



The State Senate

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**FINAL REPORT
OF THE
JOINT AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
STUDY COMMITTEE**

SENATE AND HOUSE MEMBERS

**Honorable John Bulloch
Senator, 11th District**

**Honorable Terry England
Representative, 108th District**

**Honorable Joseph Carter
Senator, 13th District**

**Honorable Ellis Black
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**Honorable Greg Goggans
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**Prepared by the
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CREATION AND DUTIES

The Joint Agricultural Education Study Committee (Committee) was created by House Resolution 50 during the 2005 Legislative Session. The intent of the resolution was to provide direction to develop instructional strategies to teach specific agriculture standards from elementary through high school, then integrate these standards into a broad range of academic subject areas. With this in mind, the hope is that a stronger career preparation program will be made available to meet the demands of a dynamic and competitive agriculture industry. Ultimately, the aim of the resolution is to provide for a better informed citizenry.

The Committee was charged with completing a study with respect to what improvements are needed and can be attained in the area of agricultural education, including a study of the development of non-mandatory instructional standards for the integration of agricultural education into elementary, middle, and secondary schools' programs of study for public schools in Georgia and the development of a K-12 Agricultural Education Strategic Plan. Additionally, the study will provide direction and oversight for the development and implementation of an action plan for the delivery of agricultural education and any related programs.

The Committee must also provide recommendations for the following:

- A plan for a statewide Agriculture Learning Center Model to be developed at local levels;
- Program-standard approval for all related appropriations;
- New program criteria available for funding;
- Recommendations to the Governor and legislative bodies for appropriations and legislative acts to enhance the delivery of agricultural education; and,
- The development and review of an annual report and evaluation for the agricultural education program.

SCOPE OF THE COMMITTEE

House Resolution 50 provided for the membership of the Committee consisting of fifteen members, including three Senators and three Representatives, with Senator John Bulloch and Representative Terry England appointed as Co-Chairs of the Committee. Legislative members included Senator Greg Goggans, Senator Joseph Carter, Representative Ellis Black, and Representative Penny Houston.

Other esteemed members of the Committee were: Ward Black, President of the State Future Farmers of America; Stuart Bennett, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Jim East, Retired School Administrator; H.F. Johnson, Jr., Teacher; G. Randall Pugh, President and CEO of Jackson Electric Membership Corporation; Jimmy Scott, Program Coordinator of the Georgia Young Farmers Association; Hillary Stringfellow, Attorney; Reed Waldrep, Agriculture Education Teacher; and, James Woodard, State Director of Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE). Additionally, the legislative and administrative staff members assigned to the Committee included: Asenith T. Dixon of the Senate Research Office; Jena Davis and Gardner Sapp of the House Committee Services Office; and, Leah Tatum-Dick, Administrative Assistant.

Five public meetings were held on: July 27 and 28 at the State Future Farmers of America (FFA)-Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Camp in Covington; September 30 at Camp John Hope FFA-FCCLA Center in Fort Valley; October 7 in Perry; and, December 14 at the Macon Centreplex in Macon. During the July 27th meeting in Covington, the Committee heard testimony from Department of Education staff: James Woodard, Frank Flanders, John Wilkinson, Scott Carey, Jimmy Scott, Cindy Greene, and John Bridges. On July 28th, testimony was given to the Committee by the following individuals: Dr. Larry Case, Chairperson of the National Future Farmers of America; David Gilligan, Principal of the Chicago School of Agricultural Science; Lucille Shaw, Master Teacher Agriculture Education Department of the Chicago School of Agricultural Science; Floyd Jenkins, Booker T. Washington School of Agricultural Sciences in New Orleans; and, Asenith T. Dixon, Policy Analyst Senate Research Office.

Subcommittees were created during the July 28th meeting and the following individuals were appointed as Chairpersons: Curriculum Direction - Chairman Joseph Carter; Delivery Systems - Chairman Penny Houston; Funding - Chairman Greg Goggans; and, Urban Programs - Chairman Ellis Black. Members of the subcommittees were a combination of official Committee members and individuals interested in the future of agriculture education in the state. Those individuals included: Virgil Blalock, John Bridges, Scott Carey, Bobby Carrell, Matthew Gambill, Cindy Greene, Jeffrey Harvey, Bucky Kennedy, Todd Teasley, Melvin Thompson, Bryan Tolar, and Bill Verner.

BACKGROUND

The Georgia Department of Education defines agriculture as “the science and art of producing, processing, marketing, and supplying plants and animals useful to man.”¹ Agriculture plays a very large role in our nation’s livelihood that many take for granted. As most of us expect to have at least three nutritious and affordable meals a day, many forget what is involved in accomplishing that feat. It is one that would be impossible without the hard work and dedication of millions of agriculture workers in America.

For over 200 years, the United States has been fortunate to maintain a population of dedicated farmers who toil daily to keep us fed and not reliant on foreign entities for food and fiber. Food science programs within agricultural education serve a need by demonstrating and instructing students and communities in how to prepare and store food for use at later times, which is beneficial in many ways to national security.

Agricultural production in Georgia accounts for 2 percent of jobs whereas the agribusiness sector accounts for more than 20 percent of Georgia jobs.² In Georgia, farmers produce 23 million pounds of chicken, 11.7 million table eggs, 7 million hatching eggs, and 75 tons of turkey meat. Roughly half of the peanuts produced in the United States each year come from Georgia. Onions, watermelon, tomatoes, sweet corn, and bell peppers are the top five vegetables and fruit grown in

¹ Georgia Agricultural Education, 20/20 Vision, www.aged.ces.uga.edu/2004cds/cd1/overview.

² Ibid.

Georgia. Georgia ranks third in the nation in peach production. In 2001, the Georgia peach crop totaled 140 million pounds and brought in \$35 million.³

Agriculture is misconceived to be significant only in rural areas and farming communities. Many people feel that urban and suburban communities, minorities, and females have little interest in agriculture. What must be understood is that agriculture is not only about plows, cows, and sows. Agriculture is essential to us all in many ways.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Agricultural Education in the Georgia Department of Education (DOE)

The vision statement for Georgia's new Agricultural Education program is "to be a premier learning system that delivers agricultural, environmental, and leadership education programs and services."⁴ Based on testimony, agricultural education in Georgia has been modernized to better reflect our changing society.

The new 20/20 Vision for agricultural education was created by the National Council for Agricultural Education in 1996. The 20/20 Vision was formulated around eleven vision themes: global agriculture, leadership, agricultural awareness, marketing, environmental, partnerships, technology, biotechnology, lifelong learning, curriculum, and recruitment. The Agricultural Education Program provided by DOE is comprised of three parts. These parts: the classroom/laboratory; Supervised Agricultural Experience program (SAEP); and, leadership/FFA, work together to provide a balanced approach to agricultural education.

Students receive instruction on basic agriculture and agribusiness concepts and theories in the classroom. In the laboratory, students gain hands-on experience which enforces application skills. In SAEP, students combine their classroom/laboratory knowledge with real-life situations where they are able to gain on-the-job skills. Lastly, the leadership/FFA component functions as a means of developing leadership skills.

The Georgia FFA Association has the third largest membership in the country, behind California and Texas. Membership has increased from 11,563 in 1998 to approximately 24,210 in 2005, with a projection of 25,131 members in 2006. Also, for the last several years, the Georgia FFA Association has won more National FFA Awards than any other state.

It was noted by presenters that Georgia's Agricultural Education Program plays a major role in dropout prevention. State School Superintendent Kathy Cox recently commented at the Farm Bill Listening Session in Moultrie, Georgia, that she felt, "Agricultural Education is Georgia's number one dropout prevention tool." Many students become active in agricultural education and the FFA and excel. Their successes in agriculture education translate to achievement in other coursework

³ Georgia Agricultural Awareness, "A Look at Georgia Agriculture," www.agclassroom.org/kids/stats/georgia.pdf.

⁴ Georgia Agricultural Education, "Vision," www.aged.ces.uga.edu/vision.htm.

areas where they may have previously been failing. Thus, giving them hope and a will to stay in school and graduate.

Agricultural Education Teachers

The state has seen an increase in the number of agricultural education teachers since the 1998-1999 school year. During that school year, 303 teachers were instructing and, by the 2004-2005 school year, the state had 373 agricultural education teachers. Though the number of agricultural education teachers is growing, the growth is slow and hints at the national shortage of agricultural education teachers. As many new teachers graduate Georgia universities, they are lured away for jobs in other segments of agriculture or completely different industries.

There are many reasons for this occurrence, not the least of which is teacher salary issues. Agricultural education teachers are very similar to individuals who are self employed, in that their dedication of time is enormous. Many have quit after teaching only a few years, others leave after long tenures in the classroom due to frustrations over administrative issues that detract from actual classroom instruction time.

This point highlights the fact that as this program grows, a struggle to find qualified teachers will continue. In the future, there may be a need to offer college debt retirement, as a way of enticing more students to enter college bound for an Agricultural Education degree with a goal of teaching agricultural education in Georgia classrooms.

Urban Agriculture Programs

Testimony given by Mr. Chip Bridges details the misconception associated with agricultural education programs in urban and suburban areas,

“Many of the critics may imply that agriculture is not important enough to be offered in suburban or urban schools. They will say that there is not a need for the agricultural education programs in places that do not have farms. That statement alone proves how much we need agriculture education in those areas. Those statements are made by people that do not understand that agriculture is more than just farming.

“Agriculture is about food, clothing and shelter. These are the necessities of life that should be important to everyone. The agriculture industry is far too important to allow for complacency when it comes to insuring its future. There are many jobs in the agriculture industry. Even if a person does not have a job in the agriculture arena, they still need to understand the importance of this dynamic industry. Agriculture education and the FFA can make sure that this happens.”⁵

The greatest issue for the Committee was related to the need for an Urban Agriculture Education program being developed and implemented in Georgia. Committee member, Mr. Randall Pugh, summed it up with the following comment,

⁵ Testimony at the July 27th meeting.

“I believe that in order to continue the success we are experiencing in agricultural education and the FFA program in Georgia, we must commit to a stronger presence in our urban counties. The urban population in Georgia is growing much faster than in the rural areas. This translates to a stronger influence of the urban communities in the State General Assembly as well as the Department of Education, both of which vocational education must depend on for political and financial support.”⁶

The main issue for agricultural education in the coming years is not teaching young people how to farm, but teaching them where their food and fiber originated. For urban and suburban students this is an important concept that could truly be of benefit. In the process of learning, the students will amass hands-on training and practical workforce experience.

For instance Mr. Floyd Jenkins of the Louisiana Booker T. Washington School of Agricultural Sciences in New Orleans testified that inner-city students, from the three housing projects surrounding the school, maintain, produce, and participate in all areas of agriculture, specifically horticulture and aquaculture. Ninety percent of these students are FFA members.

The school encourages entrepreneurship by allowing the students to create a business based on their tilapia production. The students sell and market their fresh tilapia at a local farmer’s market for profits which gross more than \$200,000 a year. The business venture is run by a student-elected Chief Executive Officer and a Board of Directors from various areas of agriculture.

Another example of an urban agricultural program is the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. It is a public high school founded in 1985 to offer an agriscience curriculum to students in the Chicago area. The school is located on 72 acres of working farmland. Only students that perform in the 40th percentile or better on 7th grade standardized tests may apply for the program. Of the approximately 1,350 applications received yearly, only 150 freshman seats are available. The graduation rate for 2004 was 85.7 percent and 90 percent if summer school graduates are included.⁷ Eighty-nine percent of African-American students graduated. Nearly 76 percent of the students are from economically disadvantaged households. One hundred percent of the 600 students at the school are FFA members.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

House Resolution 50 mandated specific areas that the Committee needed to address in its final report. In light of the Committee’s findings, the following recommendations have been approved and agreed to by the Committee as a whole and organized accordingly:

A Plan for a Statewide Agriculture Learning Center Model

- A. The Committee believes that the local system should maintain a majority of the control of the local program since the local community knows the needs of that area. The CTAE staff

⁶ Testimony at the July 27th meeting.

⁷ The Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences does not offer students a fifth year to complete their coursework.

of the DOE should have increased input in the determination of local teacher performance and assisting the local system in deciding whether the program meets state standards.

- B. The Young Farmers Program should undergo a fundamental change, including its delivery system. It is recommended that the Young Farmer teacher position name be changed to better reflect the new direction of the program, for instance “Agricultural Awareness and Environmental Stewardship Coordinator.” This “Coordinator” would then be responsible for organizing agriculture education activities in elementary and middle schools where a program does not exist. Hence, the “Coordinator” would be required to work in more than one county (possibly 3-6) depending on the number of programs and schools within that district. The district would be assembled as advised by the DOE. The Committee recommends that further research be done on the delivery aspect of this recommendation and report back to the proposed Agricultural Education Legislative Oversight Committee (Oversight Committee) by the end of 2006.
- C. It is recommended that at least an Agricultural Education managerial level staff person and the current structure of the Agricultural Education Program be retained by the DOE due to the size of the statewide program.
- D. It is also recommended that the Agricultural Education Program should remain for the foreseeable future within the structure of the CTAE Division provided that the managerial and budgetary identity of Agricultural Education is maintained.
- E. The Committee strongly recommends that an Oversight Committee be created to help advise the direction of the program in the future. This committee would receive an annual report on activities, program direction, and trends in agricultural education, then make any recommendations necessary for any new directions or trends that should be made or followed. The Oversight Committee will consist of members of the General Assembly, Governor’s Office, and the DOE.
- F. A priority should be placed on having CTAE personnel visit and educate the administration in school systems that do not currently have an Agricultural Education Program.
- G. The Committee recommends that schools which have block scheduling expose students to advanced courses within the curriculum. Many schools with block scheduling do not have class time in their yearly schedule to allow students to participate in advanced courses.

Program-Standard Approval for all Related Appropriations

- A. Within the proposal for the new Young Farmer Program the “Coordinator” could possibly be divided, but not limited to, the areas listed below. However, if the Young Farmer Program recommendations are not adopted, the following recommendations should still be adopted:

1. Kindergarten through Fifth Grade – Consumer education, the overall importance of agriculture, environmental education, and the role of science and math in agriculture and technology.
 2. Sixth through Eighth Grade – Relationship of agriculture to our standard of living and national security; how agricultural science identifies soil types; why it is important for some areas of the state and country to remain fallow; the use of natural resources; production improvements through technology; and, career exploration.
 3. Ninth through Twelfth Grade – The agricultural education instructor should use state provided curriculum that includes topics, such as: why agriculture is important to society; the influence of science on farm practice; the function of the components of the food and fiber system; efficiency through technology; agribusiness and its role in the national and world economy; biotechnology and its role; social, political and economic factors that affect agriculture; and, the relationship of research and development activities in agriculture.
 4. Adult – A possible area for the Department of Technical and Adult Education to work with the local agricultural education program for adults wishing to take courses that are not offered at the local Technical College, or allowing high school students the opportunity for joint enrollment. The economic development piece for the Young Farmers Program would tie in here.
- B. A 12 month contract should be a requirement for all agricultural education instructors. This would hopefully alleviate the perennial problem of budgeting issues and allow for a more equal interpretation of the expected duties of all teachers. If necessary, a legislative mandate in the Official Code of Georgia should be implemented to provide for this recommendation.
- C. The Committee believes that a fundamental change in the way food science facilities are currently being used will be necessary. An option may be to allow students to utilize these facilities on a year-round basis in learning about all types of food preparation and storage. Food science programs within agricultural education serve a need by demonstrating and instructing students and communities in how to prepare and store food for use at later times, which is beneficial in many ways to our national security. Such a program should be rolled into a new comprehensive program for training students in the food science industry in Georgia.
- D. The role of the Area Teachers has changed dramatically over the last 20 years compared to what their traditional roles had been from the inception the Agricultural Education Program. The Committee feels that Area Teachers are crucial to the production of Career Development Events (contests), as well as other student activities on the local, state and national levels. Area Teachers also assist classroom teachers with curriculum development for their particular areas, and the planning and setting up of new agriculture laboratories across the state. Furthermore, Area Teachers should be involved in idea sharing with other CTAE program areas. Hence, Area Teachers should be utilized primarily for Agricultural Education Program improvement. It should be noted that this is not a recommendation for moving Area Teachers to other areas and away from Agricultural Education.

- E. The Committee recognizes the importance of Industry Certification and recommends that more emphasis be placed on the agricultural industry being involved in assisting programs in becoming certified. This includes direction for all programs to become certified.

New Program Criteria Available for Funding

- A. The recommendation for changing the delivery structure of the current Young Farmer Program and the inclusion of consumer, awareness and environmental stewardship in grades kindergarten through twelfth, will require additional funding into the future.
- B. The Committee recommends additional funding for the Youth Camp Program facilities and activities in Covington and Fort Valley. Instructional programs at both Camps should move toward leadership activities, which should contain an agricultural career education theme. The Committee recommends that the Camps be included in the capital outlay program for school construction so that the formula would provide for possible annual earnings.

The State FFA/FCCLA Camp at Covington is in need of facility improvements in several locations. Roofs on many of the cabins are in dire need of repair and replacement. New structures are needed for expanded programs and activities, as well as for building a new Leadership Center Facility. In order to continue to serve our student population, these facilities are needed as soon as possible. A suggestion was made to create a relationship with the Department of Corrections for inmate help in repairing and renovating the facilities at the Camp in Covington and Fort Valley.

The condition of the State FFA/FCCLA Camp at Fort Valley (Camp John Hope) was viewed as near deplorable. This Camp is showing its age attempts to modernize this Camp on very limited funds over the last few years have been unsuccessful. The current Camp Administrator has a very aggressive plan to turn this Camp into a Diversity Center to be used in providing opportunities for underprivileged youth. The program that was presented would follow the student from at least the ninth through twelfth grade years. The Diversity Center would create a possible pool of future employees for the agribusiness industry.

Both camps need to have a comprehensive plan for year-round use by students and educators. Both facilities are in prime locations for use with other State agencies in emergency preparedness planning and use. The Camp at Covington played a major role in disaster relief after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast through efforts with the Red Cross relief effort in the southeast. Camp Director Todd Teasley was noted as having the best run relief effort in the entire State.

- C. The Committee recommends funding for additional agricultural education teachers and equipment as a means of expanding the program, not only in the urban and suburban areas but for the start up of new middle school programs. Capital equipment money should be distributed to school systems with new programs and/or those who wish to expand or update their existing programs.

- D. The Committee feels that the state should plan for growth in the agricultural education program area. The Committee feels that this is a program that works and should be rewarded for its success. The Committee recommends utilizing capital equipment money to increase funding for program expansion: new and innovative programs for students who currently do not have access to such a program; and, growth in rural area programs to increase the number of students currently participating.

Recommendations to the Governor and Legislative Bodies for Appropriations and Legislative Acts to Enhance the Delivery of Agricultural Education

- A. Agricultural awareness among grades kindergarten through twelfth is critical in the opinion of the Committee. The lack of a basic understanding of agriculture and agribusiness facts and realities is an obstacle in today's society. The Committee believes this should be a priority of everyone involved in agriculture education and economic development in urban and rural areas across the state.
- B. Urban agriculture programs are a key to the success of agricultural education programs in Georgia. The Committee believes that many successful programs exist throughout the state that may be used as a reference in creating urban programs in Georgia. The Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences is held as the standard-bearer for these types of programs. The Committee does not feel that all urban schools should be modeled after this particular school, but that there are many parts of their curriculum that could be used to accent current teaching methods. The Committee believes that an effort should be made to receive private industry technology suggestions and funding for these programs as a career development tool.
- C. The Committee recommends future planning for the establishment of a high school for agriscience, possibly opening in the Atlanta area. Once this facility is established, then other such schools could open in other urban areas throughout the state. Funding for such a project would involve investing in non-traditional staff persons, such as an instructional veterinarian, agricultural economist, and an actual farmer.
- D. The Committee recommends establishing an Agricultural Education Oversight Committee (Oversight Committee).
- E. The Committee recommends codifying a requirement for all agricultural education teachers to work on a 12 month contract.
- F. The Committee believes food science facilities should be upgrading and expanded.
- G. The Committee recommends fully funding Young Farmers Program positions.
- H. The Committee recommends providing funding for: the Oversight Committee and the growth and development of an agriscience-themed high school in the Atlanta area.

The Development and Review of an Annual Report and Evaluation for the Agricultural Education Program

- A. As stated previously, the Committee strongly recommends that Oversight Committee be created and charged with making recommendations for changes or improvements in the program. Additionally, the Oversight Committee should review annual reports regarding the yearly progress of the Agricultural Education Program.
- B. The DOE Agricultural Education Program Manager should be charged with the duty of compiling a comprehensive report on: the condition of the program; the number of students served; the new programs started and the programs terminated; partnerships created; and, any other information deemed appropriate for inclusion in the report.
- C. The Oversight Committee should review the annual report and make recommendations based on the information and should consider information received from outside sources.
- D. The Oversight Committee should then make any recommendations for budget or legislative action that may be necessary for the continued improvement of the overall program.

Respectfully Submitted,

The remaining Committee Members signatures are on file in the Senate Research Office.

Honorable John Bulloch
Senator, 11th District
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