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# History and Organization of FFA

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**Unit:** Developing Leadership and Communication Skills

**Problem Area:** Opportunities in FFA and Youth Organizations

**Lesson:** History and Organization of FFA

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Explain how, when, and why the National FFA Organization was founded.**
- 2 Describe the mission and strategies, colors, motto, parts of the emblem, and organizational structure of the National FFA Organization.**
- 3 Recite and explain the meaning of the FFA Creed.**
- 4 Explain the purpose of FFA's Program of Activities and describe its committee structure.**

- **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

E-unit: *History of the National FFA Organization*. Danville, IL: CAERT, Inc.  
[www.mychaert.com](http://www.mychaert.com)

E-unit: *The Mission, Symbols, and Creed of the FFA Organization*. Danville, IL: CAERT, Inc. [www.mychaert.com](http://www.mychaert.com)

E-unit: *Developing the Chapter Program of Activities*. Danville, IL: CAERT, Inc.  
[www.mychaert.com](http://www.mychaert.com)

- **List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Writing surface
- ✓ Overhead projector
- ✓ Copies of sample test
- ✓ Visuals from accompanying masters
- ✓ Copies of student lab sheet

■ **Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ active
- ▶ Agricultural Education/FFA
- ▶ alumni
- ▶ Leslie Appelgate
- ▶ collegiate
- ▶ eagle
- ▶ ear of corn
- ▶ FFA motto
- ▶ Henry Groseclose
- ▶ honorary
- ▶ C. H. Lane
- ▶ owl
- ▶ Carlton Patton
- ▶ plow
- ▶ Program of Activities
- ▶ rising sun
- ▶ Smith-Hughes Act
- ▶ E. M. Tiffany

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

*Ask the students if they can name the largest student youth organization in the United States, with nearly half a million members. Once the correct answer is given, ask the students what they know about the history and purpose of the National FFA Organization.*

## SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Explain how, when, and why the National FFA Organization was founded.

**Anticipated Problem:** How, when, and why was the National FFA Organization founded?

- I. Becoming familiar with the National FFA Organization's history and the purposes for which it was founded will help you understand the benefits the organization has to offer.

- A. The initial idea for forming the organization came when Congress passed the **Smith-Hughes Act** in 1917.
  - 1. This act, known as the National Vocational Education Act, established vocational agriculture classes.
  - 2. It was named after the two congressmen who wrote the legislation.
- B. In the early 1920s, Virginia formed the first Future Farmers Club for boys in agriculture classes.
  - 1. **Henry Groseclose**, an agriculture teacher from Blacksburg, Virginia, organized the first Future Farmers of America and is known as the father of the National FFA Organization.
  - 2. In 1926, the American Royal Livestock Show in Kansas City, Missouri, invited students to compete in livestock contests.
- C. The National FFA Organization was established on November 20, 1928, at the Hotel Baltimore in Kansas City, Missouri.
  - 1. National dues were 10 cents per member.
  - 2. The first national advisor was **C. H. Lane**.
  - 3. The first national president was **Leslie Appelgate** from New Jersey.
- D. In 1929, 64 delegates from 33 states met for the first annual convention.
  - 1. National blue and corn gold were selected as the official colors of the organization.
  - 2. The first Star Farmer of America, **Carlton Patton** from Arkansas, was named.
  - 3. By 1934, all states, except Rhode Island, had FFA chapters.
  - 4. The national convention was held every year in Kansas City, Missouri, until 1999. Since then, the national convention has been held in Louisville, Kentucky, and Indianapolis, Indiana.
- E. Significant changes have been made over the years to improve the FFA organization.
  - 1. In 1965, the New Farmers of America (NFA), an organization for African American agricultural education students, merged with FFA, adding 50,000 members.
  - 2. In 1969, women were allowed national membership. Today, about 35 percent of FFA membership is female.
  - 3. In 1971, the National FFA Alumni Association was founded.
  - 4. In 1988, the organization officially changed its name from Future Farmers of America to the National FFA Organization to reflect the expanding career field of agricultural education. The organization is commonly called FFA.

*Begin the lesson with an interest approach. State the learning objectives and introduce terms. Have the students visit the FFA Web site (<http://www.ffa.org>) for a brief introduction to FFA. Discuss with students the purpose of youth organizations in schools. Have students research and list well-known Americans who were FFA members. Lead a discussion on the history of FFA. Use a*

PowerPoint presentation as a teaching tool. Use VM–A to further explain the history of the FFA organization. Use LS–A to evaluate students' understanding of important dates in FFA history. Have chapter officers talk to the class about FFA.

**Objective 2:** Explain the mission and strategies, colors, motto, parts of the emblem, and organizational structure of the National FFA Organization.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are the mission and strategies, colors, motto, parts of the emblem, and organizational structure of the National FFA Organization?

- II. The National FFA Organization was organized to address specific objectives outlined in the organization's mission and strategies. The mission statement for the National FFA Organization reads as follows: "The National FFA Organization is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education."
  - A. The purpose of the National FFA Organization is to help students develop their full potential through agricultural education classes.
    1. The National FFA Organization is an integral part of classroom/laboratory instruction.
    2. Leadership, personal growth, and career success are developed through the available career development activities.
  - B. The FFA organizational structure has three levels: local, state, and national.
    1. Some states may also have districts and sections.
    2. Each level has student officer teams, an advisor, and a group of members whom the officers represent.
    3. Competition at contests and awards are structured the same way.
  - C. FFA has four types of membership.
    1. **Active**—those who are enrolled in agriculture classes and have paid their membership dues
    2. **Alumni**—former active, collegiate, and honorary members and other individuals who support FFA
    3. **Collegiate**—those who belong to FFA chapters at two- or four-year post-secondary institutions and are enrolled in agriculture programs
    4. **Honorary**—individuals who have provided outstanding service to FFA and/or agricultural education
  - D. The National FFA Organization chose national blue and corn gold as its official colors in 1929.
    1. National blue represents the blue field of the U.S. flag. It signifies that the organization is national in scope and open to everyone.
    2. Corn gold represents a crop grown in every state of the United States and national fields of crops ready for harvest—a sign of success. It helps to symbolize the commonality of the organization.

- E. The **FFA motto** consists of just 12 words, but these words are extremely powerful. The motto helps members achieve their goals in life. The motto is:
- Learning to Do,  
Doing to Learn,  
Earning to Live,  
Living to Serve
- F. The FFA emblem represents the history, goals, and future of FFA. It is comprised of:
1. A cross-section of an **ear of corn**, signifying common agricultural interest
  2. A **rising sun**, symbolizing progress in agriculture
  3. A **plow**, symbolizing labor and tillage of the soil
  4. An **owl**, symbolizing wisdom and knowledge
  5. An **eagle**, representing the national scope of FFA
  6. The words **Agricultural Education/FFA**, signifying that FFA is an important part of any agriculture/agribusiness program

*Lead a class discussion on the mission and strategies, colors, motto, parts of the emblem, and organizational structure of the National FFA Organization. Use VM-B to explain FFA's purpose, VM-C to outline the four types of FFA membership, and VM-D to explain FFA's motto and colors. Use VM-E to define the symbols of the FFA emblem and VM-F to introduce some guidelines for wearing the FFA jacket. Have a current member come to class in official dress to demonstrate proper use of the FFA jacket.*

**Objective 3:** Recite and explain the meaning of the FFA Creed.

**Anticipated Problem:** What is the meaning behind the five paragraphs of the FFA Creed?

- III. The FFA Creed is a basic statement of beliefs that serves as a common bond between new members of the organization.
- A. The FFA Creed was written by **E. M. Tiffany** and was adopted at the third national FFA convention.
  - B. It was revised at the 38th convention and again at the 63rd convention to reflect changes in FFA membership and the agriculture industry.

*Have the students learn the FFA Creed and be able to recite each paragraph. Then, lead a discussion on the meaning of each paragraph and the key words found in each paragraph. Use VM-G as a visual aid during the discussion.*

**Objective 4:** Explain the purpose of FFA’s Program of Activities and describe its committee structure.

**Anticipated Problem:** What is the primary purpose of FFA’s Program of Activities and how is it structured.

- IV. The **Program of Activities** serves as a road map to guide an FFA chapter toward its annual goals.
  - A. The Program of Activities is divided into three major sections.
    1. Student Development Division—promotes leadership, personal growth, and SAE activities
    2. Chapter Development Division—focuses on recruitment, finance, public relations, support groups, participation in state and national FFA, and other organizational activities
    3. Community Development Division—strives to develop economic, environmental, and human resources; citizenship; agricultural awareness and literacy; and safety
  - B. Each of the three divisions can be divided into committees that concentrate their efforts in single areas. These committees are responsible for:
    1. Setting goals for what they want to accomplish during the year and how they plan to achieve those goals
    2. Reviewing the goals to determine which ones were achieved
  - C. All chapters can compete in the National Chapter Award program which rewards chapters for their accomplishments throughout the year.

*Have the students review their FFA chapter’s Program of Activities. Give all students an opportunity to serve on a chapter committee.*

- **Review/Summary.** Use the objectives for the lesson as guides in reviewing and summarizing the content. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. The anticipated problems can be used as student review questions.
- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheet to apply the information presented in the lesson. Students can apply the content of the lesson in their agricultural education and FFA activities.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. The sample written test can also be used.

## ■ Answers to Sample Test:

### Part One: Matching

1. e
2. d
3. a
4. f
5. c
6. b
7. j
8. i
9. h
10. g

### Part Two: Multiple Choice

1. a
2. b
3. d
4. d
5. b

### Part Three: Short Answer

- Ear of corn—common agricultural interest
- Rising sun—progress in agriculture
- Plow—labor and tillage of the soil
- Owl—wisdom and knowledge
- Eagle—national scope
- Agricultural Education/FFA—FFA is an important part of any agricultural education program

# History and Organization of FFA

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct definition.

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. FFA                   | f. active membership     |
| b. collegiate membership | g. 1988                  |
| c. 1917                  | h. 1969                  |
| d. 1928                  | i. FFA Creed             |
| e. FFA motto             | j. Program of Activities |

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Twelve words that guide FFA members
- \_\_\_\_ 2. The year the National FFA Organization was founded
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Three letters designating the name of the National FFA Organization
- \_\_\_\_ 4. FFA members in a secondary school
- \_\_\_\_ 5. The year the Smith-Hughes Act was passed
- \_\_\_\_ 6. FFA members in a post-secondary school
- \_\_\_\_ 7. Serves as a road map to guide an FFA chapter toward its annual goals
- \_\_\_\_ 8. A basic statement of beliefs that serves as a common bond between new members
- \_\_\_\_ 9. The year women were allowed national membership
- \_\_\_\_ 10. The year the name of the organization was changed

## ► Part Two: Multiple Choice

**Instructions:** Write the letter of the correct answer.

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Which part of the Program of Activities focuses on recruitment, finance, public relations, support groups, participation in state and national FFA, and other organizational activities?
- a. Chapter Development Division
  - b. Community Development Division
  - c. Student Development Division
  - d. School Development Division

- \_\_\_\_ 2. Who is known as the father of FFA?
- E. M. Tiffany
  - Henry Groseclose
  - Leslie Appelgate
  - Smith Hughes
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Who was the first national FFA president?
- Corey Flournoy
  - E. M. Tiffany
  - Fred McClure
  - Leslie Appelgate
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Which type of FFA membership is given to individuals who have provided outstanding service to FFA and/or agricultural education?
- Active
  - Alumni
  - Collegiate
  - Honorary
- \_\_\_\_ 5. What are the national colors of FFA?
- Leafy green and mellow yellow
  - National blue and corn gold
  - Patriotic red and amber yellow
  - Royal blue and tangerine orange

► **Part Three: Short Answer**

**Instructions: Complete the following.**

List and explain the six symbols of the FFA emblem.

# MAJOR EVENTS IN FFA HISTORY

- 1928 Future Farmers of America is founded.
- 1939 National FFA Camp is set up on land that formerly belonged to George Washington in Alexandria, Virginia. (The camp later became the National FFA Center.)
- 1944 National FFA Foundation is established to use funds from business and industry to support FFA activities.
- 1950 Public Law 740 is passed by Congress granting FFA a federal charter.
- 1952 *National Future Farmer* magazine begins publication.
- 1965 Consolidation with the New Farmers of America (NFA) strengthens FFA. (NFA was an organization similar to FFA for African American students.)
- 1969 Women are allowed national membership.
- 1971 National FFA Alumni Association is formed.
- 1988 Name of the organization is changed to the National FFA Organization.
- 1989 Name of *National Future Farmer* magazine is changed to *FFA New Horizons*.
- 1999 National FFA Center moves from Alexandria, Virginia, to Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 1999 The national FFA convention moves to Louisville, Kentucky.

# PURPOSE OF FFA

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The purpose of FFA is to develop:

- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Scholarship
- ◆ Improvements in agriculture
- ◆ Cooperation
- ◆ Citizenship
- ◆ Recreation
- ◆ Patriotism
- ◆ Service
- ◆ Character
- ◆ Thrift

FFA stresses three closely related areas: leadership, personal growth, and career success.

# KINDS OF FFA MEMBERSHIP

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1. Active
2. Alumni
3. Collegiate
4. Honorary

## FFA MOTTO

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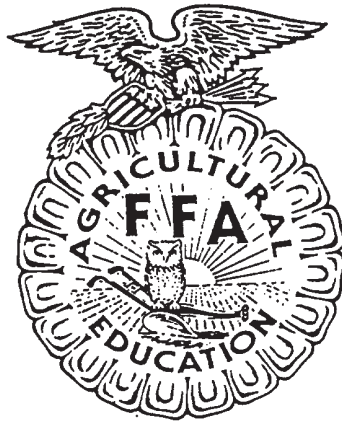
Learning to Do  
Doing to Learn  
Earning to Live  
Living to Serve

## COLORS OF FFA

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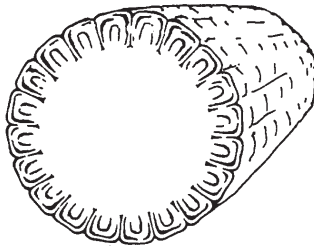
The colors of FFA are national blue and corn gold. Blue reminds us that FFA is a national organization. Gold reminds us that corn is native to the United States and is grown in every state.

# SYMBOLS OF THE FFA EMBLEM

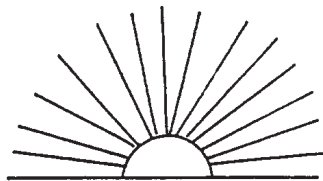


## THE EMBLEM

The FFA emblem was designed with much thought and meaning. It is made up of five symbols.



**A cross-section of an ear of corn.** The symbol of corn represents our common agricultural interests, is native to America, and is grown in every state.



**The rising sun.** It symbolizes progress in agriculture and the confidence that FFA members have in the future.



**The plow.** It is a symbol of labor and tillage of the soil.



**The owl.** It symbolizes wisdom and knowledge.



**The eagle.** This is symbolic of the national scope of FFA.



The words "Agricultural Education" surround the letters "FFA." This tells us that FFA is an important part of agriculture and agribusiness programs.

# SOME GUIDELINES FOR WEARING THE FFA JACKET

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1. It should only be worn by FFA members.
2. It should always be clean and neat.
3. It should only have the names of the state association and local chapter on the back. The individual's name and office of honor should be on the front.
4. It should be worn, with the zipper fastened, to all official FFA occasions.
5. It should not be worn with apparel bearing the insignia of other organizations.
6. It should be worn with no more than three medals beneath the individual's name.

# FFA CREED

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I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds—achievements won by the present and past generations of agriculturists; in the promise of better days through better ways, even as the better things we now enjoy have come to us from the struggles of former years.

I believe that to live and work on a good farm, or to be engaged in other agricultural pursuits, is pleasant as well as challenging; for I know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life and hold an inborn fondness for those associations which, even in hours of discouragement, I cannot deny.

I believe in leadership from ourselves and respect from others. I believe in my own ability to work efficiently and think clearly, with such knowledge and skill as I can secure, and in the ability of progressive agriculturists to serve our own and the public interest in producing and marketing the product of our toil.

I believe in less dependence on begging and more power in bargaining; in the life abundant and enough honest wealth to help make it so—for others as well as myself; in less need for charity and more of it when needed; in being happy myself and playing square with those whose happiness depends upon me.

I believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life and that I can exert an influence in my home and community which will stand solid for my part in that inspiring task.

(From: *FFA Official Manual*)

# FFA Dates

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to associate dates with major events in FFA history at both the state and national levels.

## Objective

Research significant events in the history of the National FFA Organization.

## Materials

- ◆ resource materials
- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

## Procedure

Using available resources, match the following dates with the events listed below. (Note: Some dates may be used more than once.)

1928	1947	1965	1973	1988
1929	1952	1968	1976	1998
1944	1953	1969	1979	1999

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Future Farmers of America is founded
- \_\_\_\_ 2. First national FFA convention is held
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Seventh and eighth grade students are included in FFA
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Illinois Association of FFA is organized
- \_\_\_\_ 5. President Eisenhower addresses the national convention
- \_\_\_\_ 6. NFA merges with FFA
- \_\_\_\_ 7. *National Future Farmer* magazine is first published
- \_\_\_\_ 8. Illinois FFA Foundation is established
- \_\_\_\_ 9. State FFA office is established at Roanoke

- \_\_\_10. President Nixon addresses the national convention
- \_\_\_11. FFA constitution is revised to include females
- \_\_\_12. First former FFA member is elected to U.S. presidency
- \_\_\_13. First female wins the National Public Speaking Contest
- \_\_\_14. National FFA Foundation is established
- \_\_\_15. New National FFA Center opens in Indianapolis
- \_\_\_16. First national FFA convention is held in Louisville

# FFA Dates

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1. 1928
2. 1928
3. 1988
4. 1929
5. 1953
6. 1965
7. 1952
8. 1947
9. 1973
10. 1968
11. 1969
12. 1976
13. 1979
14. 1944
15. 1998
16. 1999