

**Si Se Puede! An Application of Spanish Resources for ELL Students within Agricultural Education Programs**

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According to the 2020 Census, the U.S. Latino population is nearing 63 million, representing 19% of the nation's population (U.S. Census, 2020). As the population of Spanish-speaking individuals continues to rise in the United States there is a critical need for teachers who are able to speak and teach in Spanish. Spanish-speaking individuals are an entire demographic of workers in agriculture who have been overlooked as being no more than “migrant laborers”. These individuals bring with them a plethora of knowledge, experience, and drive for a better life in the United States but face a massive language barrier. This barrier for many begins as soon as they exit the door of their homes and continues into the English-speaking workforce, community, shopping, medical world, and even schools for their children. Using annualized growth rates, agricultural education enrollment (4.06%) grew more rapidly than SAE participation (1.65%) and FFA membership (2.39%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). With the increase of agricultural education programs across the nation, the implementation of Spanish resources within these programs is pivotal to ensuring students’ success and providing English Language Learner (ELL) students with a sense of belonging in the classroom as well as agricultural youth programs such as FFA.

FFA is a co-curricular student organization focusing on the development of premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education (Kentucky FFA, 2021). In recent years, the National FFA has dedicated a task force to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion. The National FFA Organization is prioritizing increased representation from underrepresented and marginalized populations in FFA membership and FFA leadership at all levels and is identifying challenges, barriers, and issues that underrepresented and marginalized populations face. Educators need to change how they view this organization, going from “us. vs. them” to becoming a “we”. This shift in mindset only comes when every classroom, event, and function is a place where every student feels like they belong (National FFA, 2023). Providing Spanish resources, such as curriculum, contests, and workshops can bridge the gap between surviving and thriving in agricultural education for Spanish-speaking students and can pave the way to providing students with the sense of belonging they deserve.

### **How it Works/Methodology**

The University of Kentucky’s Agricultural Education Program hosted a Regional Competition for Career and Leadership Development Events (CDEs). As Spanish-speaking students are not proficient enough to compete, the researcher decided to work with Agricultural Educators in the region to provide a workshop on opportunities in FFA for Spanish-speaking students. These students had recently immigrated with their families from Cuba, Mexico, and Guatemala and had been enrolled in agricultural education classes. Kentucky is reaching critical mass with Spanish-speaking students and having more options and resources is important. After a quick survey of what teachers may need and want for their students, the researcher developed the workshop. The workshop was taught and facilitated completely in Spanish, including the traditions and history of FFA, CDEs, and SAEs. Participants viewed the FFA creed in Spanish, completed a scavenger hunt using the FFA Manual in Spanish, participated in dairy products identification and tools identification and were given Spanish SAE Idea Cards. While the workshop took place, educators were welcome to witness the workshop and ask the researcher

questions regarding the workshop. Teachers left with an understanding of Spanish resources for their students including an FFA Manual in Spanish, Opening Ceremonies in Spanish, and classroom resources for the future.

### **Results to Date/Implications**

The inaugural workshop hosted six attendees representing three counties. Teachers of the participants were able to witness their students participate in a curriculum they would be able to implement into the agricultural education programs. Holistically, facilitating workshops such as these raises awareness for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and showcases the importance of Spanish resources to accommodate and allow students to participate in events, competitions, and leadership opportunities. Resources that raise awareness to the growing Hispanic population and give accommodations to serve the population get educators one step closer to providing students with a sense of belonging and inclusion within agricultural education. The workshop was well-received by the participants and the educators who witnessed the workshop as the researchers received thank-you's from the educators who brought their ELL students to participate in the workshop.

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

Moving forward, the researcher wants to include more students to maximize the potential of Spanish resources within the classroom. Additionally, we would want to offer this workshop to other regions to provide resources to students and teachers who want to implement the curriculum into their classrooms and advocate for other educators to do the same. Following the dissemination and implementation of ELL FFA workshops and Spanish resources, the execution of a Spanish Creed speaking contest at the University of Kentucky's 4-H/FFA Field Day would provide an opportunity for Spanish-speaking students to participate in a well-known FFA contest and showcase the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within Kentucky Agricultural Education Programs.

### **Costs/Resources Needed**

The designing and printing of the workshop materials was the largest expense. Using University resources, the materials were funded for the participants. The cost was approximately \$1.50 per FFA manual, \$0.50 per SAE card pack, \$0.75 per identification card for Dairy Products Identification CDE and Tool Identification CDE and \$1.10 per CDE sheet. Additional costs were incurred by the student and teacher in transportation to the University of Kentucky.

## References

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