



Why Are We Here?

Created: 05/2026 by the National FFA Organization

Description of Lesson: *In her retiring address, 2024-25 National FFA Central Region Vice President Mary Schrieber shares the deeper meaning behind the question of why FFA members are here.*

Student Learning Objectives:

- After completing these activities, students will ...
- 1. Identify how belief and belonging contribute to teamwork and leadership.
 - 2. Analyze how relationships influence personal growth.
 - 3. Apply the concept of brotherhood to real-life situations.

Suggested Grade Level:

Grades 9 and 10 (This lesson is written so instructors can scale up or down based on class needs.)

Suggested Time: 60 minutes (*Time requirements may vary based upon student understanding and class schedule.)

Resources/References: Video: “FFA Brotherhood: Belief and Belonging,” <https://vimeo.com/1132496305?fl=pl&fe=cm>

Related Resources:

- 1. Retiring Addresses and Keynote Speeches, [FFA.org/proceedings/2025-proceedings/](https://ffa.org/proceedings/2025-proceedings/)
- 2. Keynote-Retiring Address Lessons, <https://ffa.app.box.com/folder/375371522202?s=v5eqwmltx9xuqgdi7zimqnt3zaec609l>
- 3. FFA Value Lesson Series, <https://ffa.app.box.com/s/u9qnfyvape9sy3d3xc85hlqxdxghq3dg>

Equipment and Supplies Needed:

- 1. A copy of the “Why Are We Here?” worksheet for each student
- 2. A copy of the “Appendix 1: Building Belonging” handout for each student group
- 3. A copy of the “Appendix 2: Building Brotherhood” handout for each student group
- 4. Internet access to play the video in real time or embed it in a PowerPoint ahead of time
- 5. 15 marshmallows or small cups, 10-15 toothpicks or uncooked spaghetti noodles and string or tape

Vocabulary:

- 1. Belief
- 2. Belonging
- 3. Brotherhood

Cross-Curricular Connections:

English/Language Arts
• Identify key ideas and themes. • Analyze abstract concepts.

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SAE and FFA Connections

1. Agricultural Communications and Education SAE Idea Cards,
<https://ffa.app.box.com/file/301231972163?s=x7e4v2qzxcwkleugkun3mt042lm5nejx>.
2. Extemporaneous Public Speaking LDE, [FFA.org/participate/ides/extemporaneous-public-speaking/](https://ffa.org/participate/ides/extemporaneous-public-speaking/)
3. Prepared Public Speaking LDE, [FFA.org/participate/prepared-public-speaking/](https://ffa.org/participate/prepared-public-speaking/)

Student Activity Sheets:

Direct access to student activity sheets without lesson plan or answer key for easy upload to a learning management system or printing for classwork.

<https://ffa.app.box.com/file/2251038119222> (Word)

<https://ffa.app.box.com/file/2251070272070> (PDF)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HNyTdEO8n1ksvTjDDBfzUs7_Cl3SwA0z_gRX4Nu4XdI/copy (Google)

These Activities Are Aligned to the Following Standards:

FFA Precept

- FFA.PL-A.Action A1. Work independently and in groups to get things done.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A3. Plan effectively.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A4. Identify and use resources.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A5. Communicate effectively with others.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A8. Evaluate and reflect on actions taken and make appropriate modifications.
- FFA.PL-B.Relationships B1. Practice human relations skills including compassion, empathy, unselfishness, trustworthiness, reliability and listening.
- FFA.PL-B.Relationships B2. Interact and work with others.
- FFA.PL-B.Relationships B5. Participate effectively as a team member.
- FFA.PL-C.Vision C1. Contemplate the future.
- FFA.PL-C.Vision C2. Conceptualize ideas.
- FFA.PL-C.Vision C4. Adapt to opportunities and obstacles.
- FFA.PL-D.Character D1. Live with integrity.
- FFA.PL-D.Character D4. Respect others.
- FFA.PL-D.Character D6. Value service to others.
- FFA.PG-K.Emotional Growth K2. Live a compassionate and selfless life.

Common Core – Writing

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

Common Core – Speaking and Listening

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and task.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

AFNR Career Ready Practices

- CRP.04. Communicate clearly, effectively and with reason.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Productivity and Accountability
- Think Creatively

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Lesson Plan:

1. **Bell Ringer:** Why do you think people join organizations like FFA? List at least two reasons.
2. **Introduction:** Each student needs a copy of the “Why Are We Here?” worksheet. *Today, we are going to watch a retiring address from the 98th National FFA Convention & Expo. This retiring address was given by 2024-25 National FFA Central Region Vice President Mary Schrieber. In her speech, she introduces the concepts of belief, belonging and brotherhood. As we watch the video, look over the questions on the worksheet “Why Are We Here?” and be ready to record the answers.*
3. **Activity:** Each student needs a copy of the worksheet “Why Are We Here?”
 - a. **Part 1:** Have students watch the retiring address of the 2024-25 National FFA Central Region Vice President Mary Schrieber. The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/1132496305?fl=pl&fe=cm>. While students watch the video, have them answer the questions on their student worksheets.
 - b. **Part 2:** Lead a class discussion with the last three questions from the “Why Are We Here?” worksheet.
 1. What does “Why are we here?” mean beyond the memorized response?
 2. How did others' beliefs impact Mary's journey?
 3. What is the connection between belonging and leadership?
 - c. **Part 3:** Place students in groups of three or four. Provide each group with 10 to 15 marshmallows or small cups, 10 to 15 toothpicks or uncooked spaghetti noodles and string or tape. Challenge them to build the tallest freestanding structure in 10 minutes with only the materials provided. Distribute a copy of “Appendix 1: Building Belonging” to each group. Instruct groups to assign each group member one of the following roles:
 1. Encourager: builds belief and gives positive feedback
 2. Includer: ensures everyone is participating and builds belonging
 3. Builder: focuses on the construction
 4. Communicator: shares ideas and keeps group organizedAfter three minutes, tell the groups that to keep building each member of the group must contribute at least one idea. When the full 10 minutes has expired, measure structures and celebrate effort, not just height. Have a debrief discussion with the class and ask:
 1. What made some groups more successful than others?
 2. How did encouragement (belief) impact your group?
 3. Did everyone feel included? Why or why not?
 4. How does this relate to FFA teamwork?
 - d. **Part 4:** Students should be paired up and share the answers with the following two prompts that are listed in the “Appendix 2: Building Brotherhood” handout:
 1. Share one way someone has shown belief in you.
 2. Share one time you felt like you belonged.Partners should complete a handshake or fist bump to symbolize the brotherhood exchange.
4. **Follow-up:** *Today's activities show us that success isn't just about what we build. It's about how we build it and who we build it with. The strongest structures didn't come from one person doing all the work. They came from teams where people encouraged each other, shared ideas and made sure everyone participated. That's exactly what Mary Schrieber was talking about when she described belief, belonging and brotherhood. When we believe in each other, we give people the confidence to contribute. Creating a sense of belonging makes sure that everyone feels valued and included. When those two things come together, we build something even stronger: brotherhood.*
5. **Optional – Extended Learning Opportunities (Not factored into time requirement):**
 - a. This should take 15 minutes. Have students stand in a large circle. Using a ball of yarn, the teacher should instruct students to share a time someone has believed in them or a way they can help others belong. Then, they should hold onto the end of the yarn and toss the ball to another student across the circle. Continue until all students are holding part of the yarn, creating a web across the circle. Ask students to look around the circle. *This is what brotherhood looks like. We are all connected through*

Name: _____

belief and belonging. Ask one or two students to gently drop their yarn. Students will begin to see the web weaken or collapse. Ask students:

1. What happened to our connection?
2. How does this relate to teamwork and relationships?

Debrief by sharing that brotherhood isn't built alone. It is created through shared belief and belonging. When one person disconnects, it impacts everyone.

6. **Exit Ticket:** What is one action you can take this week to show belief in someone else?

Name: _____

Why Are We Here?

Aligned to the following standards:

FFA.PL-A1; FFA.PL-A3; FFA.PL-A4; FFA.PL-A5; FFA.PL-A8; FFA.PL-B1; FFA.PL-B2; FFA.PL-B5;
FFA.PL-C1; FFA.PL-C2; FFA.PL-C4; FFA.PL-D1; FFA.PL-D4; FFA.PL-D6; FFA.PG-K2;
CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.4; CCSS.SL.9-10.6; CRP.04

Directions: Answer the following questions while watching the retiring address of 2024-25 National FFA Central Region Vice President Mary Schrieber. The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/1132496305?fl=pl&fe=cm>.



1. What does Mary's family love to do together?
2. Finish this statement: FFA members, why are we here?
3. What was the first FFA activity that Mary said she participated in?
4. What moments happened where others believed in Mary?
5. Why did Mary's friends and advisor encourage her to get involved?
6. Where did Mary and her advisor dig for inspiration?
7. Belief + Belonging = _____
8. How do FFA members experience belonging?
9. Which state did Mary first visit as a national officer?
10. What did Mary ask members to promise each other?

Answer the following questions with complete sentences and discuss with a partner.

1. What does "Why are we here?" mean beyond the memorized response?
2. How did others' beliefs impact Mary's journey?
3. What is the connection between belonging and leadership?

Name: _____

KEY: Why Are We Here?

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CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.4; CCSS.SL.9-10.6; CRP.04

Directions: Answer the following questions while watching the retiring address of 2024-25 National FFA Central Region Vice President Mary Schrieber. The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/1132496305?fl=pl&fe=cm>.



11. What does Mary's family love to do together?

Take road trips

12. Finish this statement: FFA members, Why are we here?

To practice brotherhood, honor agricultural opportunities and responsibilities and develop those qualities of leadership which an FFA member should possess

13. What was the first FFA activity that Mary said she participated in?

Middle School FFA Quiz Bowl

14. What moments happened where others believed in Mary?

Participating in creed speaking, beekeeping and running for state and national offices

15. Why did Mary's friends and advisor encourage her to get involved?

Answers will vary but may include because they believed in her.

16. Where did Mary and her advisor dig for inspiration?

FFA.org

17. Belief + Belonging = Brotherhood

18. How do FFA members experience belonging?

Answers will vary but may include wearing FFA jackets.

19. Which state did Mary first visit as a national officer?

South Carolina

20. What did Mary ask members to promise each other?

Answers will vary.

Answer the following questions with complete sentences and discuss with a partner.

1. What does "Why are we here?" mean beyond the memorized response?

Answers will vary.

2. How did others' beliefs impact Mary's journey?

Answers will vary.

3. What is the connection between belonging and leadership?

Answers will vary.

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Appendix 1: Building Belonging

Encourager

Builds belief and gives positive feedback

Includer

Ensures everyone is participating and builds belonging

Builder

Focuses on the construction

Communicator

Shares ideas and keeps group organized

Name: _____

Appendix 2: Building Brotherhood

1. Share one way someone has shown belief in you.

2. Share one time you felt like you belonged.