**Fairfield Agricultural Education**

**Jennifer Fleener Fairfield Area School District Fairfield, Pa 17320**

TO: Fairfield Area School District Parents and Students

FROM: Mrs. Jennifer Fleener, Fairfield Agricultural Educator and FFA Advisor

SUBJECT: Agricultural Education and FFA Information.

Dear Parents and Students,

Students at Fairfield Area School District have an exciting opportunity to enroll in the Agricultural Education program next year! Please consider this letter an explanation of FFA and the Ag classes that students may take.

I am Jennifer Fleener, the Agricultural Teacher at Fairfield High School. I graduated from Delaware Valley College with a degree in Agricultural Business and received my Agricultural Education teaching certification from Penn State University. I have been involved with Agriculture my whole life, my husband and I currently raise Hampshire sheep, Shorthorn Plus and Mini Herford cattle for both show stock and market.

After enrollment in an agricultural course, students are given the chance to join the National FFA Organization, which is the largest student organization in the United States. There are over 700,000 members that reach from the state of Alaska to Guam, Maine to Hawaii! Pennsylvania alone has 210 Ag teachers and boasts over 12,771 student members.

My hope is that your family will encourage participation in Ag/FFA next year. The classes offer diverse opportunities regardless of background or future plans. There is such a wide variety of topics to learn about, events to compete in, and skills to learn! Each student will gain recognition and awards for their participation. Students should consider choosing an Ag class as an opportunity to learn about new concepts, become a well-rounded individual and to develop leadership skills.

The courses that are offered her at Fairfield are Agricultural Science I and II, Horticulture, Animal Science, Ag Leadership Lab, and SAE. Students gain knowledge of agriculture through hands on learning including raising piglets, rabbits, snakes, poultry and various other small animal species. Students will also get a chance to learn in our newly renovated Aquaponics Greenhouse, where they will get a chance to grow and harvest food for our Cafeteria. Students that complete all Ag classes offered are eligible to take the NOCTI exam and also receive a certificate of completion as well as college credit for their efforts!

 Enclosed is a copy of Commonly Asked Questions. I hope your family will consider the positive impact that agricultural education will have on students. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments regarding Ag classes or FFA.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jennifer Fleener
Fairfield Ag Educator

**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.**

**Commonly Asked Questions**

**Our family does not farm. Why should my son or daughter take Ag class and be in FFA?**

 It is about much more than farming or ranching! Although learning about production agriculture is one aspect, an Agricultural Education program offers a wide variety of activities and topics to explore. Some general areas of study may include the following: Ag business, environmental natural resources, alternative energies, ag communications, veterinary science, plant science, floriculture, horticulture, nursery and landscaping, recreation, tourism, welding, woodworking, ag mechanics, genetics, entomology, careers, leadership, food science, education and ag law.

In 1988, the FFA officially changed its name to **The National FFA Organization**. It was formally known as, and often is mistakenly referred to as, the Future Farmers of America. This update was made to recognize all aspects of the diverse and growing agricultural industry. Students will have the opportunity to explore many pathways in agriculture.

**My child is not interested in an agricultural career. How could Ag class and FFA help him/her in the future?**

*Students will learn life skills that will be applicable in any future endeavor*. Practice keeping financial records. Develop effective verbal, written and body-language communication skills. Apply problem-solving skills to real-world scenarios. Learn personal etiquette and business procedures. Use technology sources to gain 21st century abilities. Recognize civic responsibilities. Maximize human-relation and interpersonal skills. Improve employability and job interview techniques. Gain confidence and self-esteem through local, state and national recognition.

*Ag class curriculum directly integrates science, math, and readings skills which will reinforce core academic concepts!* The hands-on and real-world application of abstract concepts may be just the trick needed for a student to excel. Challenging content offers exciting opportunities for students to be competitive beyond FFA events. The reinforcement of concepts that is gained through Ag classes has proven to help students succeed in college and careers.

*In fact, statistics tell us that 1 in 3 careers is related to agriculture*, as reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Whether it is directly or indirectly, many individuals will hold a job position that is tied to the agricultural industry.

**How much homework is involved with agriculture classes?**

 Because agricultural classes are largely based around hands-on curriculum, most work is completed during class time. There will be assignments, projects, and tests to gauge the understanding of concepts. Occasionally students may find it beneficial to spend additional time outside of class preparing for assessments or upcoming contests and events.

**I think learning about agriculture sounds neat. What cool things will we do in Ag class and FFA?**

There is never a dull moment in Ag class! Everyone will enjoy the wide variety of topics, trips, contests, and conventions! Depending on student interest, the following activities are likely options: Dissect the digestive system of a cow, test soil samples, identify pasture grasses, vaccinate pigs, present a speech, discuss the impact of the Humane Society of the United States, groom a pig, apply for scholarships and awards, ear notch piglets, practice job interview skills, sheer a sheep, travel across Pennsylvania, the United States and potentially even internationally, milk a cow, practice hunting, fishing or rodeo skills hatch chicks, make flower arrangements, landscape outside, grow plants, collect insects, attend fun events, learn farm safety, judge livestock, be in the local newspapers.

**What type of credit will my child earn for taking an Ag class? And what course is offered for my incoming 9th grade student?**

Students who enroll in Ag Science I, II, Animal Science, Aquaponics or Horticulture are able to utilize these classes for either a science or elective credit. Incoming 9th graders are eligible to take Ag Science I and/or Aquaponics. Ag Leadership and SAE are elective credits and completed outside of class time.

**When we travel to contests, events and conventions, will I know other students in FFA?**

 Probably! If you do not already have friends from neighboring schools, FFA is a wonderful opportunity to network with other high-achieving students. Mason Dixon FFA is in the South Central Region and part of AFY and will participate with every other school in the county. When we attend state events there will be students from 177 PA schools. The National FFA Convention is a great time to meet peers from all across the country!

 **Okay, maybe Ag and FFA sound pretty interesting! Where could I get more information?**

Contact Mrs. Fleener! Shoot her an email, give her a call, or arrange a meeting any time. She can be reached at fleenerj@fairfield.k12.pa.us . *If Ag class conflicts with your class schedule, please ask about alternative course arrangements!* And, check out the Pennsylvania FFA website at [www.paffa.org](http://www.paffa.org) or the National FFA Website at [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org). Both sites provide lots of quality information regarding Agricultural Education.