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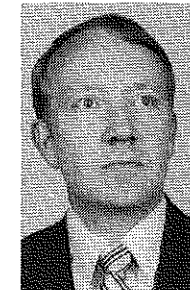


THEME: FFA Conventions and Contests

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Resiliency



BY LARRY E. MILLER, EDITOR
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The flexibility of the willow has been amply tested by most farm youth who laboriously cut a seven foot sapling from the creek bank with a dull knife to use as a fishing pole or, more often perhaps, sling upon which to place mud balls or broken, wet corn cobs. The sling was good for many days as the willow slowly dried-out. The small willow could bend this way and that without suffering a fracture. Winds could do their thing with the willow flexing it this way and that, or bending it parallel to the ground with tornadic force. Youth took great advantage of its supple nature for numerous mischievous adventures. Talented individuals created baskets, chairs and many other useful utensils with its flexible stems.

The Dark Clouds

Prophets, soothsayers sages and, yes, editors typically wish to foretell the awaiting tragedy; the pending storm. Every year, and perhaps more often, editors wish to warn their readers to carefully examine their course before they take action.

Vocational agricultural is certainly not alone in having its course cluttered with obstructions. Year-in-and-year-out one problem after another seem of dire importance to the continued survival of the profession. Politicking for state and federal legislation, resisting cutbacks in supervisory staffs or teacher education programs, upgrading teachers' salaries, recruiting outstanding teachers, or improving program quality are but a few of the persistent struggles of the profession.

Persons with less commitment to their profession might be less concerned with the problems. But when they care, they want to act and not be forced to react to forces which threaten their work. The caring attitude necessitates that a perpetual alert be maintained to keep informed the profession of pending obstacles. The scouts keep us well informed of pending attacks.

The scouting reports keep the troops astir. The negative often seems to be the major emphasis of the professional meetings and communications. Someone always seems to be the harbinger of doom. The positive aspects of our work do not receive as much attention. They need equal attention.

Our Response

Our profession is not unlike the willow. We bend with the wind coming first from one direction and then another. We weather gusts and tornadoes. We continue to remain rooted, stand upright and maintain flexibility.

We are nourished by those that see the importance of agriculture which unfortunately does not include everyone. We seek nutrients at the federal level where our cause is low in priority and whose legislation often dictates our program emphasis to the detriment of the clientele we serve. State and local policies are not always conducive to what we know to be effective. Excellent programs of vocational agriculture need not be confined solely to what is prescribed in legislation. We can move our program forward in spite of the gusts. Let us not be limited by the policies. Our shallow roots may be fed by fluctuating policies but our real nourishment goes much deeper. Our agricultural clientele is the real sustenance of our program.

Minimums as Maximums

The national priority for agriculture is not high as has recently been illustrated. Education in agriculture is, therefore, not a high priority with most people. We must recognize this as fact.

We may have to bend with winds of varying magnitudes but our stem is strong because it is made of a resilient, quality material. Enhancement of that high quality material is our goal and we must be willing to dictate our own future beyond those prescribed by policy so that minimums do not become our maximums. Let us be the talented weavers of our own future.

The Cover

Individual and team competition in FFA and vocational agriculture contests are hallmarks of our program. The benefits are questioned by many. This issue focuses upon the issues evolving around the use of contests and conventions. Strategies are presented

to encourage their utilization to maximize learning. The Theme Editor, Stacy Gartin, has compiled a series of articles which pose good food for thought for the profession. The outlook provided should be challenging and frank.

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor, Regional Editors, or Special Editors. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of issue intended for the article or photograph. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, and include information about the author(s). Two copies of articles should be submitted. A recent photograph should accompany an article unless one is on file with the Editor.

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Rich Sources of Inspiration

Vocational agriculture is an integral part of the educational system in over 9,000 high schools in America. Vocational agriculture, which was once predominantly production agriculture, has expanded into many different occupational areas to meet the growing needs of its clientele and the agricultural industry.

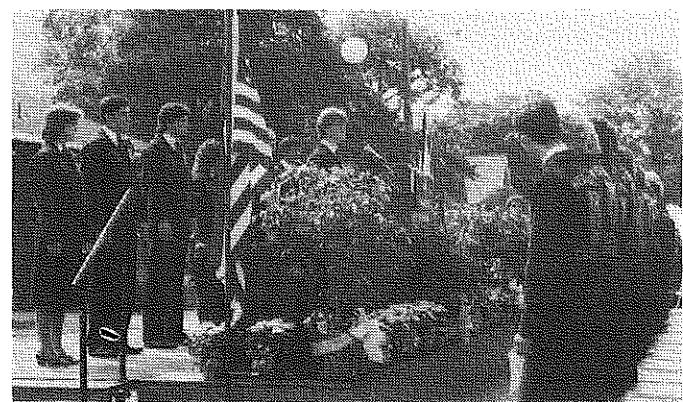
The FFA organization is a component of the instructional program which prepares students for careers in agriculture. Since its beginning in 1928, the FFA has been committed to the development of leadership, citizenship, and cooperation. Through participation in FFA activities, students develop the leadership and personal competencies necessary for occupational success.

From the beginning, vocational agriculture has provided training and experience beyond the classroom. Vocational and affective domain skills are developed through the "Learning By Doing" component of the FFA. This concept makes instruction more interesting and more practical by combining work experience and agricultural leadership development activities with classroom activities. The FFA is an important teaching tool for the practical application of lessons in leadership, cooperation, and citizenship. Through its activities, the FFA encourages entrepreneurship, helps develop better work attitudes and prepares better citizens for our society. Two influential activities which assist in developing agricultural leaders are contests and FFA conventions.

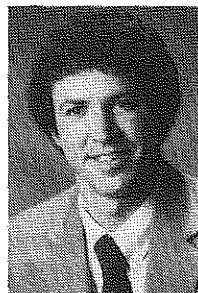
Contests

Among professionals of agricultural education, there is probably no issue which arouses more vigorous discussion than whether contests are a value to the vocational agriculture program. As vocational education programs in agriculture broadened, so have the contests which provide incentive for students enrolled in these non-farm agricultural areas.

Judging contests have been a part of the vocational agriculture program since its beginning. It seems that con-



Outgoing officers relinquish their duties to a new slate of officers during the installation ceremonies as a part of the final session of the unique outdoor festivities. (Photo by Stacy Gartin)



By STACY A. GARTIN, THEME EDITOR
(Editor's Note: Dr. Gartin is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education at West Virginia University. Morgantown, West Virginia 26506-6108.)

tests have been an asset to our program and can continue to be of benefit to us. Selected contests can be of value if, through student participation in them, the student is motivated to apply those skills which were identified in the course of instruction. Students should be encouraged to participate in those contests which relate to their supervised occupational experience program. Contests on the chapter basis should be an outgrowth of the program of activities. The nature and effectiveness of all contests should be re-evaluated on a continual basis.

Conventions

Conventions are a rich source of inspiration which should be the highlight of an FFA member's year. A large portion of our state associations are to be commended on the great job they are doing. It would be naive to say that every state does an outstanding job of conducting a state convention. It seems some states have failed to remember the main purposes of a state convention.

A priceless source of leadership training is provided through stimulating and important business sessions that are meaningful to the FFA members. A spark of interest and enthusiasm is created when official delegates debate, discuss, and take action on matters of importance.



Weed identification enables students to select proper control measures for increased production. (Photo by Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)

The second major purpose of state conventions should be to properly recognize FFA members and individuals who have done commendable work in and for the vocational agriculture program. Outside groups and organizations should also be recognized for their support of the vocational agriculture and FFA program.

Thirdly, the convention should be a viable source of information about chapter activities. It should provide many ideas which other chapters might find applicable in their community.

It is realized that no two states are alike in geography,

The Wrong Message from Contests

By LLOYD BELL

(Editor's Note: Dr. Bell is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68583-0709.)

"Organized in November 1928, the FFA is an integral part of the curriculum of vocational agriculture/agribusiness departments in the public schools."³ This direct quote from the Official FFA Membership Manual is based on the first stated aim and activity of national constitution and bylaws of the FFA.

If the intracurricular nature of FFA in the vocational agriculture/agribusiness program is such an explicitly stated aim, why do public school administrators and the public view student participation in FFA contests in a similar perspective as students participating in extracurricular athletic and/or music contests?

In public discussions, startling examples have been given of the amount of time students spend away from the secondary classroom during the school year participating in school related activities. No distinction has been made between intracurricular and extracurricular participation. In response to this perceived problem, many states have enacted legislation requiring students to complete a minimum amount of in class hours (1080 in Nebraska) during a school year to be considered eligible for graduation or advancement in the school system.

In response to this "time on task" legislation, the public and school officials have looked toward the reduction of activities outside the school classroom not directly contributing to the basic education of students. In most cases, this means reducing the amount of extracurricular ac-



Contests award ceremonies provide recognition of students who excelled in the previous day's judging and skill contests. (Photograph courtesy of Stanton Gartin)

ilities, membership, or opportunities. If the profession supports the notion of state conventions, then should they not be conducted to attract an unlimited audience?

The theme articles in this issue focus on FFA conventions and contests from different perspectives. Are we communicating the true value of conventions and contests? Are we making the most of valuable time in preparing for and participating in these two endeavors? Are all parties involved reaping the maximum benefits possible from these activities? These questions are addressed in this issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*.

ivities in which students participate. This action kindles the seemingly never ending debate of what balance between extracurricular and intracurricular activities constitutes a quality education. Within this debate surfaces a question of crucial concern to every vocational agriculture educator, why have school officials and the public perceived out of classroom vocational agriculture experiences and FFA activities as being extracurricular?

Informed Constituency

The large majority of school officials who administer, and the public who support our public education system have not been informed of the philosophy of vocational agriculture. Until explained or demonstrated to them that every student in a vocational agriculture program is expected to have an agriculturally related occupational objective, every student must conduct a supervised occupational experience program which relates to the occupational objective, and every student is to participate in FFA activities which relate to that occupational objective; they will not understand the meaning of intracurricular in relation to vocational agriculture and FFA. Even after they have been informed of the relationship, that relationship must be demonstrated to them, over time, for the true meaning to be realized.

Proper Demonstration

When demonstrating the intracurricular benefit of contest participation, the question must occasionally be asked, why are these students participating? Is it in support of their occupational objectives or is it for other reasons? If for other reasons, what are they?

Foremost of those other reasons is competition. It has been said that vocational agriculture is known for its

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The Wrong Message From Contests

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problem solving approach to instruction, and as Hachmeister points out "there is no greater problem in life than competition." Students must learn while in high school and after graduation to compete in everyday life. The individual and team competition is one of the skills of competition."¹

In support of competition as a reason for contest participation, Mayfield says, "Competition in the form of judging contests is good. It can be the tool for motivation and enthusiasm."²

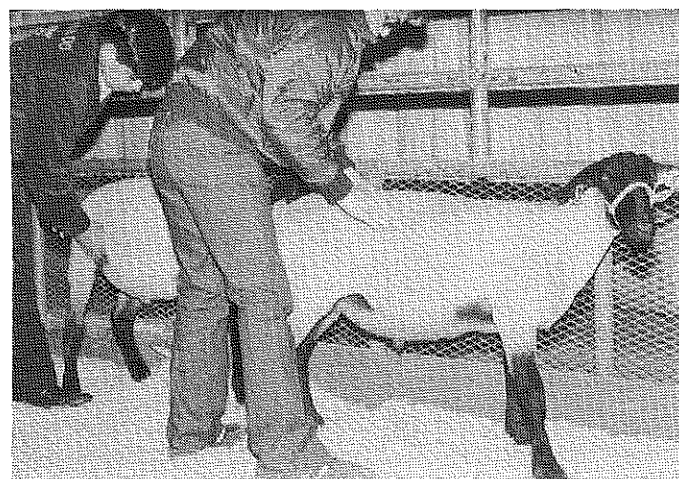
When administered correctly, contest participation will assist students in gaining self-confidence, enhance their self-image and build their self-esteem. Maslow, in his hierarchy of needs, identifies the development of self-esteem as a necessary step toward self-actualization. It can then be said that contest participation assists students in their maturity process.

Competition, motivation, enthusiasm and maturation are just a few of the other reasons we encourage students to participate in contests, but do students not derive these same benefits from any correctly administered extracurricular activity? The obvious answer is yes! If these are the only reasons given school officials and the public for participation, it is easy to see why they perceive FFA activities as extracurricular.

If the only results school officials and the public see from contest participation are ribbons, plaques, and placings as they compare to other competitors, then the reason for participation appears to be the same as the box scores provided in athletic competition. In order to reinforce the intracurricular nature of FFA, a report of competencies gained and their relationship to occupational development should occupy a major portion of the publicized results.

Exploratory Participation

To believe that high school vocational agriculture students know or even have an idea concerning their future occupation may be viewed as idealistic. However, it is the purpose of the vocational agriculture program to assist



Proper judging techniques increase students' awareness of the industry trends and consumer needs. (Photograph courtesy of Stanton Gartin)

students in identifying occupational areas of interest, and by the time of graduation, to develop the skills and/or competencies necessary for entry level employment. The use of interest inventories can assist students to identify preferred agricultural areas of study. These inventory results can then be used by the instructor as a basis of contest participation and justification of participation to parents and administrators.

When tied to meeting individual student's career related objectives, contest participation takes on the intracurricular purpose of assisting the student in identifying areas of occupational interest. By the time students are juniors, they have identified an occupational goal and are on their way to developing competencies necessary for employment or further education in that occupational area.

The instructor must be careful that a student's contest participation does not turn into four years of total exploratory learning for avocational purposes. A majority of student participation for this purpose communicates to school officials and the public the same message as extracurricular activities. That message is avocational preparation to deal with life. The intended message of vocational education in agriculture is occupational preparation. Consequently, any other message leads to the degradation of the vocational agriculture image in the public school system.

Intracurricular Perspective

In planning for contest participation and emphasizing the intracurricular nature of the participation, vocational agriculture instructors should:

1. Select contests based upon the occupational competencies that can be provided participants.
2. Base student participation in contests primarily on individual occupational objectives.
3. Counsel parents and administrators that student par-



The soil contest is an educational activity designed as a practical method of teaching students to evaluate soil to determine its greatest safe potential use. (Photograph courtesy of Stacy Gartin)

ticipation in contests is based on occupational program development.

4. Emphasize through public relations activities to the community the occupational competencies students learn and practice through contest participation.

Only through effective communications to administrators and parents, and a commitment to the philosophy of vocational education in agriculture can FFA contests be recognized for their real purpose: that of further develop-

ment of occupational skills and competencies needed to enter and advance in an agricultural career.

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- ²Mayfield, J. "Contests and the Classroom-A Delicate Combination." THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE, Volume 51, Number 3, 1978.
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THEME

Keeping Contests In Perspective

The important thing in the Olympic games is not winning, but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering, but fighting well.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin
Founder of the Olympic Games

The FFA has enjoyed many years of growth and success as an organization supporting vocational agriculture programs in the United States. By most accounts, it has served as a model for other vocational student organizations to emulate. A colleague of ours in vocational education recently stated to students in a college course that when one studies vocational student organizations in this country, there is the FFA and there are other vocational student organizations. What makes the FFA so distinctive and so much better than all the rest? Among other reasons, the FFA is better organized and better promoted than any of the other vocational student organizations. This can be observed at the national, state, and local levels. As a result of this organization, there are more programs that provide opportunities for students to get involved.

Despite, or perhaps because of the consensus high stature of the FFA, some of those within agricultural education and in vocational education question and even criticize the FFA organization on a number of points. Foremost among these points of debate are the value, purpose, and role of FFA contests in the vocational agriculture program. Some of the negative perceptions that occur regarding FFA contests need to be recognized and discussed, not only among ourselves, but with other educators who are



Students do not have to be a contest winner to be a winner. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Communications Department.)



By ED OSBORNE AND ELDON WITT

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uninformed or skeptical about the value of our efforts in vocational agriculture.

Some Misconceptions

1. *The FFA is too contest-oriented.* For those who have limited exposure to FFA programs and activities, this may be a common argument. By the same token, this misperception may be fed by the type of FFA activities that we, as teachers and advisors, promote and publicize. Certainly, contests are a major area of activity within any FFA chapter, but one only needs to refer to a few major references to be reminded of the many other worthy activities that chapters undertake. Teachers are the key to correcting this misperception.

2. *Contests reward a selected few.* In some FFA chapters, this perception may be more accurate than we would admit. The number of FFA members involved in contests can easily be broadened by the approaches taken to organizing contest activities. All FFA contests should have their foundation at the local level. Local contests should be open to all FFA members. From this contest, chapter representatives to regional and state contests may be selected. All contestants in local contests should be recognized for their participation. Some chapters limit the

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Keeping Contests in Perspective

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number of contests in which students may represent their chapters above the local level. This policy obviously helps to provide for involvement of a greater number of FFA members.

3. *Contests place too much emphasis on winning.* There is no doubt that we live in a very competitive society. Losing is an outcome that some individuals, regardless of age, simply cannot accept. On the other hand, we should realize that each of us has a natural desire or impulse for competition. Thus, if kept in proper perspective, competition can be very healthy for us as human beings. Hudson (1981, p. 54) stated that "the primary benefit to students who enter competitions is incentive for learning, not winning contests." That is, contests should be viewed as the means to an end, and not the end itself. Teachers who help their students adopt this philosophy will create a healthier attitude in their students with equal success and less pressure on students to be the best.

4. *Contests are not representative of real-life events.* Judging contests have often been criticized on this point. People have said that it is one thing to win a livestock judging contest and another to go out and be able to select the best replacement heifers from a pen of 40. As a result, contest rules and procedures in many instances have been revised. Livestock contests no longer involve placing on physical appearance alone, but also include consideration of performance records. Similar revisions have been made in other FFA contests. Contest officials have recognized the need for contests to contribute to the application of learning outside the doors of the school setting.

5. *Contests have little educational value.* Christiansen and White (1978, p. 189) concluded from a study of FFA contests in Texas that "serious attention must be paid to the way in which contests are used as instrumental tools if they are to be relevant to the needs of students and the community." If contests are designed to parallel real-life situations and are kept in proper perspective, then the benefits to the student are tremendous. Contests provide application of principles and practices learned in other settings, development of personal and technical skills, an increase in student motivation, an opportunity to develop social and communication skills, and a positive influence on the development of one's self-confidence and self-con-

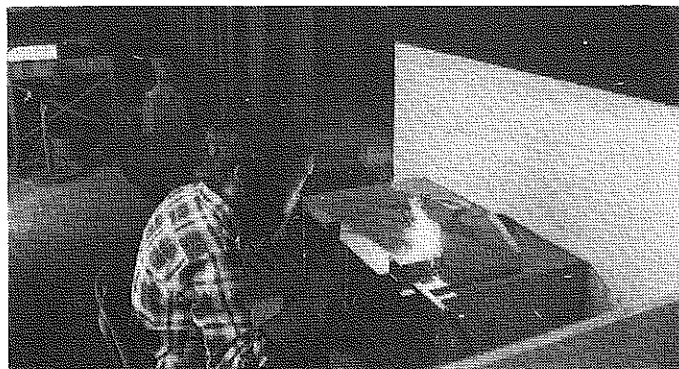
cept. All of these benefits can be received just by participating.

6. *The vocational agriculture program is a part of the FFA (the tail wags the dog).* With an organization that has so much to offer, it is no wonder that some have trouble understanding which is the pie and which is the piece of pie. This misperception is due primarily to the publicity patterns of teachers and students in vocational agriculture. Ninety percent or more of public relations activities probably involve FFA events. It is easy to understand why others in the school and community have trouble determining the nature of vocational agriculture. Teachers need to have a solid and accurate philosophical base to keep them from steering off course and enable them to keep things in perspective.

7. *Agriculture teachers teach contests.* Undoubtedly, this circumstance does occur from time to time in vocational agriculture. This is unfortunate, because teachers committing the crime have obviously lost their perspective on the role of contests in the program. Beginning teachers are often unsure of the difference between teaching for contests and using contests as an instructional tool. The distinction lies in the extent to which contests rules and procedures become a part of classroom instruction.

An excellent example is parliamentary procedure, certainly a justifiable area of study within a vocational agriculture program. Every year students in one of the ninth or tenth grade classes at a high school would be taught how to use parliamentary procedure correctly. Certainly this teaching should be timed so that students would be ready to prepare for competition in an official contest. The role of the contest has been kept in perspective if the basics of parliamentary procedure are taught during class, and then interested students from all classes are given the opportunity to compete in a chapter contest. These students would work on their own and during called practice sessions to refine their skills and adapt them to the contest format. On the other hand, teachers who teach parliamentary procedure to their classes according to contest rules are over emphasizing and distorting the purpose of the contest. These teachers often select their official team out of the class that has just studied the topic. Further, students under this system often have great difficulty in transferring their parliamentary procedure skills to situations other than FFA (i.e., community organizations).

A key question that teachers should ask themselves is,



Arc welding, a basic skill needed in agriculture, is put to the test in the mechanics contest. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Communications Department.)



Students identify plant specimens of various crops and weeds present in their state. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Communications Department.)

"If there were no FFA contest in this area of study, would I teach it differently?" If the answer is yes, then probably too much emphasis is being placed on contests in the instructional program.

8. *Contests are for teachers, not students.* This situation obviously characterizes a teacher who has lost sight of the place of contests in the program. While teachers do and should take great pride in the participation and accomplishment of their FFA members in contests, they should remember that they are merely the advisors and the students are the real performers. Although contest participation provides many benefits to the student, it also aids teachers in motivating students, providing avenues for extended learning, and establishing positive public relations in the school and community.

9. *Contests are extra activities.* In most cases, FFA contests do occur at time beyond the school day. However, participation in relevant contests should be considered a part of the job from the teacher's standpoint, simply because of the tremendous benefits that students receive. Teachers have always gone the extra mile to provide experiences for students that strengthen their skills and abilities. Participation in FFA contests should be a natural and essential outgrowth of the instructional program.

10. *Contests produce losers as well as winners.* In terms of trophies and ribbons, this statement is certainly true. But wisdom tells us that winners are not best characterized by the size of their dusty display of trophies, but rather by the personal achievements that they carry within them from day to day wherever they may go. Teachers can have a tremendous influence upon how their students accept losing in contests. More important than first place is the experience gained, the learning acquired, and the knowledge that one did his/her best. A student does not have to be a contest winner to be a winner.

Summary

Contests at various levels have been a major component of FFA activities for many years. When kept in proper perspective, participation in FFA contests can be a healthy, learning, beneficial experience. Professional and public misconceptions about contests in the FFA and vocational agriculture program are often the result of unintentional emphasis on contests and winning through purposeful and natural public relations.

To better ensure that they keep FFA contests in perspective, teachers should:

- be familiar with all FFA programs and activities and encourage student participation where possible.
- promote and publicize the vocational agriculture program and various FFA activities.
- encourage participation in those contests that are relevant to the instructional program.
- remember who is the participant.
- involve as many students as possible in each appropriate contest.
- help redesign contests that need to be better aligned with real-life situations.
- remember the place and role of contest in the program.
- help students develop a healthy attitude toward competition.
- remember that students learn best what they experience through their own activities.

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TEACHING TIPS

Need to revitalize your local FFA chapter banquet with some new activities? Then try using your local FFA chapter charter as the basis for a banquet placemat.

Langdon FFA Chapter in North Dakota, advised by John F. Nowatzki, tried this arrangement and were very satisfied with the effect. The chapter photographed the original charter and then reproduced the photo in the size needed for the placemat design. Information concerning the chapter officers and the chapter were placed on the left side of the charter photo. To the right of the charter photo was placed the banquet program and menu information. The final development step was the duplicating of the original placemat

to all of the charter members who had not attended the banquet.

Is your public relations showing? In other words, are the activities of your vocational agriculture department publicized in such a way that the community is easily made aware of what is going on in your department?

To help ensure this awareness, community resources were utilized by Jack E. McClaskey, teacher of vocational agriculture, Girard, Kansas. Jack used a watch case display that the local jeweler was glad to give away. Jack converted the discarded watch case into a useful photo display at little expense and effort.

Basically, Jack removed the advertising from the case and installed a new light. The words, "FFA Activities" and

"Girard Chapter" were made from blue tape and placed in the circle from where the advertising label was removed.

Pictures of FFA activities were placed in the case and embossing tape was utilized to describe each activity. The tape could be removed and replaced as pictures were rotated, depending upon recent functions of the department. Small stands to support the pictures were made from plywood.

Jack discovered that selecting an appropriate location for the display case to assure full effectiveness was most important. He concluded that the display should be located where the traffic included rural as well as urban population. Jack ultimately located the display case in a local bank which is a strong supporter of the FFA.

Following the banquet, the chapter officers mailed copies of the placemat

A Time For Evaluation

As we all know, the interest of students is as varied as their physical appearances. They are all motivated in different ways. Their goals vary, as does their purpose for being vocational agriculture students and FFA members.

With the wide variety of contests offered through vocational agriculture and the FFA, it is hoped that at least one contest will interest a student and will correlate to that student's supervised occupational experience program.

We realize that some students are motivated by competition and would participate, regardless of the contest area. Others, motivated by the need to be successful in leadership roles, strive to move up the leadership ladder provided through FFA contests and opportunities, such as being a delegate or officer.

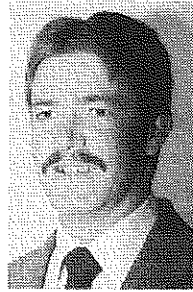
We, as vocational agriculture instructors, need to utilize contests and conventions to help us motivate students to set goals for themselves and learn. At the same time, we need to keep vocational agriculture contests and FFA contests and conventions in perspective and balanced with the other aspects of our programs.

Contests

Vocational agriculture contests are an outgrowth of classroom and laboratory instruction. They should be designed to test students' abilities, competencies, and skills that were taught in vocational agriculture classes. If the instruction is taken to the doing level and implemented in the student's supervised occupational experience program, preparing students for contests is simplified and ongoing year round.

This is not saying that contests dictate curriculum. The opposite should be true. Contests should be constructed and designed with curriculum in mind.

Instructors, working closely with their advisory councils in constructing and reviewing their curriculum to meet the needs of the students and the community, have sound justification for contest participation. Giving students an opportunity to participate also offers instructors a chance to evaluate their teaching and preparation techniques by sharing ideas and practicing together. Most states differ in



BY STANTON J. GARTIN

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the total number of vocational agriculture contest areas, but most offer the well established areas of livestock judging, dairy judging, field crops, land classification, and agricultural mechanics.

As vocational agriculture progresses through the 1980's, we need to do a better job of evaluating and updating our contests. We evaluate and review our curriculum every year, but seldom make changes in contests. For example, livestock judging is still centered around the comparison and evaluation of animals. However, that is only one part of raising livestock.

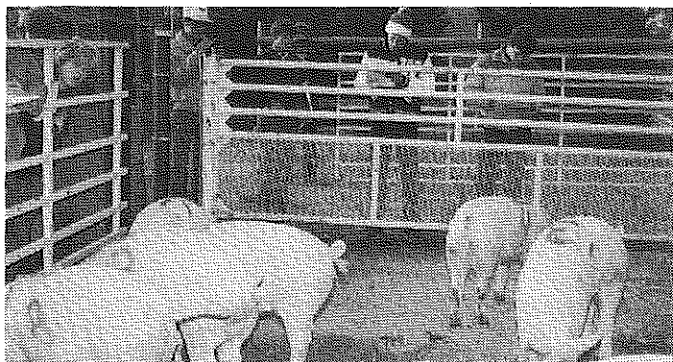
We need to incorporate other aspects of general livestock production into this contest, i.e., balancing rations, preventing and controlling diseases and parasites, breeding, caring for the mother and offspring at birth, weaning, etc. This would be a contest that was designed around curriculum.

Too often, contests above the local level are operated by college and university instructors and are designed well above the level of secondary vocational agriculture students. The material found in written exams often tend to be above the capabilities of most high school students. Constant, in-depth evaluation, would hopefully keep these problems from happening.

Some states only allow students to participate at the state level once in a contest area. This is designed to encourage students to become more diversified and knowledgeable in other areas of agriculture. On the other hand,



FFA members rise as the degree of State Farmer is bestowed upon them.



Livestock evaluation may include a keep and cull class. The students analyze production records as well as physical appearance as basis for their decisions.

we encourage students to strive for their occupational objective by expanding and becoming proficient in their supervised occupational experience program. This is somewhat contradictory and a medium needs to be reached. One solution may be to allow a student to participate in a contest area twice unless he/she has won the state contest the first year or has qualified for the national contest.

This would enable a student to participate in the contest area that they enjoy and that relates to their SOEP, while it also dictates the philosophy for being well rounded. Allowing or encouraging a student to participate in the same contest area every year will only result in tunnel-visioned students who have failed to grow in knowledge and benefit from the curriculum.

FFA Contests

As student and community needs differ from community to community, the need to produce agricultural leaders is a goal of every instructor. The individual FFA contests are providing an opportunity for all students to improve their leadership abilities by developing their speaking and performance skills.

Creed speaking, extemporaneous speaking, prepared public speaking, and parliamentary procedure all have a leadership developing purpose. These contests are easily implemented into the curriculum. Instruction in parliamentary procedure, learning the FFA creed to meet Greenhand requirements, and utilizing magazine reports given orally in class, tie these contests to daily instruction. Even though final contest preparation is normally individualized in the speaking contests, every student should be encouraged to perform in front of a group during his/her vocational agriculture career.

Proficiency award contests provide all students an opportunity to participate in a contest area that truly interests them.

These incentive awards show advancement in individual SOEP area. However, as is often the situation, many students would rather pass up an opportunity to receive recognition for accomplishments than fill out an extensive application. Possibly, we need to develop different proficiency applications for local, state and national levels. Each level could become more detailed and thorough. This might increase interest on the local and state level. Many proficiency areas on the state level have few, if any, applications.

With the interest of microcomputers in vocational agriculture programs, and recordkeeping being a prime target of their use, state FFA associations and the national organization need to make efforts to computerize degree applications, especially with computers starting to replace typewriters in many schools.

Chapter FFA contests have taken a step in the right direction by recognizing individual effort as evidenced in the Building Our American Communities contest. More of this kind of individual recognition is needed in other chapter contests such as the Chapter Safety Contest.

With video recording equipment becoming very popular and commonly found in high schools being used as teaching and coaching aids, it may be advantageous to have chapter contest applications accompanied with a five to ten minute video tape outlining the major chapter accom-



Vocational agriculture students learn to identify retail cuts of meat as a part of their training for an occupation in the meat industry. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Communications Department.)

plishments. This would have to be tried on an experimental basis as all schools do not have the necessary equipment to produce such a tape.

Teachers who specialize in completing applications, would soon become proficient in dressing up these video tapes as well. Photographs and captions often do not express the student's abilities as well as a video tape might.

FFA Conventions

Since a chapter banquet is the highlight of the chapter's activities, the state convention should be the highlight of the state's activities. Yet, many states have difficulty in attracting adequate representation from local chapters to really make the convention spectacular.

Some states limit attendance due to facilities. Such states should look for an alternative place to hold their conventions. Others lack attendance because of the high cost involved in traveling and lodging.

Attendance at state conventions is directly influenced by local instructors. If interest is instilled in contest areas at the local level and those applications sent to the state level, attendance should increase. All award recipients should be encouraged to attend and have the opportunity to receive recognition at the state convention.

We are all aware of the current issues facing schools, time-on-task in classrooms, students missing school for a variety of reasons, and many others. States who conduct their conventions during the school year are feeling the pressures to move them to the summer. We may also see the need to move from the long tradition of the National FFA Convention being held in November to holding it during the summer as well. Many states hold their judging contests in conjunction with their state FFA convention. Perhaps this is an idea other states need to reconsider.

Summary

Contests and conventions are motivating tools we can utilize to help produce the future leaders of agriculture. We must strive to make and keep them educational for our vocational agriculture students and FFA members. As agriculturists become more specialized and efficient, we too must constantly evaluate, update, and improve our contests and conventions for the betterment of our students.

A Sponsor's View: We're Putting Our Trust In You

Why do agribusinesses support FFA conventions and contests? Why does the industry pump millions of dollars (if you include local, state, and national support) into the FFA? I think you can consider it much more than corporate advertising. I think you can call it a faith and trust in the quality of teaching by vocational agriculture instructors and agriculture educators. In so doing, however, you must also ask why industry takes sponsorship of conventions and contests seriously, and if there is a possibility of ever breaching that trust. I believe there is both possibility and reality that that breach happens at times. That is why we appreciate opportunities like this to offer input to the educational side, not to mention reminding ourselves of the value of supporting your efforts.

There are long range benefits associated with supporting contests and conventions that far exceed advertising and name recognition for agribusinesses. Progressive agribusinesses which provide quality products and services to farmers and other agribusinesses, and which seriously approach meeting their members'/customers' long range needs, enjoy valuable benefits when vocational agriculture student and FFA members are well-taught and when FFA conventions and contests are properly utilized.

How are FFA contests properly utilized? What are the long-range benefits that accrue to the agriculture industry when they are properly utilized? My answers to these questions are actually an aggregate of input received from co-workers and colleagues, and my own experiences, first-hand and otherwise.

Let me state that as a whole, we believe you are doing a good job; otherwise we would not support you and these activities with our dollars. Remember, though, "a little leaven leavens the whole loaf." We need you to hold yourselves accountable, since it is impractical for us to always observe first-hand your teaching methods.

FFA contests are well utilized when the instructor uses them first of all as a testing tool, to see if learning has taken place. Prior to this testing, however, there should be a foundation of quality classroom instruction and laboratory experience which emphasizes what should be learned and why it should take place. If instructors use most of their class time to teach students how to win contests, they may accumulate some hardware and get their students to think them great, but such instructors have actually short-changed the student's future.

An Example

Let me share an example. I know of a situation where an instructor utilized much of the class time to teach contests. A couple of the teams were state champions several years in a row. They were not only state champs but were

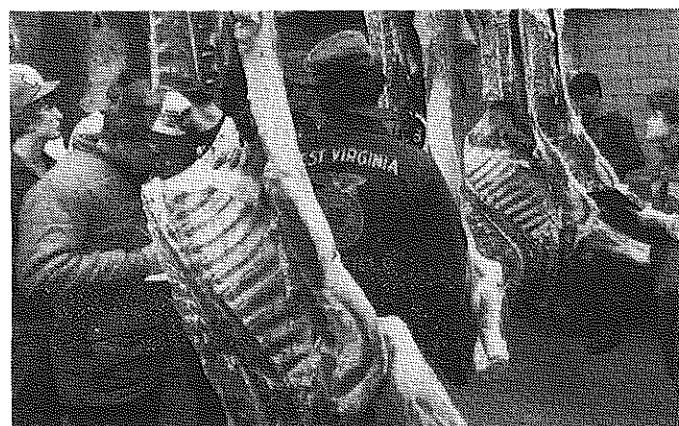
By MICHAEL L. GOOLSBY

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undefeated in over 100 consecutive contests. There was, however, no instruction given to the crops judging team regarding why it was necessary to be able to identify certain common and noxious weeds in a particular crop, nor was there even field experience in doing so. There was no instruction about how to control such weeds. There was a form of grain grading done by contestants, but no instruction concerning what different grades meant economically to the producer. Neither were there instructional tips regarding how to produce top quality grain. There was seed analysis of a sort but no instruction concerning the benefits of using top quality or certified seed, how to treat and protect stored grain seed, etc. Lest one think I am only critical of the instructor, let me add that the contest put on by the state did not require students to possess evaluative skills in hands-on situations; rather primarily they learned rote memory skills in contests that were rarely very unique.

The students who competed and won state championships received recognition, but it was not recognition of learning of many applicable skills. While enjoying the victories in the short run, I suspect that they later realized they missed some valuable learning opportunities. In fact, they were not even encouraged to try out for different judging teams from year to year. They were instead encouraged to keep repeating their hollow victories, which I suspect were for the benefit of the instructor.

This particular instructor was a capable teacher and did



Beef carcass evaluation tests classroom and laboratory skills developed by students in vocational agriculture. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)

indeed teach some things very well, but real learning among some students was exchanged for trophies and plaques. I think most agricultural industry representatives would rather have seen instruction and measurable behavioral objectives met to indicate that real learning did indeed take place.

We can follow this example through to show some of the long range benefits which accrue to agribusiness as the result of quality instruction and use of contests as a means to measure learning rather than as a goal of an end in itself.

Needed Competencies

Today's top agricultural producers recognize that value of quality products and services and will patronize those businesses which provide both at a competitive price. Consider the case of students who receive minimal instruction concerning proper seed selection, planting, fertilization, weed control, harvesting and marketing of their crops. They are far less likely to recognize quality products and services. The result may be that they may either pay too much for said products and services, or they may judge strictly by lowest price, not comparing value and benefits of other products and services, and, consequently, it costs themselves additional dollars in the long run. With the agricultural conditions that exist today, these are mistakes few can afford to make.

Let us consider also the value of well taught students as employees of agribusiness. Those who have learned principles of production and marketing and not just how to win contests will be more quickly trained by agribusiness and more quickly productive. These factors can translate into both additional margins to the agribusiness and lower costs to the producer, since the producer ultimately pays for the products, services, and training.

One final note regarding FFA contests is that successful agribusinesses often benefit by hiring quality vocational agriculture instructors. Whether you view this as a compliment to the instructor and the company's personnel officers or as an indictment to the company for stealing away education's best talent and/or an indictment to the education system for not being able to compete salarywise with industry, the point is this: few companies hire instructors dedicated to winning contests. Instead, agribusinesses seek those instructors dedicated to their students' learning. Why? It is because if instructors are not dedicated to their



State officers tally the vote to determine if a majority of the delegates were in favor of the issue for passage. (Photograph courtesy of Stacy Gartin.)



Seed grading and evaluation provides a basis for determining germination, weight per bushel, and damage. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)

profession, chances are they will not be dedicated to the company and its customers either.

Learning Accountability

FFA conventions can be a marvelous tool to reinforce learning as well. The FFA advisor who selects carefully those members who will attend, and who maximizes the value of their attendance by finding out just what they learned while there, has also maximized the return on the investment of the agriculture industry sponsors. Those who are not good stewards of the dollars invested by sponsors shortchange both their students and the sponsors.

Perhaps even more directly, they stand to lose convention attendance privileges from school boards and administrators who, like agribusinesses, should be able to give an account of their investment. We can tie together opportunity for developing support among administrators and other school teachers. When extracurricular activities are eyed with skepticism compared to today's probably justifiable call to emphasis on math and science skills, we have an opportunity to sell the value of the FFA and vocational agriculture programs.

I say justifiable because our schools have been proven weak in these areas. Such a call can be turned into an asset for the instructor who is teaching vocational agriculture, not just contests and conventions. Where can a student get better hands-on science experience than in learning the value of proper fertilizer and chemical application?

Where can the student get better hands-on experience regarding physics than in learning what takes place when you weld metals together or learn about the workings of internal combustion engines in the laboratory? Of course, statistical analysis is probably more applicable to collegiate-level agriculture training, but certainly mathematical skills can be valued in learning to keep proper records and planning one's own marketing program, be it real or hypothesized. All these possibilities exist within the framework of the vocational agriculture curricula.

When FFA advisors return home from the convention, they should visit individually with each member to deter-

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A Sponsor's View: We're Putting Our Trust In You

(Continued from Page 13)

mine what learning took place. Perhaps they should even make assignments ahead of the convention to ensure that students will look for things to learn. The FFA members who attend have a responsibility to share their insights and events of the convention with their fellow members who remained at home. For this reason, conventions that provide students with structured opportunities for interaction such as leadership workshops are to be prized above those where a student simply sits and observes.

The role modeling and recognition that takes place at FFA conventions can serve as great inspiration to further achievement for all FFA members. It is therefore important that state and national FFA officers who serve as role models be young men and women of real substance, not just those who are flashy. The best way to ensure this is for agriculture educators to recruit, select, and train instructors who will teach vocational agriculture and related skills, not just how to gain recognition.

State and national staffs must continuously evaluate whether their conventions and contests and election procedures recognize those with good fundamental and communications skills who have genuinely learned while accomplishing their goals. Let me add one other necessary attribute — strong moral conviction. We cannot afford shallow heroes and heroines as leadership examples.

You are fully aware of the challenges facing agribusiness, agriculture education, and vocational agriculture as a result of the current economy and evaluation of our nation's education system. I cannot help but see some good in all of this. Industry must evaluate and spend its dollars wisely.

Agricultural educators at all levels must evaluate curriculum and tell the country of the benefits of vocational agriculture. One of the most exciting opportunities of both the agricultural industry and agricultural educators to accom-

plish these goals lies within the success of the newly formed National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture (NCVTEA). It is a brilliant concept which will help keep both facets of agriculture accountable to one another.

It is not unreasonable or unhealthy for industry to expect to have input into vocational agriculture curriculum, contests, and conventions, since agribusinesses support these financially. It is also quite reasonable and healthy for agricultural education to expect support from the agricultural industry in the form of time and money since you are preparing future leaders in agribusiness. That is why my company has adopted the work of the NCVTEA as our National FFA Foundation Special Projects Sponsorship. I hope you will do your part to become familiar with the work of the NCVTEA and voice your ideas to your representative on the Council.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to represent some thoughts of industry concerning FFA conventions and contests. As one who as an FFA member sought after industry support and who is now viewing it from the other side, let me close by offering the following critical summary.

Instructors who provide quality classroom instruction and relevant vocational agriculture laboratory experience are upholding the faith industry has in them. Instructors who teach contests for the sake of accumulating trophies, community kudos, and resume material have breached that faith because they do not consider the long range ramifications. Instructors who utilize attendance at conventions as an opportunity to teach and motivate FFA members to further learning and to fulfill their responsibilities as representatives to chapter members who do not attend, again, uphold our faith and protect our investment. Those who consider it a good time away for awhile, and do not take advantage of the learning that can take place while present (and by not following up), have breached our trust and squandered our investment. Let us continue to work together for one another's benefit, and thanks for your good work.

BOOK REVIEW

CAPITAL INVESTMENT ANALYSIS: USING DISCOUNTED CASH FLOWS, by George L. Casler, Bruce L. Anderson, and Richard D. Aplin. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1984, Third Edition, 144 pp., \$19.95.

This book focuses on capital investment decisions which may involve large sums of money in expenditures for land, equipment, buildings, and other assets. Since these decisions influence the long-run flexibility and earning power of the business, it is imperative that they be based on reliable forecasting and evaluation procedures.

The book contains 14 chapters. The major areas covered include capital investment decisions, commonly used

measures of investment worth, time value of money, present value of a future sum of money, evaluating capital investments in terms of cash flows, discounted cash flow measures of investment worth, adjusting cash flows for income taxes, the cost of capital, special problems in projecting cash flows and in analyzing investments, handling uncertainty, handling inflation, acquiring assets with financial lease vs. purchase and loan, and capital rationing.

Two widely used measures of investment worth, the payback and simple rate of return methods, are discussed and it is noted that both suffer from the weakness of failing to reflect the time value of money. The book focuses on

two measures of investment worth that do reflect the time value of money: the net present value method and the internal rate of return method. The authors stress that these two approaches, correctly applied, can provide an excellent basis for applying judgment in making capital investment decisions.

This publication is designed as a basic text for courses in advanced farm management or financial management. It would be useful as a reference for agricultural teachers at the high school and junior college levels.

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THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE

THEME

Filling The Empty Shell



BY MARK LELLE

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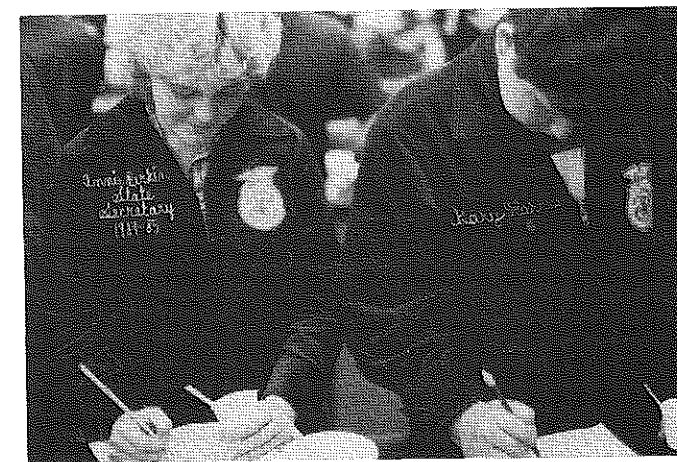
Humpty Dumpty might have been a future farmer. Looking down from the wall of leadership upon his domain, Humpty Dumpty saw no cause for alarm. He had been trained well as a leader. Smartly dressed (he had learned to tie a tie as a freshman) and quite mannerly (his advisor spent a week on table etiquette before the chapter banquet), Humpty Dumpty had learned all he thought he needed to know about being a leader. Alas, upon his "great fall" he discovered that he was only an empty shell.

The fable of Humpty Dumpty should raise a question in the minds of everyone involved in preparing young people for leadership roles. Are we teaching knowledge and skills essential for leadership development, or are we devoting our instructional time to units on public speaking, table etiquette, social graces, and parliamentary procedure? Are we truly developing effective leaders, or are we building an empty shell, hoping that the void inside will somehow develop on its own?

Developing Leadership

In recent years, social scientists have studied and analyzed the dynamics of leadership. The characteristics of good leaders have been identified, and procedures for developing these qualities in people have been developed. The different types of leaders and leadership styles have been studied, and it is known that different situations require different approaches to leadership. Researchers have also identified management tools which increase our control over new and/or challenging leadership situations. Why, then, should we not seek to develop these understandings in students before we attempt to teach the more traditional vocational agriculture leadership subjects?

There are two possible answers. First, teachers themselves may be unaware of the growing body of knowledge and research in leadership. Many of the latest leadership theories have been tested only during the past five years.



Students are able to utilize selected skills in evaluating the quality of milk and cottage cheese. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)



Students exhibit safety and driving skills with agricultural machinery. (Photograph courtesy of Stacy Gartin.)

The second and more probable reason is that vocational agriculture is locked into a leadership curriculum which teaches only the peripheral portions of the body of knowledge encompassing leadership. The leadership subjects presently being taught have existed throughout much of the history of vocational agriculture. It is time to revitalize the FFA as a leadership training tool and use the latest in leadership research, just as good teachers use the latest findings in horticulture, animal science, and agronomy.

Improving the Teaching of Leadership

What can be done to improve leadership instruction? Several things, many of which can be accomplished locally. First, teachers themselves must become more knowledgeable about the latest leadership research. There are many excellent resources available through the National FFA Center, universities, and publishers which cover leadership topics. Not only should these resources be utilized by instructors, they should be present in the chapter or department library for student use.

Second, instructional units could be developed which cover four major areas of leadership: Types of leaders, characteristics of effective leaders, leadership styles, and management of time and resources.

Third, educators must give larger numbers of students leadership responsibility. Vocational agriculture is often

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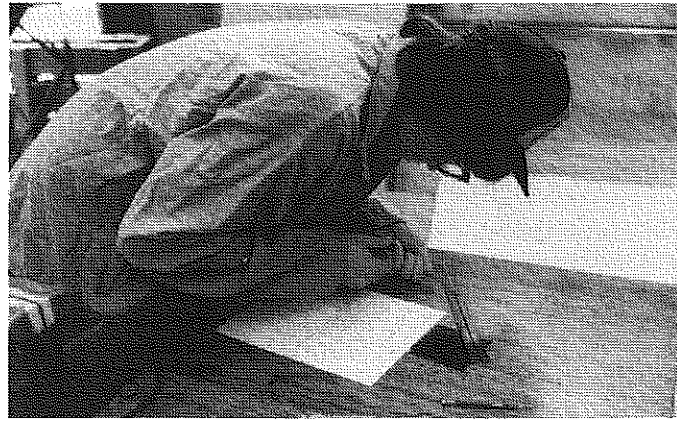
Filling The Empty Shell

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criticized for devoting too much time to the talented students who would probably succeed anyway and not enough time to students who are truly in need of leadership training. Delegation of responsibility is not easy. In fact, teachers will find delegating responsibility more time consuming than completing the task themselves.

For some students cleaning the chalk board is a task which matches their learning readiness. For others, planning and conducting a chapter banquet might be more appropriate. Expand opportunities for leadership by establishing an officer team in each class or by making effective use of committees. Our unwillingness to break from past tradition is the major obstacle on the road to increased leadership development opportunities for chapter members.

Lastly, a national movement must occur to initiate a revitalized leadership training program. The National FFA Center, in cooperation with the National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture, is in an ideal position to encourage the creation of instructional materials and teaching units aimed at developing a core of leadership knowledge essential for all Future Farmers.



Measuring and marking a circle on sheet metal is one skill needed in the ag mechanics contest. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)

Conspectus

This article is not a plea to abandon traditional leadership instruction. Rather it is meant to remind us of the need for basing all of our instruction in vocational agriculture upon the latest research available in the field, and for making that research available to every member as a central core around which to add traditional training. The time has come to learn the lesson of Humpty Dumpty and concentrate on developing the total leader in all members.

THEME

Time For Reflection

The great escape — a chance for fun, relaxation, pleasure, venture, and sport; an opportunity to leave responsibility at home and enjoy; a challenging, rewarding, and enlightening experience — the FFA convention and contests.

To many, the purpose of FFA conventions and FFA contests is varied. Each member of the agricultural education profession; teachers, teacher educators, and supervisors; approach the conventions and contests with a different frame of reference. It is this reference upon which we must reflect. Why should an individual participate in these events?

Professionalism

We are always hearing of professionalism. As educators, we are asked to become true professionals, but do we exhibit these qualities at our FFA contests and conventions? Before we display professionalism, is it safe to assume we must first be able to define a professional. Professional educators are those who are dedicated and committed to their work, often making major personal sacrifices for the good of their programs. Likewise professionals are student minded and instruct at the level of their students. They are mindful of and responsive to student values, problems, and concerns.

Experienced and trained educators are understanding and respectful of the right to public education and stress its



BY DARRELL L. FORNEY

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importance. In like manner, proficient individuals should be self-directed and self motivated; displaying enthusiasm and energy in their work. This energy can often be an asset that is contagious to others that complement the vocational and academic program.

Technical competence is another virtue that is of vital importance. Without this competence and the willingness to upgrade skill level, educators will find themselves instructing the methodology of farming rather than the complexities of agribusiness. To adequately round out an individual's character, they must be concerned about and must work toward the improvement of their colleagues.

As specialists in agricultural sciences and pedagogy, we should obligate ourselves to be active members of professional organizations and institutes related to our lifework,

but are we willing to volunteer our time and services to committee meetings and delegations that assist in the organization of these contests and conventions? Does our present fraternal spirit strengthen the role of the conventions and contests as they are entwined into an integral and complex vocational structure?

What kind of an example are we setting when we only attend convention to get away from home and have a good time, when we should be attending the necessary sessions to update ourselves? Are we missing the train as we stand at the station watching excellent opportunities pass us by; opportunities to display our professionalism, to strengthen our fraternal spirit, and to exhibit our profession's leadership?

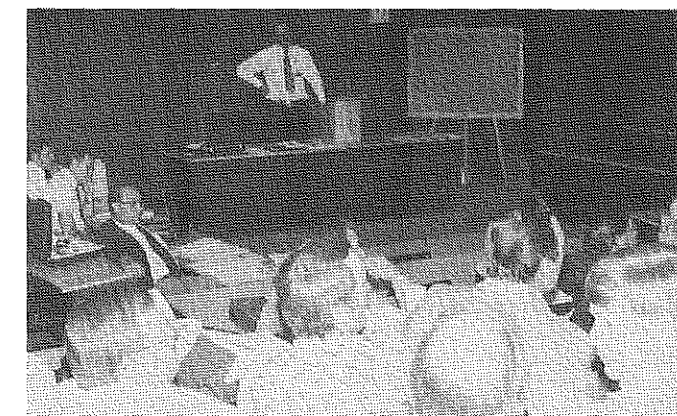
Leadership

It appears ironic that we as agricultural educators can teach young people how to become leaders and yet as members of the profession we often fail to exhibit many of those same leadership qualities. We are the best informed and yet as a group we are the worst understood in our society — a society that feels that education is a panacea.

What are we doing to upgrade the knowledge level of our society? How extensive is our public relations program in spreading the word about our involvement in those contests and the attendance of conventions? Do we adequately search for sponsors of our involvement? How much effort would it require to obtain financial and/or physical support to include others in our activities? Have we considered inviting our administrators, our fellow academic instructors, and our key agriculturalists to our activities to educate them of our involvement? Would administrators be more willing to allow us to attend FFA conventions and contests if they were better informed of the outcomes of our efforts? Are we obligated to our profession? Do we pledge total support and show our leadership? Are we setting a good example for our youth? Are the conventions and contests not ideal places to display our pride, improve ourselves as individuals, and demonstrate our leadership capabilities?

Assessment and Improvement

What better place than the convention is there to exchange ideas and new innovations with others in the pro-



State FFA conventions and judging contests offer vocational agriculture instructors an opportunity to conduct business in their state teachers association. (Photograph courtesy of Stanton Gartin.)

fession? If we are to make things happen in our communities and programs, then we need to assess our strengths and weaknesses, share our successes and quality improvement, and work at developing ourselves as educators. Have we forgotten to organize and evaluate our personal goals and objectives?

The desire for progressive education mandates that we remain up-to-date and technically competent. We must note that technological development is irreversible. Are we willing to sacrifice foresight and future potential by justifications based on past performance? Are you going to be an accessory to watered down vocational education?

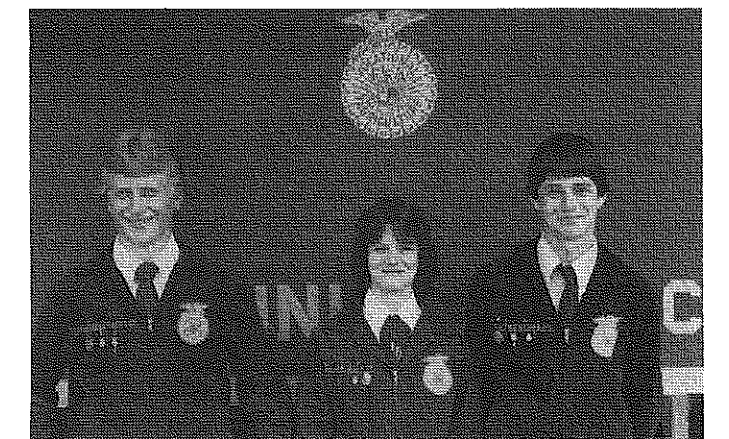
Education itself is the means of forming and reforming society. Are we taking full advantage of the occasions provided to us to organize and reshape ourselves? Optional seminars, symposiums, debates, discussions, lectures, and many other activities could just as easily be included in contests and convention programs. If these activities are already included, why is it that attendance is poor? Is attendance and involvement not important? What will be our strategy to improve our quality of teaching? How are we going to close the gap between standards and our quality of performance?

Quality Recognition

One of the important aspects of contests is the presence of competition. Likewise, we organize our conventions to recognize the excellence of those individuals faring well in competition. Do we often have difficulty admitting that other advisors and educators are more successful than us? Should we not be more enthusiastic about the success of others and proud of their accomplishments? To what extent do we offer a congratulatory handshake and a slap on the back for a job well done? Do we often find ourselves attending contests only if we feel we have a team that will win? Should we not be exposing more students to the experience, practice, and knowledge gained rather than wanting to be recognized as the best coach.

It has been said that education is an art, not a science; whereas the great teachers and even the good teachers largely teach themselves. Should we not as a professional group organize to reward those individualities of teaching? What is wrong with allowing advisors the opportunity to

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Success breeds happiness and instills motivation in students. (Photograph courtesy of Stacy Gartin.)

Time For Reflection

(Continued from Page 17)

participate in FFA contests and to then be recognized for their expertise?

Some, however, may feel that we already recognize individuals too much for their ability to coach. What is wrong with evaluating an educator's overall program — including classroom instruction, supervision, involvement and accomplishment — and recognizing quality performance? Are we overemphasizing the capacity to direct or prompt a winning team rather than underscoring the other duties of an excellent scholar of learnedness?

Rejuvenation

For many, the conventions and contests are an opportunity to reflect upon our programs and to return to our communities with a renewed energy. This revitalization provides the strength to enter another area in education. It supports the willpower, dedication, and commitment vital to survival in the agricultural education profession. How many times have you returned from a convention or a contest and felt rewarded for the long hours and hard work, and felt that you were ready to embark upon a new term? We must also recognize the possibilities that contests and conventions furnish fun, recreation, and sport.

Career Guidance

We are seeing the need, as never before, to encourage youth to plan in advance for their careers. Too often, career education has been left untouched or left to a select group of educators. Technical innovations and advancements have pressured many to pursue advanced education and training. Many educators neglect to realize that conventions and contests are an excellent opportunity to encourage career awareness and exploration.



Students participate in learning activities relative to the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of dairy products. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)

A great deal of guidance can be provided toward career selection while attending conventions or preparing for and/or attending contests. Likewise the lessons of incorporation of values and effective decision making strategies can provide excellent training for the career development process. It is essential that all students develop an awareness of themselves, their interaction and involvement in the environment, the world of work, economic, and employability. As able, qualified, and licensed individuals we must train ourselves to utilize these opportunities and to encourage career planning for our youth.

Reflection

By definition, each of us approaches the conventions and contests from a different frame of reference. We arrive with our perception of the reasons for attending. Is it not time you reflect upon the reason for your involvement?

BOOK REVIEW

AN APPLE FOR THE TEACHER - FUNDAMENTALS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COMPUTING by George H. Culp and Herbert Nickles, Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1983, 239 pages.

This book is designed for teachers who would like to know the fundamentals of the BASIC programming language and how to apply them in designing and developing instructional computing programs. The text is divided into two parts and consists of nine chapters plus two appendices. In Part 1, the first five chapters cover BASIC programming language statements and commands common to five areas of instructional computing: problem solving, drill and practice, tutorial dialog, simulation and gaming, and testing.

Chapter 6 gives a short example and model programs in each of the five areas of instructional computing. Actual computer program listings are given. Chapter 7 discusses and demonstrates the use of graphics as an instructional technique.

In Part 2, Chapters 8 and 9 explain the specific steps needed to design and develop instructional computing programs. The appendices include general instructions for using a microcomputer; instructions for loading, editing, and saving programs; answers to the questions and problems in the chapters; and an annotated bibliography of journals and publications which address instructional computing.

Twenty-six programs, from simple to complex, are presented in the book.

The text and programs are written for Apple II uses, but with some editing most of the programs could be made compatible with other computers using the BASIC programming language. A diskette containing all of the programs, plus solution programs to selected problems is available from the authors for a \$10.00 fee to cover cost, postage and handling.

This book would make an excellent reference for any teacher who would like to begin designing and developing his/her own instructional computing programs. It is well organized, easy to understand, and very complete.

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THEME

Using FFA To Meet The Needs of Disadvantaged and Handicapped Students

Vocational agriculture programs today are made up of a diverse student population, including those students identified as being disadvantaged and handicapped. It has been established that effective vocational agricultural education programs for disadvantaged and handicapped students are dependent upon three methods of delivering instruction: classroom and laboratory instruction, an extension of classroom instruction in practical settings through the SOEP and/or cooperative education model and the FFA.

FFA Offering

The field of agriculture has changed dramatically since the FFA was founded in 1928. With new and advanced technology in the agriculture industry, FFA contests and programs have been expanded and updated. FFA activities reinforce and supplement material covered in the vocational agriculture curriculum.

Enrollment figures show that although the percentages of disadvantaged and handicapped students in vocational agriculture programs are increasing, their membership in the FFA has not kept pace. In the past these students have been discouraged from joining the FFA by overprotective parents, peers, and school personnel. One causal factor is that disadvantaged and handicapped students have been categorized as lacking motivation and self-confidence. Too much emphasis has been placed on the disability and not enough on their abilities. This has resulted with contests held at the local, district, state, regional and national levels. This encourages student travel, and offers student exposure in a variety of settings. The FFA contests and awards program now offers a variety of individual and group awards: Proficiency, Public Speaking, Degree Recognition, Achievement, National Chapter Contest, Food for America, and Chapter Safety Award. Students are able to demonstrate the occupational skills as well as leadership skills developed in their program through these contests and awards.

The benefits for disadvantaged and handicapped students to participate in FFA contests and activities are numerous. Harris and Sweet (1981) identified several benefits for participating in youth groups that apply to students including those with special needs: (1) vocational understanding; (2) leadership development; (3) civic consciousness; (4) social intelligence; (5) self-confidence building; (6) home improvement; (7) positive use of free time; (8) scholarship; (9) spirit of competition; (10) respect for work; (11) understanding employer/employee relationships; (12) employability skills; (13) sense of independence and accomplishment; and (14) opportunity to plan and carry out an idea. The ultimate goal is to develop the maximum degree of independence and self-esteem.

Research and experience have shown that student orga-

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nization activities are the most effective way to teach some of the critical skills. Students are able to build friendships with peers and their advisors through teamwork and individual activities. This relationship between the special needs student and the advisor is particularly beneficial. Advisors can serve many different roles such as: guidance, advisement, encouragement, supervision, assistance, and reinforcement.

Future Implications

With open communication and cooperative planning between vocational agriculture teachers and special education teachers, it will be possible to enhance participation of special needs students in the FFA. Some activities promoting cooperation between these teachers and teachers aides include inservice workshops, co-advising of FFA activities, and sharing of vocational assessment materials.

The goals of the FFA can be achieved with careful planning, encouragement, working cooperatively, and positive thinking. Through individual and group activities all students will have the opportunity to reach their maximum potential. Students can accomplish realistic, functional goals in the FFA to prepare them for future employment and productive citizenship.

Reference

Harris, T. and Sweet, G. Why we believe in vocational students organizations. Voc Ed, September 1981, 33-35.



Operation of agricultural machinery enhances the employability of students in all areas of agriculture. (Photograph courtesy of Stacy Gartin.)

Leadership Development Internship

An important part of a total program of vocational agriculture is the FFA. The FFA is, of course, the vehicle which provides the incentive, motivation, recognition and enhancement to learning. Further, the FFA is an excellent laboratory in which students can apply the leadership competencies taught by the teacher of vocational agriculture. Many of these competencies are applied and practiced through FFA contests and activities. The kinds of competencies learned are those which future leaders of American agriculture must master.

Specific Preparation

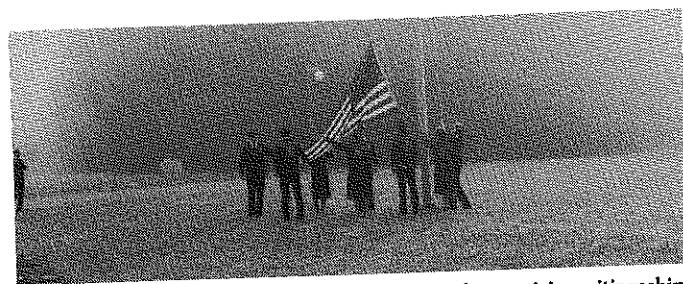
How many of us know where we learned such competencies? Were those kinds of things taught in a course? If so, which one? How was it done? More probable is the idea that we learned those competencies by experience in groups and organizations. Most of us probably learned of the leadership competencies while participating in youth organizations such as the FFA.

However, many of today's prospective teachers of vocational agriculture did not belong to the FFA during their formative years. Yet, we expect them to obtain a degree in agricultural education, meet requirements for teacher certification, and go out there and develop leaders through the FFA.

Such expectations may be unreasonable given their limited personal leadership background and the level of undergraduate preparation for this important component of their job. We do not expect them to teach agricultural mechanization, animal science, soil science, or farm management without basic undergraduate coursework specific to the subject. Similarly, how can we expect them to teach leadership without practice at the undergraduate level? It is not realistic to do so. A course in FFA is not sufficient to equip tomorrow's teacher of vocational agriculture with the competencies necessary to develop next year's agricultural leaders. Even those students who are former FFA members realize the role of the advisor requires competence and experience beyond secondary school membership.

Using Internships

If we believe in the concepts of learning by doing and the problem solving approach to teaching, then instruction in



The FFA builds leaders for tomorrow through practicing citizenship, cooperation, and patriotism. (Photograph courtesy of Stacy Gartin.)



By DAVID E. COX

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leadership development competencies should not differ from instruction in other competencies. In fact, the teaching, and subsequent learning of leadership development competencies should be rather easy. The motivation as well as the application is readily available.

Undergraduate students preparing to be teachers of vocational agriculture begin gradually to realize the magnitude of the job. As the role of a local FFA advisor becomes more vivid to them, so do the inherent competencies required to perform this aspect of the job of the teacher of vocational agriculture. Due to lack of experience, the demands on the undergraduate student to learn the competencies necessary to effectively carry out the role of the FFA advisor can become overwhelming.

In order to utilize the problem solving approach in developing those competencies associated with advising vocational youth organizations, teacher educators need to identify and utilize selected leadership development (FFA) activities to involve undergraduate students. These selected activities then become the content of a laboratory for the prospective teacher of vocational agriculture. With cooperation of local vocational agriculture teachers, this approach to learning by doing can be established and become functional. A leadership development internship requires minimal effort on the part of the teacher of vocational agriculture, and enhances on-going local FFA activities. In fact, teachers of vocational agriculture are quite receptive to having additional help in conducting and managing FFA contests and activities.

The program is in operation in the Department of Agricultural Education at The University of Arizona. Referred to as the Leadership Development Internship, it serves undergraduate students as a laboratory for the application of leadership development competencies as they prepare to become FFA advisors.

Originally the program was designed to be operated on an independent basis as was reported by Cox and McCormick (1978). Subsequently, the approach has been altered to its current internship mode. Students participate while concurrently enrolled for credit in a junior level course entitled Youth Leadership Development. The course objectives call for each student to participate in a minimum number of FFA activities in a local vocational agriculture program to meet the internship requirements. The leader-

ship development activities utilized are those in which students may gain experience in planning, managing, and evaluating FFA activities. All approved activities must allow the agricultural education major direct contact with FFA members.

The course content is designed to present problems and situations which confront the FFA advisor. For example, the relationship of the FFA to vocational agriculture, preparing a meeting agenda, conducting committee meetings, training officers, conducting a chapter meeting, carrying out the chapter program of activities, training a judging team and managing a contest are among the problems and situations presented. The Leadership Development Internship becomes the vehicle for subsequent practice in a real setting to apply the material taught in the course.

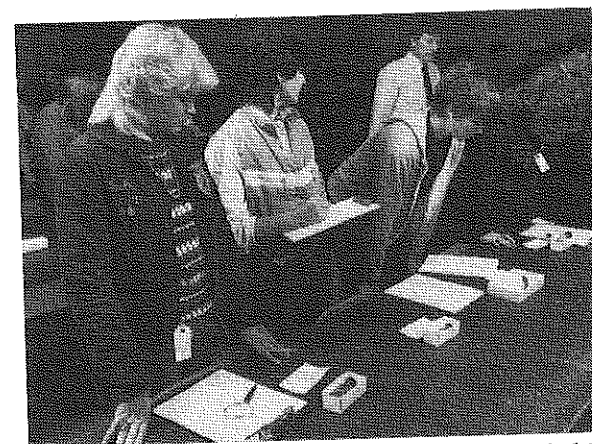
Cooperative Effort

Prior to the start of the semester, local teachers of vocational agriculture are contacted by a faculty member in order to solicit their cooperation. A list of the teachers who agree to cooperate along with their telephone number is provided to the students enrolled in the internship. Students participating in the internship then contact the appropriate teacher(s) and arrange the details such as activity, date, location, duties, etc.

The teacher and the intern work together to accomplish the activities involved with the FFA meeting, contest, or event. The intern has the opportunity to gain first hand experience in planning, conducting, and evaluating FFA activities under the guidance of an experienced FFA advisor. Upon completion of each activity, the competencies experienced, and a brief narrative of what the student learned are provided. The teacher signs that report and the student submits the form to the teacher educator for review and recording.

Additional Benefits

Besides adhering to the learn by doing philosophy and allowing the teacher educator to employ the problem solving approach to teaching, the Leadership Development Internship provides the student with a great number of additional experiences. Perhaps the most significant experience for the intern is the personal contact with an enthusiastic, dedicated, professional teacher. The teacher may serve as a role model for the student who is preparing to



Students must correctly name the order and hosts of identified insects. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)



Serious evaluation is given by students in analyzing problems associates with small gasoline engines. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Creel, WVU Comm. Dept.)

become a local advisor and teacher. This contact and experience probably has a greater impact on the intern than does the experience with the FFA members themselves.

Further, when students participate in conventions and contests, they have the opportunity to meet state supervisory staff, other teachers, parents, and supporters of the vocational agriculture program. Certainly, direct contact with an observation of FFA members is vitally important to the future FFA advisor.

Finally, one cannot work closely with the FFA members and advisor without observing such things as student management, recordkeeping, administrative relations, housekeeping, teacher-student relations, faculty relations and professionalism.

Summary

The Leadership Development Internship has evolved over time. Currently, it is used as a vehicle for undergraduate majors to gain practical experiences working directly with FFA members and advisors. It provides a very real laboratory whereby students can learn by practicing leadership development competencies. It also allows teacher educators to employ the problem solving approach to teaching leadership development competencies at the undergraduate level.

Additionally, early experiences prior to student teaching become a significant aspect in building the confidence and competence of the student. Undergraduate students are typically in the junior year when they participate in the internship. In states where early exposure is mandated, an internship of this type may be a means to meet the intent of the mandate. Since it is impossible for a student to participate in the events and activities of a local FFA chapter without gleaning insights into the total role of the teacher of vocational agriculture, the internship meets many needs.

The Leadership Development Internship provides for realistic application and practice in working with FFA members. An additional reward comes in the form of the working relationship which develops between the intern and the local teacher. The intern has an opportunity to observe and assist the teacher of vocational agriculture carry out the professional duties and responsibilities.

Reference

Cox, David E., and F.G. McCormick, "Supervised Leadership Development for Prospective Ag. Teachers - One Approach." *AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE*, 50, 8, February, 1978.

The Agricultural Teacher: The Key In Program Improvement

There is a line in Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" that says, "The nature of bad news affects the teller." This seems to be true in most of education. Some vocational agricultural teachers have reported that their students are not as good as in the past, that they are not as well behaved, that many lack the desire to learn, that there is more absenteeism; that classes in general do not have the quality of the past. In searching for the cause of this situation and assessing the responsibility, the public has in a large part placed the blanket of blame on the profession and on the teachers themselves.

Setting Standards

Agricultural teachers consider themselves professionals and any group that calls itself a profession can expect to be held accountable. It is the obligation of a profession to assure its clients and society of ethical conduct and effective performance by each of its members. Professional preparation and licensing should be indicative of initial competence.

It is imperative that teachers be involved in determining not only what the basic requirements for entry into the profession are, but also what the marks of an effective teacher are and how effectiveness can be improved. How teachers of vocational agriculture define and monitor effectiveness is continually troublesome. Yet, how effectively teachers perform the functions expected of them has tremendous significance for both the future of society and the life of every individual.

If we in agricultural education do not set the requirements for the profession, we must expect to be judged by a public that is impatient for results, and a public that will use as criteria a romantic, idealistic notion of what good teachers should be. If the teaching profession does attempt to interpret teaching effectiveness for itself and for those whom it serves it can expect to gain a clearer understanding of its own



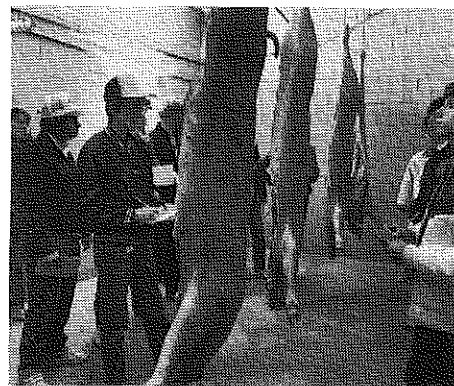
BY JAMES P. CLOUSE
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role and improve its professional performance.

A Model

A teacher's effectiveness goes well beyond his or her contribution to certain (or even all) educational goals in the teaching-learning process. A teacher also plays a role as model and mentor for students beyond the classroom, as a faculty colleague, and as a member of the profession and its various associations. In each of these roles, somewhat different qualities are important and different effects are sought. In each, therefore, the meaning and criteria of effectiveness differ.

Clearly, our conception of the effective teacher cannot be some narrow, conventional stereotype. Responsible administrators are obliged to render judgments, regarding teacher effectiveness, and students, alumni, parents, and the general public make such classifications as a matter of course.



The skilled teacher plans appropriate learning activities. (Photograph courtesy Dave Creel, WVU Communications Department.)

The agricultural teaching profession has its own ideas of what constitutes or makes an effective teacher. In most cases these are the same attributes as are appropriate for any teacher.

Here are some characteristics that are important to the effective fulfillment of an agricultural teacher's responsibilities:

1. *Current mastery of technical subject matter.* No teacher can be effective without something to teach, and no field, particularly agricultural education, remains static. Good teachers work to stay abreast of new developments in the broad field of their subject matter and continually increase their mastery in areas of special interest. Earning a graduate degree contributes to such mastery, but continued effectiveness demands practical application experiences as well as continual professional and technical improvement.

2. *Continual intellectual growth.* Teachers of agriculture are expected to lead active intellectual lives and to exhibit a breadth of intelligence and cultural awareness beyond the subject matter and the community. Such a breadth of learning and experience contributed directly to the teacher's effectiveness by enriching instruction. In addition, it gives students a model to respect and emulate. What better way to encourage lifelong learning than to provide a living, personal demonstration.

3. *Awareness of professional responsibilities and societal expectations.* The local agricultural teacher must be clear about what the job is and what the expectations are. The effective teacher is fully cognizant of the educational goals to be achieved and participates in their periodic review with sensitivity to changing societal circumstances and requirements. Such teachers also know and accept their obligations to both their profession and the community they serve. Like all good workers, they know their jobs.

4. *Awareness of advances in teaching methodology.* Awareness of expectations is fruitless without the ability to meet them. Effective teachers keep abreast of developments in educational practice as well as in technical subject matter. They neither persist in outmoded, ineffectual procedures nor uncritically adopt every fad that comes along. Effectiveness is promoted by inventiveness, but needless reinvention can be avoided by alertness and receptivity to good ideas from professional colleagues and others.

5. *Plan for effective teaching.* Effective teaching is no accident, and effective teachers do not leave instruction to chance. They plan carefully both what is to happen in their classrooms and what is to result from it, so that precious class time will not be wasted for lack of preparation. They modify their plans and depart from them when necessary, but they do not rely on improvisation, nor do they permit classes to drift aimlessly. Students lose confidence in teachers who do not seem to know what they are trying to do. This is particularly true in vocational agriculture.

6. *Skilled in the instructional functions.* The best laid plans are of no value unless they are implemented and may have little effect if poorly executed. One of the most common ways of judging teachers' effectiveness is to observe them carrying out instructional plans in the classroom. Often a stereotyped preconception of teacher behavior is imposed, favoring a somewhat unimaginative, mechanical craftsmanship and a slavish adherence to plans. The effective teacher exhibits flexibility in taking advantage of unexpected opportunities for enrichment, and in dealing with student difficulties when they become evident. Beyond this, a master teacher, like any true artist, manifests a unique personal style that departs from the stereotype. Style is revealed in subtle ways — in variations and transitions, in a sense of timing and in the absence of tension in the class. The learning situation is a relaxed, organized situation in which enthusiasm is contagious.

7. *Concern and respect for students.* Effective teachers treat students like people, not as objects or numbers. They regard each one as an individual and show sincere concern for the well being of each and a genuine interest in helping each succeed. They do not so

much demand respect from students as earn it, by according students the respect to which they are entitled, without regard for race, gender, or ethnic origin. Many vocational agriculture teachers are remembered not for what they taught but for who they were.

8. *Dependable as a team member.* Teaching is at times a lonely endeavor, largely carried out by the individual in isolation from colleagues. Nowhere was this more true than in the one-room school, but even in a large contemporary school, the teacher in the classroom is still a lone practitioner. Nevertheless, most teachers today are also members of a faculty. As a responsible group, a faculty is dependent for its overall effectiveness on the participation of all its members in the making of decisions and on each member, individually, in carrying them out. Effective agricultural teachers make their influence felt both in the formal deliberations of the faculty and its committees, and in informal discussions and conversations among colleagues. A willingness to assume leadership, when appropriate, and a record of carrying out assignments on behalf of the group, mark a teacher as effective in the eyes of peers.

9. *Dedicated to improving the profession.* One of the primary reasons for the existence of professional associations is to encourage and assist practitioners to increase their effectiveness in rendering the services in which they are specialists. To remain at the forefront, effective teachers need to take full advantage of this source of support and contribute their share to teachers' collective efforts in promoting educational improvement. The sense of professionalism which marks the effective agricultural teacher today can be further strengthened as they work together to improve their effectiveness as teachers and professional educators.

10. *Involved in community welfare and improvement.* Good agricultural teachers are ambassadors of education in the communities in which they teach or reside. They help others understand what the schools are trying to accomplish, learn what their neighbors need and expect from the schools, and join them in creating the kind of environment that reinforces, rather than frustrates, the schools' efforts.

Securing Effective Teachers

As a recognized profession, there are

at least five critical selection points in the development of a quality local teacher of vocational agriculture: (1) admission to a preparation program, (2) completion of degree requirements, (3) qualifying for a license, (4) initial appointment, and (5) granting of tenure. At each successive point, a sounder basis exists for judging a person's potential for becoming an effective teacher.

During the period of initial academic professional preparation, there can be substantial progress made toward many of the ten characteristics of an effective agriculture teacher. Other characteristics are more appropriately developed during student teaching and the first few years of teaching.

Further refinement will take place during graduate study, but the attainment and maintenance of full effectiveness as a teacher probably rests most heavily on a continuing program of personal growth and formal professional study while teaching.

The primary responsibility for achieving and maintaining effectiveness as a teacher rests with each individual teacher. Others can and should be supportive. Measures taken to encourage and assist active teachers to grow professionally are well worth the effort.

Two chief sources of support are supervisors and fellow teachers. As members of the same profession, those who have administrative or supervisory responsibilities should be sensitive to the needs of individual teachers and faculty groups. They should be competent to help teachers overcome difficulties and improve performance or be in a position to arrange opportunities for such assistance. As members of the agricultural teaching profession, teachers should increasingly assume responsibility for making decisions regarding curricular and instructional matters and for helping one another to become more effective.

Every active agricultural teacher should be an effective teacher: liberally educated; current in the subject matter and its pedagogy; aware of what is expected of teachers and schools; skillful and conscientious in planning, preparing for, and carrying out instruction; respectful toward students and concerned about their welfare; and actively involved in faculty, professional, and community affairs.

Stories in Pictures



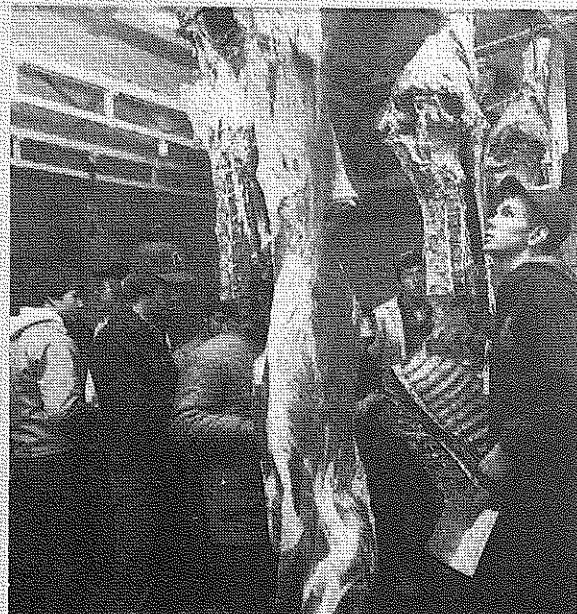
Students learn to identify crops and weeds in various physical forms and stages of growth. (Photograph by Stanton Gartin)



Agricultural mechanics skills are essential in trouble shooting small gas engines. (Photograph by Dave Creel)



Students apply classroom knowledge in evaluating land and soil potentials. (Photograph by Stacy Gartin)



Determining quality and yield grades are vital skills for employment in the meat industry. (Photograph by Dave Creel)

Application of vocational agriculture knowledge and skills better prepare students for careers in the agricultural industry.