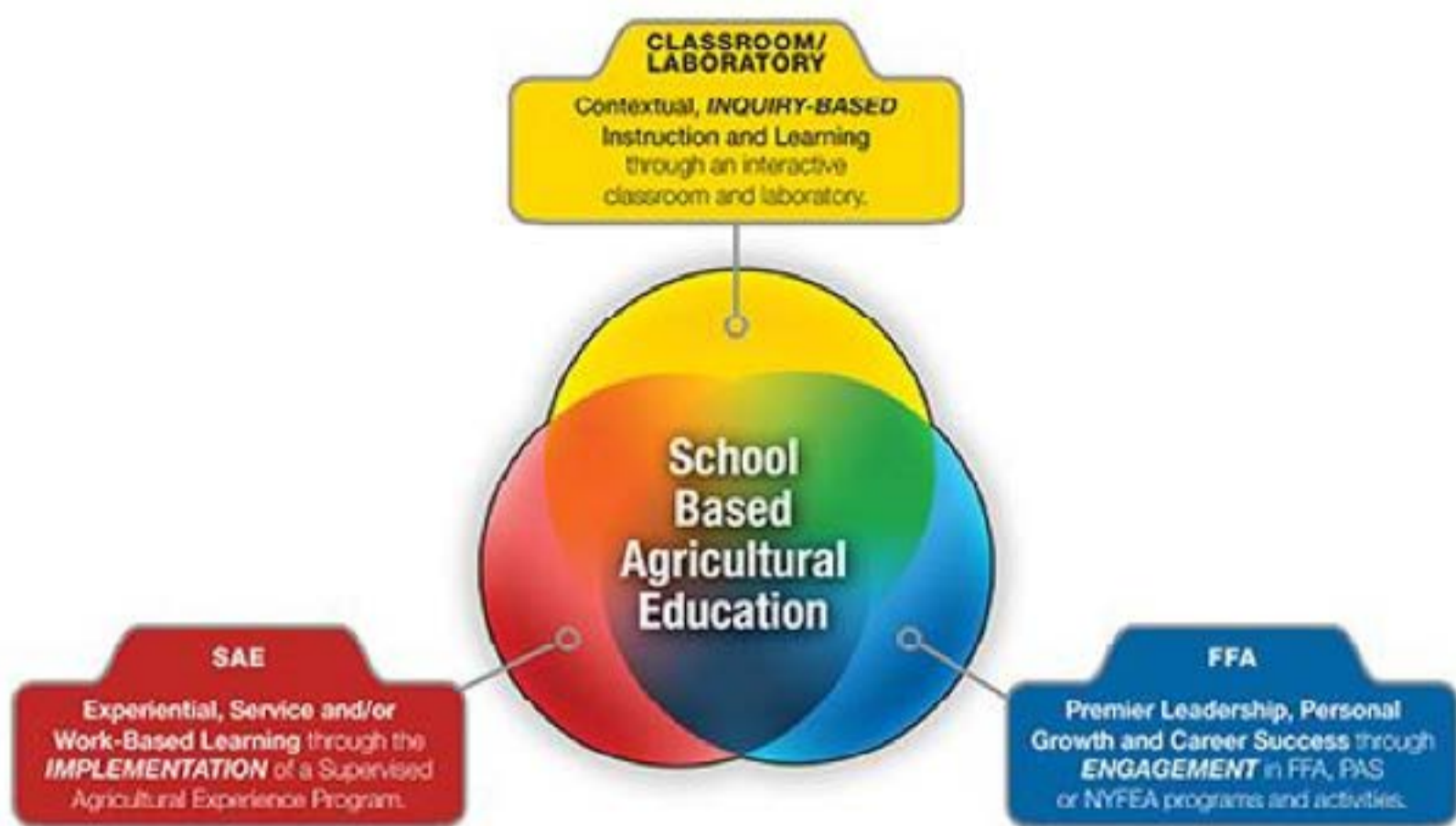
## *We will!*





# Agricultural Education

Agricultural education is delivered in a three-part model (see figure). The classroom and laboratory are designed to provide career awareness in animal systems, plant systems, agribusiness systems, agriculture mechanical systems, food products and processing systems, and natural resource systems. The courses combine science, technology, engineering and math concepts into many different courses.



## Help Wanted

All activities in agricultural education are designed to have students engage in career awareness and career exploration in agriculture and related industries. According to CNBC there will be close to 60,000 skilled agriculture jobs in the next five years, but a shortage of the number of graduates to pursue these jobs. Promotion of local agricultural education programs and training within the industry sectors will help to meet the demand of skilled workers interested in pursuing agriculture industry occupations. Agricultural education students are skilled in solving problems, and creating solutions. The skills they obtain in these courses follow them through life, and create productive citizens within communities.

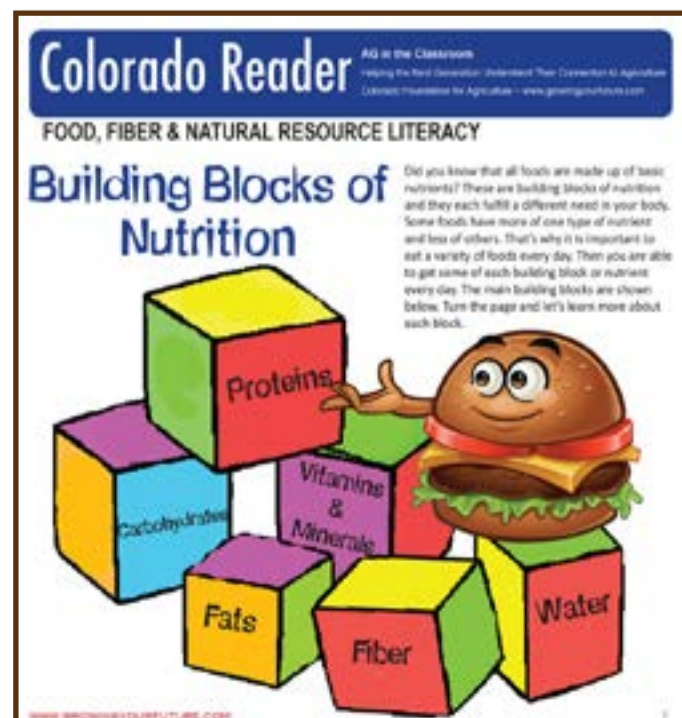
Colorado is currently experiencing a 20 year shortage of teachers of agricultural education. Colorado State University is the only university-based training program for agricultural education teachers that lead to a recommendation for licensure through the Colorado Department of Education. If you are interested in pursuing a career in agricultural education and making a difference in the lives of youth and agriculture, please see <http://dare.agsci.colostate.edu/undergraduate/academic-programs/>.

School-based agricultural education in Colorado is delivered through local high schools in cooperation with Colorado Team Ag Ed which includes the Colorado Community College System, the Colorado FFA Alumni Association, Colorado State University, and the Colorado FFA Foundation. If you would like more information regarding starting a local agricultural education program, please contact Michael Womochil, Agricultural Education Program Director at Michael.Womochil@cccs.edu.

## Learn More About Agriculture and Food



Click on these pictures of the Colorado Readers and they will take you to an interactive version. You can find more interactive readers at [www.growingyourfuture.com](http://www.growingyourfuture.com)





# Voices of Future Agriculture Leaders

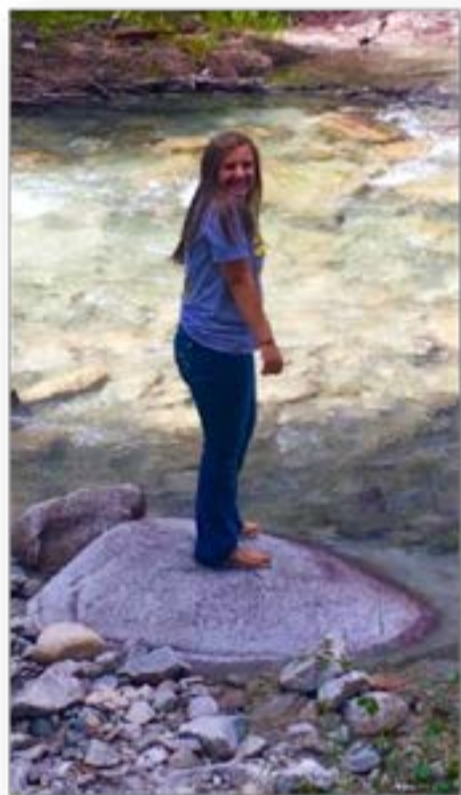
## Alex Pacheco

Being in FFA has helped me academically because it taught me to be responsible for myself. Now I see if I don't do my work and try my hardest in school it will affect me in many different ways. FFA helps me socially because I was very shy before I joined and now that I am Vice President of our chapter I have to talk to many other people to help our chapter and talking to them makes me feel that I have gotten stronger in my social development.

Participating in agriculture and FFA has been helping me to start to achieve my future goals because if I get to go to college I want to major in Culinary Arts and business because I want to open my own restaurant with a pastry shop. FFA has helped me with the business because I help with some of the financial and organization of our chapter. Agriculture has helped with my culinary arts part because I can learn a lot about where the produce comes from and what makes it better and what kind of quality product I want to serve.

For my peers that are not in agriculture I would like to tell them that they should join because you learn a lot about all the things that agriculture provides for you everyday. Also, it is not a class where you just sit and get lectured but is rather fun because you get to do hands on activities. We have lots of class pets we get to take care of like chinchillas, fish, birds, chickens, and turtles. We also cook every other week and learn where the meal originated from and the nutrients that the food contains. I will tell them they would have so much fun in agriculture.

I would like to say that agriculture and FFA is great for any student because it can help them in so many ways even if their family isn't involved in agriculture. You still get the experience and in the future to explore different jobs and opportunities, and if you're in agriculture you should join FFA because you can do many different activities that are outside of school to help your community and public.



## Bailey Ingo

At a young age my family was big into rodeo. My brothers did it and they were amazing and won a lot of things. Soon after we stopped rodeoing and started 4-H with showing pigs. In April 2007, my uncle Anthony who was one of the most respected men in the 4-H community passed away and that year we held a memorial jackpot show in his memory. My older brother, Lane, won Grand Champion that year as well. Even though it wasn't me, it was that moment I knew I wanted to be just like my older brother but better. In my brother's high school days I attended many of his FFA events. These moments as well enforced that I was going to be in FFA. My 7th grade year was when FFA was introduced at Vineland and I willingly signed up. A few days later in class I decided to run for President just for the fun of it, not expecting to actually win. After all of the votes were in, surprisingly I won! The first few weeks were a little rough but now I'm proud of how far I've come. And only a few years into it I know for a fact I owe all thanks to my brother for being my inspiration. Thank you for this opportunity!

FFA has helped me academically and socially by meeting new people. I believe FFA has boosted my confidence which has led me to become closer with my teachers and peers. I hold a 4.0 GPA to show my fellow FFA members and younger students in the school that good grades will help in the future and to be a good role model to them.

Being associated with agriculture has benefited my career goals because in the future I wish to go into the Medical or Veterinary field. In agriculture we learn a lot about animals and their anatomy along with all of their facts.

Advice for a peer if they are not involved in agriculture would be to learn what agriculture is and how everybody is affected by it, and how important it is to everyday life. If they are really interested in it then they should join a class or FFA. If they don't enjoy it then at least they tried and they have some background knowledge on it.

## Mason Wilbank

Hello, my name is Mason Wilbank and I have grown up in an agricultural environment for my whole life. My Father always taught me to work on certain cars and farming. I have always loved to explore new things and try different stuff in life, and FFA has been one of them.

I have always been such a shy girl and never like to step outside of my box. Now that I have joined FFA it has helped my social life very much. I'm not scared to talk in front of big crowds or do big research projects. It helps me keep my grades up and to focus more on work.

Being an agriculture student has really helped me a lot by getting me to cook cool meals and now I look forward to school. We get to learn about science and do cool debates which are really fun. We also have a garden and class pets.

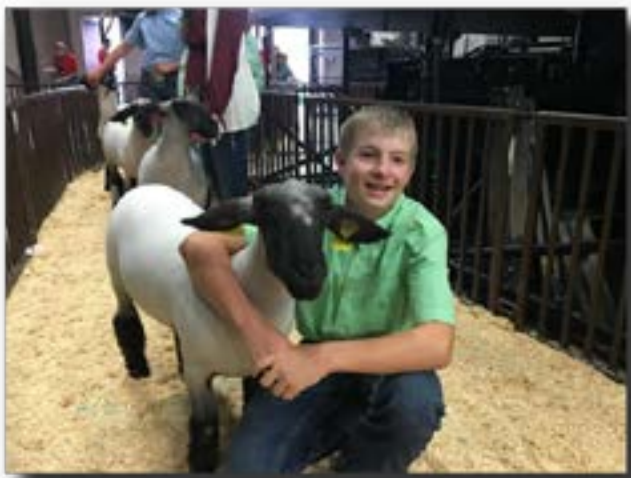
My advice for some peers is to at least try agriculture or FFA - who knows, you might really love it. I never knew that I would take such a class. It helps me so much and it may even help you. If you are really shy sometimes you just really need to get out and try new things. That is what agriculture and FFA has done for me.

One thing about our agricultural program is we can try new things and activities. Even in middle school we are able to try new stuff and do cool and amazing projects. We all have an great time working on projects and making fun memories.



## Jed Sidwell

My name is Jed Sidwell and I am the treasurer from the Platte Valley Middle School FFA Chapter. I am the fourth generation in my family to be part of FFA and I have been surrounded by rural agriculture all of my life. I show and raise sheep and cattle; I also like to help out with everything from irrigation to silage harvest. So basically, FFA helped me realize that there are other forms of agriculture out there like beekeeping and cheese making. My own forms of agriculture have helped me immensely. I have been lucky enough through showing livestock to earn money toward college. I have also been able to learn many different skills that help me to be well rounded. To anyone who is not in agriculture: get involved in some way or form. You will be surprised by how much you can make an impact. By joining FFA, you will gain valuable traits such as public speaking and leadership. These talents will help you throughout your life.





# Olivia Thorn

My name is Olivia Thorn; I'm a member of the Platte Valley Middle School FFA program. Coming from a small town, FFA has had a huge impact on my life. Not only have I met many people, but I also have gotten more of a "behind the scenes" look at where all of our food comes from. So far agriculture has been helping me achieve my career goals by showing me what life is like outside of school and all the struggles that occur in multiple jobs.

I personally think that FFA is something that everyone should be involved in; even kids coming from an urban or inner city background. You can learn so much about leadership skills and the food you eat. FFA has brought so many people together in my community and I'm so grateful to be a part of this group at a young age.



# Amelia Hatch

Hello, my name is Amelia Hatch. I am an eighth grader at Platte Valley Middle School and I am the President of our Middle School FFA Chapter. It is a national organization that helps students develop leadership skills and teaches them all aspects of agriculture and how it provides for the world.

I have lived in the small town of Kersey. My dad even graduated from Platte Valley. My family owns a weed and pest control company called Hired Gun. I have four younger brothers who I love dearly. I show and ride horses for 4-H. I have a paint mare that we rescued off a slaughter truck. She is the sweetest and most cooperative mare you'll ever meet. In my free time, I am usually with my best friend Abby, riding, or helping with the family business. All in all, my life is just how I would want it to be and I can't wait for what the future holds.



Agriculture plays a huge part in my life. I don't mean that it supplies my food and such. I mean agriculture has helped my family business thrive and has given me various opportunities to achieve my goals. I want to co-own an equine-assisted therapy company with Abby. I want to use horses to help people grow physically, mentally, and emotionally. I have always had a passion for helping people, kids to be more specific, and I love horses. I figured, why not combine the two and make a business out of it. Without agriculture, my dreams would not be the same.

Being involved in FFA has helped me both socially and academically. FFA has taught me to be a better speaker at public events and in just everyday conversations. It has also shown me how to be more outgoing. I find myself taking more risks and being more social. With my agricultural background and the things I learn from the organization, I have an easier time in school. There is a lot of math, science, and writing in the business of Ag. We have to practice it and know it well. These methods help me understand lessons taught in school and help me get better grades on tests. Being a part of FFA gives me more advantages with academics and social life.

For all those students who are not involved in agriculture, I advise you to take some time to learn a little more about it. Learn how your food ends up on your plate and how the clothes you are wearing came to be. Maybe even thank a farmer because without farmers and agriculture, there would be no food on that plate or clothes to buy. I also encourage you to take risks for the better. Don't be afraid to achieve your dreams. When someone says you can't, prove why you can. When times are bad, show them that you have the power to change it. Success is possible for those who want it and work hard enough to achieve it.

FFA has given me so many unforgettable experiences. I have shown my horses and pigs at the Little American Royal Livestock show for as long as I can remember. This small town show is hosted by the Platte Valley FFA chapter and it draws competitors from all across the state. I have so much fun at the banquets they put together. It's like a giant feast for people to celebrate agriculture and their achievements in it. One of my favorite memories is our most recent field trip. We went to an ear tag company called Richie's Ear Tags. After they gave us a tour of their building and explained the process of how the tags were created, they took us outside. We got to tag a few of their little calves. It was so fun to work with my friends to pin down a calf and tag it. Everyone was laughing as they watched some of the kids that had never tagged a calf before fall and get dirty. I had so much fun that day.

FFA is a national organization that I am proud to be a part of. Without it, and all the skills it has taught me, I don't know where I'd be today. I am filled with gratitude for the people who work so hard to oversee this program that allows kids these great experiences that will be useful later in life. I am very blessed to be a part of FFA.

*This issue of Colorado Kids was produced by the Colorado Foundation for Agriculture in cooperation with the Denver Post Educational Services.*

## ColoradoKids

is produced by  
Denver Post Educational Services  
Executive Editor: Dana Plewka  
dplewka@denverpost.com  
CK Editor: Mike Peterson  
coloradokidseditor@gmail.com  
We welcome your comments.

For tools to extend the learning in this feature, look under "Youth Content" at: [www.ColoradoNIE.com](http://www.ColoradoNIE.com)

eEditions of the Post are free of charge for classroom use. Contact us for information on all our programs.

Denver Post Educational Services  
101 W. Colfax Ave.  
Denver CO 80202  
(303) 954-3974  
(800) 336-7678

Stories without bylines were written by the editor.



[ColoradoNIE.com](http://ColoradoNIE.com) 