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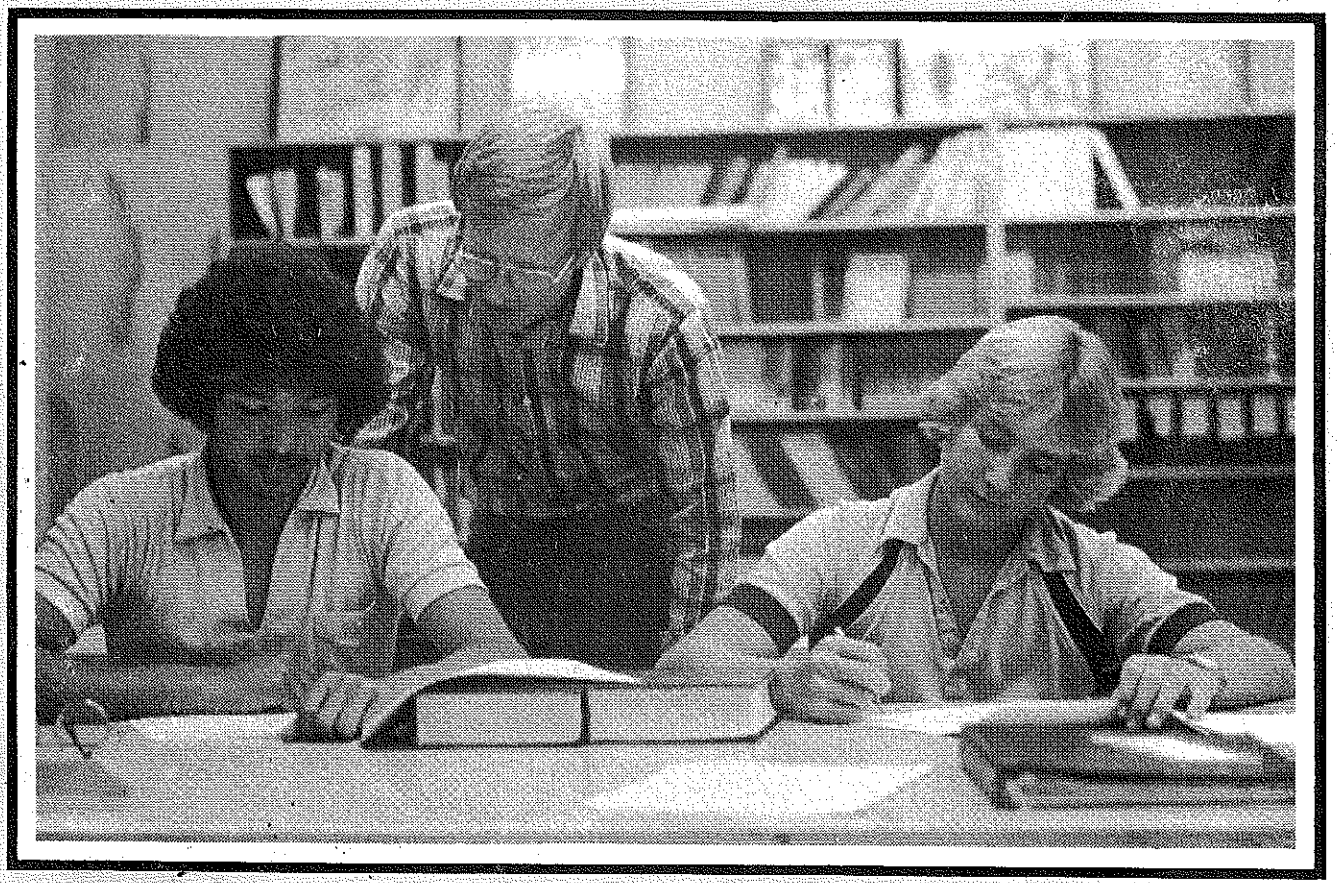

THEME: The Beginning Teacher

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THE
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
MAGAZINE

August, 1981 Volume 54 Number 2

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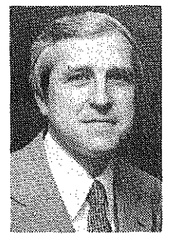
EDITOR'S PAGE

The Beginning Teacher



JASPER S. LEE, EDITOR

(The Editor also serves as Professor and head, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Mississippi State University.)

The beginning teacher of vocational agriculture is faced with many adjustments and challenges. No teacher in a school has as many different responsibilities and clientele as does a vo-ag teacher.

One of the keys to the adjustment of beginning teachers is realizing that vo-ag is more than a class. It is a program! A beginning teacher could quickly become disillusioned by observing an academic teacher (history, for example) and comparing the observations to the demands made in vo-ag. This is further compounded by the responsibilities of other vocational teachers as related to those in vo-ag. Only the vo-ag teacher has program responsibilities.

The fact that vo-ag is a program and not a class should be viewed with positive enthusiasm. The vo-ag teacher is in a leadership position and has the opportunity to make substantive impacts in most school districts in the United States. Individuals who are self-starters are required to effectively develop a vo-ag program.

The Climate: Is It A Mirror?

The conditions under which people work are important in making a successful beginning. Some schools need new vo-ag teachers almost every year. In other schools, teachers may spend a lifetime teaching vo-ag. What makes the difference? It is something known as "climate."

In vo-ag, climate for a beginning teacher includes the general attitude in the school and community toward education, the attitude of the school administrators, the kind of vo-ag facilities, the nature of agricultural industry in the area, and the performance of previous vo-ag teachers. Individuals can be successful or failures in any climate. This depends upon the attitude and enthusiasm of the beginning teacher. The attitudes of others toward vo-ag are largely the products of vo-ag teachers toward their own programs. Vo-ag teachers who have enthusiastic attitudes toward vo-ag are also likely to have administrators, communities, agricultural representatives, and others who have enthusiastic attitude.

Much of the vo-ag climate in a school is merely a reflection of the attitudes of vo-ag teachers themselves. Climate is largely a mirror of the vo-ag personnel. To a large extent, teachers create their own climate.

Retention

Much has been written and spoken about a shortage of vo-ag teachers. The question that is sometimes raised is, "Does a shortage of teachers exist?" If we look at the number of teachers who complete teacher education programs, we will find that an adequate number is usually prepared. Many of those who are prepared do not teach, but choose to pursue other careers, primarily in agricultural industry.

Another problem is that some individuals teach only one or two years. Some of these are very capable teachers, but they become dissatisfied with teaching. This is due to a number of factors. The need exists for close follow up by teacher educator departments and state supervisory personnel. This follow up can provide assistance to help beginning teachers adjust and feel a sense of satisfaction with their teaching. The responsibility for increasing retention rests with local school administrators, agricultural teacher educators, and state supervisory personnel.

Teacher Supply

Each year since 1965 a study has been made of the supply of and demand for teachers of vocational agriculture. Initiated by Ralph Woodin at The Ohio State University, the study is now carried out by David G. Craig at The University of Tennessee. Entitled "A National Study of the Supply and Demand for Teachers of Vocational Agriculture," the study is partially supported by the Agricultural Education Division of the American Vocational Association.

The 1980 version of this study reported that teacher turnover was 12.5 percent, the highest in the 16-year history of the study. All of the vo-ag profession needs to be concerned about the retention of the quality teachers. Helping beginning teachers adjust is one way of reducing turnover and solving the problems caused by a shortage of teachers.

Support from Profession

Beginning teachers need support from the profession. The support can be provided individually by teachers, supervisors and teacher educators and by professional organizations. The performance of individuals in the vo-ag family has a strong influence on beginning teachers.

One of the areas in which members of the vo-ag family need to work is to portray a positive, enthusiastic image to beginning teachers. This is comprised of a myriad of elements, including what is said and what is done. An example is when experienced teachers complain about job demands (long hours, etc.) in the presence of beginning teachers. The vo-ag family needs to work toward building an enthusiastic, positive attitude among beginning teachers.

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The Beginning Teacher

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August, 1981

The theme for this issue of the MAGAZINE is "The Beginning Teacher." Dr. Phillip Zurbrick of the University of Arizona has served as Theme Editor. His assistance is greatly appreciated.

The Cover

Rob Turley, a first-year vocational agriculture teacher at Dysart High School in Peoria, Arizona, is shown explaining a concept in animal nutrition to students in his class. (Photograph courtesy of Phillip Zurbrick, University of Arizona.)

THEME

Perpetuating The Profession

BY PHILLIP R. ZURBRICK, THEME EDITOR

Editor's Note: Dr. Zurbrick is Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721.

The perpetuation of a profession, not unlike the perpetuation of a species, requires the constant introduction of new individuals with new ideas and enthusiasm. All of us in agricultural education must be cognizant of and concerned with helping others find the rewards in teaching and the opportunities for success that we have experienced. Only through our attention to these concerns can we continue to be part of a successful, dynamic profession which will continue to serve people and the agricultural industry in the manner we have so successfully used in the past.

Another lesson which can be drawn from nature is that the species which provides the most desirable environment for the beginner tends to be the most successful in perpetuating itself. The neophyte in agricultural education is of course the beginning teacher. Without the annual influx of new teachers into our profession, it would not last long.

The continuing need for vocational agriculture teachers, coupled with the large number who teach only a few years, leads one to question if we are providing the most desirable environment for the beginning teacher. If we are not providing conditions under which a beginning teacher can learn and succeed, we need to ask ourselves why.

It is very easy to point the finger at one part of our profession and say they are negligent. One might for example blame the local school administrator for not providing the beginning teacher with a lighter load, higher salaries and easier classes. Or, we might blame teacher educators for not recruiting more teachers and not preparing them better. Still, we could blame the supervisors for not providing enough on-the-job supervision or not being sensitive enough to the beginning teacher's problems. Further, one might blame fellow teachers for not taking the harder classes rather than giving them to the beginner or for not encouraging and helping the new teacher more. Obviously, the environment of the beginning teacher is multifaceted in which everyone in the profession plays a part. It is important that we all contribute in a positive way towards enhancing the opportunity for the beginning teacher because we all have a professional investment in his/her success.

It is particularly appropriate that this issue of THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE is devoted to the theme of the beginning teacher. The start of a new school year with many beginning teachers about to begin their careers is imminent. We have asked people representing the various phases of the profession to reflect on the initial experience and provide suggestions for its enhancement. Teachers who have recently completed their first year have provided suggestions for those beginning and as well as those who might provide assistance. A high school principal suggests how the beginning teacher can be helped, identifies warning signs of difficulty and suggests how the new teachers can help themselves. Supervision and how it can be most effectively delivered and received so as to enhance teacher effectiveness is also addressed.

In summary, I hope that after reading the articles we can all see ways in which we can help the beginning teacher and be so inclined as to follow through. I also hope that the new teacher will find the articles enlightening and will stay in and help perpetuate a wonderful profession.

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The Agricultural Education Magazine

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THEME

The First Year: Help When Help Is Needed

BY GARY CAMPBELL

Editor's Note: Mr. Campbell is Vocational Agriculture Teacher at Sahuarita High School in Sahuarita, Arizona 85629.

The teacher of vocational agriculture in America should be considered an endangered species. Many times we have heard the reasons why our NVATA membership is falling. The list of closed departments grows with each passing year. Qualified vocational agriculture teachers leave the profession in increasing numbers for a variety of reasons. Let us not go the way of the Carrier Pigeon. Each of us has within us the ability to turn the situation around. My mission is not to outline our problems, but to outline the future — the future of the first-year teacher. The neophyte vocational agriculture teacher is our future because if he or she is not fully aware of the job that lies ahead, they too will leave.

What then of that first year? Our agriculture teacher trainers are doing an excellent job of preparing new teachers. When they exit college, new ag teachers are prepared to begin teaching; but perhaps only prepared to begin teaching. What are the challenges and concerns which lie ahead in the next 12 months? Where are the answers to the questions that were not covered in school and the student teaching experience?

The new teacher is a professional and will proceed forward. He or she has many decisions to make. The hardest decision is the use of time. Time management is a difficult tool to get a handle on. Wasted steps, extra trips to the principal or maintenance yard all teach valuable lessons in time management. Other decisions include program thrust, which direction to take, change or remain the same.

What must be taught? What kind of competencies must the student possess to enter and advance in the agricultural community? The FFA and SOEP offer new challenges. The successful program has an active FFA and again time is critical. The SOEP means supervision — it must be done, but how much and how often? All of these questions, challenges, concerns and more leave the first year teacher anxious and hopefully ready to seek some help.

Ask Questions!

The best advice that can be offered to the new teacher is the same words offered to the incoming freshmen, "Don't be afraid to ask questions." Once philosophy and policy have been outlined, procedure must be addressed. Procedure is the great unknown. Those of us who have taught for a while know that resources are the key — use them! The school has valuable teaching resources — other teachers who will feel flattered to be asked for help. Get from them that which is helpful and will fit policy and philosophy. Go into the community and seek aid. Resource persons and materials abound in the community. Find the key contact person — a farmer, agribusinessman, cafe owner, anyone who can give aid. If there is an active advisory council, they will prove invaluable. Use anything you can. Cultivate a relationship with the administration. They want you to succeed. Your success will make them shine. Follow school procedures and pay attention to details in working with administrators. Think ahead and make the administration's tasks easier and they will smooth your path. One other tip is to use your telephone and the mail to keep in contact with the state staff. They know procedures to follow in the matters of schedules and deadlines for vocational funding and FFA activities.

Get Help!

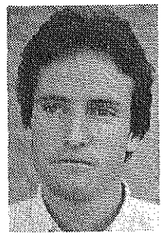
Another valuable resource includes the experienced ag teachers in nearby departments. Some state agricultural teachers associations operate on a buddy system and informally assign a nearby teacher to help. Most will help willingly whether assigned or not. We all want the new members in our profession to do well. New teachers, ask the formal and informal questions of your neighbors. Each of us needs someone to whom we can talk and blow off steam. Experienced teachers can keep you aware of local, county, district, and regional activities as no one else can. They can help you avoid pitfalls peculiar to your area. Experienced teachers should "keep in touch." Ask about activities and upcoming events and share experiences when you are together. Make the extra effort to see that the new teacher does it right the first time. That first year is rough and we can help smooth the road.

Experience is the best teacher — we believe this! New teachers must learn from their experiences. Look forward to each new challenge. Test yourself and try to accomplish more with less effort. Don't be afraid of making a mistake as this will only prevent you from trying something new. Use your students, school and community to provide the best program you can with what you have. Be prepared for the best and expect nothing less. Have faith in your ability and plan ahead. Each year will bring a new set of problems and rewards. You will avoid many problems the second year. Who knows, next fall a new vocational agriculture teacher may ask advice from you on how to survive the first year!

THEME

The First Year: A Series of Challenges

It is difficult to capture in a word or two what that first year was like. It was enjoyable . . . but not always. It was inspiring . . . but not always. It was challenging . . . yes, it was always challenging.



By John Mulcahy

Editor's Note: Mr. Mulcahy formerly taught vocational agriculture at Evergreen High School in Vancouver, Washington 98664.

As I recall now, the challenges began that first day. By some administrative fluke, both my class and another were assigned to the same room. Seeing no other alternative, I elected to take my class to the parking lot. There, the students dutifully stood or leaned against cars as I detailed my classroom rules, threatening the wrath of God upon all transgressors. I stood with handouts under each foot and notes tucked precariously beneath my arm, all the while quietly cursing the wind and praying that the ever-present northwest rain spare us fifty minutes. It did.

The days following held their challenges, too, though of a different sort. Becoming accustomed to "Mr. Mulcahy" was no small chore. Even now, I glance furtively about at the mention of it, expecting to see my father. And, too, there was the challenge of learning to discipline. Each of us recalls, I suspect, that first time a student said, "And what if I don't want to?" Most of us resisted the urge to strangle the offending party, and instead reminded them that they were not asked but told.

Learning to discipline also required a certain thickening of the skin. Many teachers never expect to be popular. Others, I suppose, secretly hope that they can be "friends" with their students. Yet, more than a few beginning teachers have found that familiarity breeds indifference and contempt. Few students will obey a teacher they cannot respect.

Lesson Planning — In Search of a Teacher's "Holy Grail"

The daily task of writing and revising lesson plans was a definite challenge. Many nights were occupied with the endless chores of locating information, composing study questions and devising teaching aids. At other times, the ongoing search continued for a teacher's "holy grail" — that introduction to a lesson which spurs students on to joyous, self-directed learning! (I must say that if such an introduction exists, it somehow eluded me.)

Delivering lessons proved to be no less a challenge than preparing them. Balancing the opposing acts of speaking, listening, watching, twisting ears and confiscating chewing gum required some getting use to. It was also necessary to learn to vary the instructional format. At first, neglecting everything Dr. Bjoraker had taught me, I lectured fifty minutes non-stop. Very soon, however, I learned that fifty minutes of my endless drawl is something less than music to the ears of high school freshmen. In retrospect, alternating informational, operational and managerial lessons, as required by instructional objectives, is the best approach. Variety is still the spice of life and a good hedge against discipline problems.

Time Management — The Biggest Challenge of All

Perhaps the biggest challenge of that first year was time management. If I made one list of things to do, I made one hundred. Morning after morning I made a list of things to be accomplished that day, and night after night I stared at the list of tasks undone. Always, it seemed other things took precedence: There was the student with a sick hog or the student who needed help with a speech; there was the broken water pipe that could not wait or a building project that took longer than planned; and often, there was the student or parent who simply needed to talk. Each of these activities is vitally important, as are preparing lesson plans, farm visits, grading papers, completing reports, FFA meetings, judging team practice, ad infinitum. The miracle is accomplishing them within a day.

Some Tips

Ask for help. Looking back, I am convinced that if there was a mistake to be made that first year, I made it. Agriculture department meetings were often interrupted with fits of laughter as I recited my litany of errors. Yet, when the laughter subsided, a helpful suggestion was always offered. For that, I shall be forever indebted to Rich Cooper and George Jungle. Fellow teachers, especially vocational agriculture teachers, should be consulted often. Why reinvent the wheel? Once upon a time, they were first year teachers, too.

Leave time for yourself. The solution to managing one's time wisely lies, in part, in adherence to a schedule. Still, flexibility is important. In my case, setting aside one afternoon a week when students were not allowed in the department was the ticket to success. This approach allowed me to collect my thoughts, to survey the facilities, and most importantly to work uninterrupted for several hours.

Maintain discipline. Disruptive students can take the joy out of teaching if allowed to have their way. Every effort should be made to put a stop to such behavior before it develops into a problem. I have found that calling parents at the first sign of trouble is well worth the time invested. Most parents will appreciate your concern and attend to the problem immediately. An occasional call or letter to the parents of those students who are a joy to have in class is also a good idea. Students will soon learn that appropriate (as well as inappropriate) behavior gains attention.

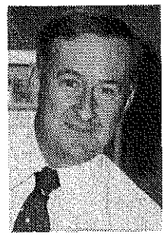
Summary

My first year of teaching was certainly challenging. It began with those first nervous moments in the parking lot and continued through discipline problems, grading periods, meetings, and contests. Each was a new experience; each was a challenge. I made many mistakes that first year. Still, none of my mistakes were novel; each had been made before.

Recognizing mistakes, however, is not enough. Few patients have been cured by the knowledge of their ailment alone. Achieving success involves constant planning and immediate attention to problems as they arise. Invite constructive criticism from teacher trainers and state supervisors. And, above all, consult fellow agriculture teachers. I have never met an agriculture teacher who shunned an opportunity to be of help to a colleague.

THEME

The First Year: More Than Survival Training



By Peter A. Sesow

Editor's Note: Dr. Sesow is Principal of Dysart High School in Peoria, Arizona 85345.

Orientation activities occur in high schools throughout the United States each September. Faculties return from summer vacations or part-time jobs to begin another year of teaching. New faces are seen in the group. Introductions are made. The new teachers are proud as they tell of their preparation and mention the names of the colleges or universities attended. They hope the apprehension they feel is not evident. They know their academic preparation has been good. They are not so confident as they think about the responsibilities they will be confronted with in just a few days as classes arrive. They find there is so much to remember and learn about this new place. Finally, there is a day to themselves to talk to their new colleagues and to make last minute preparations.

The Beginning of a Career

The students finally arrive. The tardy bell rings, the door is closed, and a career begins. Maybe!

New teachers face many challenges. If they are fortunate enough to secure employment in a district which has made provision for their continued growth through experience-type activities, they will probably make progress and remain in teaching. If not, they will become frustrated and either leave teaching or go from job to job attempting to survive in the business of teaching.

By the "luck of the draw" many new teachers somehow seem to survive through their own tenacity the first few shaky years. Well-intentioned administrators either cannot find the time or lack the necessary skills to assist the beginning teacher.

It appears that three paramount problems exist as attempts are made to evaluate the competency, or if you will, the effectiveness of the beginning teacher. These would include:

1. The administrative expectation
2. Assessment vs. improvement
3. Rewarding survival rather than competent or effective teaching

The Administrative Expectation

The administrative expectation of new teachers is such that the performance during the first year must measure up to particular standards set by the system, or must be equal to or excel the performance of their fellow teachers of many years experience. Interestingly, tenure laws have been instituted to protect the continuing teacher who has gained experience as a result of tenure, while new teachers have no real protection beyond their one-year contract. In a sense, this procedure should be reversed.

Whether we use criterion-referenced or norm-referenced indices, the same problem exists. The administrative expectation leaves out the crucial factor of experience. Until beginning teachers have the opportunity to gain this initial experience, so crucial to the entire field of teaching, a different measure must be utilized rather than that used with the tenured teachers.

Most administrators, if they are honest with themselves, would look back upon their first year of teaching as something less than satisfactory. Yet, as we progress from

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The First Year: More Than Survival Training

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teachers into administrators, we tend to use a different measuring stick to evaluate first year teachers.

Assessment vs. Improvement

A great deal of effort is used in assessing the performance of beginning teachers. Assessment is merely the first step towards the improvement of instruction. If done properly, assessment provides us with a true picture of what is taking place. Unfortunately, by the time thorough assessments are completed, little time is left for the other components, such as analyzing, conferencing, planning for improvement, reassessing, reconferencing, and replanning.

A greater commitment of time, resources, and personnel must be provided if we are to be truly effective at improving instruction. Implicit in all of the above is a clear understanding by the evaluator and the teacher that both parties operate from a common definition of teaching competency or effectiveness; that the teacher must have confidence in the evaluator; and that the evaluator must be sure that the teacher understands how to use the recommendations to bring about improvement.

Perhaps we need to use a little different approach with the new teacher. It might be well to very thoroughly explore the instrumentation to be used in the evaluation, coming to agreement on the various terms utilized. This will enable beginning teachers to be aware of just what is expected of them. Teachers need to get to know their evaluator, during which time a level of trust can be established. Once this has been accomplished, suggestions made by the evaluator will become more believable and acceptable.

Rewarding Effective Teaching

This point is perhaps the most crucial. It seems that we tend to reward our beginning teachers on the basis of survival rather than effectiveness or competency. Few beginning teachers are dismissed due to poor subject matter background or for lack of creativity or enthusiasm in their teaching. Many are dismissed for failure to maintain "proper" discipline, failure to individualize, personality difficulties, non-conformity, or other similar problems. It appears that given enough time, assistance and work experience, many beginning teachers who are currently being dismissed could be helped to develop the skills to overcome these deficiencies. It is sad to see highly creative, enthusiastic individuals dismissed after their first year of teaching due to a lack of understanding in some area that may require a year or two of experience to develop. It is doubly sad when we have a tenured teacher working on the same staff who lacks creativity and enthusiasm and yet is protected from dismissal by tenure.

The author (right) is shown assisting Rob Turley, a first-year vo-ag teacher at Dysart High School. (Photograph courtesy of Phillip R. Zurbrick, University of Arizona.)

Working With Beginning Teachers

Administrators must be prepared to work with beginning teachers in those areas where help is needed. New teachers need time to become accustomed to their role. The supervisor must exhibit patience and humaneness.

If we are to be truly effective as supervisors of beginning teachers, we might consider the following:

1. Areas in which the new teacher needs help
2. Warning signs that the beginning teacher is experiencing difficulty
3. Ways to help the new teacher

Some common areas in which new teachers need help would include things as simple as housekeeping chores to more complex situations such as discipline.

An abundance of housekeeping chores exists on each campus. Attendance taking, reports requested by the administration, warning notices, grading, tardiness, and many other necessary functions take some of the energy of the new teacher. Accuracy is essential in all of these areas. Inaccuracy will cause concern.

New teachers sometimes find it difficult to establish the proper relationship with students. There may be a tendency to want to be a "friend" or to be "accepted" by the students. This sometimes leads to discipline problems as the teacher attempts to re-establish authority in the classroom.

During the interview, the teacher should very carefully study the philosophy of the school. If this philosophy is contrary to personal beliefs, employment should not be accepted if it is offered. Should it be accepted, it will be difficult to deal with some of the things that will be required.

Good lesson planning is essential to success. The prepared teacher is not likely to experience disciplinary problems, student lack of interest or student failure.

Many early warning signs that the beginning teacher is experiencing difficulty are evident to administrators if they are alert to the signals. Teacher absenteeism, student comments, disciplinary referrals, parental calls, excessive warning notices, excessive failures, teacher nervousness, and students dropping the class are signals to the administrator that the new teacher may need help.

Many approaches may be taken to assist the new teacher with difficulties. Orientation sessions with follow-up are essential at the beginning of the school year. These should be well-planned to insure that the beginning teacher has the opportunity to become as familiar as possible with the school and its policies and procedures. If this is done properly, accuracy of reporting, meeting deadlines, and adherence to policy and procedure will be greatly enhanced.

"Buddy" teachers can be a ready resource for the new teacher as questions arise. Sessions with the administrator and successful disciplinarians on the staff will assist the beginning teacher with many techniques which may be utilized as the need arises. In-service sessions for new staff members should be provided on a regular basis to insure that all possible assistance is given during the first years of teaching. These in-service sessions might address such things as individualization in the classroom, creativity, motivation, discipline and subject matter specialization.

Teaching is a dignified profession and should be treated as such. Since we have invested much time, money and energy in selecting the teacher who will work in our school, it seems prudent that we should protect our investment by being sure that we do everything possible to insure the success of the new teacher on our staff.

THEME

The First Year: A Demanding Experience

By Phillip R. Zurbrick

Editor's Note: Dr. Zurbrick, Theme Editor for this issue of the Magazine, *is a teacher educator at the University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721.*

The one thing all teachers, both past and present, have in common is they have all experienced "that first year of teaching." That fact may explain to a large extent why some are still teaching and others are not. The first year has been described in many different ways. Some have described it as rewarding, exhilerating, interesting and educational and others as disappointing, discouraging, tumultuous and unnerving. All would agree that the initial classroom experience is filled with many highs and likewise many lows. One veteran teacher, who obviously survived the first year, described it as a once in a lifetime happening that every adult should experience, but which no man should have to repeat. Another teacher observed that the work load was so great the first year she was unsure how she survived and was equally sure that if subsequent years were as demanding, few if any would have more than two years of teaching tenure.

A question might be raised as to why the first year is such a traumatic and demanding experience. Kevin Ryan in his book entitled Biting the Apple: Accounts of First Year Teachers describes experiences and raises questions which might help explain the importance of the first year. One important factor seems to be the beginning attitude and expectations with which they approach the initial assignment. When the beginning teacher's expectations don't match the realities of the job, difficulties or as least frustrations are the inevitable result. Often times such experiences are beyond the control of the teacher and come with the "territory".

The fact that the new teacher is commonly assigned to those schools and courses which veteran teachers have rejected is an example. Typically, such assignments involve schools with limited resources and classes with less capable students. Yet, the neophyte is expected to perform as a veteran teacher while carrying a greater teaching load and dealing constantly with unfamiliar situations. All of these add to the intensity of the first year's experience.

Importance of Experience

While the difficulties of the first year are easy to identify, the importance of the experience must not be overlooked. During the first couple of years a vocational agriculture teacher is on the job, the successes and failures which are experienced will influence whether or not the individual chooses to stay in the profession. Further, these experiences will significantly influence the future effectiveness of the instructional program offered.

It is during this time, and especially during the first year, that work patterns are formed and philosophies developed which tend to become career habits. If these habits include lowered expectations or the attitude of "just getting by," the teacher is likely to develop an ineffective philosophy and conduct an inferior vocational agriculture program. On the other hand, when the beginning teacher is placed in a situation where he or she can experience successes and can work under conditions where the total program can function as designed, a strong, capable teacher is generally produced. These situations generally include strong moral support and a program of regular and timely supervision.

Quality Supervision is Essential

The most effective use of supervisory assistance to the teacher occurs during the formative years. Assistance in planning instruction, budgeting professional time and constructive analysis of the vocational agriculture program are useful activities when properly timed and offered. Supervision is further enhanced when it is provided by individuals knowledgeable of both the local situation and of the vocational agriculture program. Often it is difficult if not impossible, to identify an individual with knowledge of both areas. Therefore, supervision may need to be provided by more than one individual and agency. Supervision provided by the local school administration can take many forms and because of its day-in and day-out

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The First Year: A Demanding Experience

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availability, can be the most effective. Local educators often express concern over their lack of understanding of the vocational agriculture program and thus are reluctant to provide constructive suggestions for program improvement. This is where outside personnel need to be utilized in the supervision process. Both state supervisory personnel in vocational agriculture as well as teacher educators in agriculture can be used.

Assuming that a program of supervision is properly designed and delivered for the beginning teacher, the teacher's attitude towards supervision will largely determine its effectiveness. The teacher who is fearful or defensive towards suggestions offered will derive little, if any, benefit from the supervision provided. Such teachers often plan tests or student activities for the class periods when the supervisor is scheduled to observe instruction. These teachers will have reasons or rationalizations to counter every suggestion offered. On the other hand, a teacher who is open, receptive and candid with a supervisor will not only derive value and assistance, but will develop the professional respect of the supervisor for his or her efforts and program.

Success is a Must

Achievement of success as a vocational agriculture teacher is the goal of everyone who works with beginning teachers. In order for such a hope to be realized, the beginning teacher must desire success and be willing to expend the effort needed to overcome their inherent disadvantages. Unfortunately, many beginning teachers expend their efforts in the wrong areas. The beginning vocational agriculture teacher must concentrate efforts and do an effective job of teaching in the classroom and in developing satisfactory supervised occupational experience programs with students. A teacher who recognized this fact, directs efforts accordingly and compensates for disadvantages by using available resources will find that the first year can be an enjoyable experience. Further, the success they experience initially will tend to be repeated in a continuing career as a vocational educator in agriculture.

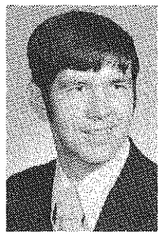
Reference

Ryan, Kevin, et al. BITING THE APPLE: ACCOUNTS OF FIRST YEAR TEACHERS. Longman, New York, 1980.

THEME

The First Year: Making The Trip

Beginning teaching is somewhat analogous to a first experience in independent foreign travel. We study travel brochures and guides. We talk extensively with others who have been there. Travel tips and suggestions are eagerly stashed away. We toy with a few basic foreign language phrases, rough out our itinerary, and budget our money. As our departure date approaches, excitement grows. We enter a foreign country in anticipation of undiscovered delights. The first days are manic. Then jet lag settles in. Sleep is disrupted. We may catch a cold. Language difficulties hamper communication. The costs of traveling are much higher than we had expected (and we lose our traveler's checks). Cities are crowded and noisy; hotel reservations bungled. Suddenly there comes a tidal wave of second thoughts about the whole trip, often accompanied by a discomforting depression. So it is with beginning teaching. No matter how thorough one's preliminary preparation for teaching may be, it can never be fully adequate.



BY ROBERT A. MARTIN AND DAVID L. HOWELL

Editor's Note: Mr. Martin is Instructor and Graduate Student and Dr. Howell is Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Education, the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802. The article was approved by the Pennsylvania State University Review, number 6210-2267, March, 1981.

The above analogy by Ellis Evans (1976) gives us a clear image of the beginning vocational agriculture teacher. New teachers have unique needs and problems. They are concerned about whether they will succeed or fail in their first year in teaching. Beginning teachers are quite vulnerable to the conditions and problems that cause teachers to fail. Under pressure to succeed, a number of teachers are known to revert to practices, some good, many bad, remembered from their own school days. Others are found to rely entirely on their own imagination or initiative to solve the problems that confront them. Some of the novices survive and become masters in their profession. Unfortunately, too many potentially good teachers fail and eventually seek employment elsewhere.

With qualified teachers of agriculture in short supply, intervention is needed to control the defection of new teachers. The question is — what help? Is there a series of strategies we can follow to enable us to help teachers survive? What is the key that unlocks the door to survival?

The Key

Adequate supervision is viewed as one of the keys to helping the beginner become a competent and successful teacher. Research indicates that teachers welcome suggestions for instructional improvement. However, these studies also indicate that teachers reject the type of supervision that is inspective and autocratic in nature. Recent literature in the area of supervision indicates that a shared responsibility in the development of supervisory techniques results in improved staff morale and has a bearing on success in teaching.

Adequate supervisory guidance can provide the key ingredient necessary for an eased entry into the profession. Is there a method of supervision that emphasizes teacher growth, student performance, communication and problem solving? From all indications, evidence is building that there is. The method is called clinical supervision.

Recent research by Martin and Howell (1980) in supervising beginning teachers of agriculture using the clinical supervision model indicates that a beginning teacher working in a system of product specifications can have a positive influence on students regarding the climate and style of operation in the learning situation.

Additionally, Martin and Howell concluded that beginning teachers working in a supervision-by-objectives system perceive their principals to be effective in the following areas of supervision: goal commitment, decision-making procedures, emphasis on objectives, challenge, control over resources, knowledge of results, and intrinsic rewards. Finally, Martin and Howell concluded that principals using product specification supervision perceive themselves as being more effective in instructional supervision in the areas of controlling and managing resources, leadership, openness to teachers, receptivity to ideas, and support given to teachers.

The Supervisory Procedure

Clinical supervision was the brainchild of Morris Cogan of Harvard University in the late 1950's. At the heart of clinical supervision is the concept of product specification. Another term often used is management-by-objectives. The term " clinical supervision" has often been used to imply that there is a strategy to follow when teachers and supervisors begin to solve instructional problems.

Regardless of the term used, the emphasis is on communication, teacher growth, student performance and problem-solving. Practitioners of clinical supervision assume that teachers possess the drive and personal resources to solve their problems.

Clinical supervision is a five-step process that aims at helping the teacher identify and clarify goals and objectives as well as instructional problems and solutions to these problems. Traditional in-class supervision emphasizes teacher defects and all too often casts the supervisor in the role of a superior telling the teacher what needs to be changed and how to change it. However, clinical supervision is just the opposite: it tends to produce a self-directed teacher. Traditional supervision tends to produce a supervisor-directed teacher.

The five steps in clinical supervision include: the pre-observation conference, observation, analysis, post-observational conference, and critique.

The objectives of the pre-observation conference are to establish what is planned for the lesson; become familiar with the performance objectives, student outcomes, and teacher strategies; get an orientation to the group of students the supervisor will be observing; decide on what is to be observed; and develop a contract.

The primary purpose of the observation is to record in writing what goes on during the lesson. The supervisor must collect data based on the original contract. Supervisors using traditional in-class supervision have always tried to list all the teacher weaknesses and problems and to later check them off in the teacher's presence. These lists are then conveniently filed away. Supervisors using clinical supervision collect data on a smaller number of items, as agreed to in the initial contract.

After the observation, the supervisor analyzes and organizes the data collected. The analysis reflects the intent of the original contract objectives established during the pre-observation conference. The supervisor then prepares for the post-observation conference. He/she considers the nature of the teacher and the ability of the teacher to implement any mutually agreed upon changes. The supervisor will also list a number of alternative ways to perform in various teaching situations.

The objective of the post-observation conference is to deal with the original contract items — teaching strategies used and objectives achieved. This conference is positive and reinforcing. The feedback is specific. The teacher is given the opportunity to explain what was accomplished and how it was done. The supervisor and the teacher develop a report of what happened or didn't happen.

The final step, the critique, dwells on one or two items that perhaps need modification. A number of alternatives are discussed. The supervisor and teacher systematically address the problem and develop a strategy to deal with it. The supervisor and teacher then prepare for the next observation.

The ultimate goal of both traditional in-class supervision and clinical supervision is the same — to improve instruction. However, in traditional supervision, emphasis is placed on the process of teaching. There is also an assumption that the supervisor is the expert. By contrast, in clinical supervision, the emphasis is on the student and the product of the learning situation. There is an assumption that both the supervisor and the teacher are instructional experts with the teacher identifying his/her concerns and the supervisor giving specific data on observations. Together they select alternatives to address the teacher's concerns.

Communications

There is no magic in the clinical supervision model itself. Just mechanically following the steps outlined above will not achieve change and result in instructional improvement. The model merely provides the framework for

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The First Year: Making The Trip

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communication. However, the pre-observation conference changes the emphasis of traditional supervision practice. The teacher is placed in a position to explain fully what will happen, how it will happen, and why it will happen. The teacher is specifying the performance objectives, the strategies, the student activities as well as the evaluation criteria. The supervisor is a listener and facilitator. A disciplined effort to improve communication skills on the part of the teacher and supervisor is the key to improved instructional performance and student performance.

Conclusion

It has become increasingly clear that vocational educators, administrators, supervisors, and master teachers need to carefully consider supervisory strategies that will help new teachers adjust to the profession.

Perhaps House and Lapan (1978) said it best when they noted that

"One enters teaching much like a space satellite enters the Earth's atmosphere except the beginning teacher enters without a heat shield. The heats gets progressively more intense and many burn up."

Adequate supervision can provide the heat shield needed to help new teachers remain in the profession and develop a desire to make teaching a life-time career.

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ARTICLE

Preparing for the First Year

BY FRED RENEAU AND MIKE MURRAY

Editor's Note: Dr. Reneau is Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education and Mr. Murray is Graduate Assistant in the Department of Agricultural Education and Mechanization at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

The number of individuals entering the field of vocational agriculture education with little or no farm background is increasing. Because of the reduction of the number of "family farms" coupled with smaller family units, fewer farm experienced youths are entering educational programs geared for training vocational agriculture teachers. As a result, more and more of the beginning vo-ag instructors are going to emerge from this inexperienced population.

Institutions of higher learning that train the vo-ag teachers for farming communities must continuously re-evaluate their agriculture education programs and re-tool them according to the needs of the student with little farm background. Teacher educators in agriculture education must provide the prospective vocational agriculture teachers with a comprehensive variety of experiences that familiarize the beginning teacher with classroom activities, working with student SOEP's, advising FFA chapters, conducting adult work, and participating in professional activities. Twice as many of the individuals majoring in agriculture education have never experienced SOEP nor been active in FFA, these "doing" training activities should be extensive and closely monitored by the agriculture educators.

In providing the prospective teachers of agriculture with these learning experiences, teacher educators must develop within the individual an awareness of the components of a total vocational agriculture program. This process provides the students, especially those with little farm background, with a realistic view of the scope and responsibilities of the vocational agriculture teaching profession

At Southern Illinois University at Carbondale several activities are incorporated into the sequence of courses required by agricultural education majors. The activities or experiences are used to provide the prospective teachers with first hand information and hands-on experiences in teaching vocational agriculture. The prospective teacher involvement with vocational agriculture programs must come early in the teacher education program.

Basic Techniques and Procedures of Instruction

To adequately become acquainted with the multi-faceted teaching profession, each student must complete ten activities at the local high school vocational agriculture program site. One-half day per week for 13 weeks must be spent at the assigned vocational program for the purpose of completing the activities. Each activity has specific items which must be completed and turned into the teacher educator.

Activities of the prospective teacher include:

1. Observe the teacher and students during the class settings.
2. Obtain the names of the students and conduct a preassessment activity.
3. Identify the subject taught and record the teacher and student actions.
4. Become familiar with the teaching materials and equipment available to the assigned class.
5. Participate in two of the following: taking roll, preparing lab demonstration, scoring objective tests, putting material on chalkboard, working with youth club officers, or finding instructional resources in library or files.
6. Prepare a lesson plan and present the mini lesson (15 minutes) to the vocational agriculture class.
7. Identify motivational techniques used in the classroom and observe discipline management.
8. Prepare a second mini lesson plan and present the lesson (15 minutes) to the high school class.
9. Identify the evaluation techniques observed in the class and work with the teacher in grading an objective test.
10. Prepare a lesson plan and teach a complete lesson (50 minutes).

Agriculture Education Programs

To further broaden the scope of the beginning vo-ag teacher, the following experiences are included in the agriculture education program:

1. Visit a vocational agriculture program to determine the components of a total program. Each agricultural education student must set up a meeting time with a vocational agriculture teacher. During the meeting students must identify the components of that particular program, identify the components that are missing (if any), make recommendations for program changes (written critique — to be turned into the teacher educator), and identify the amount of time devoted to each component of the program visited.
2. Attend a high school FFA meeting to determine how the meeting was conducted. The role the advisor played, the major items of business, the use of the official opening and closing ceremonies, and the time involved in this activity (number of meetings, how often, etc.) are determined. A written critique is required.
3. Visit an adult class in agriculture to assess the differences between the adult class and the high school vocational agriculture class. The prospective teacher identifies the method(s) used and discusses with the teacher the time involved in conducting an adult class.
4. Visit an SOEP and cooperative education training site for vocational agriculture students. The prospective teacher analyzes the components of the training site. An evaluation system to be used by the student, teacher, and employer in evaluating the components of the co-op training program is outlined.
5. Discuss with a vocational agriculture teacher the standards of quality evaluation system adopted in Illinois. The prospective teacher previews with the teacher the standards of quality for vocational agriculture programs in Illinois.
6. Participate in a field trip to Vocational Agriculture Service to gain first hand knowledge of reference materials and other teaching media available to vocational agriculture teachers in Illinois.
7. Interview a vocational agriculture teacher, principal or guidance person and school nurse on the school drug and alcohol abuse policy.
8. Visit an SOEP and/or cooperative education training site for vocational agriculture students during a site visit.
9. Participate in an FFA local, sectional, district, state or national evaluation of awards session.
10. During a site visit, discuss the standard of quality evaluation system adopted in Illinois.

Field Experiences

The purpose of field experiences is to provide the preservice agriculture education student the opportunity to observe and participate in experiences in secondary vocational agriculture programs in Illinois. A total of 39 hours of participation must be completed by all agriculture education majors.

The student chooses 12 of the 14 experiences listed below.

1. Determine the purpose and function of the professional.
2. Visit a vocational agriculture program to determine — Why does the teacher teach what he/she teaches?
3. Visit an extension office to assess available material.
4. Determine how the vocational agriculture program is promoted to prospective school students.
5. Identify problems and issues of teachers when working with members of the opposite sex.
6. Determine the major components of the public relations program.
7. Determine the role, function, and activities of an advisory committee.
8. Attend the State or National FFA Convention.
9. Gain experience in teaching adults in vocational agriculture.
10. Attend and participate in the District V Parliamentary Procedure and Public Speaking Contests.
11. Develop a lesson plan and teach a shop skill (30-45 minute presentation).
12. Develop a lesson plan and teach a problem solving topic.
13. Develop a lesson plan on "Record Book," teach and conduct the lesson 20-30 minutes.
14. Identify a student with a special need and do a case study.

Realistic Approach

In providing the prospective teachers of agriculture with these learning experiences, the students develop an awareness of the components of a total vocational agriculture program. This process provides the prospective teachers with a realistic view of the responsibilities of the vocational agriculture teacher.

BOOK REVIEW

PRINCIPLES OF ANIMAL ENVIRONMENT, by Merle L. Esmay, Westport, Connecticut: AVI Publishing Company, Inc., 1978. Textbook Edition, 358 pp., $21.50.

PRINCIPLES OF ANIMAL ENVIRONMENT presents a detailed discussion of the enviromental factors involved in raising livestock and poultry.

Some of the topics discussed in the text include humidity and its effect on animals, heat loss from animals, heat and vapor transmission in buildings, air exchange in livestock and poultry buildings, and energy conservation principles.

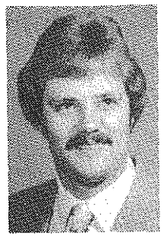
Dr. Esmay, a Professor of Agricultural Engineering at Michigan State University, has included numerous figures and equations in the text to aid the reader in understanding and calculating environmental problems related to air exchange, insulating buildings, etc.

The text is primarily for students enrolled in college agricultural engineering courses and individuals who provide technical advice and assistance in designing and constructing agricultural facilities.

Hobart L. Harmon
Salem, Virginia

ARTICLE

A Rookie Sounds Off



By Brad Greiman

Editor's Note: Mr. Greiman is the Teacher of Vocational Agriculture, Algona Community Schools, Algona, Iowa 50511.

September 30, 1981

Dear Professor,

How are things at the university? Things have sure changed at high school. I don't remember my high school days like they are now . . . we had more respect then. Let me tell you how it really is now.

I'm working like crazy. Some of the students call me by the previous ag teacher's name. Even my mail is addressed to that ag teacher and the superintendent talks about him all the time.

I have a custodian who thinks he's the principal, a faculty who thinks I run a fix-it shop in my free-time, a coach who swears that the 11th commandment is "Thou shalt not miss football practice or thy days shall be short upon the gridiron," and students who want to know when the third test will be given so the half-year of "shop" will start.

Well, that's it for now as I have to do my lesson planning.

Signed,
Rookie Ag Teacher

October 4, 1981

Dear Rookie,

Sounds like you're going through the "Rookie Syndrome" cured only by 30 hour days or you can work smarter rather than longer.

Concentrate on building the program with a blend of freshmen, sophomores and interested juniors and seniors. You will have the most influence on the underclassmen, especially the freshmen.

Recognize that if juniors and seniors are not involved in FFA and SOE now, they never will be. Rather than using valuable time trying to motivate them for those activities, use it to work with freshmen, sophomores and their parents. They will be your solid base in the future built by your aims and goals.

Work your strong areas to cut down on preparation time. When your students seem to be losing interest in class, it is probably time to shift the burden of preparation (lecture) from you to student activities, resource persons, worksheets, role-playing, contests or field trips.

Remember, if you overcome these problems now, your chance of being successful is excellent!

Signed,
Professor

Parts or all of the above letters will sound familiar to vo-ag instructors. Although we might have forgotten many of the problems and ordeals of our first teaching year, they were awfully serious at the time.

I was a rookie teacher three years ago. I want to share some things that were helpful to me.

Have Patience

Realize that respected and smooth-running vo-ag programs take more than one or two years to develop. Have three or four main goals you wish to accomplish during the year, but don't lose sight of your long-range goals for the program.

Many times beginning teachers look at top vo-ag programs in the state and feel they should be at that level also — not five years down the road but immediately. A vo-ag program is built one step at a time.

Emphasize Strong Area

Work your strong area — whether beef, crops, mechanics, or agribusiness — as there is less preparation for those areas. When people asked what I was teaching, I said, "animal science."

Also, have one class in the mechanics laboratory at all times so you have one less classroom preparation. Of course, laboratory activities also require preparation, often more than teaching in the classroom.

Get Help

If you don't ask for help, you won't receive any. Beg or borrow handouts, student activities, and teaching materials. Visit with neighboring ag teachers and community college instructors who have specialty areas. Your cooperating instructor during student teaching will be glad to help out.

I would especially like to emphasize the importance of joining your state vo-ag teachers association and becoming involved on the local level. Many questions and problems can be solved the first year at the local meetings. Our sub-district has developed the policy of riding in car pools to these monthly meetings. This allows discussion the entire evening.

Beginning teacher workshops can be very helpful. (I attended some my first year.) These meetings were very helpful. We all had many of the same first-year problems and the time spent discussing solutions was most beneficial.

Discipline

Every article in this magazine could deal with discipline and classroom management, but experience is still the best teacher. Some key points to note are discussed here.

1. Beginning teachers must expect high school students to test their ability early in their teaching career. Your expectations for their behavior will become evident quickly. Students will soon know the answers to these questions: Can I be late for class? How much talking can I do in class? Will he or she take points off if my assignments are late? Do I have to wear safety glasses in the shop? Do I have to take notes?

2. Respect from students is gained by being fair, honest and firm. Students expect you to control the class. It is especially important as you get to know the students and their home situations to not relax your standards. There is a fine line between being a friend and a teacher.

3. Correct a small problem before it becomes too serious. Talk one-to-one with an uncooperative student or make a home visit to better understand the situation. Stress that a cooperative spirit is needed so your role as teacher can be carried out and students may learn.

4. Students expect you to promptly handle discipline problems such as talking and late assignments. Only in extreme cases, such as insubordination or damage to school property, should a student be sent to the office for the principal to deal with.

5. For a class whose members have a hard time getting into their seats and is noisy at the beginning of class, have an assignment on the board, a test or a worksheet to start on. A seating chart seems like elementary school tactics, but just separating good friends does wonders for classroom control. Be sure to change the seating arrangement often to create a new look. (I knew of a student teacher who put the tables in a different arrangement every week for a full quarter.)

6. Never make rules or threats you cannot back-up. Also don't give ultimatums or place students in a position where they have to make decisions. Example: The class has been noisy so you say, "Next person to talk without permission goes to the office" or "If anyone misbehaves on this field trip it will be your last."

7. Remember that a well-prepared teacher who uses good student activities is a prerequisite for good classroom management.

Make Things Happen

If we set up a climate for learning, our students are far more likely to sense that something not only can happen in our class, but probably will. If you feel comfortable and special about your teaching, classroom and mechanics laboratory, students will also. We all know the important difference between a house and a home. The same is true of a classroom.

Every classroom should display student work. Important work should be shared with others. Have them bring in crop and soil samples, advertisments, feed tags, posters, herbicide cans, and weed samples. Start a scrapbook of judging teams and contest winners on the wall. Start plaques for top judges, fruit salespersons or State Farmers. Make the vo-ag room special and start tradition.

Maintain Your Sense of Humor

If the first year of teaching is so bad you can't laugh once in a while, it probably isn't worth it. So what if your judging team writes Suffolk Yous and Hampshires U's on the card. Hang onto these cards and on those really bad days pull them out and remind yourself of the progress you have made.

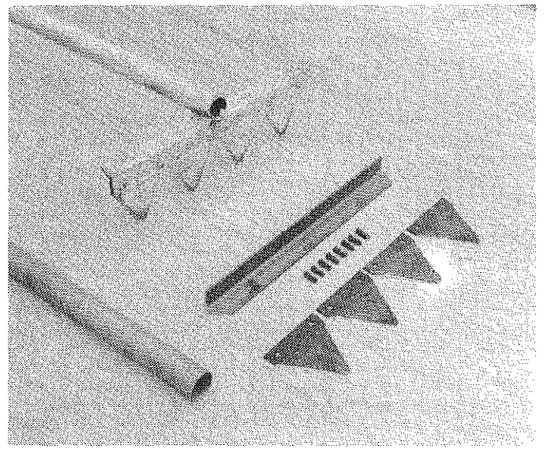
Teaching vo-ag is a demanding profession. To find enjoyment in teaching, we should look at each difficulty as a challenge rather than a wall. Each student comes to us with different wants, needs and abilities. It's easy to see why problems can overwhelm and dominate us if we don't look upon them as professional challenges rather than personal obstacles. We must take the attitude of working with our students rather than against them.

Count Successes

Remember to count your successes. Too often we count only our failures. Our successes far out number our short comings. So, let's count them. This will give us more enjoyment out of teaching. We will be better teachers in the process!

IDEAS UNLIMITED

Constructing A Fire Rake



Fire rake, complete and with needed materials.

By Robert M. Pollok

Editor's Note: Mr. Pollok is Vocational Agriculture Teacher at Dan River High School at Ringgold, Virginia 24586.

A fire rake is a practical, easy to build construction project. Students can apply a number of skills in building the one shown here, including measuring, cutting, drilling, welding, and riveting.

The bill of materials is:

- One piece of 1 inch metal conduit 60 inches long (This is the handle.)
- Four mower sections
- One piece 1/8 inch x 3/4 inch angle iron as long as the four sections when placed side by side
- Eight 3/16 inch x 1/2 inch iron rivets

The procedure involves:

- Clamping the mower sections to the angle iron and drilling 3/16 inch holes;
- riveting the four mower sections to the angle iron; and
- welding the handle to the top and center of the angle iron.

ARTICLE

Priorities for the First-Year Teacher

By Richard Norris

Editor's Note: Mr. Norris is Vocational Agriculture Teacher, Northwestern R-1 Schools, Mendon, Missouri 64660.

All vo-ag teachers have been told to set priorities in their jobs. As difficult as this task is for the experienced teacher, it can seem impossible for those just starting out. Having just finished my first year as a vocational agriculture teacher, I feel that there are four major items that first-year teachers must place high on the priority list if they are to be successful. Each of these items requires such large portions of time that it is sometimes easier to neglect them than to see that each is done right.

The areas which I have found to be of critical importance in trying to develop a solid program as a first year instructor of vocational agriculture are: classroom instruction, supervised occupational experience, farm visits, and record keeping.

Classroom Instruction

Each teacher must keep in mind that he or she was hired first of all to teach vocational agriculture. It is easy at times to become so involved with other activities, that the day to day classroom instruction is neglected. If a first-year teacher does nothing else, spend enough time in preparation for each day's classes so that you are confident when it comes time to teach. A cooperating teacher is no longer around to make sure you prepare your lesson plans, use motivational methods, or gather together all the materials you need for classes. You are now on your own! Teachers who come to class prepared will find their problems to be fewer and their jobs more enjoyable, while those who are ill prepared give their classes an open invitation to misbehave.

In preparing for each day's classes, don't be afraid to use imagination and try new ways to present lessons. If something fails, just chalk it up to experience. You'll have a lot of that before your first year is over. Nothing turns off students faster than a class that is predictable from day to day. Work to make class an enjoyable experience for you and your students.

Finally, if discipline problems should arise, and they will, deal with them quickly and fairly. Do not ignore a situation in the hopes that it will go away. It won't! Try to be fair and consistent with your students. When dealing out punishment, try to make it fit the "crime." Remember, if a first-year teacher must lean one way, it is better to be too strict than too easy.

Supervised Occupational Experience Programs

Finding each of your students an SOE program can be a difficult task, especially if you have a large number of students living in town. It won't take long to realize that those students who have programs are the same ones who work the hardest in class, take a greater interest in the FFA, and are willing to help you out when you need help. Not only will you be benefiting the student by requiring and helping him or her find a suitable SOE program, but you will receive rewards knowing that this program will help the student to get more out of vo-ag classes. I have found that helping students find projects that are right for them, and then watching them work and succeed with the program, to be one of the most rewarding parts of the job.

Farm Visits

Making farm visits is one of the easiest areas to neglect. We have so many other things pressing for our time that we can let our number of monthly farm visits drop. I know of no quicker or easier way to gain the respect of students than through the use of on-farm visits. If a new teacher shows genuine interest in students by visiting them and helping with their problems, the students will repay you with respect not just as a teacher, but as someone who really cares. Remember, don't let the size of the program influence how interested you are in the student. The student with one pig must be as important as the one with 50 cows!

Record Keeping

A final major priority lies in the area of monthly record keeping. You will be saving not only your students, but yourself, a great deal of time and trouble if you teach proper record keeping and require all students to turn in monthly records. It is so much easier to fill out reports and proficiency award applications, if the students have kept good monthly records. You may find that students complain about the practice of turning in monthly records at first, but they will soon become accustomed to it and the time saved in the long run will be great.

Success

There are many important items for first year teachers. FFA activities, state reports, local school responsibilities, and many others are important. In looking back over my first year, the four items in this article seem to have been most important. It is my feeling that if new teachers do a good job in these areas, all the other things required of them will fall in place and they will be successful.

BOOK REVIEW

Developing Shop Safety Skills, by Clinton O. Jacobs and J. Howard Turner, Athens, Georgia: American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials, 1979, 84 pp., $6.75.

Developing Shop Safety Skills provides readers with an opportunity to become acquainted with essential shop safety principles. The writers use color pictures, simple diagrams, and charts to supplement the book's easy to read print. The color presentations will serve as reading incentives for students who prefer to read books that contain a variety of effective pictures.

Appropriately, the first chapter of the book focuses on the reasons why an individual should develop a concern for safety. Subsequent chapters of the book provide information about the kinds and types of clothing one should wear while engaging in shop work, safety skills that could alleviate common bodily injury, and safety concerns and practices that should be integrated into one's work habits. The cleaning, securing and storage of tools is emphasized in one of the chapters which also details several tasks that should be accomplished by a shop worker prior to leaving a work area. The book also features the names and addresses of fourteen safety agencies and two effective charts that provide information about fire extinguishers and safety color coding for shop machines and equipment.

In addition to their knowledge and experience, the authors have also obtained information from several industries and individuals who possessed expertise in agricultural engineering, agricultural education, safety and agricultural mechanics. As noted by the authors, the concepts presented in the book have common application for school or laboratory personnel, the homeowner, farm worker or skilled industrial worker. Information presented in the book also makes it an ideal text for high school and junior college students.

All students, non-professionals, and professionals who are engaged in shop activities or possess a common concern for shop safety will find this book useful as a reference and text.

Daniel M. Lyons
North Carolina A&T
State University
Greensboro, North Carolina

LETTERS

"Letters to the Editor" is a feature to encourage dialogue among readers of the Magazine. Selected letters will be printed without comment or editing. Your letter will be welcomed! (Send letters to: Editor, The Agricultural Education Magazine, P.O. Drawer AV, Mississippi State, MS 39762.)

Editor:

I want to congratulate you upon your recent forthright editorial commenting upon those in Washington who would sell vocational education down the river in order to please a new administration. Such public statements as yours are the best means I know of to keep our fair weather friends in proper alignment. This problem is of course not new for we had a similar experience during the early Eisenhower years.

I find it refreshing to read your editorials dealing with some very real problems and issues brought about by history-making changes in our society.

Sincerely,
Ralph J. Woodin, Professor Emeritus
The Ohio State University and
The University of Tennessee
208 Agricultural Administration Bldg.
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Editor:

I enjoyed reading your recent editorial "The Big Sell" in the May issue. I could not agree more with one of your concluding sentences: "During economic adversity, good vocational education is needed more than ever." Furthermore, to quote Tom Jones, "vocational education is part of the solution not part of the problem!"

The only part you had to leave out of your article was to name the vocational educators who no longer represent us. I think we need to know who "they" are so we can, as you suggest, purge them as leaders.

May I hear from you?

Sincerely,
Joe Sabol, Teacher Educator
Agricultural Education Department
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, California 93407

Editor:

Thanks for the fine statement placed in the front of the January, 1981, Agricultural Education Magazine. There are many unsung heroes that work long hours to improve the program and provide service to FFA members. Many of these individuals work at the school, state and university level, but we are fortunate to also have many dedicated people at the FFA Center. They work on important matters that cause good things to happen to young people preparing for agriculture careers.

Again, thanks for your fine statement. It really helps to receive some praise and a pat on the back.

Sincerely,
C. Coleman Harris
National Executive Secretary
National FFA Center
P.O. Box 15160
Alexandria, Virginia 22309

ARTICLE

A Heritage and Philosophy For Training Skilled Agricultural Workers

By Charles C. Drawbaugh

Editor's Note: Dr. Drawbaugh is Professor of Agricultural Education at Rutgers — The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903.

"I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture." These were the thoughts and words of George Washington, the father of our country, nearly two hundred years ago. "The greatest service which can be rendered any country," Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "is to add a useful plant to its culture." Daniel Webster's assessment of the basic industry was that, "Unstable is the future of the country which has lost its taste for agriculture."

"From the very beginning, great Americans from all walks of life have eloquently praised the farmer as a source of our Nation's strength" (Country Gentleman, 1976). Agriculture always was and still is recognized as being vital to the economy and well being of our Nation and viewed as an ideal way of life by our people. Inspiration, rugged individualism, hard work, and technological invention coupled with the blessings of fertile land and favorable climate have made the industry of agriculture in the United States of America the most productive and most efficient in the world.

Enabling Legislation

As agriculture became more technical and scientific, it was in need of support systems to (1) train highly skilled workers, (2) engage in systematic research activities, and (3) disseminate such information as approved farm practices and research findings to farmers. Historically, four pieces of federal legislation created an educational structure for supporting the rapidly changing agricultural industry of the 1800's. The acts, years of passage, and major provisions were as follows:

1862 — Morrill Act - Donated public lands to (loyal) states for the establishment of colleges for agriculture and the mechanical arts.

1887 — Hatch Act - Established agricultural experiment stations and provided for the diffusion of agricultural information.

1914 — Agricultural Extension Act - Provided for a program of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics.

1917 — Smith-Hughes Act - Provided federal grants-in-aid to be matched by individual states for promoting instruction in agriculture and the trades.

The Smith-Hughes Act stated that agricultural education "shall be designed to meet the needs of persons over fourteen years of age who have entered upon or are preparing to enter upon the work of the farm or farm home." The controlling purpose of the act was to fit boys and girls for gainful employment and, ultimately, establishment in farming. For the next fifty or more years after its passage, the Smith-Hughes Act was bolstered by succeeding acts which provided additional appropriations to further promote programs and provide training for veterans, out-of-school youth, and others.

In 1950, the Congress of the United States of America, recognizing the importance of the Future Farmers of America as an integral part of the program of vocational agriculture, granted a federal charter to the organization under Public Law 740. The FFA is a national organization of students enrolled in vocational agriculture. It has had a most positive influence on the training of students for skilled jobs in farming and ranching.

"The Vocational Education Act of 1963 was passed because of accumulating evidence that the old federal program of assistance to vocational education — the one begun by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and supplemented over the years by other acts of Congress — was not broad enough, or flexible enough, or rich enough, to meet present day needs, much less the needs of tomorrow" (The VEA Act of 1963).

The Act broadened vocational education in agriculture so that it was no longer limited to preparation of persons "to enter upon the work of the farm or farm home." The Act included education in any occupation involving knowledge and skills in agriculture. In addition to production agriculture, the taxonomy for vocational education in agriculture embraced agricultural supplies and services, agricultural mechanics, agricultural products, ornamental horticulture, agricultural resources, and forestry.

No longer were federal funds earmarked specifically for agricultural education programs. The recent legislation focused on such priorities as programs for the disadvantaged, bilingual vocational education, sex stereotyping, and program improvement. Funds for vocational agricultural education are now funneled through priority areas rather than made available directly to the service area as was previously the case.

Tradition and Legacy

For three-fourths of a century vocational agricultural educators have been preparing youth and adults to produce all the food and fiber needed in our land. A large surplus of our agricultural products has helped feed and clothe the poor and hungry peoples of the world. Vocational education in agriculture has contributed immensely to the well being of our Nation during such periods of adversity as depression, war, drought, and the more recent energy crisis. During times of national emergency, programs were extended in many directions to meet needs. Traditionally, agricultural education can be depended upon by the government to meet its needs.

Three or more generations of dedicated agricultural educators have experimented with ways and means of strengthening the educational program. The records are rich in effective procedures and proven techniques. While the heritage reveals changing philosophies and strategies, certain key concepts, which point to consistent strengths of the delivery system over the years, permeate and pervade the literature.

Key Concepts

The blending of a good image of agriculture with strong legislative support and a rich legacy in training has resulted in six commonly recognized key concepts which generally characterize vocational education in agriculture as it is administered nationally. Taken together, the key concepts can be used to form a philosophical base for training youth to become skilled agricultural workers. The six key concepts with supporting statements follow:

1. Vocational education in agriculture is an integral part of the public school system. Since 1918, the Cardinal Principles of Education have been recognized as a basic guide in educational matters. The cardinal principle on vocation "emphasized equipping the student to earn a living, to serve society through work, to maintain the right relationship toward fellow workers and society, and as far as possible, to develop oneself through the vocation" (Today's Education, 1976).

Vocational education in agriculture is a public necessity which should be controlled and supported by the public. In addition to need, it can be further justified in that it broadens and enhances general education offerings and contributes to the development of the whole child. Agricultural educators advocate a firm foundation of general education prior to specialization in agriculture. Agricultural educators "recognize the American tradition that abhors class distinction and prefers an educational system that gives little evidence of demarcation between groups of students" (Barlow, 1969).

2. Vocational education in agriculture is for all who desire it and can benefit from it. Programs of instruction should be planned with reference to the occupational needs of the industry, but also be congruous with the needs of the people to be served. Each individual, regardless of age, sex, creed, color, nationality, geographic region, or intelligence, should be allowed and encouraged to elect instruction in agriculture when aptitude and/or interest lead to inquiry. Vocational education in agriculture, for example, can and should serve those for whom special education is prescribed. It can and should offer training for those already employed who are guarding against job obsolescence or wanting to move up the agricultural ladder as a means of maintaining or improving their standard of living. The concept dictates that programs must provide for flexibility in terms of student entry, termination, re-entry, and advancement needs.

3. Vocational education in agriculture fits persons for gainful employment. A challenge for vocational education in agriculture is to ensure that competent, motivated, productive workers are available to meet the needs of the agricultural labor market. This requires that individuals engaged in or preparing to engage in farming or in off-farm agricultural occupations possess the agricultural competencies necessary to secure satisfactory placement, advance in an agricultural occupation, or become established as an entrepreneur. In addition to employment skills, the individual should be fitted with employability skills such as occupationally acceptable values, attitudes, and behaviors. Vocational agricultural education is charged with the responsibility to train skilled workers in agriculture upon which our nation can rely to guard against the social, economic, and political turmoil common to many nations of the world.

4. Vocational education in agriculture emphasizes individualized, community-oriented, and relevant instruction. Instructors are encouraged to adopt the methods and techniques of teaching which are identified with individualized instruction. Supervised study, the project method, student-teacher conferences, and supervised occupational experience, for example, favor the learner by relating directly to his/her vocational objective, abilities, and experiences.

One learns to do by doing. Theory learned in the classroom should be supplemented liberally with practice in the laboratory and community setting. "The community is rightly seen as an extension of the school classroom. It provides the ultimate in environments and resources for learning but is used too sparingly" (Drawbaugh and Hull, 1970).

Learning through involvement in supervised occupational experience and on-the-job training is realistic because the environments are replicas of the environments in which work is done. Furthermore, the training is carried out in the same way, with the same operation, equipment, and tools as in the occupation itself (Prosser and Allen, 1925). Learning under real conditions saves time since application or transfer of learning is not necessary.

To be relevant, the specific training needs of an individual must be met at the time he/she needs them. The needs must be translated into up-to-date, meaningful, and purposeful instruction sequenced so as to be progressive in interest and difficulty.

5. Vocational education in agriculture utilizes a wealth of human resources in planning, conducting, and evaluating programs. Programs demand the attention of instructors, students, parents, school administrators, government officials, labor representatives, agribusiness people, and the public at large. Rightfully, programs should reflect the best thinking and vision of all people in the school community. Programs which use collective human resources can be characterized as open to recommendations and change. Change is inevitable if quality programs are to be maintained and improved.

The use of advisory committees is a most effective means for keeping instructional programs up-to-date and relevant. Carefully selected committee members know the skills and competencies skilled workers need, the kinds of equipment and machinery the agricultural industry uses, and the number and kinds of job opportunities available and projected for the future. "When the advisory role is not filled, the school and the community cannot benefit from the exchange between the educator and the committee that presses programs to more effective operation. More importantly, if the

(Continued on Page 20)

A Heritage and Philosophy For Training Skilled Agricultural Workers

(Continued from Page 19)

program function does not match its potential, the individual student is denied the maximum amount of help that could, and should, be available to him — help that comes from the interaction of those who will educate and train him and those who will hire him" (American Vocational. Association, 1969).

6. Vocational education in agriculture, through leadership organizations, strengthens the confidence of future agriculturalists in themselves and their work. The Future Farmers of America (FFA) and Young Farmers of America (YFA) programs of work are built around the needs of their respective memberships. The organizations develop the abilities needed in individuals to exercise and follow effective leadership in fulfilling occupational, social, and civic responsibilities. Both organizations sponsor activities which develop and strengthen human relations qualities within members.

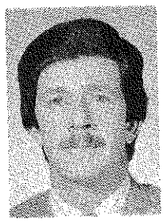
The FFA and YFA create a heightened interest in agriculture and stimulate their memberships to greater achievement. Both organizations have contributed considerable leadership not only to agriculture but to the entire business, civic, and political community as well.

Summary

Agriculture in the United States always was and continues to be respected as a way of life and as a profession. It has been blessed with fertile land, favorable climate, dedicated professionals, and technological inventions.

ARTICLE

Professionalism In Teaching Agriculture: What and How



By Richard W. Tenney
and Arthur L. Berkey

Editor's Note: Dr. Tenney is Assistant Professor and Dr. Berkey is Professor at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853. Both are in the Department of Agricultural and Occupational Education.

There is general agreement that members of the teaching profession ought to be "professional." There are differing opinions, however, as to what constitutes professionalism and how best to achieve this goal. This article posts two positions about professionalism and professional development. First, that professionalism needs to be defined in terms of a realistic teacher role. And second, that professional organizations continue to be a unique and primary means for professional development.

Professionalism and Teacher Role

One of the current challenges for both the profession and the individual teacher is to define a realistic role for the agriculture teacher.

The key question is, "how to meet this challenge and what factors must be considered?" Historically, additions have continually been made to the teacher's role without offsetting deletions. Teachers often feel that more experienced peers or administrators see them as not being "worth their salt" unless all of the traditional program activities are carried out. At the same time there is pressure to take on additional responsibilities such as new FFA contests, accept and work with special needs students, and file additional required reports.

On the other hand, budget cuts in many schools are resulting in reduced teaching resources. There is also a concurrent general trend in our society toward a shorter work week and higher value placed on responsibility to family and self. Additionally, teacher responsibilities are now specified in negotiated contractual terms which puts peer pressure on the teacher who puts in "too much time" beyond the required minimum — without any additional salary.

What can a teacher realistically accomplish in light of these two opposing foes? What alternative procedures or resources can be used to "do the job" and "preserve the teacher?" What procedure(s) can be used to identify and justify priorities that will ensure that each student receives the educational opportunity to which he/she is entitled and still make the role of the agriculture teacher "liveable?" The realities posed by the answers to these questions must be recognized and provided for in determining a realistic role that will reverse the current trend of recruitment problems, teacher "burn-out" and decreasing length of service.

Since professionalism is reflected in job performance and continuing professional development, professionalism for the teacher of agriculture is directly related to that job, i.e., role. Thus, role definition is one of the most important current needs in agricultural education. The profession should define a realistic overall role, and individual teachers need to be prepared to set job priorities at the local school level to reflect this role. An important part of this role is professional development.

Professional Organizations as Ways and Means for Professional Development

Are professional organizations a viable means for the professional development of teachers of agriculture? If not, what are the alternatives for providing such growth? These are legitimate questions when the cost of membership dues and travel for attending and participating in professional organizations are increasing, while at the same time the real purchasing power of salaries has lost ground to inflation. Teachers frequently ask the questions, "Why does it cost so much?" and "What will membership do for me?" If professional organizatons are worthwhile, then answers to these questions need to be available in order to attract and retain membership.

Professional growth through group interaction. Problems faced by teachers of agriculture are far more common than unique. Teachers can help each other by sharing solutions to common problems, ideas on teaching strategies and materials, and course content. Also, just knowing that others face the same problems is a psychological lift. The solution to some problems may be simply a change in how the situation is perceived. Discussions with other teachers can often bring a more realistic perception which in turn can facilitate solving the problem.

Group meetings can be an important source of inspiration and renewed enthusiasm for teaching — which is not available through individual activities. The friendships developed through sharing are also important. What members get out of such group interaction is limited only by how much they put in.

Professional service through organizations. Many important and necessary services are provided through teacher organizations. Local teacher organizations/unions deal contractually with the wages, hours and working conditions for all teachers in a local school. Agriculture organizations provide a means for additional service specifically for agricultural education. Examples include coordination of industry inservice courses, planning and conducting professional improvement conferences, coordinating and hosting FFA contests, working with youth exhibits/contests at State Fairs, assistance in identification and development of priority instructional materials, and the big brother/sister program for new teachers. These and other service activities are carried out in most states.

In a few states, staffing and services to agricultural education from state education departments (SED) have been significantly reduced. An example is reduced support for the FFA Executive Secretary function. Recognizing the importance of such services to vocational agriculture programs, several state agricultural organizations have raised their dues to employ staff to provide these services.

A major aspect of professionalism is the commitment to provide quality educational program opportunities for students. Services provided by professional agricultural organizations are a significant part of meeting that commitment. It should also be remembered that quality programs both merit and receive community support — which often determines which programs are retained when local school budget cuts are made. Also, the benefits of professional growth through group interaction mentioned above accrue as teachers work together to help students and themselves.

Professional organizations and political decision making. The interests of agricultural education are directly affected by many decisions at a political level. It is therefore necessary to have an effective means to provide timely input with a united voice toward such decisions. A current example on the national scene is the reauthorization of vocational education legislation.

At the state level, professional organizations can have important impacts on the level of state education department staffing, and services to agricultural education. For example, in New York State the Association of Teachers of Agriculture in New York (ATANY) was effective in supporting the decision to retain a separate Bureau of Agricultural Education.

The need for timely and united input to political decision-making is a reality in our governmental system — one that history shows needs more recognition by educators. If funding priorities for agricultural education are to receive fair consideration, teachers will need to work collectively to assure that current and accurate information is available to political decision-makers.

Professional organizations are the only current available means for collective input to political decision-making. The National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (NVATA) and the American Vocational Association (AVA) provides such a mechanism. Also, the NVATA national legislative alert system has been effective with legislators from individual states.

Are Professional Organizations Worth The Price?

Deciding on how to spend money is a process of setting priorities. In most cases, state organization dues are less than the cost of a dinner out for two, and the state-national dues package is less than the cost of one vacation weekend. Such comparisons are useful to provide perspective.

Professional organizations provide a means for professional development and need to be considered as a professional investment the same as tuition costs for courses to meet certification requirements. Also, professional dues are tax deductible and therefore cost is reduced by the percentage of the teacher's highest tax bracket.

The problem of convincing nonmembers that "it's worth the price" is often not that the evidence is lacking; rather, that members who are aware of the value need to take time on a personal basis to tell non-members. Also, non-members often correctly point out imperfections which will continue to exist in all organizations run by people. However, the professional challenge is to get involved and make things better rather than to expect perfection.

Summary

Professionalism in agricultural education needs to be defined in terms of a realistic job role for teachers of agriculture. Group efforts and interaction through professional organizations are a unique and necessary part of professional development. Also, service activities provide important educational opportunities for agricultural students. Professional organizations are the only currently available means to provide collective input to political decisions affecting agricultural education.

BOOK REVIEW

FARM ACCOUNTING AND BUSINESS ANALYSIS, by Sydney C. James and Everett Stoneberg. Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, second edition, 1979, 271 pp., $15.75.

This practical, comprehensive farm management and business analysis book begins with emphasis on the importance of records and accounts. The text retains the farmer as its central focus, supporting the fact that the authors have had practical on-farm record keeping and analysis experience.

The authors include clear, concise descriptions and many examples of useful record keeping forms. They refer to double entry bookkeeping but accept the fact that most farm businesses use the single entry cash accounting method.

Both cash and accrual methods are detailed separately including the near impossibility of analysis without accrual records. All the standard items as inventory accounts, networth and cash flow statements, total farm and enterprise analysis, production and statistical records are given careful attention. Types, calculation and use of efficiency factors and using records and accounts for farm planning are included.

One chapter is devoted to income tax management. A chapter on electronic data processing concisely explores the presently operating systems but does not specifically include the microcomputer. The book concludes with good suggestions for family living accounts and six pages on organizing the farm business center.

The appendix includes two interest tables up to ten percent. (Who ever thought that interest would go above that?)

Every high school vocational agricultural department should include this book in the reference library. It would make an excellent text for upper classes in high school, as well as for junior or senior college classes.

Donald L. Mincemoyer
The Pennsylvania State Univ.
University Park, PA 16802

IDEAS UNLIMITED

A Quick Scoring Method for Judging Contest Forms

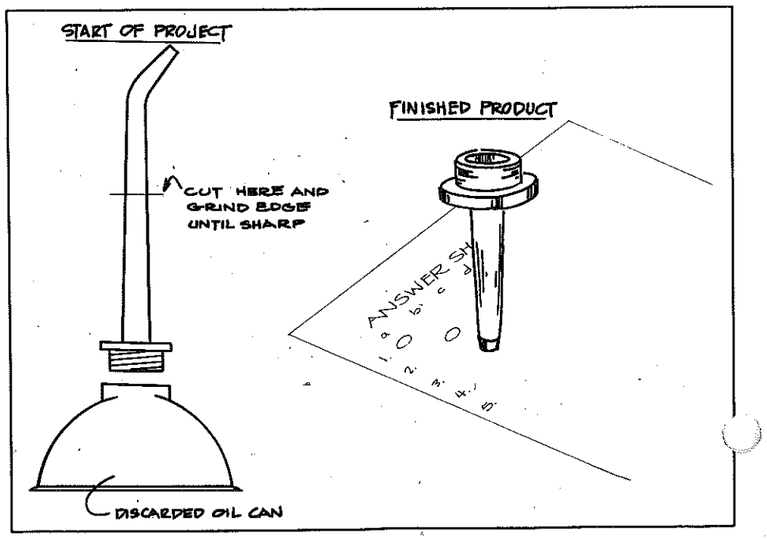
By JOHN KELLY BALDWIN
Editor's Note: Mr. Baldwin is Vocational Agriculture Teacher at Bladenboro High School, Route 1, Box 8, Bladenboro, North Carolina 28320.

When North Carolina went to the current national system of grading market animals, the papers were very difficult to grade (Forms 12 and 13). This resulted in a greater likelihood of error, more teacher fatigue, and a slow process which often held up the FFA business meetings. A faster, more accurate, scoring method was obviously needed.

The Solution

It seemed that a "punched out" scoring key could be used. There were two problems with this approach: the scorecard was divided into several sections with different point values for correct and near correct answers for each, and a punch was needed that would reach anywhere on the 8½ x 11 inch scoresheet.

A commercially made punch with long reach could not be found. The solution was to make a punch. This was done by cutting off an ordinary squirt can (oiler) spout and sharpening the cut end. This punch works quite well when the paper is placed over a close-grained wooden board (such as walnut or maple) and struck a light, sharp blow with a small mallet. Now that this punch has been tried, it appears to be even better than a commercially made one because it is so easy and fast to locate on the paper.



FFA PAGE

The National Convention — Awakening Enthusiasm

By RICHARD MAKIN
Editor's Note: Mr. Makin is Vocational Agriculture Instructor at Admiral Peary A.V.T.S., Ebensburg, Pennsylvania 15931.

The FFA has been and will continue to be a source of direction for today's youth. At no time does this become more apparent than at the annual National FFA Convention. At the Convention, held each fall in Kansas City, Missouri, the participants share two experiences that do indeed dissipate the clouds of doom many individuals forecast for our society and give hope for the future. First, FFA members are swept into an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm. Secondly, these same FFA members discover themselves and the potential contained within each and every one of them.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm, that sometimes missing link at the local chapter level, is the foundation of each year's National Convention. There is no isolating oneself from it. Enthusiasm touches all who attend. FFA members become enthusiastic at the general session held in convention hall. The national officer team, guest speakers, national chorus, and band participants are infected with enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm is an intense or eager interest. It can be seen in 20,000 FFA members collectively brought together and in each individual FFA member. A good example occurred at the 1980 Convention. Programs were being distributed at the entrance to the Career Show. A female delegate from Florida spent much of one afternoon not just passing out programs, but passing out programs with enthusiasm. It appeared that no one gained entrance to the Show without either the young woman giving them a program or her being assured that one had previously been obtained. In addition to the written program, there was a bonus for those individuals fortunate enough to encounter this FFA member from the South — a smile that radiated enthusiasm.

Advisors and chaperones are by no means left out. Teachers from Alabama talk with those from Oregon. Ideas are exchanged and plans are made. All look forward to the return home when the implementation of these plans can actually begin. Teachers of agriculture know the importance of enthusiasm in their individual classroom style, and the National Convention seems an excellent place to bolster both beginning and experienced teachers. Without doubt, all this is good, but the bottom line is the local chapter. The local chapter must not only experience enthusiasm, it must also become a carrier agent of it. At the Convention, chapter members talk among themselves about future plans once they return home. If an FFA chapter in South Carolina has conducted a community workshop on solar energy, why can't a chapter from Pennsylvania do the same? There's no doubt about it — the Pennsylvania chapter can!

The Changing Student

Metamorphosis is the biological change that takes an insect from one state of its life to another — egg, larva, pupa, and then the final stage, the adult. As yo-ag teachers, we observe an even more amazing metamorphosis taking place in our students. Each of our students does indeed undergo dramatic change from the time he or she first enrolls in vocational agriculture until he or she graduates. At some point an awakening process occurs.

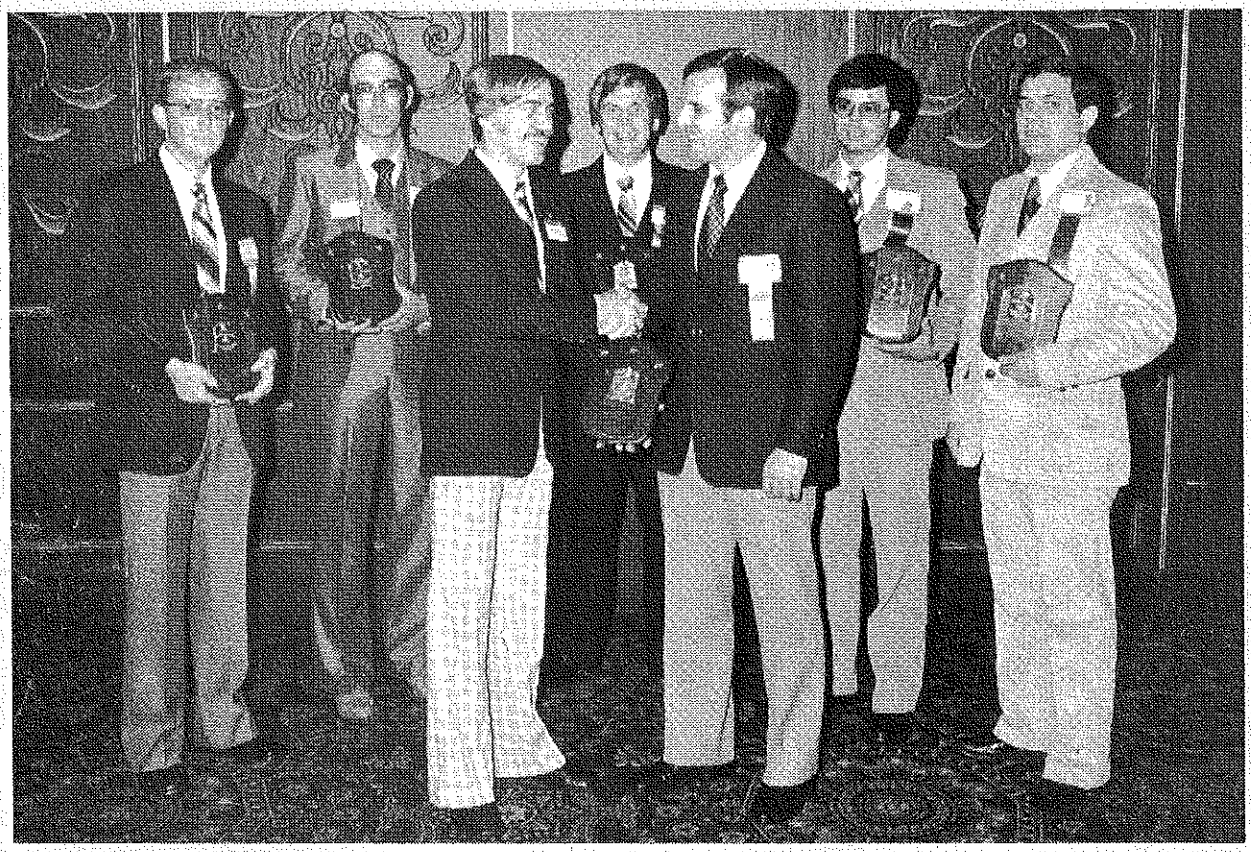
The ways of a child are for some reason abandoned. Assuming responsibility, developing a genuine desire to learn, developing confidence in oneself, and becoming a productive worker are some of the changes. Horseplay in the mechanics laboratory and anticipation of the bell ending class take on lesser, unimportant roles. Sometimes this change takes place during the course of the school year while at other times it happens over the summer. The National Convention serves as a causal agent for this change.

At the Convention, there is without doubt an opening up of untapped personal ability. FFA members from Pennsylvania find out that they do have thoughts and ideas that they want to share and express. They get to know FFA members from many states. There is a co-mingling of ideas and activities by students who may have had trouble expressing themselves in front of their classmates. Confidence in oneself becomes seemingly natural in the Convention atmosphere. The reason or rationale for this behavior may remain unexplained. The only thing for sure is that the Convention is at least partly responsible. This sharing and expression of ideas points in a very positive direction developing potential leadership for a time in history when it is needed.

The Future

Enthusiasm will by no means solve all the problems facing the United States in the decades to come. Neither will 20,000 FFA members, anxious and confident in themselves, solve these problems. However, none can argue that the enthusiasm and self-esteem discovered at the Convention will not help in one way or another. There are young people in America who are eager, intense and confident about the challenges of the future.

National Conventions are long remembered as sources of varied and numerous experiences for each and every individual who attends. The important point is that there are experiences at the National Convention that cannot be had in a local chapter or a state convention. Plans are being made now for the 1981 National FFA Convention. Perhaps, you and your chapter should be making plans to be there.



NVATA Outstanding Young Member Awards went to these teachers in 1980 (left to right):

Cy Vernon, Yanceyville, North Carolina
Donald Bumpurs, Hearne, Texas
Robert Wendt, Manchester, Iowa
Dennis G. Epperly, Cassville, Missouri
Roy S. Walls, Keymar, Maryland
David Hall, Wallowa, Oregon

John Coy (third from right), Public Relations, Deere and Company, Moline, Illinois, is shown presenting the awards.

The award is designed to recognize the participation of members in the professional activities of the NVATA. Limited to one member from each NVATA Region, it is open only to vocational agriculture teachers who have taught at least three years but not more than five. (Photograph courtesy of Sam Stenzel, NVATA.)