Teaching Biology Using Agriculture as the Context: Perceptions of High School Students

Balschweid, M.A. Teaching Biology Using Agriculture as the Context: Perceptions of High School Students. Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

PURPOSE
The purpose of this study was to determine how high school students perceived science and agriculture after completing a yearlong biology class that used animal agriculture as the context.

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to determine how high school students perceived science and agriculture after completing a yearlong biology class that used animal agriculture as the context. This study utilized a case-study approach. The population for the study included all students who participated in a biology course utilizing animal agriculture as the context for teaching biology (N=531).

More than 90% of the subjects reported they agreed or strongly agreed that participating in a biology class that used agriculture as the context helped them understand the relationship between science and agriculture. Over 85% of those responding agreed or strongly agreed they appreciated the complex nature of animal agriculture as a result of taking the class, and the class helped them understand the practices used in animal agriculture. Nine of ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they appreciated the importance of agriculture and those who work in agriculture after participating in the class.

Almost 90% disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements that animals should not be used for meat and that farmers raising animals are not concerned with the environment. Over 80% strongly agreed or agreed that raising animals for food and/or being a farmer is a noble profession.