

Activity: Many Hats of a Nebraska Farmer and Rancher

Activity Level: Intermediate

Source: Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation

PURPOSE

Students will understand that farmers and ranchers have to complete many different types of tasks for their jobs and why those tasks are important.

EXAMPLE TOPICS IT SUPPLEMENTS

Career exploration; listening; questioning; perspectives.

ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

1. Organize and Prepare Supplies
2. Read Background Information
3. Interest Approach
4. Conduct Activity

Explore the different “hats” a farmer/rancher can wear while working. Use props to have students dress up as one of the many tasks to guess what type of task the farmer has. Then, talk about the importance of each task. After students have guessed the task, pin the nametag onto their costume with the answer.

5. Ask follow-up questions and make the connection to agriculture
 - If you were a farmer, which job would be your favorite?
 - Least favorite?
 - Why is it important that farmers know how to do these different jobs, or wear these different hats?
 - What role do farmers play in everyday life?

STATE STANDARDS IT SUPPORTS

- LA 4.3.1.d—Convey a perspective with clear reasoning and support.
- LA 4.3.1.e—Ask pertinent questions to acquire or confirm information.
- LA 4.3.2a—Demonstrate active and attentive listening skills (e.g., eye contact, nonverbal cues, recalling, questioning) for multiple situations and modalities.

MATERIALS

- Costumes:
 - o Veterinarian, Business Manager, Mechanic, Construction Worker, Electrician, Plant & Soil Scientist (Agronomist), Truck Driver, Nutritionist/ Chef, Athlete, Computer Technician, Inventor/ Engineer, Meteorologist, Environmental Scientist, and Teacher.
- Name tags for each “hat” or costume – written on sticky nametags or printed and placed in plastic name tag holders
- A cloth shopping bag for each set of “hat” props

WHAT’S THE CONNECTION TO AGRICULTURE?

Agriculture Literacy Outcomes

Food, Health and Lifestyle Outcomes

- Recognize that agriculture provides our most basic necessities: food, fiber (fabric or clothing), energy, and shelter
- Culture, Society, Economy & Geography Outcomes
 - o Discuss what a farmer does.
 - o Discover that there are many jobs in agriculture.

PROCEDURES:

1. Organize and Prepare Supplies
See “Materials” on cover page.

Collect different props for the “many hats of a farmer and rancher”

Before the presentation, place the materials for each “hat” in a separate cloth shopping bag with the appropriate name tag. Place the bags in the desired order on a table or at the side of the presentation space, within reach, facing away from the audience.

If there is a large group of students, set up a chair for each career in front of the space for costumed student volunteers to sit in.

2. Background Information

Farming is an occupation that requires farmers to do many different jobs on a day to day (or even season to season) basis. In many lines of work, people complete the same tasks every day, but for farmers, tasks have a great deal of variability throughout the day, week, or year.

Farm Facts

- 2% of Americans are involved in production agriculture
- There are over 200 careers in agriculture
- More than 97% of Nebraska farms are owned by families
- There are approximately 89,000 farms in Nebraska

Farmers must be proficient in the completion of many different types of jobs, which is often called “wearing many hats.” This can also be referred to as being a “jack of all trades” – having skills in a variety of different trades or the ability to complete many different jobs.

Some of the many hats farmers wear include:

Veterinarian

- **Props:** Scrubs, syringe, stethoscope
- **Duties:** Identifies health problems in his/her livestock. Helps deliver baby animals when problems occur. Administers vaccines and medicine when necessary.

Business Manager

- **Props:** tie, calculator, brief case
- **Duties:** Watches the market and decides when to sell crops and livestock. Makes business deals. Buys and sells land and equipment. Calculates profit and whether a new business venture will be profitable. Manages employees, keeps financial records, sends bills, and distributes checks.

Mechanic

- **Props:** Gleaner hat, wrench, mechanic’s shirt/overalls.
- **Duties:** Fixes tractors, trucks, and implements when problems occur. Sometimes he/she makes repairs in the farm shop, but, during busy times of the year repairs are often made in the field.

Construction Worker

- **Props:** Tool belt, hard hat, screwdriver, safety glasses
- **Duties:** Builds fences and buildings. Makes repairs to fences, loading chutes, etc. Pours concrete and prepares the foundation for new buildings.

Electrician

- **Props:** Electrical tape, wire stripper, hard hat, spool of wire
- **Duties:** Properly installing wire to bring electricity to bins, grain dryers, shops, augers, and farm machinery.

Plant & Soil Scientist (Agronomist)

- **Props:** Magnifying Glass, insect holder, soil test kit, Otilie/Pioneer seed hat.
- **Duties:** Monitors crops for insect and disease problems. Needs to be able to identify different soil types on his/her farms and know what those soils need to produce a bountiful crop.
- **Talking point:** Nebraska farmers are true professionals by bringing a variety of educational experiences to their agriculture business. For example, most farmers are trained and certified in the use of ag chemicals.

Truck Driver

- **Props:** Trucking company hat, road map, steering wheel
- **Duties:** Hulls grain to the farm or elevator, transports feed for his/her operation.

Nutritionist/Chef

- **Props:** chef's hat, measuring cup
- **Duties:** Prepares feed rations for the best health and development of livestock.
- **Talking point:** Farmers make sure that their livestock (cows, pigs) are healthy because they are raising the animal for human consumption. Farmers make sure there is not too much fat on the animals.

Athlete

- **Props:** Headband, dumbbell
- **Duties:** Farmers are usually physically fit because they do hard physical labor nearly every day. Jobs such as scooping corn, stacking hay bales, and lifting bags of feed are physically demanding and require farmers to be strong.
- **Talking point:** Every spring, farmers lift and pour bags of seed into the planter. Often times, the bags weigh about 50 pounds each. How about stacking small bales of hay? A small bale of hay weighs approximately 70 pounds. Some seven year old kids don't even weigh 50 pounds.

Computer Technician

- **Props:** laptop case (ask the student to pretend it is heavy). Also, say that this person could be holding a GPS Unit.
- **Duties:** Uses technology to farm the land more efficiently
- **Talking point:** Thanks to modern technology, such as biotechnology, global positional systems and conservation tillage, farmers are producing more food on fewer acres with fewer inputs.

Inventor/Engineer

- **Props:** Calculator, graph paper, pliers, wrench
- **Duties:** Farmers often make changes to farm equipment so that they work better and do the job he/she needs them to do. Develops new tools and machines that make work easier.
- **Talking point:** A farmer invented a Shover, which is two tools in one: a shovel at one end with a detachable hammer on the opposite end. The Shover saves time and frustration when building and repairing fences and other farm tasks by combining a shovel and a hammer in one easy-to-carry tool.

VOLUNTEER ENRICHING ACTIVITY

Meteorologist

- **Props:** Umbrella, big sunglasses, weather map from newspaper
- **Duties:** Understand weather and climate; be aware of possible weather changes and how to prepare for these changes.
- **Talking point:** Farmers need to be aware of the weather conditions outside. Farmers can only spray fertilizers when there is little or no wind. And, they want to make sure it will be dry because rain will wash off the fertilizer.

Environmental Scientist

- **Props:** Big test tube, water test strips, tree book
- **Duties:** Works to protect and conserve our natural resources.
- **Talking point:** Farmers take good care of the soil and water because they earn their living from the land. And, they want to make sure they are able to pass the land on to future generations.

Teacher

- **Props:** Chalk, black board, apple
- **Duties:** Teaches the next generation about farming.
- **Talking Point:** This is one of the most important jobs of a farmer, and they are often teaching others without realizing it. Farmers usually learn how to be a farmer by watching and working with their parents/grandparents/neighbors. Today, most farmers have a college education, but many of the skills needed to be a good farmer cannot be learned in a classroom - they learn by experience and watching others. Note: Saving the teacher for last is a nice way to end the presentation.

3. Interest Approach

Ask students to list jobs in their community. What do their family members do? What do they do every day?

4. Conduct Activity

- Explain to students that farmers are people who raise crops and livestock for food, fuel and fibers. Unlike jobs in which people complete similar tasks each day, farmers have a wide variety of tasks they must complete, the job of a farmer requires the skills to complete a wide variety of different types of tasks. These tasks can be very different from one day or even one season to the next. That's called "wearing many different hats."
- Remind students that in the presentation, many of these jobs will be explored, but many of these could also be a person's full-time job, too. For example, a farmer may complete many tasks a veterinarian would, but there are people who are veterinarians full-time and complete those tasks every day.
- Explain that you have brought costumes and props that represent the various "jobs" of a farmer. Volunteers will be asked to come onstage one at a time, put on the costume and model it for the rest of the group. The group will then guess what job the student is modeling.
- Ask volunteers to come up one at a time, and reiterate that volunteers chosen will be people who have been good listeners and answer questions throughout the presentation.
- Select a student volunteer to join you. Have them stand in an easy-to-see place.
- Select the shopping bag that contains the costume for the first job. Start with a job that is easier to guess, such as a veterinarian.
- Put the costume on the student volunteer and ask the group to think about what they think the job might be, but keep their guesses to themselves until the whole costume is on.

VOLUNTEER ENRICHING ACTIVITY

- h. Once the volunteer is completely in costume, ask the group to guess the job. If they have not guessed correctly after a few tries, give the group the answer and pin the nametag on the student volunteer.
 - i. With the volunteer still in front of the group with you, talk about the job and why farmers need to know how to do it.
 - j. After explaining the job, ask the student to sit in a chair in front of the group. If chairs are not available or the group is small, have the student take off the costume and return to the audience.
 - k. Repeat steps f-j until all of the jobs have been discussed.
 - l. If students in costume are seated in the front of the room, review the jobs for the group by having students go down the line and say their job title.
5. Ask Follow-Up Questions and Make the Connection to Agriculture
- Agriculture is a big part of everything we do each day. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the products we use—most can be easily connected to agriculture. In addition, the food, clothes, and products we use provide jobs and careers for people across the United States. It is important to know how food and products connect to agriculture and that the production and transportation of them create opportunities for jobs and careers.
- If you were a farmer, which job would be your favorite?
 - Least favorite?
 - Why is it important that farmers know how to do these different jobs, or wear these different hats?
 - What role do farmers play in everyday life?