



Skagit
County

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Teaching Diverse Audiences in the Same Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Extension serves an increasingly diverse community with a number of program participants who are new farmers, minority farmers and low income farmers. Since the 1980s, Skagit County Extension has provided a tractor safety course to young adult farmers, ages 12 to 15. In 2008, several retired females inquired about learning how to operate farm machinery. In 2009, adults were allowed to join the WSU Skagit County Extension Gearing Up for Safety course. Early in 2010, a non-profit farm incubator showed interest in having their members participate in the Extension's farm safety course. This introduced new adult farmers and Hispanic farmers to a classroom of young adults. Meeting the needs of these distinct farming cohorts in a single classroom requires a multimodal approach replicable in other Extension education programs. The following poster contains the results of the 2012, 2013 and 2015 WSU Skagit County Extension Gearing Up for Safety Program.



Educating Diverse Groups

	2012	2013	2015
Young Adults	9	21	10
Beginning Adult Farmers	5	2	8
Hispanic Farmers	7	2	5

Male	Female	Farming Background:	No	Yes
70%	30%		48%	59%



Summary

1. Of the 81 participants in the WSU Skagit County Extension *Gearing Up for Safety* course, 39 took the time to fill out the survey on the last day of class—a 48% response rate.
2. The average age of the WSU Skagit County Extension *Gearing Up for Safety* Participant is 24.6 years of age. Those older than 20 years of age were not allowed in the course prior to 2010.
3. The male/female ratio for WSU Skagit County Extension *Gearing Up For Safety Course* was 71:29 with a higher amount of older female participants in the 2012 class.
4. 100% of participants strongly agree, agree or are undecided that the Agricultural Hazardous Occupations Orders (AgHO's) are a good thing.
5. 100% of the WSU Skagit County Extension *Gearing Up for Safety* course participants strongly agree, agree that they feel more confident to operate a tractor.
6. **As a result of the WSU Skagit County Extension *Gearing Up for Safety* Course there have been no fatalities of any participants.**

Multimodal Approach for Educating Diverse Groups in the Classroom:

Targeted Administrative Support

- Dedicated course administrator for each cohort
 - 4-H instructor for youth
 - Spanish translator for Hispanic participants
 - Third administrator for beginning farmers
- Each administrator had an active and ongoing relationship with students within specified cohorts
- Avenue for accelerated course completion
 - Some participants pass through course within 3 sessions
 - Maintained curriculum standards

Traditional Coursework

- Lectures reviewing course reading remained a staple of the program
- Tests and intermittent quizzes used to evaluate knowledge set

Contextual Application of Subject

- Shared farm/tractor safety anecdotes from both administrators and course participants
 - Articulated real-life importance of farm safety
 - Engaged all classroom cohorts in participation
 - Small group discussion of example scenarios and responses
- Facilitated by a course administrator

Dynamic Hands-On Experience

- Increased time on tractor
 - Confidence and proficiency increases in all cohorts
- Dynamic tractor driving obstacle course
- Implemented proficiency tasks
 - Engaging PTO, driving with a trailer, moving soil with bucket loader

Collective Knowledge Transfer

- Students as teachers
 - Students among and between cohorts coached each other through tractor obstacle course and proficiency tasks
 - Students strengthened knowledge set by explaining information to new users
- Sharing highlights from small group discussion reveals safety implications for different types of farming

Survey Comments:

Participants were asked "What did I like most about the course?" 95% of the comments were related to the hands-on experience of the course. Selected comments:

- "Before I did not know how to operate a tractor and how I feel confident to run one. Thank you."
- "The course instilled a strong respect for tractor/machinery that I won't soon forget. The experience with the machinery helped me get comfortable."
- "I liked driving the test tractors and learning how they function."

Participants were asked "What did I like least about the course?" 22% of comments mentioned disliking role-playing scenarios. All other comments were dissimilar.

