

BACKGROUND

I once wrote that accountability enables individuals to gain focus of the task at hand and remain cognitively responsible for their performances, results and response. As an educator this ideal is pertinent to the learning opportunities I make available to my students and to the quality of education they will invest in. The state of Pennsylvania also recognizes the proven theory that educational institutes can be prudentially accountable through the implication and use of state academic standards and assessment anchors.

An executive order in 1996 required the establishment of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Academic Standards. In 1999, Pennsylvania adopted academic standards for reading, writing, speaking, listening and mathematics. These standards allow for a way to assess every student's knowledge in Pennsylvania in grades 5, 8 and 11.

PURPOSE

As the state uses such academic standards to evaluate specific learning performances of all students in Pennsylvania, I must deem it appropriate to allow accommodation of these standards by agriculture education departments. Agriculture education departments across the state of Pennsylvania all engage in a common learning activity called Career Development Events (CDEs). These CDEs were called chapter contests, which include the performance and evaluation of students' abilities at specific tasks, related to plant, animal and food sciences and production and agricultural mechanics.

METHOD

I made a diligent effort in connecting the current academic standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, environment and ecology and science and technology and their related assessment anchors to each of the CDEs in Pennsylvania. I sought assistance and guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, my advisory team at The Pennsylvania State University, The Pennsylvania FFA Executive Manager and fellow colleagues in the agriculture education industry.

APPLICATION

The connection of academic standards and assessment anchors to career development events will allow teachers in agriculture education to illuminate the idea of not only covering standards, but bringing a true connection to a student's learned knowledge, in other classes, to that of an applicable learning situation.

The method for accomplishing this task of connecting the academic standards and the assessment anchors to each of the CDEs began by developing a baseline in the skills and knowledge needed to competitively engage in each CDE. I accomplished this by evaluating each CDE's rules, components, and the 100 percent proficiency levels. Once the baseline was established for each CDE, I was able to view the academic standards and assessment anchors developed by the state and draw a conclusive connection. In addition, I purchased a CDE content/material guide from the National FFA Organization for all Pennsylvania FFA CDEs and for the purpose of publishing my results. Finally, I was able to provide at least two examples for each academic area and career development event.

As a result of such efforts, I believe that agriculture educators will find it more convenient and valuable to accommodate the academic standards and assessment anchors into their lesson plans and career development preparations. I hypothesize that by making this work available to agriculture teachers across Pennsylvania, agriculture programs teamed with academic teachers will better prepare students for performance testing in grades eight and eleven.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

I would recommend that others might challenge themselves to match their state accountability standards to the career development events they utilize within their own state. In addition, one could accommodate other academic content areas within Pennsylvania, such as Civics and Government, Economics and Geography for connection examples to Pennsylvania FFA Career Development Events.

Further work could also include the development of curricular units that include the state standards and assessment anchors for each Pennsylvania FFA Career Development Event to be taught in the classroom.