

The First Annual Texas Junior FFA Leadership Conference

Poster Abstract

Doug Ullrich
Sam Houston State University
Carl G. Igo
Southwest Texas State University

Introduction

During the 1999 – 2000 school year Texas had 5,596 Jr. FFA members in 462 chapters. To be a member of the Jr. FFA the student must be involved in the local FFA Chapter and pay dues of \$2.50 to the Texas FFA Association. These members are expected to participate in the local program of activities and manage a Supervised Agricultural Experience Program.

In order to capitalize on the energy and future of the organization the Texas FFA Association State Officers with support from the state Agricultural Education Staff developed the First Annual Jr. FFA Leadership Conference. This conference was created as a day camp complete with leadership development, educational programs and physical activities.

How It Works

State Jr. FFA dues and a pre-registration fee of \$10 per member were used to cover the expenses of the program. These expenses included the rental of a dining hall and campsite, one mid-day meal, snacks, T-shirts for each participant, decorations, and State Officer expenses.

The State Officers and State Agricultural Education Staff met during the FFA Convention in July to develop guidelines and the program for the conference. Dr. Steve Forsythe, State FFA Executive Secretary, developed a rough draft for the program created a method for publicizing the event. The officers then offered their suggestions and finalized the program and activities for the day.

When the program was finalized a summer camp in Kerrville was selected and reserved as the site for the First Annual Jr. FFA Leadership Conference. Officers then organized into teams to develop T-shirts, finalize the activities, manage the publicity and registration and to develop the final format of each session.

The officers met the afternoon prior to the conference to review the program and practice each of the sessions. Several advisors and parents were recruited to help monitor registration and each session during the day.

Results

The State FFA Officers and State Agricultural Education Staff felt that the program was successful in that it brought everyone together for a full day of education about Agricultural Education and FFA in Texas.

The Jr. FFA members attending the conference developed an understanding of FFA history. These students also developed an appreciation for the State FFA Officers leadership abilities and the agricultural education program. An excitement of becoming an FFA member in High School and participating in a full range of FFA activities was created with high expectations for their future.

Future Changes

Several changes will be made for next years' officer training and the leadership program. Concerns were found on the flexibility of the schedule, which inadvertently created too much time between program segments. The lack of a rigid, well timed schedule created some conflict with the younger students who lacked the maturity and time management skills to return at scheduled times.

Another concern was that the State Officers managing the program were not trained well enough to deal with the younger students. A training session with knowledgeable people to help them understand the younger students is planned. Another recommendation is that two or three people with experience with elementary level students be involved to monitor the students during the activities.

Thirdly, changes to the program need to be considered. It is suggested that the program focus largely on goal setting and less on fun activities. Too much effort was made to make the program fun and physically entertaining and not enough effort was spent dealing with educational or goal setting activities.