

The National FFA organization is a youth leadership organization that strives to make a positive difference in the lives of young people by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agriculture education.

FFA functions within the three-circle model of agricultural education as a student leadership organization that complements a student's classroom/laboratory instruction and supervised agricultural experience program.[5] FFA members can compete in Career Development Events (CDE) that cover job skills in everything from communications to mechanics. Some events allow students to compete as individuals, while others allow them to compete in teams.[6]

Students are supervised by education teachers in cooperation with parents, employers and other adults who assist individuals in the development and achievement of educational and career goals.

FFA is represented at several different levels across the nation; FFA administration may change from state to state. The basic levels are the national level, serving all of the United States of America, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; the state level, serving an individual state association; and the chapter level, serving a school or set of schools in an area. By definition, there can be three types of chapters at the secondary level, they are middle for middle school, junior for ninth grade and senior which can be either tenth through twelfth or ninth through twelfth depending on the school. Other levels include districts, subdistricts, sections, regions, areas, federations, etc.

Originally created to serve high school students, the FFA has recently moved into middle schools where membership may begin as early as age 12, allowing members to become active earlier and stay active for longer. Each chapter is chartered as part of the state association and national organization. Collegiate chapters exist as well.

Most states hold FFA conventions at least once annually, where members gather to compete, be recognized for awards, attend leadership workshops, debate organizational issues in a delegate process, and more. Nationally, the National FFA Convention & Expo is held once a year in the fall, and was originally held in Kansas City, Missouri, from 1928-1998. The convention moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1999 before moving again in 2006 to Indianapolis, Indiana. The 86th National FFA

Convention & Expo will take place once again in **Louisville, Kentucky** in October 2013.[7]

As the FFA is a member-led organization intended to serve youth around the Nation, it elects officers from its own diverse membership to certain levels of the FFA. At the Chapter level, and many other levels, officers elected are usually:

- President — The President is stationed by the rising sun, a symbol of a new era in agriculture.
- Vice President — Stationed by the plow, the symbol of labor and tillage of the soil.
- Secretary — Stationed by the ear of corn, the symbol of the national span of FFA because corn is grown in all fifty states.
- Treasurer — Stationed by emblem of Washington, to keep an accurate account of receipts and disbursements just as Washington kept his farm account.
- Reporter — Stationed by the flag, to inform the people that the FFA is a national organization.
- Sentinel — Stationed by the door, to make sure the door is open to all and keep the room comfortable as well as assisting in mainting order.
- Advisor — Stationed by the owl, the time honoured emblem of knowledge and wisdom
- Parliamentarian —Stationed by a copy of **Robert's Rules of Order** or the eagle.
- Historian — Stationed at the scrolls or chapter scrapbook.
- The Student Advisor — Stationed by the owl or the key.
- Chaplain — Stationed by the Bible or Book.
- Executive Committee/ Executive Board.

The most recognizable symbol of the organization is the blue **corduroy** FFA jacket that is worn by current FFA members. The back of the jacket features a large FFA emblem just underneath the name of each FFA member's state. The name of the local FFA chapter, district, region or area is embroidered below the emblem. The front of the FFA jacket features a smaller FFA emblem on the left chest and

the FFA member's name, office and year on the right chest. FFA members are required to wear the FFA jacket as part of official dress while participating in all official organization activities.[8]

Originally created to be worn by the Fredericktown Band of the Fredericktown FFA Chapter by Dr. Gus Lintner,[9] the FFA Jacket was adopted in 1933.

The color of the jacket's corduroy has ranged from shades of blue to shades of purple through the years. In 2004, the National FFA Organization worked with a supplier in North Carolina to set a new standard for the blue corduroy by using samples from archived FFA jackets. The jacket's color standardization was accompanied by a restoration of the embroidered FFA emblems and fit corrections led by Clemson University's Apparel Research Center. The improved FFA jacket, produced in both Van Wert, Ohio and South Vietnam, was first made available in August 2005. Currently, all lettering, embroidery and finishing of FFA jackets is completed by Universal Lettering Company in Van Wert, Ohio.[10]

FFA members are required to wear official FFA dress while participating in official organization activities. For females, official dress consists of a black skirt (black slacks may be appropriate for traveling and outdoor activities), a white collared blouse, an official FFA blue scarf, black dress shoes with a closed heel and toe, black nylon hosiery, and an official FFA jacket zipped to the top. Male official dress includes black dress pants, a white dress shirt, an official FFA tie, black dress shoes with a closed heel and toe, black socks and an official FFA jacket zipped to the top.[8]

FFA members earn metal pins that signify achievement within the organization. These pins can be placed on the front of the FFA jacket,[8] though official guidelines say no more than three pins may be worn at one time. The pins are placed beneath the FFA member's name on the right chest and can recognize the highest office, highest award, and highest organizational degree. Two exceptions exist within pin placement guidelines. When an FFA member earns a State FFA Degree or American FFA Degree, the award keys should be worn above the name on right chest or attached to the FFA jacket with a standard key chain.[8]

As an organization, the FFA has many traditions and trademarks identifying it as

an agricultural education organization:[11]

The FFA Motto: Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve.

The FFA Mission: 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.[11]

The Official FFA Colors: National Blue and Corn Gold (worn on the Official FFA jackets).[12]

The FFA creed was written by Erwin Milton "E.M." Tiffany of Wisconsin[13] and adopted at the 3rd National FFA Convention.[13] It was revised at the 38th and 63rd National FFA Conventions by the assembled delegate body. It is recited by new members to the organization to reflect their growing belief in agriculture and agricultural education. The FFA Creed also must be memorized and recited to earn the Greenhand Degree.

I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds - achievements won by the present and past generations of agriculturists; in the promise of better days through better ways, even as the better things we now enjoy have come to us from the struggles of former years.

I believe that to live and work on a good farm or to be engaged in other agricultural pursuits, is pleasant as well as challenging; for I know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life and hold an inborn fondness for those associations which, even in hours of discouragement I cannot deny.

I believe in leadership from ourselves and respect from others. I believe in my own ability to work efficiently and think clearly, with such knowledge and skill as I can secure, and in the ability of progressive agriculturalists to serve our own and the public interest in producing and marketing the product of our toil.

I believe in less dependence on begging and more power in bargaining; in the life abundant and enough honest wealth to help make it so-for others as well as myself; in less need for charity and more of it when needed; in being happy myself and playing square with those whose happiness depends upon me.

I believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life and that I can exert an influence in my home and community which will stand solid for my part in that inspiring task.

FFA Career Development Event, or CDE's, are contests that members compete in to test their skills learned through agricultural education instruction. They vary at the different levels of the FFA, and some are competed in only at certain levels and certain states, districts, areas or federations.[14]

At the National level, there are 23 CDE's:[1]

- Ag Communications
- Ag Issues Forum
- Ag Mechanics
- Ag Sales
- Agronomy (Insects, seeds, etc.)
- Creed Speaking
- Dairy Cattle Evaluation

- Dairy Cattle Handlers Activity
- Dairy Foods
- Environmental & Natural Resources
- Extemporaneous Public Speaking
- Floriculture

- Food Science & Technology
- Forestry
- Horse Evaluation
- Job Interview
- Livestock Evaluation
- Marketing Plan
- Meats Evaluation & Technology

- Parliamentary Procedure

- Poultry Evaluation
- Prepared Public Speaking
- Veterinarian Science
- Quiz Bowl

Examples of CDEs that can be available at the state level are:

- Small Animal Care
- Arboriculture
- Aquaculture
- Safe Equipment Operation
- Land Judging
- Rangeland Judging
- Agricultural Electricity
- Opening/Closing Ceremonies
- Wildlife
- Website Development
- Entomology
- Tractor Operations
- Greenhand CDE
- F.A.R.M education
- Nursery/landscape
- Envirothon
- Demonstration

To be an active member in the National FFA Organization, a member must have an **Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE)** project.[15] The projects involve hands-on application of concepts and principles learned in the agricultural education classroom, with guidelines for the SAE projects governed by the state FFA delegation. SAE programs are grouped into four different areas:

- Exploratory - learning about the 'big picture' of agriculture and related careers
- Research/Experimentation and Analysis - conducting research or analysis of information to discover new knowledge
- Ownership/Entrepreneurship - planning and operation of an agriculture-related business
- Placement - working either for pay or experience in an agricultural setting