

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ag Classes. FFA. Leadership Contests. Fruit Sales. Skills Contests. State & National Convention. These probably bring up different thoughts and memories for everyone. Right or wrong, everyone remembers something different. Class schedules and involvement have changed over the years. But one of the constants has always been FFA. A strong agriscience program in the high school is necessary for a strong FFA.

Ag classes and curriculum need to continually change to meet federal requirements and guidelines from the chapter's Advisory Committee. The Michigan Center for Career and Technical Education has standards that teachers must follow. The four basic curriculum areas include 1) basic agricultural sciences 2) business & management 3) horticulture 4) natural resources and conservation. Ag teachers have the flexibility to include advanced material and are required to expose students to FFA and a Supervised Agricultural Experience. A good quality education and hands-on experience is expected for students enrolled in agriscience classes.

Currently, classes that are offered at Breckenridge include: Zoology, Botany, Ag Communications & Leadership and advanced classes in these areas. Over the years, classes have been fine-tuned - class names and lesson plans have changed. Some of the out-of-classroom activities and lab work includes the Land Lab, Broiler Projects, raising livestock in the barn, the Greenhouse and raising Tilapia fish.

All this has helped give our students a good agriculture education with practical experience. Alongside the classroom and hands-on experience has been FFA. FFA has helped develop important leadership and life skills with involvement in SAE projects, skills contests, leadership contests, award & degree applications, community service, mentoring and many other areas at the chapter, state and national level.

Breckenridge FFA has a lot to be proud of. We have had many regional and state officers. We have had state winning teams that have advanced to national competition. We have had numerous members that have earned their American Degree, the highest degree a member can receive and awarded to a deserving, elite group nationwide each year.

Some community members that were never involved in FFA may not understand the relationship of FFA and agriscience education. What needs to be emphasized is the dependence on agriscience education to maintain an active FFA. There are minimum requirements for classroom instruction for many of the award areas. It is very difficult for students to be involved in FFA without agriscience classes, unless they belong to a chapter from another school. If ag classes are eliminated, the FFA Chapter will not be able to exist.

Farming has changed. Agriculture is constantly changing. There are more challenges today with markets, consumer demands, energy, regulations and biotechnology. Everyone could add more to this list. Today farmers spend more of their time with paperwork, a computer or a cell phone than in the field. There are many more ag careers than simply farming or production agriculture.

We need to consider some of the following when deciding the future of agriscience education.

There are fewer students each year coming directly from farms with hands-on agriculture experience.

Should classes concentrate on traditional production agriculture or more specialized jobs and careers?

Are we preparing our agriscience students and FFA members for new opportunities and challenges?

Ag classes can be used to help educate non-farm students. Eventually this will create a better understanding of agriculture and help reduce conflict in the community between farmers and the non-farm public.

Thank you for taking an interest in Breckenridge FFA and our agriscience program. We would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes and share your opinion. The results of this survey will help guide the Advisory Committee in determining if changes should be made to the current curriculum. It will help provide community-wide direction for what would be best in preparing our students for all the opportunities and challenges they will face after leaving high school.

PLEASE READ THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION BEFORE COMPLETING THIS SURVEY.

Please rank the following curriculum areas in order of importance (1 through 6) or preference that Breckenridge Community Schools should be offering to high school students. 1 is the most important.

- Natural Resources (pollution, energy, environment, forestry, fisheries, wildlife, outdoor recreation, etc.)
- Plant/Soil Sciences/Botany (crop production, soil science, pest mgt., floriculture, greenhouse, landscaping, hydroponics, turfgrass, etc.)
- Animal Sciences/Zoology (animal production, genetics, nutrition, health, evaluation, vet science, etc.)
- Business Management/Marketing (accounting, finance, taxes, marketing, ag law, etc.)
- Mechanical/Technical Systems (machinery, small engines, electricity, drainage, welding, etc.)
- Personal Development (communications, leadership, career development, etc.)

Please rank the following lab areas (non-classroom) in order of importance (1 through 7) or preference that Breckenridge Community Schools should be offering to high school students. 1 is the most important.

- Greenhouse (potted plants, flowers, vegetables, etc.)
- Land Lab (corn, soybeans, wheat, etc. traditional cash crops)
- Hydroponics (soil-less crops, fish, etc.)
- Barn (chickens, calves, pigs, lambs, etc.)
- Ag Shop (welding, cutting, small engines, machinery set-up, ag mechanics, small construction, etc.)
- Nursery (landscape plants, trees, shrubs, etc.)
- School Forest (species identification, tree management, wildlife, outdoor recreation, trails, etc.)
- Other (please specify) _____

Please check those that describe you best. Please check all that apply.

- I am a current Breckenridge FFA member.
- I am a past Breckenridge FFA member.
- I am a past FFA member from another chapter.
- I was involved in the leadership or skills contests while in FFA.
- I am a parent of a past or present FFA member.
- I am a past Chapter Officer.
- I am a past Regional or State Officer.
- I am currently involved in production agriculture.
- I am currently involved in the ag industry in sales, service, lending, etc.
- I am currently a member of an ag related association or organization.
- I am the owner/manager of a local business and supporter of FFA.
- I am a member of the Breckenridge FFA Alumni & Boosters
- I am interested in becoming involved in the Breckenridge FFA Alumni & Boosters

Signature, email or phone number is optional _____

Promptly return completed surveys to: Dave Stoneman, 2246 N. McClelland Rd., Breckenridge MI 48615.

Contact the Advisory Committee with any further comments or questions. Members include Matt & Nanette Brown, Larry Childs, Kent Humm, Marshall & Caryn Jenkins, Dave & Karen Stoneman, Greg Varner