

What's My Job?

Grade Level: K-3

Approximate Length of Activity: One class period

Objective

Teacher

1. Assess the students' understanding of careers and agriculture and then introduce students to a variety of jobs.
2. Help the students understand that agriculture involves much more than traditional farming.

Students

1. Learn what the words "career" and "agriculture" mean.
2. Choose a career in agriculture that interests them.
3. Demonstrate comprehension of the discussion about ag careers by drawing a picture of a typical day in an agricultural career of their choice.

Michigan Content Standards: (Social Studies) K-G5.0.1; K-C5.0.1; 1-C5.0.1; 2-G5.0.1; 3-G4.0.1

Introduction

More than 22 million people have careers in agriculture. Only two million people are traditional farmers but many people are involved in the process from farm to market. Agriculture is the second largest industry in Michigan. One million Michigan residents are employed in production agriculture, food processing and related businesses. In Michigan, over 53,000 farms, averaging 191 acres, produce more than \$63 billion in commodities per year on 10.1 million acres of farmland. There are agriculture careers in agribusiness, communications, engineering, biotechnology research, government, education, computer science, processing, distribution, marketing and many other areas. Some people have careers connected to agriculture, but they do not realize it! For example, sales representatives for food distributors, genetic researchers and elementary teachers who teach topics such as plant and animal systems are all involved in agriculture because their jobs relate to the food and fiber system.

Here are some jobs that you may want to discuss with your primary students to begin their understanding of careers in agriculture.

Agriculture Journalist- Journalists write news stories, manuals, scripts and press releases for corporations. They may work in newspapers, writing environmental stories or business stories about agricultural-based corporations. Some journalists are hired by research institutions and manufacturers.

Agriculture Teacher- Agriculture teachers are responsible for educating students, as well as conveying to them the pride and heritage of the agricultural industry. They also oversee projects and activities for agricultural youth groups, such as the National FFA Organization. They may teach at junior high, high school or college levels, or become education specialists.

Agronomist- Agronomists deal with field crops and soil management. They develop new varieties of crops, analyze soil structure, investigate soil chemistry and study the physics of water movement in soil. Agronomists work for the USDA, banks and seed companies. Some are forecasters, environmentalists or teachers.

Livestock Farmer- Livestock farmers care for their animals by feeding them and keeping them healthy. Livestock farmers breed animals to genetically improve the quality of their animals. They keep accurate records of their animals. Livestock farmers may buy animals and bring them to their farm or raise their own. They sell their animals for meat and other products.

Crop Farmer- Crop farmers grow things such as corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and vegetables. They plant their crops, care for them and harvest them. They use machinery to perform many of their tasks and computers are also helpful. They may sell their crop at a market, take it to a grain elevator or keep it to feed their livestock.

Ag Engineer- Ag engineers develop and improve farm equipment. Ag engineering has caused many advances in technology for agriculture. These advances allow farmers to work faster, have better crops and ultimately feed and clothe more people.

Veterinarian- Veterinarians are people who watch animals for signs of sickness and care for them when they are sick. Livestock farmers often ask veterinarians to look at animals on their farm. Farmers and veterinarians work together to keep livestock healthy.

Materials Needed

- Books about careers in agriculture such as “I Can be a Farmer” by Cathy Henderson or “Careers in Agriculture” by Christopher Benson
- Paper, blank and writing
- Markers, crayons and or colored pencils

Activity Outline

1. Discuss the word “career.” Talk with the students about their parent’s careers.
2. Discuss the word “agriculture.” What is agriculture and what kinds of careers are in agriculture? Talk about basic ag careers listed above. Since younger students may not be familiar with agriculture or what the word career means, explain the careers fully. Older students may be able to understand careers such as agribusiness managers, food scientists, ag journalists, youth program directors, soil scientists, etc.
3. Ask the students to choose the agriculture career that interests them the most. Talk with them about the types of things they would do each day as a crop farmer, livestock farmer, veterinarian, ag engineer, journalist or ag teacher. The school librarian may be able to help the class research careers or read books about various careers.
4. Ask the students to draw a picture of a typical day in their agriculture career. (For example: a student who chooses to be an ag engineer may draw a picture of someone studying building plans for combines.)
5. Older students can write a story or journal entry about one day in their agriculture career. They should write about the jobs they handled and the people they worked with that day.
6. Students can share their drawings and stories with the class. What career was the most popular? Talk about the training involved for different careers in agriculture.

Discussion Questions

1. What do the words “career” and “agriculture” mean?
2. What are some careers in Michigan agriculture?
3. Do you have to come from a farm to have a career in agriculture?
4. What types of duties do careers in agriculture involve?
5. What would you want your job to be?

Related Activities

1. Ask students to make a collage about careers in agriculture.
2. Ask students to write a newspaper want ad for an agricultural career. What are the skills and experiences needed?
3. Ask students to choose a career in agriculture and then write a skit. The scene of the skit could be a class reunion where everyone talks about their jobs and what they’re doing in life.
4. Ask students to write a radio jingle or TV commercial encouraging young people to pursue careers in agriculture.
5. The lesson “Many Roles of a Farmer” located in the social studies section of this curriculum guide.

Resources

1. “The Wonderful World of Agricultural Careers” by the Michigan Farm Bureau.
2. LIVING SCIENCE-A poster series about careers in agriculture, food and natural resources. Each poster includes a description of the career and suggested school work. Food and Agriculture Careers for Tomorrow, 1140 Agricultural Administration Building, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1140.
3. “Your Big Break: Exciting Careers in a Growing Job Market!”-A brochure from Cenex/Land O’ Lakes about careers in agriculture. P.O Box 64089, St. Paul, MN 55164-0089.
4. “Think About It” –A brochure from the National FFA Foundation, Inc. about careers in agriculture. National FFA Center, 6060 FFA Drive Indianapolis, IN 46268, <http://www.ffa.org>.
5. “Grow a Great Life”-A brochure from the Society of American Florists about careers in horticulture. 1601 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. (800) 336-4743.
6. “Jobs to Start in, Careers to Grow in”- A brochure from the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences. <http://w3.aces.uiuc.edu/AIM/Discovery/Careers/career.html>.

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