

Implementing the 3-circle model of agricultural education

If I had a barcode scanner, plastic storage clipboard, calculators, and storage boxes, I could implement the 3-circle model of agricultural education even more for my students!

Hello, my name is Gina Neff and I am the agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor at Utica High School, Northfork Local School District. I teach grades 9-12 and have over 50 students in my agricultural education program and my FFA chapter. (I am optimistic to start a middle school program for the 2018-2019 school year.)

An agricultural education course is unique and we follow the 3-circle model of agricultural education. Think of a 3-circle Venn diagram. One circle is the classroom experience, another is the FFA experience and the third is Supervised Agricultural Experience. This means my students are learning in and outside of class through student organizations and career skills.

So how do a barcode scanner, plastic storage clipboards, calculators and storage boxes come into play? These items will be used in all learning circles of agricultural education.

In the classroom, we are inquiry and lab based. Not often do you find us just reading or taking notes. We are moving, completing labs, and it looks like organized chaos. This is when we can use clipboards, calculators and storage boxes. Sometimes when we complete labs, we need to crunch the data and it's not always convenient to have an iPad with a calculator and notes on it. We can use the calculator to help us in completing labs. We also need to organize our information that is not on student iPads- so we can utilize the clipboards to organize ourselves and the storage boxes to organize our group work.

FFA participation is a part of our learning experience. If you are not familiar with FFA, it is the leadership portion of our classes. In FFA, we compete in a variety of agricultural career based events, are involved with leadership development on the local, state, and national level, are involved in our local communities, and try to positively impact our FFA members and students in our school district.

When preparing for an FFA contest (which we call Career Development Events or CDE's) we find that organization is key, but something that we lack. This is where we can use the clipboards, calculators, and storage boxes as well! Storage boxes can help us organize the study materials for the CDE's that we have coming up and help us know our contest better. Clipboards can be used the day of our contest- we often need to have calculators, plain paper and pencils/pens with us. The clipboards we picked are the storage kind- so even if we have an outdoor event, we can be organized and keep our paper dry and clean. (Sometimes we judge soil, so getting dirty is very easy!)

With FFA, we keep track of our events, in the same system we record our Supervised Agricultural Experiences or SAEs. Students are not always motivated to log onto the system and update their records of FFA involvement or their SAE projects. This is when we can use the barcode scanner. Each student will be able to have an ID card on paper or on their phone, which can be scanned during FFA events. This way students are more likely to keep up on their record keeping duties.

One new activity that is going to be coming up for our FFA chapter is starting a community garden. The barcode scanner would really be able to help students clock in and out when they work in the garden or help in the planning stages. This is one way that our organization is going to help our students learn life skills. Our community garden is also going to serve as a way for all students to ensure they have a

quality SAE. Our organization materials will help us in the planning and implementation of our garden and student workers.

It is a privilege to teach agricultural education and help kids learn about agriculture, as well as soft skills such as leadership, record keeping and community service. I really hope you select me to be a grant recipient, so I can continue to implement the three circles of agricultural education in my classroom and help students grown.