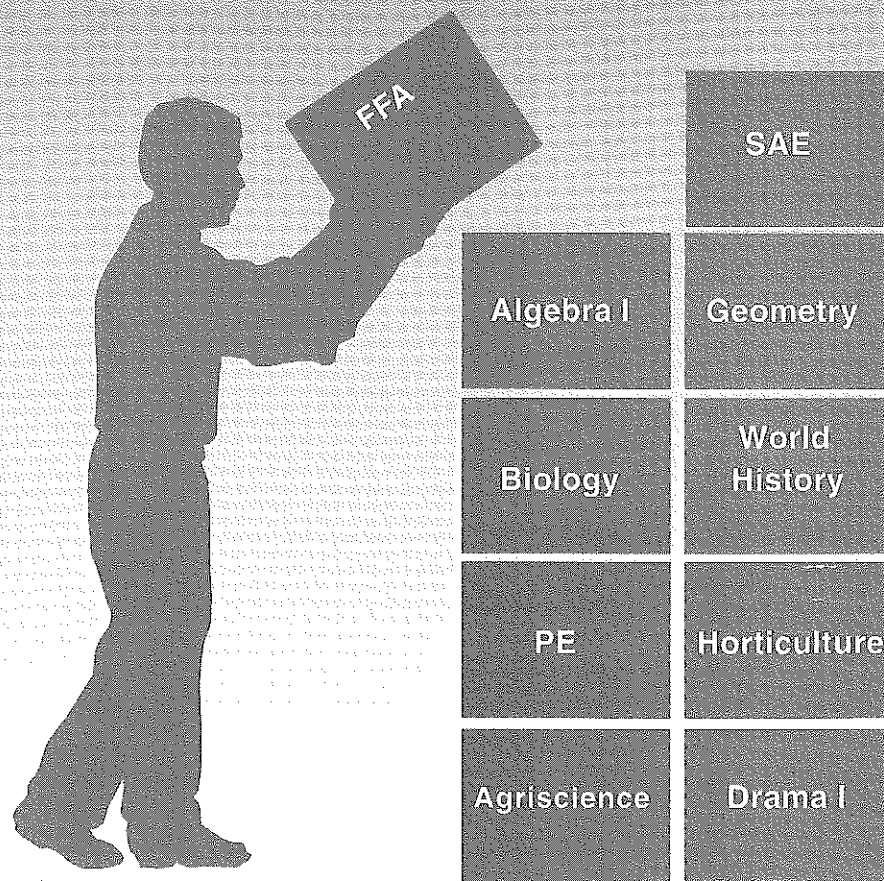


January-
February
1998
volume 70
issue 4

The Agricultural
EDUCATION
M A G A Z I N E



BLOCK SCHEDULING • BLOCK SCHEDULING • BLOCK SCHEDULING

It Isn't Your Father's Agricultural Education Magazine Any More

By Gary Moore

At the recent American Vocational Association (AVA) I had the opportunity to talk with two retired agricultural educators. One was retiring after 30+ years in the profession. His assessment of agricultural education was pessimistic. He thought agricultural education was on a downward slide. His major concern was that agricultural education was no longer focused solely on preparing workers for agricultural industry.

The second gentleman, who has been associated with agricultural education for 50 years, was attending his 40th something AVA convention. He said this was one of the best AVA conventions he had ever attended. Instead of being satisfied with what we had accomplished, he was impressed the profession was looking to the future. He was most positive about where agricultural education was heading.

Regardless of which individual you agree with, one thing is certain agricultural education has changed dramatically during the past several decades. In a speech to university agricultural educators at AVA, John Hillison of Virginia Tech discussed the history of agricultural education and described the 1950 decade as the "pure" decade. I would have probably labeled it the "traditional" decade. During this decade males were in vocational agriculture to become farmers. The programs were heavily regulated by state supervisors who operated under the auspices of the Smith-Hughes Act. Agricultural education has changed dramatically since then. Or, to paraphrase a popular automobile commercial, it isn't your father's agricultural

education any more.

Even though agricultural education has changed dramatically, our professional publication, *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, hasn't changed much over the decades. Outgoing editor Lou Riesenberg, with assistance from Rocky Mountain Communications, has done a remarkable job in transforming the appearance of the magazine. Under their leadership, the magazine was revamped to have a modern, lively appearance. Lou and Rocky Mountain are to be commended on a job well done.

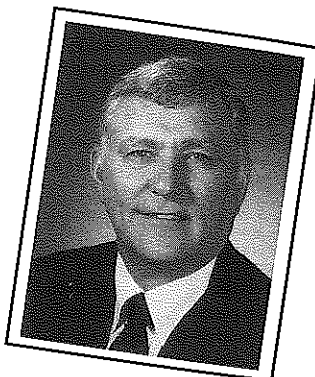
The challenge to me, as editor, is to move our professional magazine further down the road. We have added a number of new features that I am excited about:

- **The Soapbox** - This new column provides a forum for discussion of issues affecting agricultural education.
- **webmaster@agedmag.edu** - This new column contains descriptions of 5-10 World Wide Web sites that teachers need to know about.
- **Spotlight on Outstanding Programs** - Each issue will spotlight an outstanding agricultural education program.
- **Sound Off** - This new column features reactions from students and teachers about the theme of each issue.
- **Our Leadership in Agricultural Education** - Most issues will feature a biographical sketch of an individual who has provided leadership for the growth of agricultural education.
- **Professional Development** - A new regular feature will be titled Professional Development. This

- column will feature news and information from the professional organizations in agriculture.
- **Joe Scatterscrew** - This new feature is a humorous section called Joe Scatterscrew. Joe is a fictitious agriculture teacher who taught in Texas during the 1950s. The former E. V. Walton of Texas A&M University wrote over 20 Joe Scatterscrew stories.
 - **Go to the Head of the Class** - This established column will continue. Each issue will have a 10-15 question quiz about some aspect of agricultural education.

We have numerous new features planned but still plan to have a core of informative articles about issues affecting agricultural education in every issue.

You may notice this issue of *The Magazine* looks different than recent issues. The reason for this is simple. For the past year *The Magazine* has been designed and composed by Rocky Mountain Communications in Colorado. At the annual meeting of the Editing-Managing Board in December, it was reluctantly decided to discontinue using Rocky Mountain Communications. This was a financial decision to insure the long-term financial viability of *The Magazine*. I was asked to handle the layout and design of the magazine. My secretary willingly accepted this challenge. This first issue has been a learning experience and we'll keep working at it until we get it perfect; then it will be time for a new editor.



Theme: BlockScheduling

Editorial

It Isn't Your Father's Agricultural Education Magazine Any More 2
By Gary Moore

Soap Box

Count Me Among the Ranks of Public Enemy #1 4
By MeeCee Baker

Theme Articles: Block Scheduling

- Block Scheduling: Let's Get Ready to Rumble 5
By Tony Brannon
- The Block Schedule and Agricultural Education 7
By Pete Risng
- Block Scheduling: A Students' Perspective 9
By Destini Gillham
- What Goes Around Comes Around 10
By Andrew Baker
- Accelerated Block Schedule: A Texas Experience 12
By Ron Whitson
- Block Scheduling: Students' Sound Off 14
By Cindy Coffman, Amanda Imhof, Kristin Hopper, Casey Allen
- Block Scheduling: Maintaining a Complete Agriculture Program 16
By David Agnew and Gary Masters
- Block Scheduling: Taking Change by the Hand 18
By Jay Morgan and James White

Program Spotlight

Outstanding Agricultural Education Program: Jessamine County High School - Kentucky 20
By Tracy Hoover and Rick Rudd

Leadership in Agricultural Education

Lloyd J. Phipps 22
By Ed Osborne

Webmaster@agedmag.edu

By Matt Raven 24

Go to the Head of the Class

What Do you Know About Fiction and Agricultural Education 26
By Gary Moore

Professional Development

By Gary Moore 27

Joe Scatterscrew

Organizing for a New Year Back Cover
By E.V. Walton

Regional Editors

Southern Region
Bradley Leger, Midland High School, 735 S. Crocker St., Midland, LA 70559-1943

Eastern Region
Betsy Foote, Hartford Central School, P.O. Box 79, Hartford, NY 12838

Western Region
Marc Beitia, 715 Stevens, American Falls, ID 83211

Central Region
Linda Rist, 404 E. Park Avenue, Viborg, SD 57070



Page 5

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Article Submission

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Editor

Gary E. Moore
College of Agricultural and Extension Education, North Carolina State University, Box 7607, Raleigh, NC 27695-7607, Telephone: (919) 515-1756, FAX: (919) 515-9060.
E-mail: gary_moore@ncsu.edu

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Count Me Among the Ranks of Public Enemy #1

By MeeCee Baker

Our local paper carried a political cartoon last September. The captain stated, "Fall in Pennsylvania When Teachers are out on strike." Although two local associations were working without contracts, neither had threatened to strike. Since then, countless letters to the paper's editor blame teachers for entering the profession solely for the short hours and long pay. The malcontent authors often recall bad experiences with teachers and blame them for their failures.

Teachers fare little better on the national scene. Teachers receive criticism for perceived low-test scores and drop out rates, as well as poor discipline and facilities. Proposed voucher programs for private schools abound.

When did we become public enemy number one? Sometimes I wonder why I chose this profession. Then I realize, it chose me, I was called to teach. You were too. You've been called to teach, called to role model, called to mentor and called to make a difference in the lives of the students you touch through this most honorable profession.

Reflect on your youth. Apart from your parents, who influenced you? Chances are a teacher did, just as you influence the lives of your students. Students look to teachers as role models for emulation. They mimic the way you interact with your family, community, and other professionals.

You also serve as mentor to many whom need a door opened for professional and personal success. Like me, you have arranged for college visits, job interviews and helped with applications and financial aid forms. Indeed, you celebrate more in your students' successes than your own. You are also there in time of student need. Former students call you often for advice. You listen, give counsel, financial assistance and sometimes even shelter to students experiencing difficult times.

Think of the young people who have passed through your programs. Their lives have changed because of you. Maybe you assisted them in choosing their careers, aided them in developing a solid work ethic or instilled within them a sense of social responsibility. Perhaps you gave them much needed confidence or a place to belong. Linda Story, FFA Alumni President, often says, there are no bench warmers in agricultural education. No truer words have been spoken. Agricultural education creates environments that welcome all students from the outgoing to the shy, from the popular to the "odd one out", from the academically gifted to academically challenged.

Agricultural education remains the model for the total school program. While educational theorists debate latest teaching techniques complete with appropriate buzz words, we can truly impose the new cliché of "been there and done that." I would add, "and done that well." I believe supervised agricultural experience (SAE) stands as an original School-to-Work program. Our students' record books look a lot like the more trendy portfolios. Along that same line, hasn't agricultural education always been outcome based?

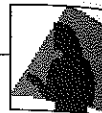
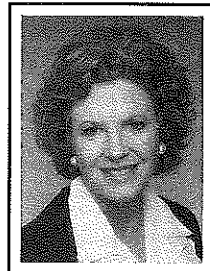
How can we fight the public enemy image and at the same time

promote agricultural education as a long standing success? We can do so by stop being humble and start being self and program promoting. Although we are quite proud of our students, we shy away from flaunting our own and program accomplishments. Let's not keep agricultural education a secret any longer. The Anne Murray song lyric rings true, "we could sure use a little good news today."

Look for every opportunity to market the good news in your programs. Better yet, involve advisory groups, alumni, parents and students in your effort. Their passion for agricultural education often remains unsurpassed. Encourage your state and national leadership to follow suit. They possess unique opportunities to serve as advocates in the larger educational arena.

My hours sure aren't short. Neither are yours. Although I'm satisfied with my pay, I wouldn't call it long. Your pay most likely isn't either. I'll never be rich. You probably won't be either. On second thought, maybe we are rich, richly blessed to be part of a redeemed profession where educators can positively influence young people while teaching the very basics of life in the technical fields of agriculture. For that, I remain truly grateful. To those who think teachers are public enemy number one, I am proud to count myself among the ranks.

MeeCee Baker is past president of the NVATA and teaches at Greenwood High School in Millerstown, Pennsylvania.



Let's get ready to Rummble.....

By Tony Brannon, Theme Editor

One of the most memorable recollections of my secondary agriculture teaching experience involves an incident which occurred in a two hour agricultural production/mechanics class. We had taken a short instructional field trip to a student's farm to demonstrate grooming a steer. While traveling back to school one of our vehicles had a flat tire and we arrived back at school a few minutes late. I quickly rushed the students off to their next class and a group of them arrived at their English class where they found a very irate teacher. When told that they had taken a field trip in agriculture and had some problems which caused them to be late she exclaimed, "I've been teaching 20 years and you

need to tell that young teacher, Mr. Brannon, that schools operate on one-hour classes and that he has you one hour and then I have you one hour." Her irateness was not calmed any when one of my students replied "No, ma'am you have us one hour but he has us two hours." Needless to say

this was my first "rumble" with an academic teacher over block scheduling. You see, she failed to see the value of a two-hour class. In the years following this incident, educational reformers began to demand more academic classes and eventually, I, as well as most teachers, had to give up our two hour block schedules to survive. Then, all of a sudden — Boom! — and "What Goes Around Comes Around."

Block scheduling has come around again - only this time it has caught on school wide and nationwide. Many schools in many states have already jumped on the block scheduling bandwagon or are seriously considering it. Agricultural

having more sayings than "Carter has Little Liver Pills.")

"Perception Is Reality"

Perhaps no one statement has snowballed the block scheduling "Rumble" more than this one. It is the perception of many educators and the general public that if you lengthen the class period, instruction and learning automatically increase in effectiveness. Such is not reality. Those "in the know" readily believe that — "It is not the size of the period that counts, it's what you do with it that counts." Just because block scheduling increases the seat time available, success is not a

guarantee. Common sense says that "the mind can only comprehend what the rear can endure." The effectiveness of the time honored methodology of lecture has gone by the wayside with the longer class periods afforded by block scheduling. Alternative methodolo-

gies such as demonstrations, experiments, field trips, projects, portfolios, cooperative learning, guest speakers, and team teaching are excellent examples of ways to utilize this alternative use of school time.

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em!
Once while harvesting our



Block scheduling provides more time for individualized instruction.

Education, as a profession, must continue to deal with this change. As we do, it is imperative that we analyze its strengths, its weaknesses and how we can use it to our advantage.

In analyzing this "rumble" of block scheduling, a few sayings come to mind (I have been accused of

tobacco crop and completing the repetitive task of hanging the stalks on the stick, a fellow worker told me, "You know, you aren't too awfully smart, but you sure are quick to catch on." Whether or not we believe block scheduling to be smart, it sure has been quick to catch on. Educational reform movements have led to an ever increasing number of required credits for graduation and college admission standards have continued to increase. Agriculture programs in schools which have stayed the course with traditional schedules have been under increasing pressure and competition for quality and quantity of students. Many states now require that students have 22-24 credits for graduation with a large portion of those credits required. The really progressive agriculture teachers who have seen the "squeeze" coming and have served on school or site-based councils have jumped on the block scheduling band wagon because they have realized that if "you can't beat 'em join 'em."

"The Good Lord Gave Us Diehards, But Even Diehards Need Charging."

I recently had a humbling experience. Upon leaving the university for the day I found that my truck battery was dead. Having parked by the sorority house of my student secretary, I thought I would see if she could help me. I knocked on the door and, lo and behold, she came to the door. After explaining my situation she asked me to step inside while she went to get her car keys. As I stepped inside, an attractive young lady on the stairs yelled "Man in the House, Man in the House," to which my secretary replied "Oh it's just Dr. Brannon and his battery is DEAD!"

Well, the traditional school scheduling may well have caused many agriculture instructors battery to go dead. The increased opportunities for curriculum improvement and expansion, student interaction and attraction, and the possibility of more planning time may just be "what the doctor ordered" to help get us out of a rut and recharge our batteries.

"It Was The Best Of Times, It Was The Worst Of Times."

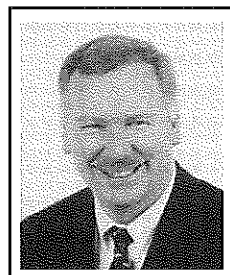
Rarely has there been such a bipolar reaction to a change than that which has occurred with Block Scheduling. Teachers seem to either "love it or hate it." The most common concerns seem to relate to its impact on FFA activities and supervised experience programs. Obviously, it changes the mode of operation on these two vital areas of our Agriculture Education Program. Yet, it seems that, once again "the teacher makes the difference." Effective teachers will find a way to make block scheduling work to their advantage.

Perhaps the saying "There is a very little difference in people. The little difference is in attitude. The big difference is whether that attitude is positive or negative.." has never been more applicable than in the implementation of block scheduling. Those teaching with a positive attitude are using block scheduling — the little difference which sets them apart from other programs and teachers.

Conclusion

As we face the continuing rumble of block scheduling "lets' don't go into battle with one boot off." This profession has always adapted to whatever comes our way because within us lies the power to change. Hopefully, you will gain some ideas from the articles in this issue. Continue to share with others your best strategies and "Let's get Ready to Rummmbble". "What you gonna do when Block Scheduling Rumbles over you?"

Tony Brannon is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Education and Chair of the Department of Agriculture at Murray State (KY.) University.



*Coming in the
March-April
Issue:*

**Career
Development
Events**

The Block Schedule & Agricultural Education

By Pete Rising

Culbertson, Montana is located in the northeast corner of the state. A rural agricultural community, with a population of approximately 700 people and conservative attitudes. The high school enrolls, on the average, 85-90 students each year. Approximately 60% of the students enroll in agricultural education courses. I have been the agricultural education instructor here for eight years. During this time few changes have occurred. Aside from having two senior staff members retire, nothing really changes from year to year. Maybe an administrator every three years, which has been the case. No changes were very significant, except when we decided to change to the "Block Schedule."

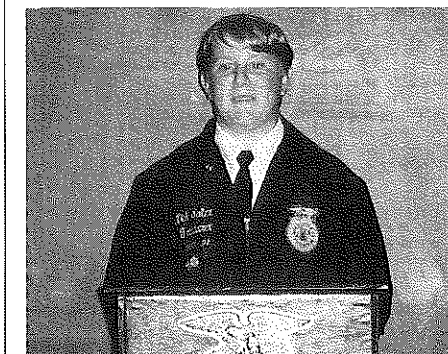
In 1993, the school counselor, the business education teacher, and myself began discussing the obstacles that the high school faced with scheduling. The counselor had years of rewarding experience in education, and is currently a superintendent in another Montana school. The business education teacher had been in the district for 21 years. The major problems facing our school included the number of students taking different courses, the lack of courses, shared teachers between the middle school and the high school, and time constraints for class.

Numerous meetings followed our initial discussion. During that time, we discovered a system of scheduling that might provide an answer to our quandary; block scheduling. We

researched the idea and developed a plan.

We convinced the school board trustees that the "block schedule" was the way to go. We then proceeded to explain the process and change to the community. By now the staff was excited in trying a new approach that presented them with numerous opportunities. The students, of course, were excited because they had less of a class load to think about each day. The community remained hesitant into the start of the 1994 school term. An agreement for a one year trial session was agreed to by the key partners. The challenge now was "Learning to Do and Doing to Learn." We also had a new principal who wasn't familiar with this type of schedule.

Initially my approach was positive, and basically still is. I believe the "block schedule" has numerous advantages to vocational technical instruction at all levels. Over the past four years I have experienced a variety of new educational teaching methods that I would not have tried on the traditional class schedule. I have become a better instructor, as have the other teachers in the district. Along with the instructional improvement we have seen an increase in students standardized tests and college entrance exams. Students are allowed to expand their education



Block scheduling presents challenges to the FFA program.

because of the extended amount of class time, not to mention the "one on one" contact with each teacher and student. We have seen a decrease in discipline problems across the school, mainly because of less student movement. During the research stage of this adventure into scheduling, we learned that there would be numerous "pitfalls" to overcome or avoid.

FFA

A major problem that I quickly faced is with disseminating information to members of the FFA Chapter. If you do not have a quality set of chapter officers each year, the task may become enormous. I have a bulletin board outside of my classroom and office for members to check each day. I have learned that students don't necessarily read and may miss the messages on the bulletin board.

Maybe a digital marquee would get their attention on a regular basis. Even with capable officers, who meet weekly, and half of the membership in class; the word still gets missed. Thus a chapter newsletter became a new strategy. This requires a quality reporter, and more time from you.

SAE

A second problem, is maintaining quality SAE projects. Students and their records are... well you all know. Some need a little more help than others and the contact may be missed. The need for extended contract time is justifiable now to community members. In order to maintain quality SAE projects and works on degrees and awards one needs to get out to the students more frequently. This is a dual sided issue in every small community. Time is money, and your time may be required elsewhere. Each location will present different challenges.

Enrollment

A third problem that is beginning to appear is the enrollment numbers are begin to decline. Why? Scheduling overlaps. I have to compete with science, math, English, and other vocational technical disciplines more now because of course offerings. This may keep some of your key members out of the traditional agricultural education classes. I have offered a zero period to pick those students up, however, that violates master agreements. Now I offer independent studies courses. I am sure that you realize that adds more classes, realistically, without any more prep periods. Once again a dual edged sword that you may not want to swallow.

Supplies

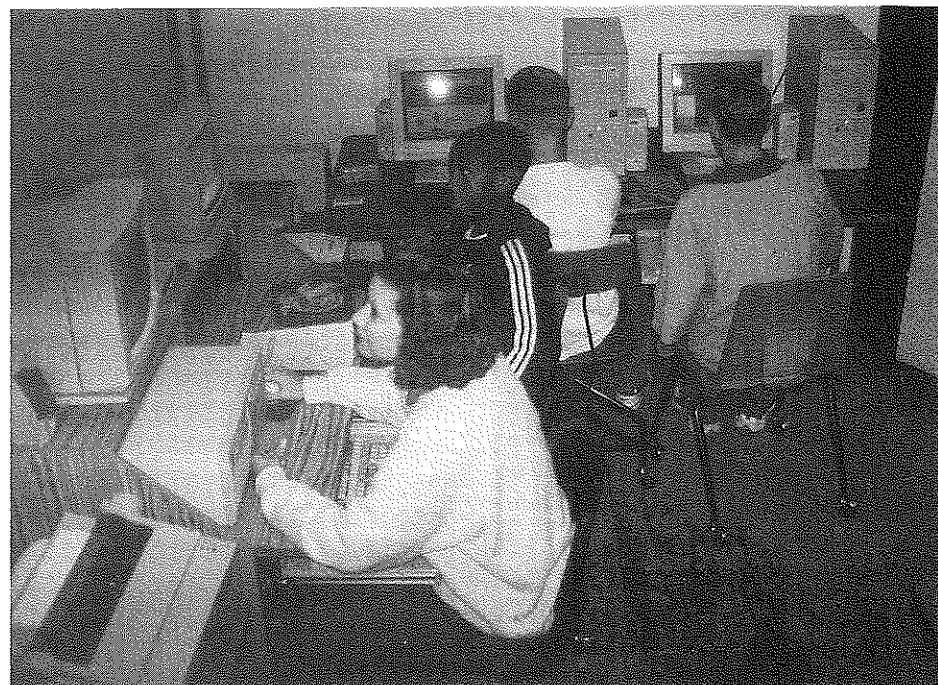
A fourth problem that I have experienced is an increase in supply consumption, thus an increase in program budgets. In a school district that may be already short on money for supplies, the "block schedule" might cause some alarm with conservative boards.

Curriculum

Finally, curriculum design needs to be addressed. You, like myself, were probably trained to present lessons in a traditional format of about 45-50 minutes. Now ask yourself, could you take the same material and put it into a 80-90 minute period, while maintaining the student attention. I have worked with new and beginning teachers in our school as a mentor helping them bridge that hurdle. A majority of the administrators are not trained to teach in this structure, thus they might not be readily helpful.

Conclusion

I have shared both sides of the coin for you to flip around. As for my professional opinion and advice: I

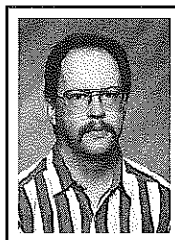


Providing a variety of learning methods is important to success in teaching Agricultural Science under the accelerated block schedule.

encourage "block scheduling" in the right situation. Challenge your districts to review different schedule schematics. If your student population is less than two hundred, I would be hesitant of changing completely to the block schedule. Do your homework, and the schedule can be beneficial to all in the school system. After four years and all of the "pitfalls," I wouldn't really want to go back to the traditional method of scheduling. As for the community, there are mixed feelings still. This year will be the ultimate test of the block schedule. I don't have all of the answers to the problems, much less solutions. However, you like myself should be willing to learn and grow while searching for the solutions.

Remember, change brings challenges and challenges will present change. Accept both optimistically for the betterment of the students in agricultural education, and education in general.

Pete Rising is an agriculture teacher at Culbertson High School in Culbertson, MT.



Block Scheduling: A Student Perspective

By Destini Gillham

Last year was our school's first year of block schedule. Teachers, administrators and school board alike were cautious of making the jump. Previously we were on a regular six period schedule. Administrators decided it was time for a change. A few different schedules were considered, based on the successes and failures of other schools.

4 x 4 was Extreme!

One option the school looked at was extreme! They wanted to have 4 periods for one semester and 4 periods for the second. For example, the first semester you would have English, Math, and two electives and the second semester you would have history, PE and two different electives, or something to that effect.

However, this was disliked by the agriculture, athletic and music departments. By only seeing your students for half a year, you would lose out on valuable time, and communication would be difficult.

The 4x4 block also completely contradicted the school districts desires and logistics to convert to year round school. Their argument was if students are gone for 3 month, they forget information, and time has to be spent reteaching. However. If you had math the first semester, it would be an entire semester, plus the summer before you had it again. Fortunately that schedule was not implemented.

A/B was Considered

A second schedule under consideration allowed students 8 classes, having 4 per day, block style. Monday, Wednesday and Friday students would have periods 1, 3, 5 and 7. Tuesday and Thursday of that week they would have periods 2, 4, 6, and 8. Then, the following week, they would have the opposite. This was a better option, but a little intimidating. One of its benefits was it allowed students one extra class, and one period of advised study time, which also would serve as a homeroom.

Modified Block was used!

The style our school chose was the least extreme and most agreed upon. Last year and this year we have a 6 period day. On Monday, Tuesday and Friday we have 6 classes. On Wednesday we go to 1st, advisement, 3rd, and 5th. Then on Thursday we have 2nd, advisement, 4th and 6th. This provides time to meet with all your teachers after the weekend, block time for labs, projects or exams, and allow for regrouping on Friday. In my own opinion, it reduces absences on block days, because missing that much curriculum is difficult to make up.

In science classes, block days make labs and experiments easier, as students have more time to set up, experiment and clean up. In fine arts classes like art, ceramics, dance, and foreign language, block days provides more time to actually work, with less interruptions. It is also a better way to take tests, permitting exams to be finished in one period, instead of over the course of two days. In agriculture and physical education classes block schedule is beneficial most of the time. An hour and a half gives more time for presentations and demonstrations.

On the other hand, there are some problems. Anytime a student

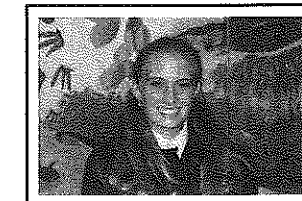
misses a Wednesday or Thursday, they miss much more. Teachers plan large projects for block days and missing them is hard. Additionally an hour and half is a long time to be with one teacher, and a long time to sit down. Teachers usually permit a short break, which wastes valuable class time. Many teachers also didn't get through all the curriculum they did on a regular schedule. They missed out on a full day every week. Homework is another issue. Since teachers only see students four days a week, the homework load is increased. If you have a class Wednesday you have until Friday to do all the homework (assignments are usually increased on block days). However, if you have the class on Thursday, you only have one night to do it.

Advisement is one major benefit of block schedule. It provides time for students to make up tests, clubs to meet, tutoring, as well as homework. Having an hour a day to just get caught up is beneficial.

Conclusion

There are many ups and downs to block schedules, and this is just my opinion of our school's. Other students feel differently. However, I get the impression, it is a welcome change, and now that teachers are more familiar with it, having a year's experience under their belt they will be able to utilize it more efficiently.

Destini Gillham is a FFA Reporter at Paso Robles High School in Paso Robles, California.



“What Goes Around Comes Around!”

By Andrew J. Baker

Many former agricultural education students can remember enjoying a two-hour agricultural construction course back in high school. However, they may not have fully understood the educational value of an extended hour course. Most just remember having more time to work on their trailers, livestock chutes, and bale spikes not knowing that the instructor was allowing for more time for planning, problem-solving, and time on task. Years later, this alternative use of classroom time has become popular among school districts due to the increased educational value received from extended instructional minutes designed in block scheduling.

Educational Reform Leads to Block Schedule

In Kentucky, like other states, educational reform efforts are being implemented. The state passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) in 1990. This piece of legislation initiated reform efforts to help students obtain skills in communications, mathematics, and problem-solving. The act was

designed to help students become more self-sufficient and responsible community members, as well as to integrate academics across discipline areas. The Kentucky Education Reform Act established six learning goals and 57 valued outcomes that every high school graduate should achieve upon exiting their high school program. In 1992, the Kentucky Department of Education began to review techniques to be used in restructuring educational programs. A task force was formed to investigate the topic of, “Alternative Use of School Time.” A popular technique, suggested by the task force, was the implementation of block scheduling.

There are several types of block scheduling used in Kentucky school districts. The KERA empowered local school districts to

Advantages of Block Scheduling

- Longer class periods allow the instructor to use multiple methods of presentations.
- Able to cover more subject matter
- Increased enrollment in agriculture education courses
- An increase in the quality of students
- Can offer more agricultural education courses in a given school year
- FFA membership has increased

Disadvantages of Block Scheduling

- FFA contests and activities have been adversely impacted.
- Loss of time for record keeping with SAE programs.

make the final decision on which type of block scheduling would be most effective for their educational system. The Kentucky Department of Education has established two categories in which all block schedules are defined. The first

category is defined as a full block schedule, which is the more traditionalist design. Full block schedules are designed on a semester basis. Most courses in a full block schedule meet on an alternating day basis with instruction times ranging from 75 to 90 minute periods of which students receive a half of a credit. A modified block schedule is defined as all other types of block scheduling which do not meet full block schedule criteria. This may include block schedules that change every 9 weeks or schools that offer courses on a tri-mester basis. The empowerment of local school districts to make the final decision on block scheduling has made it very difficult to record all of the variations in block scheduling.

For many school districts in Kentucky, block scheduling is no longer an issue. This issue has become a well-established reality for many agricultural instructors. The most recent figures from the Kentucky Department of Education indicate that 72 of the 147 (51%) school districts with agricultural education programs have already implemented block scheduling. The majority of school districts have adopted a full block schedule versus a modified block schedule. This increase in popularity has stimulated an interest in assessing the impact of this alternative use of school time on agricultural education.

Winstead (1996) studied the impact of block scheduling on agricultural education and FFA programs in the State of Kentucky. This study provided some valuable insight into the status of agricultural

Statements from secondary agricultural instructors on what they like most about block scheduling (Winstead, 1996).

- Fewer preparations
- More time for assistance in technical classes
- More time for field trips
- Finish labs in one class period
- Ability to be more creative
- Subject matter is covered more thoroughly.

Statements from secondary agricultural instructors on what they least like about block scheduling (Winstead, 1996).

- Not having an FFA member all year-communication is a big problem.
- Preparing for FFA contests
- Difficult to get students to keep up their SAE's when they are not in class.
- The period is too long for students to sit in the classroom.
- Students' attention span shuts down after 45-50 minutes.
- More time to prepare for class than what is available

If block scheduling is better, then why is it better (Winstead, 1996)?

- Students can take more classes
- The goals of the educational process are reached.
- It is better for learning
- Teaching is easier
- Teachers know their students better
- There is more time for lab activities

education programs using block scheduling. The results are shown in the sidebar box.

Conclusion

Overall, block scheduling can become an effective tool to improve classroom instruction. School districts must be prepared to address school-related issues associated with the implementation of block scheduling, such as student organizations and extra-curricular activities. School districts debating this issue must be prepared to address in-service needs, which type of block scheduling is best suited for their district, and the impact of block scheduling on other school-related activities.

The success of agricultural education has been its ability to adapt to the ever-changing educational environment. As educators, we must be prepared to meet the current and future educational reform efforts in order to carry our programs into the new millennium. As we move into this new era of block scheduling, one can only wonder what aspect of agricultural or vocational education will be next to “come around.”

Andrew Baker is an assistant professor of Agricultural Education at Murray State University in Kentucky.



Accelerated Block Schedule: A Texas Experience

By Ron Whitson

Throughout the nation, from the halls of Congress to the coffee shops of rural America, from the institutions of higher learning to the family farm, a call for the reform of the American educational system is being heard. Much of the information and research suggest that during the 21st century high school graduates will have to handle diverse information, perform effectively in cooperative work groups, solve complex problems and continue to learn in a rapidly changing world and workplace.

Schools throughout the country, faced with these facts are scrambling to insure that their graduates will be prepared to face the coming millennium and the challenges of an ever changing world. Increased graduation requirements, mandated both by states and local boards combined with the opportunity to improve flexibility, course opportunities and quality of education, have prompted many schools to look to some form of block scheduling.

Block Scheduling at Mansfield High School

Mansfield High School is a suburban school in North-Central Texas with an enrollment of nearly 2,800 students. In 1992 the school's faculty and administration studied several forms of block scheduling in an effort to restructure the learning environment and strengthen the ability of the school to meet the

challenges of the future.

Beginning in the fall of 1993 the school adopted the accelerated Block Schedule. The results have proved positive, both for the school as a whole as well as for the Agricultural Education program at Mansfield.

The Structure of the Accelerated Block Schedule

The accelerated block schedule, sometimes referred to as the 4x4 block, is a format where students attend four 90 minute classes each day. They attend the same class each day of the week, thus completing a semester's worth of instruction in just nine weeks. This system allows students to earn up to eight credits/school year. Under the accelerated block students typically take two core courses (Science, Math, English and Social Studies) and up to two electives (such as Agri-Sci). This of course allows them to take more total elective credits while in high school, but they never have the overload that is caused sometimes by having three or four core courses going on at the same time. Students at Mansfield High School have been very successful on this system. It is worthwhile just because of what it does in terms of student success. Important to the block schedule at Mansfield is the fact that all students enjoy socialization during ten minute passing periods and a school-wide 50 minute common lunch period.

The Effects of Block Scheduling on Agriculture Education

The Agricultural Science Department at Mansfield is a three teacher department. Prior to the accelerated block schedule, average annual enrollment was just under 200 students. One of the immediate advantages of the new schedule was a marked increase in enrollment in Agricultural Science courses. In the

five years (including 1997-98) of accelerated block scheduling Agriscience enrollment has been between 260 and 335 with an average of 304. Most of the increase experienced has been in the desirable students that all programs strive to attract. Many students who were involved in other school activities such as band, choir and athletics simply could not fit everything into the "old" six-period schedule. With the accelerated block schedule the program gained many good students who otherwise would have never had the opportunity to try Agriscience. It is up to us, as agriculture teachers to find ways to retain these good students after they have enrolled in our classes.

Advantages of the Accelerated Block Schedule

There are several other advantages of the accelerated block schedule in addition to increased enrollment. One major advantage is additional time for laboratory based instruction. This is especially important in courses like horticulture, PALS and agricultural mechanics. Mansfield will complete construction on a \$750,000 Agricultural Science Center this year to help meet these new laboratory demands.

Another advantage is the ability to offer new and innovative courses, such as a Horticulture course designed specifically for special needs students, PALS, and aquaculture. One other plus comes in the fact that students do have more elective choices, meaning more time in their schedule for courses in agriculture. Teachers also have fewer courses to teach at the same time, and in most cases fewer preparations (maximum of three). Student performance has increased school-wide, and the common lunch period has provided additional opportunities for Agriculture



Students still love the hands on learning that Ag. courses provide. Opportunities for group activities, modeling, labs and class demonstrations increase under the block schedule.

students/FFA members to interact and conduct business such as FFA committee meetings and officer meetings.

One of the true advantages is what the schedule does in terms of overall student success. During a recent grading period at Mansfield over 1,350 students were on the A-B honor roll, with a failure rate that is about half the state average. In fact fewer than 6% of the students failed more than one course.

Disadvantages Encountered

Naturally everything is not perfect. There are some negative points which must be examined with such a radical change. Perhaps the biggest in terms of agricultural education comes in the area of Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs. Because students sometimes are enrolled in only one nine-week Agriscience course and many may experience quarters when they are unable to schedule an "Ag."

course, the time frame of the SAE is shortened and students are less committed to quality SAE programs in some cases. Cooperative projects, increased Agribusiness work experience and many hands-on classroom/lab activities have been used successfully at Mansfield to deal with this problem. Of course, the increased number of students has made quality supervision of SAE projects much more of a challenge for the agricultural science teachers. This has provided for an increase in parental involvement in SAE activities.

Another problem of any block schedule, not experienced at Mansfield, but which would occur in a small school/program is the inability to offer enough Agriscience courses to keep students involved in the program full time throughout their high school career. At Mansfield a total of 21 courses are offered. Some courses are rotated so that they are only offered once every two years. The department is continually evaluating each course and making necessary adjustments to meet student needs and demands.

Conclusion

Accelerated block scheduling is not a cure-all for public education, it is only one of the tools which we can use to better prepare our students for the challenges which lie ahead. With increased graduation requirements the very survival of elective courses like Agricultural Science may depend on the ability to be flexible in scheduling of students. The accelerated block is much more than just changing the bell schedule. It involves changes in teaching styles, student expectations, content and expected results. It can be a catalyst to make students more responsible for their own learning. It provides opportunities for hands-on learning throughout the entire school, a basic principle we in agricultural education have relied upon since the Smith-Hughes Act.

Ron Whitson is Agricultural Science Teacher and Department Head for Career and Technology Education, Mansfield High School, Texas.



Survival Tips for Agriculture Teachers Teaching on the Block System

1. Plan, plan, plan. The faster pace and increased class period length demands that you be prepared.
2. Don't lecture more than 20 to 30 minutes. Let the students be creative in finding the information.
3. Vary activities and prepare for student transitions. Include group activities, models, labs and mini demonstrations in the learning activities of each course.
4. Set and share goals with the students. Knowledgeable students are more successful.
5. Use focus activities to prepare students to learn. This is already a strength in agriculture education.
6. Obtain feedback from students. Don't be afraid to ask them what they like and dislike about your course.
7. Use visuals to maintain focus.
8. Edit, Edit, Edit. Teach the important concepts, leave out the "fluff."
9. Be flexible. Maintain a positive attitude.
10. Strive for 100% FFA membership. Youth leadership activities are still the key to successful agriscience programs. Student enjoy and learn from these activities under the accelerated block schedule, just as they have for 70 years. This could increase your FFA membership and strengthen your chapter.

Block Scheduling: Students' Soundoff

West Virginia

My name is Cindy Coffman. I am a sophomore at Keyser High School in Keyser, West Virginia. In some ways I like block scheduling but in others, I dislike it. The classes last for 90 minutes and classes that have teachers that lecture that whole time get quite boring. I start school at 8:30 and get out at 3:30. I have less homework but I find myself getting bored frequently. Block scheduling also forms many scheduling problems. This year I had to drop out of band to take the agriculture class that I wanted. Overall I think that block scheduling is a good idea because if you have a teacher that you really can't stand, you only have to see them for a semester (unless you fail that class).

By Cindy Coffman



Tennessee

I like block scheduling at my school. I go to Munford High School, in TN. It gives you more time to study in class, and it also gives you more time in activity period, for our FFA meeting. I also like the fact that we don't go to the same exact classes everyday, so you can't get tired of the same old routine. Most of the people have said they liked it better; however, block scheduling can get pretty confusing sometimes, and its harder to keep things fresh in your mind until the next day when you are back in that class, but I really do think it is a good thing.

By Kristin Hopper

Maryland

My high school (Frederick High School, MD) started the block scheduling my freshman year. The schedule allows for students at my school to take one more class a year than with the seven period day. This extra credit allowed me to take an agriculture class my freshman year. If it wasn't for this, I may not have gotten involved in the Ag program at my school or FFA. There are many advantages to a block schedule, such as the extra period that lets students take an extra class that otherwise they may not have taken as I did.

Another advantage is that there are less classes and so it can mean more time for other activities. I don't know if I would have been able to handle 7 classes and all my other activities (including FFA, orchestra, debate, National Honor Society, etc.).

At the same time, there are some disadvantages. For example, if an Ag student/FFA member only has an Ag class during one half of the year, they may not keep up on all of the chapter activities. Our chapter has begun to work around this using a newsletter, a voice mailbox members can call to get information and by sending out letters to second-half students not yet involved with the program, inviting them to join in some of our activities.

By Amanda Marie Imhof

Texas

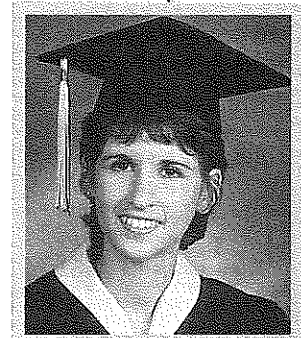
On my first day of high school I was worried and scared, but not for the usual reasons. You see I was worried about the really weird schedule, not about the really big seniors. Our school is on the accelerated block schedule, a schedule where you get more opportunities to do the most important thing, learn. It has been my experience that the block schedule has a lot of advantages for students like myself.

Being a veteran agriculture student, I have been able to take advantage of the block schedule. I have taken numerous agricultural science classes, which I find has been very helpful. With the accelerated block schedule I have the opportunity to take up to four agri-science courses each year. With the many required courses and college preparation classes, it seems that electives, such as agricultural science, are the first classes to get shoved out of the way. Sometimes it is hard for others to see how agri-science not only is getting me prepared for college and my career, but is also preparing me for life.

There are many good things about the block schedule, like only having four classes which automatically means less homework for the students. Normally only two "core" courses are scheduled, along with two electives. This makes a student's schedule more manageable and gives him/her the opportunity to explore more of what he/she finds interesting (such as agriculture!). We also have longer lunches and passing periods so we can get that soft drink or bag of chips we want. Some upper level students at my school only have three classes, making it even better. Since we only have four blocks we have more time in each class. The hour and half classes give us more time to learn and prepare. That is why it is important that teachers make learning fun by varying the activities

I am in my fourth year of agricultural science and consider it to be a main part of my life. Schools like ours, using the block system, allow students, like me, the opportunity to take more agriculture classes. I feel that this will prepare me better for college, my career and the rest of my life.

By Casey Allen



Block Scheduling: Maintaining a Complete Agriculture Program

By David Agnew & Gary Masters

Over the last several years many educators have been introduced to the concept of block scheduling. The broad term of "block scheduling" is used to define a couple of different approaches or models for allocating time to courses. Some schools are using a combination of block scheduling and traditional scheduling. In some situations the school offers only limited opportunity for teacher input on whether or not to adopt this new way to schedule courses. But many schools do seek teacher input before a decision is made. If the teacher is asked, he or she should have some understanding of the concept and how it might affect the students and agriculture program.

Overview of Two Major Models

Systems for block scheduling generally fall into two categories or models. The first model is a continuous, five-day schedule with the amount of class or teacher contact time increased to about twice the normal daily contact. For example, instead of the usual 45 or 50-minute class periods, the periods are 90 or 100 minutes each, some even longer. The result is fewer class periods offered each day. When this model is followed the year long course only takes 18 weeks to complete and a semester long course takes nine weeks. The teacher is usually responsible for three or four courses at any given time. Typically, four classes are taught during one semester and for more are taught the second semester. This approach is called the 4 x 4 block schedule.

In the second model, classes meet on alternate days. For example, a

course meets either on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, or Tuesday and Thursday. The major difference is that a year long course still takes a year to complete, and likewise a semester long course still takes a semester. Also, the teacher still has responsibility of six or seven courses at any given time, just as in traditional scheduling. This is the A/B block schedule.

Some schools have modified these two approaches to better meet the needs of their students, school, and community. Sometimes these variations are called a modified block. Too many variations of modified block scheduling exist to explain them now. However, one of the more common variations used with the model that meets every day is to only use the block format for a half day or a portion of the day and the rest of the class day is conducted with traditional 45 or 50 minute class periods. This is the model used at Marked Tree High School in Arkansas.

With the model where classes only meet every other day, some schools use equal periods of time for Monday, Wednesday and Tuesday, Thursday and then meet all six or seven periods on Friday.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The advantages of block scheduling do appeal to teachers from strictly the classroom or laboratory standpoint. The advantages are fewer preparations each day for the teacher, more time to really get "in-to" subjects or projects before the bell/buzzer sounds, and more opportunity to be focused. In some cases, more courses can be taught in a year, generating more student contact hours. At Marked Tree one of the authors was teaching 12 semester courses before block scheduling was started. After going to the block 16 semester courses per year were taught. We have greater course variety to offer; therefore agriculture courses are more attractive to a wider range of students.

From the teacher's perspective, a concern that is often expressed is, "What do I do with the longer class period?" Teachers will need to adapt their lessons and activities to the new

length of a class period. Agriculture teachers may have less trouble adapting than English or math teachers, since we tend to need larger blocks of time for our classroom and laboratory activities. It does not mean lecturing twice as long! Instead teachers will have more opportunities to use a variety of methods or techniques and activities. It may also mean more time to let students actually practice what has been discussed or demonstrated. Also, block scheduling can give you the time you need to develop the foundational information your students need to develop higher level thinking skills.

At Marked Tree I had time to try different teaching strategies, such as cooperative or group learning activities. I had always allowed about seven minutes at the beginning of class for roll call, announcements, etc. and then seven minutes at the end for cleanup. You can see that 14 minutes from a 45-minute class is a higher percentage of non-productive class time than is 14 minutes from an 80-minute period. It takes extra time for students to learn some content. Block scheduling gives you that time.

Besides adapting to a longer time period and adapting appropriate methods and techniques, there is the issue of acquisition and retention of knowledge. In other words, is this approach of scheduling consistent with what research says about effective teaching, learning, and retention? Some concern has risen in recent research on block scheduling from the standpoint of retention of knowledge and performance on standardized tests. At Marked Tree our SAT9 scores showed very little change in the second year of the block. Our school launched a major campaign to boost scores this year. Study sessions, and a wide range of incentives, and great effort on the part of the students has improved our SAT9 scores by an average of 11% for the 8th and 9th grades. (The 7th and 10th grade scores are yet to be analyzed.)

In addition to the pedagogical concerns, several administrative issues, such as absenteeism and make-up work, transfer students, day-long field-trip policies, etc. must

be addressed. The fact that missing one day on the block schedule is equal to missing two on the traditional method of scheduling causes students greater loss in the content area. Make-up lessons missed become much more important. The same is true of the teacher missing a day of school. Agriculture teachers and their students do tend to miss quiet a few days during a year. This problem has resulted in some school systems reducing the opportunity for day-long field trips to make sure valuable class time is not lost. Also, transfer students from schools not on the block become harder to integrate into the school system.

From the students' perspective they do not have to deal with the daily overload of homework from six or seven different courses. They too can be more focused. Some educators claim that the students tend to like this and cite the reduction in discipline problems and fewer absences as evidence.

Block Scheduling in Agricultural Education

So what is the big deal over block scheduling for Ag. Education? Should we be concerned with any of these models of course delivery? Agriculture teachers face two major concerns that extend beyond the classroom and laboratory. We, unlike other teachers, have two very important components to our program, the FFA and SAE that appear to be greatly affected by the block scheduling system. The threat to the FFA program seems to strike the most fear in teachers making the transition to a block format. The question many teachers have raised is how can I maintain these two vital components in a block-scheduling format, if my school moves that direction?

The model, which would seem to be the least beneficial for Agricultural Education is the one that meets every day and reduces the overall length of the course by half. Maintaining an active FFA chapter and SAE would require some means of staying in contact with students who would not be present in the second half of the year or semester. This model would in effect reduce the number of

students/members seen regularly in half. Belonging to the FFA will not be a problem, but since Programs of Activities are developed on a yearly basis, there may be some difficulty in keeping students actively engaged in the program throughout the year. A potential FFA member enrolling for the first time in a semester course in agricultural that starts in March might ask, why should I pay dues to belong to an organization when school is out in nine weeks?

From the standpoint of the SAE block schedules might cause more difficulty to keep the students interested in a project during the time they are not enrolled in an agriculture course. The question of whether or not a teacher could require the student to start and maintain a SAE program when the student is not enrolled in an agriculture course is an issue. At Marked Tree High School adapting the SAE program to the block was a challenge at first but we did adapt and the overall benefit to the agriculture program has been worth the efforts.

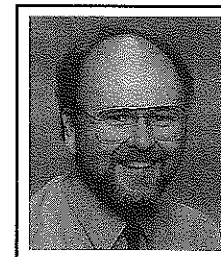
The A/B model which involves the alternate day approach to class periods seems to offer a better opportunity for maintaining a well-rounded program. With this model most of the advantages of block scheduling can be retained without seriously reducing the timely contact with students over the school year. Teachers would likely be able to do just as well or better at developing a well-rounded FFA and SAE program on this model, as on a traditional schedule. The issue still exists of adapting course content to the new length of period. This model would also allow teachers more planning time between class sessions, but would require that teachers maintain a six or seven course load year round. So given the option of meeting every other day or every day, every-other-day seems to best maintain the components of the total agriculture program.

It has been said that "change is not always progress but progress is always change." Sometimes we are pushed off the fence we are sitting on, and forced to make a decision. The stress of success or failure

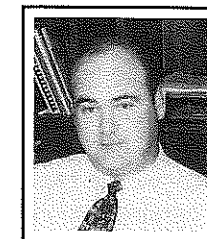
involved in this type of change is largely the result of wise administration during the process of adopting the change. At Marked Tree our administration took time to provide us with lots of information and brought in teachers from schools already on the block to help us make the transition. We only used block scheduling for the first half of the day and kept traditional classes in the afternoon, so our change was not as drastic as those were on the full block.

We have tried to present information on both sides of the issue. For teachers in schools considering block schedule, we encourage them to consider what others have said about the benefits and disadvantages, and look at the research on block scheduling, before they cast a vote in either direction. Consider this format of scheduling in light of the attributes of your students and school, remembering that what works in other communities may not work in yours, and that even a great idea can be adopted in a manner that makes success unlikely. If the decision of your school board or administration, for or against block scheduling, is different from yours after you have evaluated all the pros and cons, it is best for everyone if you as the teacher develop a positive attitude and do the best job possible. A positive attitude can overcome many problems.

David Agnew is Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education at Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Arkansas.



Gary Masters is the Principal of Marked Tree High School, and former agriculture teacher at Marked Tree.



Block Scheduling: Taking Change By The Hand

By: Jay Morgan and James White

Over the past several years agricultural education has undergone numerous changes.

Starting with the *Understanding in Agriculture* report, in 1988 we have been exposed to one change after another. First, there was an expanded mission to include "education about agriculture", as well as "education in agriculture". Next, there was change in the National FFA Organization, followed by a change in recruiting and advertising for quality FFA members. Currently, a new change has emerged, one which is drastically shaping the way that we operate our FFA chapter and the way classes are structured.

The great Winston Churchill, World War II Prime Minister of England, once remarked, "if you do not take change by the hand, it will take you by the throat". This has never been more true than with the changing climate in agricultural education. Over the past years, school systems around the country have begun embracing the concept of "block scheduling."

Managing Change

Local agricultural educators face a new challenge of effectively promoting, recruiting, managing, and leading their programs under the block. To help deal with the new trend of moving to this particular design, agricultural educators must increase the management of their programs, namely the "schedule

management" aspect of students and schedules.

In managing this new design, instructors/advisors must be willing to initiate a process with freshmen and "plan for the long run" in order to maximize the efficiency of their programs, both instructionally and competitively. Schools embracing the new block concept will force instructors/advisors to "strategically manage" the placing of students into groups or clusters with other students, and at optimal scheduling times, in order to achieve the desired results necessary to maintain the continued effectiveness and seamlessness of their programs.

Agricultural instructors/advisors can do the following in order to accentuate the positives and to combat the negative aspects associated with block scheduling:

1. Identify your programs Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT).

Once you have identified these four you may begin plugging in the various variables that you should plan to incorporate, or cull, in order to achieve your desired results. Just like a successful coach, each semester you must reassess and begin thinking of your SWOT's.

2. Plan, coordinate, and manage your program/organization and strive for it's seamlessness from semester to semester.

Since the new block design may temporarily interrupt your quest for continuity, and in motivating your outstanding students for contests and events, you must begin now in coordinating the "human resource" aspect of your program. You can start by sketching out your yearly activities and strategically placing students into classes according to their talents, schedules, and your

programs needs. Develop a one, two, three, and four year plan, if possible.

3. Continue working cooperatively with your guidance counselors, faculty members, administrators, alumni, and parents.

Now, more than ever, these individuals play an influential role in the success of your program. This is true whether you are aiding a student in planning a four year schedule or wanting to attend a 1/2 day judging event

4. Keep your district, regional, state and national representatives and supervisors, as well as your county administrators and school board members informed of your needs and maintain those contacts whenever possible.

Without a doubt your administrators and organizational representatives will play a large role in supporting your organizations transition. Keep them apprised of what is happening in your program and ask for suggestions on techniques that have worked in others. In addition, relay your thoughts to school board members that are supporters of your program.

5. Team with others to voice your opinions and to accomplish your goals.

Remember, you are probably not the only program head that is having problems adapting to a new schedule. For instance, Phillips (1997, p.34) writes that "the most vocal critics have been teachers and parents with students in advanced placement courses and in band and chorus". Utilize the strength of various groups to express your concerns.

We are constantly reminded of a statement in a previous issue of this

magazine in which it was quoted that "the important thing to keep in mind is that you need to take it slow and work on those supporters who are already allies to your program. Then they can go and recruit others in the community and school" (Daley, 1997). Continue to maintain existing relationships and team with others to forge new ones to aid in your support network.

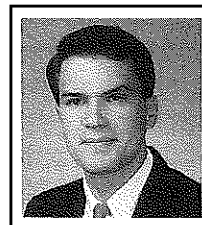
Conclusion

Agricultural education, and its nationally respected student organization, has weathered many storms throughout the years. Don't let block scheduling take you by the throat, take it by the hand.

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Jay Morgan is a graduate student at Oklahoma State University in agricultural education.



James White is a Professor at Oklahoma State University in agricultural education.



Views Regarding Block Scheduling

Positive

- An increase in instructional time for hands-on based laboratory assignments.
- The ability to take short "off campus" field trips.
- The ability to work with individuals who need extra assistance in a particular skill.
- The ability to work with contest activities and judging teams at length.
- An increased efficiency in skill, laboratory, and livestock showing/preparation related activities on school farms.
- An increase in planning time and preparation for extracurricular events, namely FFA related.
- An increase in the efficiency of instructional and laboratory time, most notably these subjects included horticulture, floriculture, wildlife and water conservation, and school farm projects.
- An increase in opportunities provided students to enroll in and obtain advanced credit in college agricultural classes.
- A more flexible schedule allowing a greater overall volume of students to schedule agriculture classes in addition to college preparatory classes.

Negative

- A decrease in the amount of time afforded to student clubs as a group during the day, primarily with the FFA.
- An increase in academic class material missed in other subjects as a result of overnight and extended FFA trips or activities. (in many cases a one day absence under the block schedule is the equivalent of two absences under the traditional Carnegie Unit.)
- The likelihood of student participation in only one semester of the academic year instead of two as a result of scheduling. This in turn has caused an overall decrease in student participation in dual semester FFA Career Development Events and livestock showing activities.
- An overall decrease in the time allowed students to enroll in multiple agricultural education courses; this is attributed primarily to scheduling conflicts with academically oriented courses necessary for college bound students and general graduation.
- Students also reported an overall feeling of detachment from the organization, as well as a decrease in their chances of being elected to chapter, district, and state offices.

Outstanding Agricultural Education Program: Jessamine County High School (KY)

By Tracy S. Hoover and Rick D. Rudd

The agriculture education department at Jessamine County High School was selected as a 1997 Regional Recipient of the NVATA Outstanding Agricultural Education Program. This nationally recognized program is a three teacher department with enrollment of approximately two hundred students. These students are selected from a student body of approximately 1,600. The three teachers are Gary Burdine, Dexter Knight and Pamela Moore. Burdine and Knight received their bachelors and masters degrees from the University of Kentucky. Moore holds a bachelors from West Virginia University and a masters from the University of Kentucky. The three teachers bring approximately 35 years of teaching experience to the department.

The Jessamine County communities of Nicholasville and Wilmore are located 14 miles south of Lexington, Kentucky. The program began over 50 years ago in 1946 and has an excellent reputation within the community and state. The main agriculture revenues from the surrounding community come from production agriculture including both livestock and crop production (beef cattle and tobacco).

Facility

The school facility includes two agriculture classrooms, one office, and one agriculture mechanics shop. An agriculture courtyard is attached to the high school building. Within 200 feet of the building there is a chain link fenced area that contains one 30 foot by 60 foot greenhouse for bedding plant production, a 30 foot by 95 foot Carolina house for the study of hydroponics, a 25 foot by 30 foot headhouse, a 60 head capacity livestock barn, and a 60 foot by 64 foot combination barn that includes a 36 foot by 16 foot classroom/lab.

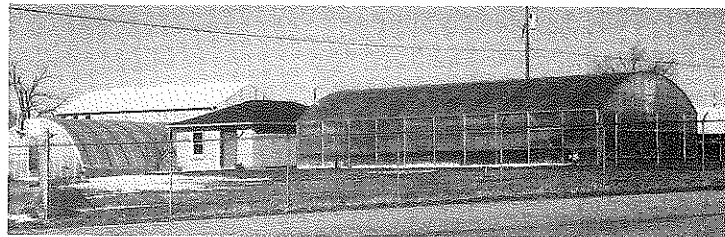
Program

The current program offered at Jessamine County High School is designed for students in grades nine through twelve. Students can select from 17 different agricultural and natural resource courses offered through block scheduling. A rotating course of study offers students following courses: Introduction to Agriculture Science and Technology-ninth graders. Tenth grade students may select from the following courses: Animal Science, Animal Technology, Small Animal Science, Greenhouse Technology, Crop Production, Agriscience (Soil and Water), Equine Science, and Environmental Technology. In eleventh and twelfth grades the students may select core courses in the following areas: Vegetable and Fruit Production, Nursery Technology, Turf and Garden, and Landscaping. Agricultural Cooperative Education and Agricultural Employment Skills are limited to twelfth graders. In 1996-97, a "pilot" Agricultural Lead-

ership Development course was offered to student leaders in the agriculture program. This course is designed for students who aspire to or currently hold leadership positions within the program. To date 18 students have enrolled in this course.

SAE

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs are vital components of the agricultural program. In the past two decades the type of SAE's maintained by students have shifted



Located within 200 feet of the high school facility is a chain link fenced agriculture area that shows the two greenhouses between the two, the livestock facility on the right, and the multipurpose barn in the background.

from nearly all production to mostly agribusiness. Some of the most common types of SAEs maintained by students are nursery and landscape placement, small animal care, along with the traditional production agriculture projects. This statement is probably best proven by two of the students being finalists in the 1997 Bluegrass Region Stars of Kentucky—one the star farmer, and the other a star in agribusiness.

FFA

Jessamine County FFA boasts a membership enrollment of 100%! The FFA chapter program of activities truly reflects the scope and diversity of the agricultural education program. The department's philosophy guided by two basic tenants: 1) contests and competitions based upon and 2) emphasis is on the local level. In 1996, Jessamine County FFA was

recognized as a National Star Chapter, an award that is given to the top ten percent of the chapters in the nation. The FFA is active in many local community projects and events. Previous community service projects include: FFA Food For America Program, Thanksgiving Food Drive, Nursing Home Visits, and Project PALS (Partners in Active Learning Support). This dedication to the local community earned the chapter the honor of state winner in Community Development.

Instruction

In addition to offering a diverse selection of courses via block scheduling to students, academics are also stressed in the program. English, math, and science are all incorporated into the agriculture program at Jessamine County High School. All high school students are expected to complete a portfolio that contains entries from English, science, and math as well as the elective areas.

For example, students who enroll in landscaping each construct a landscape design model as their final exam. In order to design this model to scale, students must both draw their plan and construct their model on 1/8th scale. This is a major math component emphasized through the agriculture program.



Staff at Jessamine County Agriculture Education Department-left to right-Dexter Knight, Gary Burdine, and Pamela Moore.



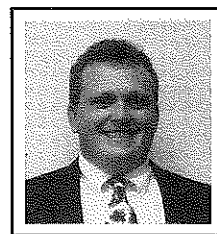
Jessamine County Agriculture Education students on the front steps of Jessamine County High School.

Agriculture teachers also teach high school science concepts and are implementing the "Academy" approach with the current freshmen class. The agriculture teachers teach the concepts in the classroom and then apply them in the land lab (school farm), in the greenhouses, and the livestock facility. Science core concepts are taught and applied through plant growth, soil science, reproduction, selection of livestock, and marketing of crops and livestock. Scientific processes are also modeled and taught through problem solving activities related to plant diseases, crop variety selection, and livestock health.

The Jessamine County agricultural education department has a longstanding and rich relationship with local agribusinesses. Producers and agribusinesses provide students with placements in job settings that will help to train them in their career choice or as their supervised experience programs. Local community businesses serve as field trip sites, judging team resources and as a source for class/laboratory.

The program also works cooperatively with the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service on projects such as crop production, rodent control, and 4-H activities. The Jessamine County Fair Board has also assisted the program by expanding their exhibit areas to showcase new agriculture programs such as landscape design along with focuses on traditional programs such as livestock and crop shows.

Tracy Hoover and Rick Rudd are editors of the spotlight column. Both are in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida.



Dr. Lloyd J. Phipps: A Leader in Agricultural Education

By Ed Osborne

Benjamin Franklin once said that in order to have a lasting impact, one must either write things worth reading or do things worth being written about. Dr. Lloyd J. Phipps continues to do both of these things even today, 20 years after his retirement as an agricultural education faculty member at the University of Illinois. Most of us know Dr. Phipps as the author of the *Handbook on Agricultural Education in Public Schools*, a work which Dr. Phipps himself cites as one of his most influential products. But his accomplishments and contributions to agricultural education go even beyond this cornerstone work for our profession.

At the age of 80, Dr. Phipps continues to have the energy and vitality of one of the "young pups" in the profession. Dr. Phipps' latest text, *Agriscience Mechanics*, (with Dr. Glen Miller, Interstate Publishers, Inc.) was just released this summer. And when I contacted him about preparing this article for *The Magazine*, I learned that just the night before he had taught the most recent session of his adult farmer marketing course with 80 students in attendance. An active grain farmer himself and very strong proponent of adult education, Dr.

Phipps volunteered to lead this course after receiving strong encouragement from farmers and the local Extension educator.

Prolific Writer

When it comes to professional writing, Dr. Phipps brings new meaning to the word "prolific." Over the course of his 58 (and counting) active years in the profession, he has authored 39 editions of 19 book titles. His first book, *Handbook on Teaching Vocational Agriculture*, was co-authored with Cook and published in 1952. The *Handbook on Agricultural Education in Public Schools*, now in its fifth edition, is commonly referred to as "the Bible" for agricultural education. First published in 1965, the *Handbook* has been used for decades by agricultural education students across the nation as the primary reference in their undergraduate and graduate studies.

Dr. Phipps has also published books in animal science, agricultural mechanics, introductory agriculture, advisory councils, and adult farmer education. His books have been used worldwide and have been translated into four different languages. Dr. Phipps has written 177 journal articles, monographs, and pamphlets, mostly between 1950 and 1970.

When scanning issues of *The Agricultural Education Magazine* published in the 1950s and 1960s, it's easy to find articles by Dr. Phipps on practices for providing adult education programs. Topics included program planning and evaluation, pre-enrollment benefits, needs of adult students, selecting and training special adult teachers, using research to improve adult educa-

tion programs, and other topics. Dr. Phipps also published articles on challenges and opportunities in agricultural education and conducting high quality research. In fact, Dr. Phipps was a leading researcher in the profession during this time, directing one grant in the early 1960s with a budget of nearly half a million dollars.

Adult Teacher

Dr. Phipps began teaching agriculture in central Illinois in 1939 and then moved to Southern Illinois University to lead the agriculture program at SIU's University High School. There he established a large adult education program, offering 33 adult farmer courses (330 sessions) to over 1300 men and women during the program's peak year. Dr. Phipps hired and trained a number of special adult teachers who assisted in delivering this large program. This experience provided the basis for much of Dr. Phipps' extensive research and writing on adult education programs during his years as a faculty member at the University of Illinois.

He earned four degrees from the University of Illinois (finishing in the top 3% of his B.S. graduating class) and was a member of the faculty there from 1949 to 1977. Dr. Phipps was a student of A.W. Nolan and H. M. Hamlin, both faculty at the University of Illinois, and credits Dr. Hamlin for getting him started in writing. During his tenure at the University of Illinois, Dr. Phipps served as major advisor for 32 doctoral students. In 1962 Dr. Phipps became head of agricultural education at U of I and was later named Head of the Department

of Vocational and Technical Education in 1968.

Problem Solving

In addition to the thinking of Drs. Nolan and Hamlin, two prominent early pioneers of our profession, Dr. Phipps was also influenced by the work of John Dewey, W. H. Lancelot, and Rufus Stimson. In his view, Stimson's supervised practice program ideas, Dewey's *How We Think*, and Lancelot's *Permanent Learning* were the beginnings of problem solving as an approach to teaching. Dr. Phipps became a master of problem solving teaching; much of his writing heavily focused on teaching methods and the need to base what is taught on the problems in agriculture that learners are experiencing.

The other primary dimensions of agricultural education, according to Dr. Phipps, are supervised experience programs, the use of advisory councils for program planning, and adult education programming. These four dimensions of agricultural education have formed the cornerstones of Dr. Phipps' philosophies and extraordinary productivity as a researcher and writer in the profession.

Dr. Phipps once stated that problem solving is the only way to teach adults and confessed that he never could understand why some teachers resisted the use of problems as the basis for their teaching. Similarly, he believed that teaching adults kept agriculture teachers current in their knowledge and skills in agriculture, and thus, led to a higher quality agriculture program. He also viewed on-site supervision of experience programs as absolutely essential, citing supervised

experience as the one factor that distinguishes agricultural education from other public school curricula.

Dr. Phipps was a proponent of two-year technical programs in agriculture and was instrumental in starting the first such program in Illinois at the community college level. His ideas on organizing and using advisory councils have been implemented in many curriculum areas, having an impact well beyond agricultural and vocational education.

Professional Leadership

Dr. Phipps has held numerous leadership positions in the profession, including Secretary of the Agricultural Education Division of AVA for 10 years, President of the American Technical Education Association, and founder and first president of the University Council for Vocational Education. He received the Distinguished Service Award from AATEA in 1970, the FFA Honorary American Farmer Degree in 1972, and the Award of Merit from the Illinois Vocational Association in 1985. Based upon the opinions of a panel of leading agricultural educators, Dr. Phipps was identified in 1985 as one of the 10 greatest individuals in the history of agricultural education (Camp & Crunkilton, 1985).

Final Thoughts

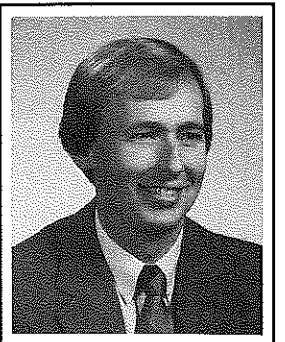
Without a doubt, Dr. Lloyd Phipps has had a major hand in shaping key programs and practices in agricultural education since he began his career in teaching in 1939. He has been an exceptionally productive writer and researcher and continues to publish new and revised works of major importance to the profes-

sion. His advice for agricultural educators today is to return to some of the basic principles upon which the agricultural education enterprise has been built, including supervised experience programs, advisory councils, problem solving teaching, and adult education. He also believes agricultural educators should work toward positioning agriculture as one of the basic sciences in a school's curriculum, while using agricultural problems and applications as the basis for their teaching. The agricultural education profession continues to benefit from his energy, positive thinking, creativity, vision, and a unique ability to articulate his views and ideas with others in the profession. Few have equaled the volume and enduring impact of his published works in agricultural education. Dr. Lloyd Phipps has been and remains a true leader in agricultural education.

References

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Ed Osborne is Professor and Chair Department of Agricultural Education and Communication University of Florida.



webmaster@agedmag.edu

By Matt Raven

Welcome to the first installment of webmaster@agedmag.edu. The purpose of this column is to identify Web sites that agricultural education teachers might find useful in the classroom, as a FFA Advisor, or in the general management of their agricultural education program. Each column will identify Web sites that are related to the theme of the issue, Web sites that focus on agriculture, and other useful Web sites. The location, a description, a brief review, and a rating of 1 to 5 stars (with 5 being the best) will be provided for each Web site. If you know of a Web site that should be included, please e-mail the URL to me at raven@ra.msstate.edu and place Ag Ed Web Site in the subject header. Now for this issue's Web sites!

Block Scheduling Web Sites

Block Scheduling

(http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/~dhv3v/block/sites.html)
A pro-block scheduling Web site that is easy to navigate and loads easily. The site is segmented allowing the user to only print the parts of interest. This site provides a description of block scheduling, research reports regarding block scheduling, and links to other sites. ☆☆☆☆

Against Block Scheduling

(http://www.athenet.net/~jlindsay/Block.shtml)
As the name implies a Web site that builds a case against block scheduling. Easy to navigate site, links to other sites, and an area for recent information. Would be better if the page was segmented. ☆☆☆☆

House of Problems

(http://www.netaxs.com/~twin/newpage/)
This site focuses on the problems associated with block scheduling. The site provides specific problems, case studies, solutions, and links to research reports on block scheduling. The site is easy to navigate although the random use of bright colors make the pages difficult to read. ☆☆☆

Blocked Schedule Report

(http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/block_scheduling_report/)
Not really a Web site but a report on block scheduling located on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Web site. The report compares schools on block scheduling and more traditional year-long schools based on End-of-Course Test scores. The report is easy to read and print. Links to other block scheduling sites would be helpful. ☆☆☆☆

Agricultural Web Sites

Oklahoma State Breeds of Livestock

(http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/)
A pioneer agricultural Web site. This site provides great content with pictures of most breeds of livestock. The site is professionally done and is well organized. Links are provided to related breed association sites. A must entry in your bookmarks. ☆☆☆☆

Mississippi State Extension Bookshelf

(http://www.ces.msstate.edu/pubs/)
The digital version the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service's (MCES) publications are available on this site. The MCES is in the process of digitizing all of their publications. Currently this site has over 1000 Extension publications in text form. The site features a search engine to locate publications and is easy to navigate. Would be nice if they also offered graphics. ☆☆☆☆

Farm Journal

(http://www.farmjournal.com)
The electronic version of the Farm Journal. This professionally developed Web site provides a wealth of agriculturally related information. Provides the current Farm Journal in electronic format as well as archived back issues. Other features include a live chat room, discussion groups, weather, market prices, and an agricultural Web site finder. Only drawback to this page is download time over slower connections. ☆☆☆☆

American Quarter Horse Association

(http://www.aqha.com)
A full service Web site dedicated to the American Quarter Horse. This well designed site provides information regarding up-coming shows and contests as well as links to other

horse related sites. Users can also conduct pedigree research and access the latest press releases. Would be nice if there was more technical content available on the site. Also be aware of slow download on the front page because of the number of graphics. ☆☆☆☆

Other Useful Web Sites

Travelocity

(http://www.travelocity.com/)
THE site for your travel plans. Do you want to find that hotel room in Kansas City no one else can? Travelocity will find you a room and also get you there via any mode of transportation that you desire. Make your travel arrangements via a secure Web server and save time. Another must on your bookmark list. ☆☆☆☆

United Parcel Service

(http://www.ups.com)
The UPS site offers everything a shipper needs. Want to find where your package is? Use their tracking service and locate your package. Have a package to be picked-up? Use their pick-up service and save yourself a trip into town. You will be amazed how often you use this site. ☆☆☆☆

Matt Raven is a teacher educator at Mississippi State University.

Below are the answers to this issue's quiz.

1. A. John Case was editor of the *Journal of Agricultural Education* for 10 years.
2. D. The American Farm Youth was established in 1913 with an endowment from the FFA. After one year the organization was summoned to appear before the U.S. House of Representatives. The organization was the official FFA magazine until the national FFA established a magazine.
3. B. Tom of Peace Valley was the first vocational agricultural teacher.
4. C. Paul Chapman was Dean of Agriculture in England.
5. A. The Greenhand was made into a novel in 1907. A review of the novel in *Farm Journal* and *Farmers Wife* described it as "a romance of agricultural and rural life in the South."
6. B. Older FFA manuals contained a key to solve the FFA members' initials and answers.
7. A. In the Schmidt novel there were no options. There was typically a family with no money, a rely-do well father, two brothers and one sister.
8. C. John Case wrote the novel *The Lone Ranger Valley* (1925). Tom Woodson is a re-entrant. The second novel, *Mean Valley* (1926) from a college where he was a football star, and the third novel, *Champion the Hero of the Lone Ranger Valley* (1927) was a sequel to the first novel.
9. A. A. W. Johnson of Illinois collected a number of short stories for FFA members to read.
10. D. Blinnier identified the novel *John Case's* as the only one of the four mentioned in the quiz.



What Do You Know About Fiction & Agricultural Education?

By Gary Moore

During the early days of agricultural education and the FFA, few students lived in areas where electricity was available. There were a few radios but the primary mode of entertainment in the evening was reading. Every book mentioned in this quiz are actual books about agricultural education. Go to the Head of the Class if you can answer the following "Fiction" related questions. Answers are on page 25.

1. The keynote speaker at the first FFA Convention in 1928 was John F. Case. Mr. Case was a:
 - A. Writer who wrote books about vocational agriculture, 4-H, and Scouting.
 - B. Noted author of juvenile sports books.
 - C. Famous Shakespearean actor.
 - D. Columnist who had a monthly column in *Boys Life*.
2. A magazine that called itself "the only national publication for F.F.A. chapters" started in 1935 and was published until the 1950s. This magazine carried a variety of short stories and other features designed to appeal to FFA members. It was:
 - A. Boys Life
 - B. The Future Farmer
 - C. The Blue and Gold
 - D. The American Farm Youth
3. The first novel glorifying vocational agriculture was published in 1925. The name of this book was:
 - A. The Hurricane Mystery
 - B. Tom of Peace Valley
 - C. Ranching on Eagle Eye
 - D. Secret of Silver Peak
4. In 1932 *The Greenhand* was published. This novel showed how FFA transformed a thug into a worthwhile citizen. The novel was written by Paul Chapman who was:
 - A. Executive Secretary of the national FFA
 - B. A teacher educator at Virginia Tech.
 - C. Dean of agriculture at the University of Georgia
 - D. Editor of the Missouri Ruralist (a farm newspaper)
5. In 1940 *The Greenhand* was:
 - A. Made into a movie and showed in theaters across the country.
 - B. Condensed by *Readers Digest* and included in their annual volume of condensed books.
 - C. Awarded the Peabody Award for juvenile literature.
 - D. Translated into Spanish.
6. For many years the official FFA manual contained a:
 - A. Review of 2-3 worthwhile books for young people
 - B. List of novels that would be of interest to young people
 - C. Short story on the back two pages of the manual
 - D. Coupon that could be clipped and mailed to order juvenile books from the Salkeld Publishing Company in Akron, Ohio.
7. Sarah Lindsay Schmidt, published a number of agricultural education novels (*New Land*, *The Secret of Silver Peak*, *Shadow Over Winding Ranch*). Which of the following statements about these novels is not true?
 - A. Typically the lead character is an orphan.
 - B. Each novel contains conflict, a foreboding mortgage and a girl to be wooed.
 - C. There is a malevolent school adversary whose father is typically the local prominent citizen.
 - D. The application of modern farming practices save the day
8. Tom of Peace Valley, Moon Valley and Peace Valley Warrior were all written by:
 - A. Sarah Lindsay Schmidt
 - B. Paul Chapman
 - C. John Case
 - D. A. W. Nolan
9. *Short Stories for Future Farmers* was published by Interstate in 1936. The individual who compiled these stories was:
 - A. A. W. Nolan, agricultural teacher educator at the University of Illinois
 - B. Rufus Stimson, state supervisor of agricultural education in Massachusetts
 - C. Sarah Lindsay Schmidt, English instructor at Colorado State
 - D. W. F. Stewart, head of agricultural education at Ohio State
10. In 1954, Brunner published an article titled "Fiction for Future Farmers" in *The Agricultural Education Magazine*. In this article Brunner:
 - A. Encouraged agricultural teachers to use fiction in teaching their classes.
 - B. Provided tips on how to be a discerning reader of fiction
 - C. Suggest agriculture teachers encourage writing on the part of students by having the students write agricultural short stories.
 - D. Identified 100 books that would be of interest to vocational agriculture students.

Professional Development

By Gary Moore

Welcome to the Professional Development page. This page features news, notices and other information of interest to the agricultural education profession. Typically the page will contain information provided by the National Council for Agricultural Education, the Agricultural Education Division of AVA, the National Association of Agricultural Educators and other members of the family.

NVATA Has a New Name: At the annual meeting of the National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association in Las Vegas in December of 1997, the members voted to change the name of their organization. The new name is the **National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE)**. The new name more accurately describes the membership of the organization.

In 1988 the National Research Council published *Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education*. This document called for the expansion of vocational agriculture beyond being merely "vocational." The field of agricultural education has grown and evolved

since that publication. The new name reflects that change.

New Officers: Congratulations to Tom Kremer of Ohio who was recently elected to the position of President-elect of NAAE. Vern Luft of Nevada was elected to the same position in the American Association for Agricultural Education. In November Robert Heuvel of California was elected president-elect of the National Association of Supervisor of Agricultural Education.

New Paradigm for a Regional Meeting: History was made from Jan. 31-Feb. 3 in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Southern Agricultural Education Conference (SAEC) held their annual conference in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS). The SAEC has been holding annual meetings for over 70 years and the SAAS had been meeting for over 90 years. The two groups had never met together until this year. The joint meeting was a result of SAAS extending an invitation to the SAEC to affiliate with SAAS. There were approximately 1,000 individuals in attendance at the joint conference.

The invitation from SAAS indicates the agricultural scientists recognize agricultural education as an equal. SAAS is a confederation of numerous professional agricultural organizations and societies in the southern United States. The membership of SAAS includes animal scientists, agricultural economists, horticulturists, agricultural experiment station directors, rural sociologists, plant pathologists, and other agricultural science professionals.

The keynote speaker for the SAAS conference was Dr. Miley Gonzalez. Miley is Undersecretary of Research, Education and Economics in the USDA. All three of Miley's degrees are in agricultural education and he is a former teacher of agricultural education. His comments before the conference reflected positively on agricultural education.

At the conclusion of the conference the animal science group and the horticultural group requested to have joint sessions with the agricultural educators next year. The affiliation of the SAEC with SAAS is an excellent example of how agricultural educators can cooperate with other groups to build coalitions.

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Organizing for a New Year

By E.V. Walton

Joe Scatterscrew sighed with relief and lit a stub cigar. The chair creaked when he let himself down in it. The last class of V.A. boys was trekking across the school ground and Joe was tired. He glanced at the clock, 11:45.

"I gonnies. Thang must of stopped." He knew it was nearly 2 o'clock in the afternoon. He looked at the clock again. It was running but the hand was going backward.

"Dang them boys! Give them a farm shop job and they are all thumbs on 2 left hands but they can tear up a good clock and make it run backwards in nothing flat. Now, I don't know how I am ever going to figure out the time."

He looked at his watch. 1:45 p.m. and the clock showed 11:45 a.m. "That's 2 hours backwards. And when it's a showing 12:45 it will be—les see? Yeah, 2:45."

Joe got a piece of cardboard and worked out a table and stuck it up by the clock.

"Can't make them boys fix it. No telling what they would make it do."

Joe studied some smudged fingerprints on the glass of the clock face.

"What a man needs is a good course in finger printing. Looks like them Colleges don't prepare a man for such as this. Too dang much stuff on methods and not enough on stuff like this."

He sagged back into his chair and frowned at the cluttered desk and room.

"It seems like I never got started before summer had clean run out from under me. I don't know how time get aways so fast. An Ag teacher could serve a fifty year penitentiary sentence in about 15 minutes and it wasn't for the honor of the thang I would just as soon do it!"

He blew some dust from the desk

and started going through a pile of papers.

"Huh! Here's something from the Superintendent, dated April 30. Requesting for requisition of supplies and equipment for next year. Blast it all! How come he sends out stuff like that just when summer is creeping up on a man. It's too far ahead. I didn't hardly know what I needed till the first week of school."

He looked at both sides of the form and laid it in a basket labeled, "To be took care of at once."

He threw away some advertisements and ran across a form 2. "If I don't work this up pretty that supervisor will be yelling his head off. Seems like he wants this before my schedule even gets settled down!"

He studied the form closely and put it in a drawer. "Chances are, I'll have plenty of time. He usually writes me three or four times before he gets riled up too bad."

He got up and filed a group of other forms in the filing cabinet. "They believe in keeping a man snowed. I can see that." Somewhere near the bottom of the stack he found a paper.

Things to Do This Summer

1. Inventory Shop
2. Bring Bulletin and Reference Files Up to Date
3. Revise Teaching Plan
4. Hold Two FFA Meetings
5. Visit Prospective Students and Parents
6. Visit Supervised Farming Projects

There were several other items listed but some ScrewWorm Medicine had spilled on the page and blotted them out.

"Must of done them bottom ones for sure. I didn't get to the first six. Yep, I reckon I started at the bottom and worked up. It ain't so monotonous that way."

Joe settled back and thought some about some way of getting his VA I boys started on a supervised farming program. He could tell already that they were going to be mean boys.

"Reckon I will wait until spring and start them off on gardens and chickens."

He thought about this for a while and the idea got better. "Their Mammass will take a interest in gardens and chickens and maybe it will turn out good."

He went back to the shop and began gathering up tools off of the floor.

"I gonnies I'll just give em a good start on shop. They probably got some ideas on what they want to do in shop and I'll start them right off." He looked at the turning lathe, "They like this lathe work lamps, bowling pins. And too, there oughta be some will want to work on their hot rods."

He blew dust off of a welding helmet.

"Might be a good idea to let them burn some rods, too. Man, they like that."

He walked over to the band and jig saws and examined them.

"New blades and they will buzz along. The boys like them whatnot shelves and stuff. Yep! Wouldn't be surprised if them boys don't go good when I point out some of the possibilities."

He rebited the cigar with satisfaction.

"It makes a man feel good to get organized for a semester!" Joe sharpened a stub pencil against a grinder and picked up a piece of paper from the floor.

"I guess I better write down this organized VA I program while it's still on my mind. Can't tell, that principal might want to know about it. VA I: Welding, Auto Mechanics, Jig Saw, Band Saw, and Lathe. Individual projects hum about 20 periods."

He frowned and scratched his head morosely.

"That don't get me over the first semester with them mean devils. Les see? About 20 periods for field trips would help. I guess I gotta teach improving livestock and poultry. Might just breeze out and look over some chickens and stock."

He locked the shop. "Next week I'll organize VA II and III."