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COUNSELING FOR AGRICULTURAL OCCUPATIONS AIDED BY DEVELOPMENT OF VO-AG INTEREST INVENTORY *

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The Pennsylvania Vocational Agriculture Interest Inventory is to be used by guidance counselors and teachers of agriculture in high schools to assist eighth grade students in deciding whether to enroll in vocational agriculture. All eighth grade boys should take the test. Those with high interests in agriculture can be identified, be given occupational information and counseled prior to selection of ninth grade courses. Test results are helpful to the teachers of agriculture and guidance counselors not only when they counsel with the boy but when they talk with his parents.

The inventory contains 75 statements to which an eighth grade boy responds by indicating how he feels about each statement. The student responds by choosing the one of five answers that best represents the way he feels: (1) strongly like, (2) like, (3) undecided, (4) dislike, and (5) strongly dislike. The system of scoring involves the use of a positive scoring key and a negative scoring key. The resulting numerical score may be used to classify each eighth grade boy as having a high, middle, or low vocational agriculture interest.

Teachers of agriculture and guidance counselors are aware that enrollment in vocational agriculture should not be limited to students who live on farms. Many students living in rural areas, but not on farms have definite agricultural preferences and should enroll in vocational agriculture. A short objective test is needed to measure vocational agriculture interest of all eighth grade boys.

How the Test was Developed

An investigation was conducted to determine if a criterion group of eighth grade boys rated as successful in ninth grade vocational agriculture would differ significantly from a norm group of all eighth grade boys in their response to items on the Kuder Preference Record - Occupational, Form D, and the Pennsylvania Vocational Agriculture Interest Inventory. Scoring keys were developed for both inventories from the items on which the criterion group differed significantly from the norm group. The keys were applied to all boys in the study to determine how well they separated the groups of boys classified as Successful Vo-Ag Students, Unsuccessful Vo-Ag Students, and Others.

The two tests were administered to 1013 boys in the eighth grade in twenty south-central Pennsylvania high schools. A rating on success in vocational agriculture was obtained one year later, at the end of the ninth grade. The criterion group consisted of 168 thirteen and fourteen year-old boys who were rated as Successful Vo-Ag Students. In addition, the boys planned to continue in vocational agriculture in the tenth grade. The responses of the criterion group to item

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answer positions were determined and converted to percentages. A nomograph was used to test item answer position percentages for both the criterion group and the norm group to determine those that were significantly different. Seventy-five items were found to have answer positions on which the two groups differed significantly. The positive and negative scoring keys were made from the significant answer positions. The mean score for Successful Vo-Ag Students was 71.2. For Other Students the mean score was 48.0.

The scores obtained from the seventy-five items were classified by locating the middle interval about the mean with limits plus and minus one-half standard deviation. Table 1 shows that 119 of the 168 Successful Vo-Ag Students had high scores, 39 had middle scores, and 10 had low scores. Slightly over 70 per cent of the Successful Vo-Ag Students had high scores. The reverse was true with the distribution of scores for Other Students. The fact that some Other Students had high scores showed that they possessed interests similar to the interest of Successful Vo-Ag Students. Other Students may not have chosen to take vocational agriculture because of a greater interest in an area other than agriculture, or counseling in eighth grade may not have disclosed their interest in agriculture.

Table 1. Distribution of Pennsylvania Vocational Agriculture Interest Scores of Eighth Grade Boys Classified by Student Group

Student Group Boys 13-14 years of age	Number of Students by Interest Score Classification**			
	Low (0-42)	Middle (43-65)	High (66-99)	Total
Successful Vo-Ag Students	10	39	119	168
Unsuccessful Vo-Ag Students	5	14	16	35
Other Students	337	292	181	810
Total	352	345	316	1013

**Significant at the .01 level by chi square test.

Correlation with the Kuder Preference Record - Occupational, Form D

A Kuder Vo-Ag Key was constructed from item answer positions on the Kuder Preference Record - Occupational, Form D, for which the criterion group and the norm group differed significantly at the .05 level by t-test. Successful separation of the students in the two groups was achieved. The mean score for Successful Vo-Ag Students was 29.8 compared with 23.3 for Other Students. Individual students who had high scores on the Pennsylvania Vocational Interest Inventory tended to have high scores on the Kuder Vo-Ag Key developed in this study and on the published Kuder Farmer Key. Intercorrelations all were significant at the .01 level. Schools that use the Kuder Preference Record - Occupational, Form D, may obtain the Kuder Farmer Key from the publisher.

Finally, it may be concluded that the systematic use with eighth grade students of the Pennsylvania Vocational Agriculture Interest Inventory and/or the Kuder Preference Record - Occupational, Form D, will be of great value to guidance counselors and teachers of agriculture as they assist students to make long range educational and occupational decisions.