

Connecting Instruction to Career Opportunities

Vocational Agriculture Practical Laboratories

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Key to the development of vocational agriculture practice was the creation of a highly structured laboratory practical(s). It was a process to connect classroom instruction to the performance of industry applications. It allowed the link between job titles, skill based activities to what was expected in a career area or profession. Vo Ag laboratory practicals always let the students know up front why the task was relevant and how it connected to the real world of employment. Many state that this approach took the guesswork out of “why am I doing this” or “how come I need to do this.” The listing of job/employment titles was a constant reminder of what the lab practical was all about. Lab practicals were structured so that the application, skill based activity and instructional exercise reinforced the learning process about pathways to a career or occupational outcome. Much of the same language was borrowed for a more recent program, The School To Career National Initiative.”

Several questions have been asked about an outline for a “laboratory practical.” It is very similar to science laboratory but is not necessarily “experimental” or “research” based. Most often Vo Ag laboratory practicals are equipment or task based and linked to performance measures or assessments. Some aspects are familiar from the scientific “lab report” except the connection to occupational awareness such as job titles and industrial applications. This year I have asked that equipment based laboratory practicals include a written section focusing on CAPT skills. Please refer to those fact sheets distributed by Trish Russell last September and December.

To assist in the organization of the lab practical I offer this outline.

- 1) Title of Lab Practical – please include your name and course title

- 2) Introduction/Overview include rationale for application/job titles - "This is important because."
- 3) Objective – the goal of the lab – why, how connected to job titles – you need to know this, etc.
- 4) Science Standards – NOCTI Performance Measures – reference number or standard. Can be a mathematics standard for Technology.
- 5) Materials, supplies, required equipment
- 6) Safety/Operations, Protocols, Industry Certificate (optional).
- 7) Activity/Task – Performance – what is the student actually doing.(skill based activity).
- 8) Written Conclusion CAPT Elements – include a situational writing prompt, problem solving exercise, reasoning and critical thinking exercises as per suggestions last fall. John Roy's case study – of the lobster problem for example I put out a fact sheet earlier – if you need another one please let me know.
 - Reference: All Vocational Agriculture Educators can participate in activities that assist authentic assessments such as CAPT and NOCTI – December 2005.
 - Reference: Components of Vocational Agriculture Laboratory Practicals – Sept ember 2005.