Agriculture education

with Diana E. Collingwood

Talking *points*

Knowledge

1. What is food security?
2. How are drones being used to benefit agriculture?

Comprehension

3. Why do the US Virgin Islands suffer from issues around food security?
4. How can agriculture education be used as a tool to teach children about core subjects?

Application

5. Diana promotes careers in agriculture but also notes that farmers often suffer from high levels of stress and financial insecurity. How do you think that education can help prevent these negative effects occurring in the next generation of agricultural professionals?
6. Diana's article describes one way in which drones can benefit agriculture. Can you think of other ways in which new technology is, or has the potential to, bring benefits to agriculture?

Analysis

7. What might be some specific instances in which farmers can benefit from networks that put them in contact with other farmers?
8. Intensive farming is typically damaging to the natural environment. How do you think Diana promotes both a business approach to agriculture as well as a respect and love for the natural world?

Evaluation

9. What do you think are some potential historic, cultural or economic reasons why agricultural careers are not always seen as desirable career paths? How do you think these challenges can be overcome in the classroom?
10. Climate change is expected to bring big challenges for food security. How do you think that small territories such as the US Virgin Islands can best prepare for these changes? Consider changes to weather patterns and effects on supply chains in your answer.

Activity

Diana emphasises the importance of introducing agriculture to young children, to foster a lifelong interest in the topic. She notes how agriculture can be used as a vehicle to teach core subjects.

Design a lesson plan for six to nine-year-olds that uses an agricultural topic to teach a core subject. Some examples might be:

- A biology lesson that shows how sunlight, water and nutrients make crops grow
- A mathematics lesson that uses a farm's income and expenses to teach addition and subtraction
- A history lesson that shows how farming has changed through the ages
- Think of your own! A geography lesson that... An English lesson that... An art lesson that... A physics lesson that...

Your lesson plan should include:

- Clear identification of the core subject material
- A framework of activities to follow, such as:
  - A short engaging introductory presentation from the teacher
  - A hands-on activity (e.g., a science experiment or art class)
  - Opportunities for children to suggest ideas or contribute answers
- Desired outcomes and ways to test whether the children have learnt the core material.

Swap your lesson plan with a classmate, and take the perspective of a teacher preparing to teach the lesson from the plan you have been given. Does it provide all the information you need? Does it focus on the core material whilst also introducing interesting concepts from agriculture? Is it pitched at the right level for six to nine-year-olds? What suggestions might you make for its improvement?

Exchange feedback and think about how you might improve your lesson plan further.

More *resources*

- The US Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture website provides information about their programmes, latest news and career opportunities: doa.vi.gov
- This video from Agronomag takes you through the 20 highest paying jobs in agriculture: www.youtube.com/watch?v=avYtbyGKpWo
- This article from the World Bank suggests a fascinating range of short-term and medium-term answers to food insecurity in the Caribbean: www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/06/28/food-insecurity-caribbean