

GRADES K-10, WHY AREN'T WE THERE?

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Walk into any elementary school, middle school or high school and you find Industrial Arts, Home Economics and Business Education programs which are non-vocational. Each program is serving a need and receives support from the community. Where is Agricultural Education?

Roberts states that Agricultural Education is a part of "general education."¹ The time has come for Agricultural Education to return to grades K-10. Only the focus must be updated. Today

more than ever, all pupils are in need of the types of educational experiences that Agricultural Education can provide. But the focus must change from vocational preparation for agribusiness to one of preparing pupils so they can relate the body of knowledge of renewable natural resources to the broad objectives:

1. To create an understanding of the concepts, principles, generalizations, problems, and strategies for the utilization of renewable natural resources.
2. To develop an interest in and appreciation for renewable natural resources as an integral part of the economic system that provides material goods and avocational opportunities for the satisfaction of human wants.
3. To demonstrate knowledge and skills that will be useful in life situations of occupational, recreational, consumer, and socio-cultural importance.²

These objectives are central to the needs of today's society. Yet, as we look throughout the schools of the country, we find little evidence of organized, systematic instruction in these areas.

It is interesting to note that Industrial Education, Home Economics Education and Business Education have all developed strong thrusts in both vocationally oriented programs and non-vocational programs. Agricultural Education, with its emphasis on the farm and production related instruction, has not developed a satisfactory two-pronged effort.

Agricultural Education has maintained a close alliance with vocationally oriented education. Programs have been developed with non-farm occupational emphasis. This is fine. But as an united discipline, Agricultural Education has not expended equal effort in the development of a K-12 program to meet the life relevant objectives of the majority of Americans.

Natural Resource Education should appear in all schools as a strong program of study. Agricultural Education must take the leadership to bring about the development of effective programs. This is perhaps more important, in terms of numbers of pupils to be served, than is the more traditional vocational thrust.

What better way to help with the implementation of a career education model than to have developed a 7-10 grade level program focusing on Natural Resource Education; and a K-6 program providing assistance to elementary teachers. By the time pupils opt for grades 11-12 vocational oriented studies, they will have a basis for making decisions. Remember, a study of the nation's renewable natural resources should also include the study of farm and non-farm agricultural production. Pupils who do not opt for a vocationally oriented program in grades 11-12 should have non-vocational courses available to them.

Those schools and states which have developed K-10 thrusts are to be commended. But for the nation as a whole, the question still remains, "Why aren't we there?"

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REFERENCES

¹Vocational and Practical Arts Education by Roy W. Roberts, Harper and Row, New York, Third Edition, 1971.

²Paraphrased from Innovative Programs in Industrial Education, by Leslie H. Cochran. McKnight and McKnight, Bloomington, Ill., 1970. "Industrial Arts Curriculum Project," pp. 78, 79.

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