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South Hamilton CSD Advisory Council Handbook

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South Hamilton CSD Advisory Council Handbook

By

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A creative component submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
Major: Agricultural Education

Program of Study Committee:

Dr. Michael Retallick, Major Professor
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Chapter 1

Introduction

South Hamilton Community Schools is made up in part of four towns in Central Iowa. Those communities are Jewell, Stanhope, Randall and Ellsworth. The South Hamilton Middle/High School is a rural school district that has a student body of approximately 325 students. A foundation of the school's educational programs at the very start of its consolidation in 1968 has been Agricultural Education.

The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program is a one-teacher program that serves over 170 students annually in classroom instruction. It offers a high level of educational instruction in the general areas of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources and offers classes such as Animal Science, Plant Science, Agricultural Mechanics, Welding and Agricultural Business.

There has been a great investment by the school and community to offer great agricultural opportunities and resources to students. The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program is on the forefront of adopting new forms of agricultural education curriculum as well as investing in new technologies that will related to future careers of its students. All junior high students participate in an agriculture exploratory class that exposes them to many different opportunities. Students then progress in the high school classes where they have opportunities to work with state-of-the-art tools, equipment and machinery as well as participate in hands on curriculum such as Curriculum for Agriculture Education (CASE) and Project Lead the Way (PLTW). The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program also has some of the best facilities in the state of Iowa. The facilities consist of a functional lab classroom, a state-of-the-art agricultural

mechanics and welding shop, a fully integrated technology lab with a laser engraver and CNC machine and a fully operational greenhouse.

Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) are a staple of being a student in the South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program. It is an expectation that all students enrolled in agriculture classes maintain records on an SAE Project. In 2016 The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program invest in a program call The Ag Experience Tracker (AET) to give students the tools they need to maintain more successful SAE Project throughout their time at a student in The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program. This has had an incredible impact as now students have easier access to their records; it is more understandable for students and it is traceable for the educator and school officials.

A major pillar of the South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program is the South Hamilton FFA Chapter. This FFA Chapter is a 75 member Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) that was founded in 1948. Originally founded as the Stanhope FFA Chapter, this organization serves as a system to take skills that students learn in the agriculture classroom and apply it in different learning opportunities. Students learn about agriculture, communication and leadership and it helps them develop critical skills that will benefit them in future careers. Students can participate in Leadership Development Events (LDE) and Career Development Events (CDE) to help build different skills. They have opportunity to serve in leadership positions as well as attend workshops and conventions that develop leaders of our future (National FFA Organization, 2020). Student at the local level get the opportunity to work and serve their community in a number of different outlets.

The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program continues to grow and evolve. New challenges and obstacles approach us. With an increase in class sizes, students involved in the FFA Chapter, and an drastic increase in students going through our program that are choosing college majors and careers in agriculture, it is important to assess whether enough is being done to meet the needs to students to adequately prepare them for their futures in agriculture.. In 2018, there had been an increase in area agricultural businesses seeking student to fill part-time work during the school year, internships throughout the year and summer and immediate full-time positions after graduation. This led to many conversations about what was being taught in the South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program and an informal evaluation of the program began.

At the time of this informal evaluation, the only other source of evaluation of the South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program was a joint advisory council agreement with Iowa Central Community College (ICCC). Functionally this advisory council with ICCC was adequate in the fact that it checked the boxes necessary for program approval with the Iowa Department of Education. However, in discussion with South Hamilton Community School District Stakeholders, such as administrators, industry supporters, parents, students and the educator in the program, it was decided that The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program desired more local assessment and support that would more adequately benefit the program and all of the people served by it (Masser, Falk & Foster, 2014). In the spring of 2019 stakeholders began drawing up an agreement for starting an Agriculture Department Advisory Council at South Hamilton Community Schools.

At the March 2019 meeting, members of the South Hamilton Community School District Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the chartering of the South Hamilton Agricultural Education Advisory Council. Upon approval communication between educator and potential advisory council members began and after lengthy discussions, it was decided that the advisory council would need some guidance and resources to get started. This was the start of what would be the South Hamilton Community Schools Agricultural Education Advisory Council Member Handbook.

In discussions of what this group would look like, it was very obvious that we needed some sort of document that would be a guiding force as this council moves forward. The group came up with objectives of what was to be accomplished with this document, which would be the template of what this advisory council handbook would be. The following objectives are defined as the purpose of the handbook:

- ❖ Define the background, purpose, and function of the advisory council
- ❖ Establish expectations of members of the advisory council and council chair
- ❖ Establish expectations and role of the educator in the program and council
- ❖ Provide goals and outlooks of the advisory council
- ❖ Identify logistics of council (Terms of service, meeting requirements, etc.)
- ❖ Provide additional support materials to better inform council members

The development of this advisory council and its need for an operation and policy handbook lead to this creative component and the advisory council's objectives stated above served as the objectives of this creative component document.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

An important factor for a successful agricultural education program is a link between what is happening with the program in the classroom, SAE and FFA coupled with how that translates to the real world (Masser, Falk & Foster, 2014). A program that is highly connected with its community's industry professionals achieves higher levels of success and provides more opportunities in education and experiences (Masser, Falk & Foster, 2014).

With the release of new information for Perkins V Legislation, there will undoubtedly be a larger emphasis put on work base learning. In an early draft it states that one of Perkins V's biggest objectives is to "Identify and meet employer needs by focusing on sector strategies, career pathways and better aligning state and federal programs and initiatives, including public-private partnerships, to support high-skill, high-demand jobs" (Iowa's Four Year State Plan for The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, 2020). This is going to be a great opportunity to get future employers into the classroom and using their resources, as well as getting future employees out there doing some work-based learning. In our handbook it is listed that some of the duties of the council are to provide the expertise in their given area of study, which is why one of the focuses of the handbook as to cover the topic of diversity of council members experiences to we have a wide range of opportunities for learning.

A key component to starting this advisory council was a state mandate that all CTE Programs have an advisory council that meets annually and evaluates the program.

“The board of directors of a school district that maintains CTE programs receiving federal or state funds, as a condition of approval by the board, appoint a local advisory council for each CTE program offered by the school district or community college” (Advisory Council Manual, 2017). Our school district was accomplishing this by working with Iowa Central Community College to host annual advisory meetings. These meetings were attended by ICCC and other schools that are in the Regional Partnership Planning (RPP) area. Our school decided that we wanted to abide more closely to the way the legislation is written and appoint a group that was more local and less regional. Our program needed more local control and evaluation because those are the employers that are going to be hiring the students that go through the South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program.

A strong advisory council leads to a higher rate of success of an agriculture education program and as we developed our advisory council manual we worked through many different ways of structuring and organizing our council. We set our sights on a more teacher focused council because we felt like it would help with organization and would help get more accomplished (Masser, Falk & Foster, 2014). This was supported by a lot of different research including articles from the Journal of Agricultural Education stating “The teacher is empowered as the leader of the advisory council and works in close cooperation with the advisory council members, as opposed other models where the teacher is waiting for others to take action” (Masser, Falk & Foster, 2014).

When we looked at all the different inputs into the research to create this group and handbook, we came to the agreement that there would be a lot of different factors to consider helping develop our Agricultural Education Program. We considered all the

different stakeholders and individuals that would play a role in the support of our program. This model below was something that resonated with us in deciding that this project was going to have to be a group effort and that the work of this council will be so vital. It is worth noting that the authors also placed importance on the fact that “There is not a true starting point in the process, but rather each component adds input at the same time that is relevant to each situation” (Masser, Falk & Foster, 2014).

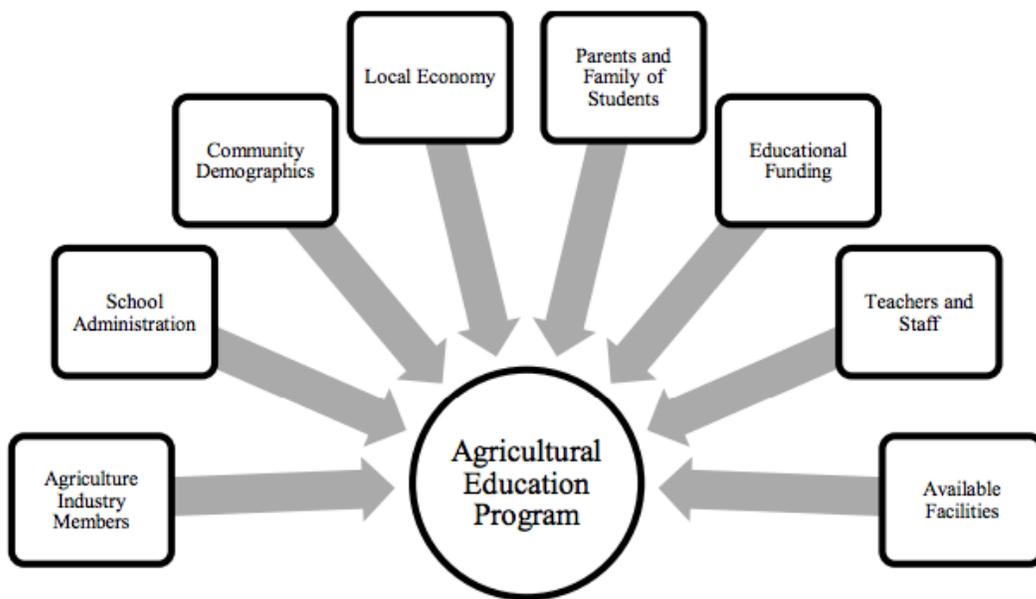


Figure 1: Interactive Model of Program Planning as it Relates to Secondary Agricultural Education Program (Masser, Falk & Foster, 2014).

Chapter 3

Methods and Procedures

In the Summer of 2018, after sitting in on a workshop lead by two Iowa State University Professors, Dr. Mike Retallick and Dr. Scott Smalley, about the importance and possibilities there are when it comes having a successful advisory council, I knew that it was most certainly a need for our program at South Hamilton. Discussion continued as I began to meet with community members and administrators at South Hamilton to talk about our vision for the program as it was continuing to grow and evolve. I began to research and meet with other teachers about their advisory councils. I consulted with some teachers in my area, I searched through NAAE Communities of Practice, and even sought out more information and feedback from Ag Ed related social media platforms. This gave me the basis of how I was going to go about starting this group.

I first found a future member of what would be my Advisory Council and we had several sit-down meetings about what we wanted this council to look like. The two of us met with neighboring school districts Ag Teacher and Advisory Council Chairman to start gathering information. Together we outlined some things we wanted structurally for our advisory council as well as with the handbook, what information were we going to want to have in the hands of our council members.

After coming up with an action plan, I started accumulating resources, picking and choosing what I wanted to use and what was relevant for our program. Two main sources that I use most were information from the Iowa Department of Education Advisory Council Manual and a Program Advisory Committee Handbook document for

starting Advisory Councils from Minnesota State. Both had documents that I could pull right from their books and probably use, but like most things they did not perfectly fit our program needs so there was plenty of rewording and retrofitting to make it fit what we are doing at South Hamilton. Both were great resources that had a lot of information that is going to be imperative for our success as a new advisory council.

Once I identified material that would be beneficial for our advisory council I began going through the resources and creating documents to put in the handbook that would best fit what we are trying to accomplish as an advisory council. The documents from Minnesota State had a lot of valuable information, but all documents used were refined to reflect our advisory council. Information was added, deleted, and reworded to suit our needs best.

This handbook can be broken down into segments and each portion serves as a different dynamic not only to the handbook, but to the advisory council as well. I started the handbook with a general “Background and Purpose” page. It serves as an introduction to why this advisory council exists and what the need for a handbook is. This transitions into a page that lists advisory council members and their contact information, for council members to reference at any time.

The next section of the handbook relates mostly to expectations and duties of the council members. A lot of good information came from the Minnesota State Manual for Advisory Councils as well as the Iowa Department of Education Advisory Council Manual. I took a lot of information from those resources but also put a lot of information that we developed as a committee. This is a very important segment of this manual as it clearly lays out the expectations of council members, the council chair, and the educator

in charge of the program. I consulted a lot with other agriculture teachers as well as my school administration. This piece of the handbook is a critical part of the future success of the council (Mills, 2010).

Moving through the handbook roles of advisory council members is included. This gives a more defined set of information about what members of the advisory council will be doing. It sets in place tasks that council members will be attending to such as assessment, assistance, and promotion. In this section is information about diversity goals. This list seeks to find a diverse group of individuals that will bring a lot of different experiences to the council. It is through this portion of the document that will continue to provide council members that help hold the program accountable, bring new ideas to the table and help our program continue to grow and evolve.

The last real document that is structurally important to the advisory council and the handbook is the document related to Council Member Terms of Service. This document outlines information relating to the number of members in the council, as well as how long a term last and how many terms a member is eligible to serve. To me this was the toughest document to create, as there was not a lot of clear literature on this topic. It was up to us to decide what would fit best for our council and what would serve our program best. This may be a section that changes over the years, as we begin this experiment of having a local advisory council. It will be interesting to see how the dynamics of people and the success of our council will shape this section.

The last section of this advisory council handbook is essentially support materials that will benefit the advisory council and its members. In this part of the handbook it lays out the Program of Study (POS) Guidance as well as Carl D. Perkins Career and

Technical Education Act information from the Iowa Department of Education (Advisory Council Manual, 2017). Also, in this section is the course catalog for the South Hamilton Agricultural Education Department. It is a document that lists available courses offered at South Hamilton in this department as well as other information relating to the agriculture classroom. The advisory council will evaluate the course catalog once a year. The purpose of this is to make sure that the catalog is fitting the needs of students, as well as potential future employers in the community. The last piece of this section is the Program of Activities (POA) of the South Hamilton FFA. This CTSO is a critical part of agricultural education and is the flagship of the agriculture program (National FFA Organization, 2020). This POA is a roadmap that lays out all the activities that the FFA Chapter participates in and the members that chair and serve on the committees.

Upon completion of this handbook it was shared with the first couple members of the advisory council. The members gave me feedback and adjustments were made. I also sent a copy of this document with two other agriculture teachers in the state of Iowa for review to make sure I am not missing any basic elements. After the revised draft was completed it was shared with South Hamilton Administrators Mr. Scott Dryer, Principal and Dr. Ken Howard, Superintendent. They shared their approval and excitement for the future of this group and our program and gave permission for the group to move forward.

Chapter 4

South Hamilton Community Schools Agricultural Education

Advisory Council Member Handbook

The South Hamilton Community Schools Agricultural Education Advisory Council Member Handbook is a document that will serve as a road map for our South Hamilton Ag Advisory Council. The contents of this manual are documents outlining council function and duties, council expectations, other supporting documents to help lead this council as they work to improve Agricultural Education at South Hamilton High School.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Reflection

When it came to the point where I felt that the handbook had been reviewed by enough people and had started to make its way into the hands of those that will use it, I felt like it really did accomplish the objectives that we set out to achieve at the beginning of this project. It was really a much bigger undertaking than I thought it would be, but with the help of a lot of different people, it turned out to be a great piece that will serve as a great guide as our agriculture program continues to grow and evolve as well as when we get through the beginning stages of this advisory council process.

Starting this process basically back in 2018 while in a workshop about advisory councils, I have learned an incredible amount about not only just advisory councils, but agricultural education as well. This process has really shaped the way I look at our program. For the first 5 years of my career as an agricultural education teacher, I really segmented out all the components of the agriculture education models. I saw things like the classroom, SAE and FFA as stand-alone, separate entities. In my undergrad I obviously came to the understanding that these three things all work together, but I think it took starting this advisory council and creating this handbook to make me understand why they all work together.

Through this project I have a much bigger appreciation for the role agricultural education plays in preparing students for careers. I think it took me developing a closer relationship with our community businesses to truly make me evaluate what our program was doing and the outcome we were getting from students working their way through The South Hamilton Agricultural Education Program. I taught using the standards I

deemed fit for our program, but after conversations with other stakeholders, it opened up that there were more and even some different routes we needed to take. While this seems like it would be a hurdle to get over, it has led to a lot of different opportunities. I now have a network of people that want to support our program educationally, financially and offer students new opportunities for work-based learning. This is going to be a huge element of our program moving forward, especially with new factors coming on in the new Perkins V legislation.

The handbook has already served as a great starting manual and I feel that its greatest strength is that it is tailor made to the group that is going to implement its principles. It was made thoughtfully with our particular audience in mind and I think that it truly fits the needs of our program and its stakeholders. It is very straight forward and basic. It isn't overcomplicated with too much jargon and isn't overly wordy. The handbook is simple and can easily be changed to fit the needs of the group using it. It will be great to see over this first cycle of members on this council how this document evolves and changes to fit our needs.

The result of our handbook is exactly the way we want it. The process of getting there was not maybe the most efficient method. If I had to do this project all over, I would have started writing this document and getting approval of it prior to chartering our council, so that it would have been prepare before the council met for the first time. Over a period of about 7 months, more and more was added to the document in small amounts and it was a really drawn out process. I appreciate our method because we got a lot of feedback from a lot of different sources, but it strung out this process and we did not get too much accomplished from a program standpoint in our first year. Now this this

document is in place, we will be able to focus all of our attention of what needs to be done for our program, and we will not have to spend as much time with group norms and logistical operations of our council.

What excites me is that those that have gotten the opportunity to be a part of the initial process are getting excited about what we are doing. It has been a great experience so far having these initial conversations and seeing everyone's willingness to help, and passion for what our program represents. A lot of the people that are major influences in this council are former students who went through the program, just like I did. It has really had a big impact on me how much everyone cares about the success of this program and its students.

Members for the advisory council have already been recruited and we are prepared to have our first true meeting for our advisory councils. Up to this point meetings have been in small groups and have been planning for our official start. Our goal was to have our first meeting this spring, within one year of getting school board approval. We were ready to do that, but world events have taken that option out of our control. We look forward to meeting this summer or fall for the first time. This handbook will probably be distributed to our council members prior to our first meeting so they have time to read through it and fully understand expectations and responsibilities prior to beginning. This will also give them time to evaluate the document and help with any additions or corrections that need to be made. Our first meeting we will be spending most of our time going through the handbook and talking about logistics of how things are going to operate for the years to come.

Master's Program Reflection

After completing my creative component, it has given me time to reflect on my experience in this master's program, and what I walked away with this experience. I think back to how my educational career has evolved over the last 12 years, and the role that each experience has played.

I think back to the way that I looked at education as a junior or senior in college at Iowa State University, and just how naïve I was. I thought I had a pretty good grasp on what this career would be and all that duties that it entails. That didn't even scratch the surface. I think about my first 4 years of teaching, and just trying to survive and revive an Agriculture Education Program that was on the verge of closing and all of the struggles that entailed. I remember trying to apply what I learned in college, figuring out what my teaching philosophy was, and really immersing myself in career. Finally, I look at my last 4 years of teaching. I got to return to my home school and continue a legacy of really great agricultural education, start my graduate degree and really start perfecting my craft.

I will admit, prior to applying to graduate school and taking coursework, I didn't have an overly high opinion of it. I just didn't see the value, and it took going through it to really help me understand what it does for educators. Course work played a crucial role in this creative component. Courses like AgEds 520 – Instructional Methods, gave me a lot of insight on working with adults in an educational setting and gave me good tools to be successful. AgEds 524 – Program Planning, helped me a lot with the evaluation of my program and how to effectively collect and evaluate data that would help our program.

Several classes were excellent tools for helping me develop this creative component, but the overall experience has been really beneficial to me as a teacher and a

leader of an agricultural education program. I think this experience has made me much more reflective and I really do a better job of analyzing what the program is about and what my purpose is. At the end of this project I have revisited some papers I have written and some assignments I have turned in. I have looked at my teaching philosophy and definition of agricultural education from AgEds 550 – Foundations of Agricultural Education, and I think back not so much to the words I wrote, but the process of making think and evaluate my role as an educator in this program. I think that has been the most rewarding part of this experience.

During this time in graduate school I also chose to mentor a student teacher from Iowa State University, and that was truly an experience that I enjoyed. I had the opportunity to work with Mr. Matthew Jones, who is now an Ag Teacher at Mount Pleasant. He was really a blessing to have in my room because it reinvigorated me in my profession and reminded me what being a true professional was all about. He also made me reflect and evaluate myself, my program and the experiences I offer our students. I saw it as an opportunity to give back to the profession that really helped mold me into who I am today. A lot of different people over the last 10 years, cooperating teachers, university advisors and professors, Iowa Ag Teachers and students have had an incredible impact on me, and my career and I am grateful.

Looking back on the experience it came at a very interesting time. I had moved back home and had one year under my belt at South Hamilton. I was coaching 2 sports and working hard to develop relationships with students and chisel out my own place in the incredible history of this program. My role in the family farming operation had started to grow exponentially due to being so close in proximity now. It was really an

incredible endeavor to try to manage my time to complete assignments on time and the biggest task for me was trying to complete this creative component. I will admit there were times that I didn't manage my time very well and it took a toll on me. However, looking back, it was a very rewarding experience and I think it will serve me well as I continue to grow in this profession.

Moving forward I look forward to continuing to apply the principles that I have learned through my graduate school experience. I am excited to work with students and develop this program into its fullest potential. I look forward to continuing to give back to this profession and finding ways to help other educators as they start their careers and develop into great professionals as well.

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