



WAUPUN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

950 Wilcox Street, Waupun, WI 53963 • (920) 324-9341

A catalyst for innovation resulting in student success.

February 27, 2024

To Our Waupun Community,

I hope this communication finds you well. The information shared here addresses the concerns regarding supporting our Agricultural classes and the FFA program within the Waupun Area School District. It is important to me and the entire district that we maintain transparency and open communication regarding these matters.

First and foremost, the Waupun Area School District is committed to supporting our Agricultural programs and the FFA. After hearing erroneous rumors of a reduction in FFA advisors and the perceived decrease in support for our Agricultural classes, I understand the apprehensions. However, our actions aim to maintain and even improve the quality of education and opportunities available to our students.

Regarding the reduction in the number of FFA advisors, it is true that we are experiencing transitions as two of our advisors are departing. However, we intend to replace them with two new advisors to maintain our current and historical level of three advisors. This decision underscores our commitment to the FFA program and its importance in the development of our students.

The Waupun Area School District is so proud of our FFA program; we know it is one of the strongest in the state. We are also one of the first in the state to offer a program in our elementary school, which highlights our commitment. According to the FFA guidelines, you must be enrolled in an agriculture course at your school or participate in a program that may incur a gap due to class schedules to be considered an active member. For the 23/24 school year, we have 411 students enrolled in at least one agricultural program course and 12 students in our elementary program. The Waupun Area School District strives for 100% of our students to participate in a club or activity, and our FFA program is vital in our efforts to reach this lofty goal.

Furthermore, concerns have been raised from the false rumor of our reducing the number of teachers within our agricultural program. I want to provide clarity on this matter. Over the years, we have made strategic decisions to address our student population's changing needs and interests while ensuring fiscal responsibility. While it may seem that there has been a reduction in support, the reality is that we will be moving forward with the same number of AG teacher Full Time Equivalent (FTEs), pending a certification, to meet the demands of our students in our Agricultural and Technology Education programs.

For the upcoming 24/25 school year, we have 362 9th-12th grade students who have expressed interest in Agricultural courses and 621 students in Technology Education. We have carefully analyzed the course demands and the available resources, including staffing. While we have made adjustments based on licensing

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opportunities and student interests, our goal remains to provide a robust educational experience for all students.

Reviewing the 23/24 School Year, we were able to offer 60 courses for the 439 9-12th grade students initially signed up for AG courses and 715 9-12th grade students for Tech Ed. This year, we hired another 1.0 FTE Business teacher to meet state-mandated coursework and increased business course requests. This allowed an opportunity to reduce class sizes in our AG program by offering other sections of the same course so our .5 FTE Ag teacher would maintain their 1.0 FTE status, which was an incredible luxury, but not a necessity, to have for one year. For the 22/23 School Year, we offered 55 courses for the 416 9-12th grade students originally signed up for AG courses, and 719 9-12th grade students who signed up for Tech Ed courses. We provided for the 21/22 School Year 58 courses to meet students' requests for both programs. Unfortunately, our computer system did not have records of the number of student requests. We have seen a reduction of interest in our agricultural programs by 77 students from last year and 94 students in our technology education program. For your knowledge and an important fact, our student population will be 26 students less next year than this year, decreasing course requests.

It is important to note that several factors, including student enrollment trends, available resources, and the evolving educational landscape, guide our decision-making process. As our student population changes and external factors influence our district, we must adapt to ensure our programs' sustainability, rigor, and relevance.

For total transparency, the following classes are no longer offered for next year. Employability Skills is the first but was only available for one section of students under the agricultural education teacher course offering. We are preparing each and every student to be college and career-ready, which requires us to address this differently to meet the needs of all. We are working on a plan for all 8th-grade students to have the opportunity to learn these vital skills. AG Maintenance is not being offered; however, we haven't had the staff with the ability or knowledge to instruct this course for two years. We would rather provide the opportunity for students through Youth Apprenticeship or by partnering with our local supportive businesses, such as Ballweg Implement or Waupun Equipment. Our students need to learn about current equipment, which is best taught by master mechanics in the workforce. We continue to offer entry-level knowledge coursework for students to begin learning about maintaining vehicles and small engine repairs.

To be clear, WASD offered 23 ag opportunities in the 21/22 school year, 22 in the 22/23 school year, and 23.5 courses this year. We plan to offer 21 courses to meet our student's requests for next year. The lower number you see was explained above with the ending of the one-course offering for Employability Skills and the one-course offering for AG Maintenance.

I understand the concerns regarding reducing student interest in our Agricultural programs. This decline reflects broader trends in demographics and educational preferences, which we cannot control. However, we must continue to adapt and innovate to meet the needs of our students while maintaining fiscal responsibility, which will ensure a high-quality agricultural education program with the finest FFA opportunities for our students with interest.

The increase of students choosing lesser opportunities for their education elsewhere will continue to add stress to our ability to offer the highest quality offerings that we have been able to offer.

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We remain dedicated to providing high-quality education and opportunities for all Waupun Area School District students. Your concerns are valued, and we will continue to engage with stakeholders to address them collaboratively.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to the success of our students.

In-Service,

Steven K. Hill, Ed.D
District Administrator
Waupun Area School District
#InnovativeCaringCommunity