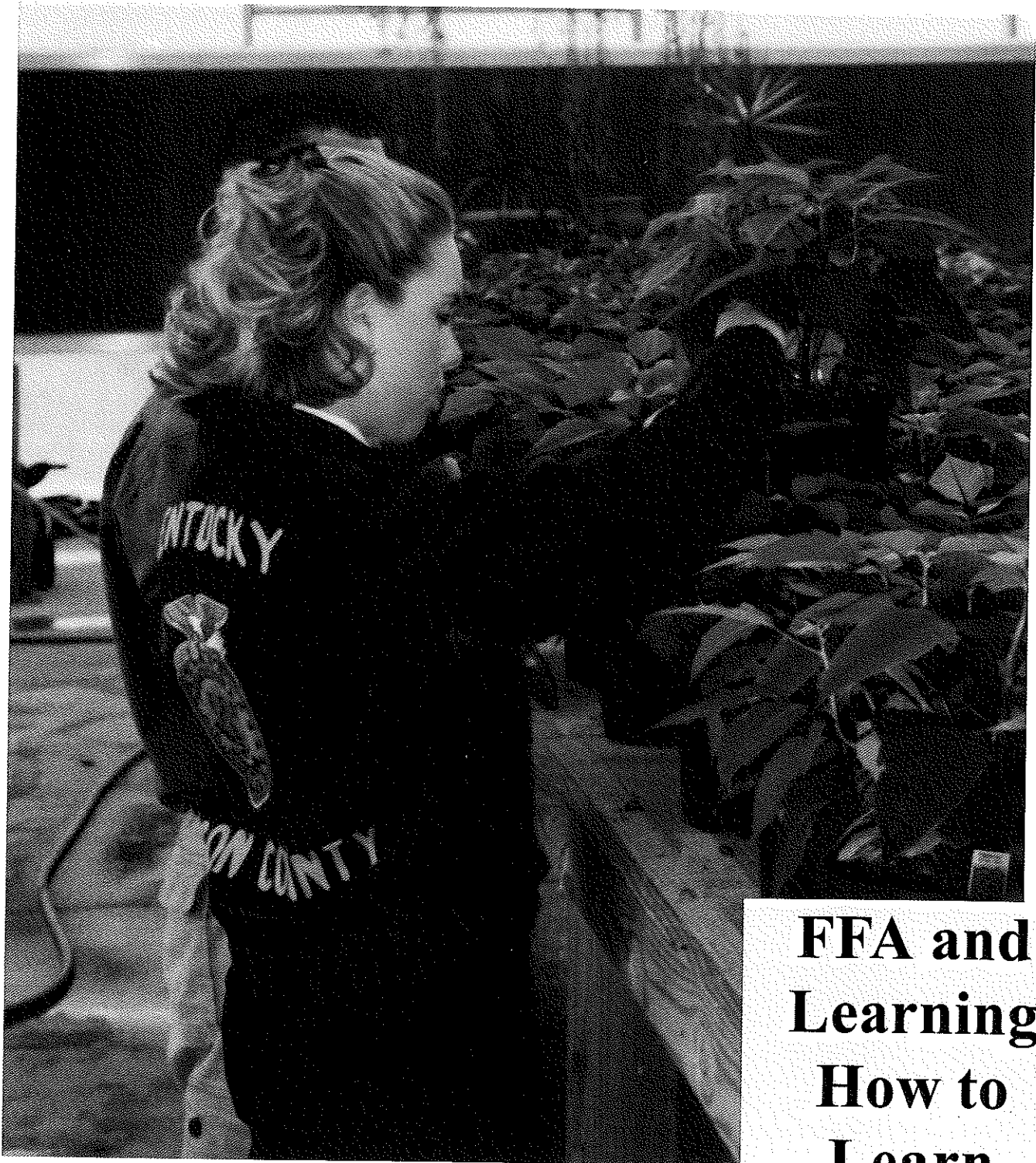


September-  
October  
2001  
volume 74  
issue 2

*The Agricultural*  
**EDUCATION**  
M A G A Z I N E



**FFA and  
Learning  
How to  
Learn**

# Perceptions More Powerful Than Facts

By Robert A. Martin, Editor

The longer I am in this profession the more I am convinced that we agricultural educators, at every level, spend a great deal of our time explaining what we stand for, describing what we do and defending our traditions. Shouldn't what we do speak for itself? Is there something wrong with us and what we do or are we not doing enough to help major stakeholders, influencers and potential clients understand what we are all about? Is our marketing strategy on target? Is our message meaningful to our audience or only meaningful to us?

Take for instance Career Development Events (CDE). I must admit that I was not involved directly in renaming contests as career development events, therefore I probably shouldn't focus on this terminology. However, the CDE nomenclature provides a very appropriate example for my point.

Does "Career Development Event" speak to our several audiences the way we think it does? I am not so sure. The word "career" certainly speaks volumes to parents, employers, informed students and potential student stakeholders. "Career" translates to "job" and that term is well understood by everyone. The same can be said for the word "event." Event implies action. The term "development" may be a horse of a different color. I am less convinced that the word development has as wide an understanding ascribed to it as we in Agricultural Education might think. In fact, it may be more educator jargon than anything. Do our CDEs really develop careers or

expand careers or have anything to do at all with career development? What does development in this context mean anyway? It is subject to lots of different interpretations.

On the other hand, "learning" is a lot like the words "career" and "event" in terms of clarity and wide understanding and acceptance. Learning implies knowledge and skill acquisition. It would be very unusual to find anyone that didn't have a fairly understandable basic concept of learning.

Perception is a powerful force and often overshadows the facts. Several authors in this issue of The Magazine indicate that many people that have influence and power over our work as well as people in our own professional ranks do not fully understand the role of FFA, CDEs and SAEs in the curriculum. Could it be that the words we use don't convey the point we want to make with these people?

If we want our CDEs to be perceived as learning events, why don't we call them that, or at least use learning as our explanation for doing them? Words mean something. They often mean different things to different people. We need to be careful that the audience we are trying to impress or influence has the perception that we really want to portray. We need to focus on words that our various publics clearly understand.

FFA clearly presents many learning opportunities. If we are serious about connecting our curriculum to our FFA activities, then we must use words like "learning" in describing or labeling our activities. Career Learning Event seems so logical.

Maybe I am not necessarily suggesting a change in our use of CDEs as a title to our several FFA events as much as I want us to think about what we are doing in the FFA. FFA is all about "learning." Learning that is fun, action oriented and student focused. We should elevate the concept of "learning" to a higher level in our focus on FFA activities.

There is no doubt where our authors in this issue stand on the issue of learning being the focus of our FFA activities. Please read this issue and learn their ideas for using FFA for a whole host of learning events.

Thanks goes to David Doerfert for soliciting and organizing the theme articles in this issue. The authors are congratulated for supplying lots of food for thought and clearly outlining some strategies to use in promoting and using the FFA as a learning tool. Readers are encouraged to use these ideas and strategies in their programs.



Robert A. Martin is Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine. He serves as Professor and Department Head of Agricultural Education and Studies at Iowa State University.

# Theme: The Role of FFA in Learning How to Learn

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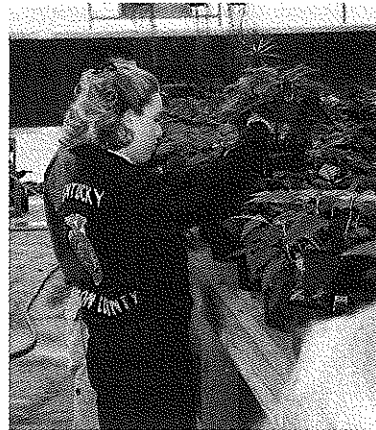
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Authors writing for the September-October issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine discuss the role of the FFA in learning how to learn. A student is shown here during the Kentucky State FFA Floriculture Career Development Event. (Photo courtesy of Stacey Vincent)

## Subscriptions

Subscription price for The Agricultural Education Magazine is \$10.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions are \$20.00 (U.S. currency) per year for surface mail, and \$40 (U.S. currency) foreign airmail (except Canada). Single copies and back issues less than 10 years old are available at \$2 each (\$3.00 foreign mail). All back issues are available on microfilm from UMI University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. UMI University Microfilms telephone number is (313) 761-4700. In submitting a subscription, designate new or renewal and provide mailing address including ZIP code. Send all subscriptions and requests for hard copy back issues to the Business Manager: Rosco Vaughn, Business Manager, National Council for Agricultural Education, 1410 King Street Suite 400, Alexandria, VA 22314, Phone 800-772-0939.

## Article Submission

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the editor or theme editors. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of the issue intended for the article or photograph. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be typed double-spaced, and include information about the author(s). One hard copy and one electronic copy of the article should be submitted. A recent, hardcopy photograph should accompany the article unless one is on file with the editor. Articles in the magazine may be reproduced without permission but should be acknowledged.

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## Publication Information

The Agricultural Education Magazine (ISSN 073224677) is the bi-monthly professional journal of agricultural education. The journal is published by the Agricultural Education Magazine, Inc. and is printed at M&D Printing, 616 Second Street, Henry, IL 61537.

Periodicals postage paid at Mechanicsville, VA 23116; additional entry at Henry, IL 61537.

POSTMASTERS: Send Form 3579 to Rosco Vaughn, Business Manager, 1410 King Street Suite 400, Alexandria, VA 22314, Phone (800)-772-0939.

# Socrates and FFA

By David Doerfert

**"The unexamined life isn't worth living." — Socrates**

Socrates Café is a recent book authored by Christopher Phillips and one that I (and Oprah) would recommend everyone to read. In an engaging blend of philosophy and storytelling, Phillips describes various Socratic discussions he has conducted across the nation in his personal attempt to revive the process of examining life as Socrates professed and modeled. In relating his passion to "seek Socrates," Phillips describes the Socratic type of philosophy as "A type of anti-guru philosophy in which the person leading the discussion always learns much more from the other participants than they could ever learn from him." (p. 8)

If Socrates were to lead a discussion with the authors that provide their insight to the theme of this issue "FFA and Learning How to Learn," what would we learn from the discussion? I wonder . . .

### Do we teach FFA?

"Great agriculture instructors do not teach FFA; they develop a classroom model that incorporates FFA as a vital part of the overall agricultural education strategy and curriculum. FFA serves as a living-learning laboratory that influences the "what" we teach, serves as a vehicle for "how" we teach and may even serve as the "why" we are teachers of agriculture." (Melodia & Meyer)

### What does FFA have to do with learning about how to learn?

Schools exist for at least 4 major

reasons. They are to teach students how to solve problems, how to transfer learning, to become self-disciplined and to learn how to learn. FFA is a laboratory of how to learn to learn. As young people are involved in programs and activities of the FFA they are learning how to learn independently, interactively and cooperatively." (Knight & Wellert)

"In addition, students are motivated (aroused to action) to learn when they perceive that the learning task or experience is fun, interesting, personally meaningful, or relevant in some way. When this motivation occurs, the student is receptive for learning or, from the teacher's perspective, a teachable moment is occurring. Teachable moments can be planned, or they can occur unexpectedly. A wise teacher will be alert to both possibilities. The FFA contains unlimited possibilities of teachable moments for a teacher to utilize as they direct the learning process." (Hedges)

### So FFA is a motivational tool for teachers?

"Today's students (Generation Y) are motivated to learn because they know that knowledge is power and if they find a subject interesting they will be eager to learn. But Generation Y is also very media sophisticated and easily bored. FFA, with its resources, can help the local teacher deliver programming that fits the needs of the Generation Y learner in their classroom." (Burton)

### Then is FFA also a learning tool?

"FFA is an educational tool. Today's Career Development Events are more intense and cover a broader variety of material that actually educates students for the real world. In an Agricultural Sales and Market-

ing class I used components of FFA's Commodity Marketing Challenge and the Agricultural Sales CDE to teach marketing analysis, advertising, sales demonstrations, displays, telephone skills and customer relations — all of which students will need to know once they face the challenges of the real world." (Vincent & Morgan)

### Do teachers know how to effectively use FFA as a motivational and learning tool?

"A high percentage of teacher education candidates are without agricultural education backgrounds and thus have not experienced first hand the philosophy that FFA is an integral part of the education process. Teaching about FFA only in a university classroom setting is inadequate for today's prospective teachers. These future teachers must experience the integral model in order to be a successful future teacher." (Elliot)

"Even those who have been FFA members and are now selected as presenters for national FFA conferences need to understand the latest research and guiding principles of teaching and learning and how to teach "student-centered" versus "teacher-centered prior to presenting their first FFA conference." Once the research and principles are internalized, two goals can be achieved: a passion for student learning and excellence in teaching." (Horton & Findley)

### Do we know when FFA has been successful in helping students to learn how to learn?

"Two students are actively engaged in the FFA, both are in the same grade, both are dedicated students, and both value learning. One has been on four state winning

CDE teams in one calendar year, and the other, well, has not. Has one learned more than the other? No. They learn different lessons about themselves, their knowledge base, and the procedures they used. The lessons are just as valuable to both students and their lessons can be directly transferred into other aspects of their education and their chosen career." (Touchstone, Dygert & Blackstock)

"We used the Food for America program in our FFA Chapter bringing boy scouts from Milwaukee to the country for a day on the farm. By virtue of FFA members taking the little tykes' hands, escorting them around the farms and answering one thousand and one questions, our FFA members became keenly aware that they indeed possessed a mountain of

knowledge — gained through personal experience and the agriculture classroom/lab. We in agriculture education are indeed blessed by the simple fact that we direct and gently guide young people so they will learn to do and do to learn." (Walker)

### So, does FFA have a vital role in learning how to learn?

"Learning is life-long. The FFA is a set of life enhancing experiences designed to teach students to be proactive in all they pursue and undertake. As a result, students who participate in the FFA are positively directed and affected throughout their lives and careers. FFA is a legacy worth leaving behind to those who come after us." (Dwyer)

### This we have learned.

### References

Phillips, C. (2001). *Socrates café: A fresh taste of philosophy*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.



David Doerfert served as the Theme Editor for the September-October issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*. He is the Student Services Team Leader at the National FFA Organization.

United States Postal Service  
Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: The Agricultural Education Magazine

2. Publication Number: 0 7 3 2 - 4 6 7 7

3. Filing Date: 10/01/01

4. Issue Frequency: Bimonthly

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6

6. Annual Subscription Price: \$10.00

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4): 1410 King Street, Ste. 400 Alexandria, VA 22314

Contact Person: Dr. Rosco Vaughn, Telephone: 703-838-5881, ext. 4295

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): 1410 King Street, Ste. 400 Alexandria, VA 22314

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank):  
Publisher: The Agricultural Education Magazine, Inc./The National Council for Agricultural Education, 1410 King Street, Ste. 400 Alexandria, VA 22314  
Editor: Dr. Robert A. Martin, Iowa State University, 201 Curtiss Hall, Ames, IA 50011  
Managing Editor: Dr. Rosco Vaughn, c/o The National Council for Agricultural Education, 1410 King Street, Ste. 400 Alexandria, VA 22314

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.):  
Full Name: The Agricultural Education Magazine  
Complete Mailing Address: 1410 King Street, Ste. 400 Alexandria, VA 22314

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box:  None

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one):  
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:  
 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months  
 Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title: The Agricultural Education Magazine

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: July/Aug. 2001

Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	3213	2959
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 (Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)	3113	2859
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 (Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	0	0
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	28	22
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b.(1), (2), (3), and (4))	3141	2881
d. Free Distribution (Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541)	0	0
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	15	20
e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	15	12
f. Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15d. and 15e.)	30	32
g. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c. and 15f.)	3171	2913
h. Copies not Distributed	25	30
i. Total (Sum of 15g. and h.)	3196	2943
j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c. divided by 15g. times 100)	99%	99%

16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: Publication required. Will be printed in the Sept/Oct issue of this publication.  Publication not required.

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Rosco Vaughn, Business Manager, Date: 9-7-01

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7. Item 17 must be signed.  
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# Learning to Do; Doing to Learn...Therefore, Learning to Learn

By Ed Walker

A few decades ago, back when I was but a mere lad, I had the formidable task of trying to explain the game of baseball to a young lady, Katrina, who happened to be a foreign exchange student. I know, I know, there have been stand-up comedy routines centered around this activity, and for good reason, but this one was real ... and my experience would've been a good comedy routine if someone would've taped it.

When I completed my task I must admit that I - judging from the confused expression on her face - created more questions for Katrina than I had answered. However, I was surprised at how much I knew about the complicated game. How had I attained such a (in my opinion) complete knowledge of baseball? By playing the game, of course. I learned from experience, by making mistakes, watching (and benefiting from) other's mistakes and by becoming actively involved in the process.

If the truth be known - and I am a truthful person at times - I learned even more subtle nuances about the game each and every time I took the field, and I played on many, many organized leagues (hardball and fast-pitch softball) up until my mid-twenties.

In other words, there is no way a young man or woman can sit in a classroom, listen to a lecture series about baseball (complete with overheads and an elaborate Power-Point presentation), take notes, quizzes and exams and come away with an understanding of the game.

One must "do" the game, walk

the walk as it were, and there must be some repetition, follow-up, reinforcement and evaluation (a score?) involved.

After being discharged from the military in 1969 and coming home to the land of multi-colored jeeps and real milk, I enrolled at Western Illinois University and became an aggie. Not surprisingly, due to my age and background, my social circle was generally within the realm of the university's Veteran's Club (the XGIs), a very large and heterozygous group of fellows from all sorts of backgrounds representing a wide range of majors. Aggies were a minority within the Vet's Club; I think I was one of five agriculture majors in the entire organization during my years there.



*FFA activities, such as the PALS and Food for America Programs, which allow students to share their knowledge, are invaluable to the learning process, according to Walker. (Photo courtesy of Stacey Vincent)*

Reflecting society in general, the overwhelming majority of fellows in the Vets Organization were from urban backgrounds, as was the young lady I met on campus, dated and married in due time. Consequently, I'd say that approximately one-third of my social life was spent answering questions about farming, agri-science and agribusiness.

It seems that almost everyone I met had one question or another about the complicated world of agriculture. It was refreshing to find that so many people (and a goodly number of them didn't know a John Deere from a Holstein) had no problem admitting complete ignorance of our nation's agrarian tradition and were most anxious to learn about it. The queries ranged from the cost of a tractor to debt service for the average farm, from how often cows had calves to why one shouldn't refer to a bull as a "male cow," operating expenses on a farm, cash flow problems, property taxes for so much land, the squeeze from urban sprawl, pesticide usage, eminent domain considerations, family farm inheritance, and on and on ...and on.

It became apparent to me, just as I felt when explaining baseball to the young lady in the early 60s, that I (as has everyone associated with farming) accumulated an impressive body of knowledge and facts over the years without being aware that this plethora of information even existed between the frontal lobe and brain stem. Moreover, if basic nutrition is indeed something we find important in everyone's life, this collection of information is essential, critical and fundamental for our society...at least three times per day.

That is exactly why I was so pleased to see the FFA's Food For America Program take shape a few years ago. This is something we've been doing in the Hartford (WI) FFA Chapter since the mid-70s, before the Food For America Program grew a title and went national.

Initially, we brought two very full bus loads of young people out from Milwaukee's inner city and treated them to a day on area farms. We showed them average-sized working operations, not just the large varieties. Aside from the expected - farms where white liquid is extracted from the mammary systems of black and white bovines - they also were treated to tours of farms where the primary raw product was, pork, beef, eggs and fruit.

We learned much from the first time we brought the city kids here, we collected facts that would help us considerably in improving the procedure in subsequent years. We learned, at times to our chagrin, that some of the city kids are more impressed by seeing apples actually

hanging on a tree than a combine the size of New Hampshire; friendly barn cats are a bigger draw than huge milk cows ... and we came to realize that a CC (coughing cow) can leave an image in their minds that will no doubt stay with them for their entire lives. Unfortunately, there exist two young men, now in their mid-thirties who, I'm willing to bet an exceptional amount of money, will never, ever go into a barn again ... because of a CC experience. But I digress.

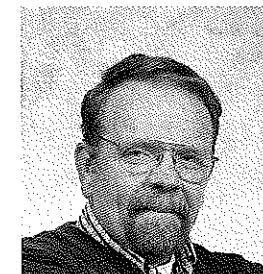
However, aside from the obvious benefits of exposing urban youngsters to a critical aspect of our society, one that is so often misunderstood and misrepresented by the entertainment industry (Green Acres, Hee-Haw), we observed a tremendous educational premium for our kids in the blue and gold jackets.

By virtue of taking the little tykes' hands, escorting them around the farms and answering one thousand and one questions, our FFA members became keenly aware that they indeed possessed a mountain of

knowledge - gained through personal experience and the agriculture classroom/lab - that was very easy to convey to the little people. And by teaching what they knew, they could easily understand how intensely valuable these production farms (and the applied science and economics utilized thereon) are to so many individuals around the globe. As a professor of biotechnology once said to me, "So many of my younger students are surprised at how much of applied biotech is directly related to agriculture and medicine. After all, what else out there is more basic and vital than nutrition and health?"

By teaching what they know from their vast arsenal of knowledge and data gleaned from experience, FFA members reinforce what we educators tell them each week. This has, I've noticed, instilled a deep sense of pride on the part of our young people ... a pride in what they already know, and in the direction of their chosen career path. A lot can be said for pride and satisfaction.

We in agricultural education are indeed blessed by the simple fact that we direct and gently guide young people so they will learn to do and do to learn. The FFA's Food For America program adds a wonderful dimension wherein chapter members can admire, enjoy, cherish and appreciate the process of learning from teaching.



*Ed Walker recently retired after 28 years as an agriculture instructor at Hartford Union High School in Hartford, WI.*

## January-February, 2002 Issue

### *Innovative Curriculum Ideas and Practices in Agriculture*

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All copy must be to the editor, Robert Martin, (drmartin@iastate.edu) by December 15, 2001

# Teaching and Learning Through the FFA

By Allison J. L. Touchstone, Shawn R. Dygert, and Joe A. Blackstock

Two students are actively involved in the FFA, both are in the same grade, both are dedicated students, and both value learning. One has been on four state winning CDE teams in one calendar year, and the other, well, has not. Has one learned more than the other? Has either one learned how to learn or have they just learned the event?

These are the questions that teachers and students need to answer when assessing the value of the FFA program to the school, teachers, and most importantly to the students involved. Although the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 established vocational education and incorporated the three areas of agricultural education (SAE, FFA, and classroom education) and

Public Law 740 granted the FFA a national charter (National FFA Organization, 2000), these facts do not inherently mean that students learn. The students and the teachers alike must work to develop curriculum and invest the time and energy needed to prepare for the FFA activities as well as CDE events.

The question then remains, what is the role of the FFA in learning how to learn? Whether a student comes in first or last, they can develop solid learning habits through preparation for career development events. Objectives, procedures, and assessment are the three commonly used aspects of curriculum design and learning procedures.

## Objectives

FFA Career Development Events have well-established rules, explanations and rubrics that outline the

objectives and purposes of the event. These objectives set out what is expected of the FFA members to learn. So the next question is, how do they learn what is expected?

## Procedure

The learning and preparation process needs to be tailored to meet the needs of the individual students while still reaching the expectations or objectives of the event. As a department, we start with the objectives of the event, which serve as a foundation for the learning processes involved in preparing for the event. Students are provided with a variety of learning situations to succeed in the event: objectives, study materials relating to the event, team practices, time and work with teachers and other experts related to the area of the event. However, the main ingredient in this stage of the learning process is still student desire. Without the passion to succeed in a given activity, students will likely never succeed in their chosen area.

The FFA provides extrinsic motivation in the form of awards and recognition at the local, state, and national levels. Once students become involved in the FFA, they can begin to develop more intrinsic motivation such as the satisfaction of learning, personal goal setting and achievement, and preparing for future careers. Agriculture teachers can also foster this desire and motivation through encouragement, assistance, and interest in the students themselves who are working to achieve success in the CDE's. Without the active involvement of advisors, few, if any students would take advantage of the opportunities presented through the FFA.

Through practices and individual study, students discover areas where their expertise is limited, and then

through work with their resources, teachers, and team members, they can discover and fill in the holes in their knowledge. This practice and discovery method allows students to better comprehend the information with which they are concerned.

## Assessment

Assessment is the third aspect of learning situations. If this step in the overall learning process is neglected, the students have learned very little. One prime example of formative assessment is Joe Beavers of the Kuna FFA Chapter. During his sophomore year, he was a member of the state soils team. Joe made a mistake in the state competition that cost the team a trip to the national event in Oklahoma City. Through personal evaluation and dedication, Joe adapted his preparation and performance during events and has been a member of four national qualifying teams in the last 12 months.

## Opportunity to Fail

One of the greatest opportunities provided students in CDE's and the FFA is the opportunity to fail. Although that statement may sound harsh, students need to learn how to deal with both success and failure and in the context of the FFA program, not winning can be a great teacher for the individual and the team.

Students often ask themselves questions like: Did I know the plant samples or meat cuts as well as I thought? How did the judge evaluate that animal differently than I did? What can I improve on for the next CDE? These opportunities for personal assessment are valuable to student learning as an overall process. Students also have the opportunity to develop and enhance their sense of personal responsibility. The performance of students in the FFA

officer interviews, career development events, and activities is the sole responsibility of the students themselves. This sense of being responsible for their personal performance and the performance of the team as a whole is a valuable skills that can easily be transferred to other school and FFA activities as well as being a vital component for career success.

## Individual learning styles

Throughout the agriculture and FFA program, students are allowed to develop and test their learning styles in the safe learning context of the FFA program. Working with teachers and other students in preparing for FFA events teaches students the value of teamwork in the classroom and the workplace. "People don't realize how much mental focus it takes to concentrate through an entire CDE," says Joe Beavers. "This was my biggest obstacle to overcome when I first competed in an event."

As a result of this personal evaluation, Joe has developed his own process for event competition: "I call it 'logical opinion'. It doesn't matter what the judge says as long as your placing was logical and you have reason to back it up." This personal confidence and understanding was learned directly through participation in the FFA. Joe, and students like him, has developed a maturity and professionalism that will carry through to any situation they will encounter in life. Honest personal and team evaluation such as this allows students to learn from their mistakes and identify weaknesses in preparation that need to be rectified prior to future competition.

Teachers play an integral role in assessment as well as instruction. We provide students with an overview of their performance, point out strengths and areas in which improvement is needed. Without

assessment activities, students would not be afforded the diverse learning opportunities that are readily provided through the FFA.

The question we began with is still unanswered; does a student on four national qualifying teams or a student who has never been on one learn more? The answer is neither one. They learn different lessons about themselves, their knowledge base, and their procedures for competition. The lessons are just as valuable to both students and their lessons can be directly transferred into other aspects of their education and their chosen career. The FFA serves as a vital training ground for student career success.

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Skills learned in the classroom and applied through FFA Career Development Events have helped students prepare for SAE programs and future employment. FFA Advisor Joe Blackstock is shown with students proudly displaying awards earned through the FFA. (Photo courtesy of the Kuna Agriculture Department, Kuna, Idaho).



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# Is FFA the Teachable Moment?

By Lowell E. Hedges

The FFA is a part of agricultural education. It makes the classroom and lab come alive. The FFA is a "vehicle", which helps ensure that a graduate of a local agricultural education program is an individual who possesses an outstanding blend of occupational and technical skills, leadership abilities, and social development. The FFA, in helping to produce this blend, also serves very effectively as a "teachable moment," especially in the teaching of employability skills.

## Defining Teachable Moments

A "teachable moment" is:

- ◆ A happening, situation, or point in time, which relates to a competency scheduled to be taught, or relates to a competency that has been taught.

- ◆ A happening not necessarily planned; an unexpected event.

- ◆ A planned happening that will not necessarily take place in the classroom or laboratory.

- ◆ A happening, a situation, or a point in time, which provides an opportunity to teach an understanding, skill, or appreciation not included in the curriculum.

We've all experienced those happenings - teachable moments - that our parents have used to teach us something they believed we needed to know. When I was a boy of pre-school age, I had a pair of rubber boots, the kind that came to one's knees and that could be slipped on very easily. They also came off very easily. A flip of the leg while I was seated on a chair, and the boot would come flying off at good speed, fast enough to land in the far corner

of the kitchen where our boots and shoes were stored.

One day I came in from play, sat down on a chair, flipped my leg and sent the boot on its way to the corner of the kitchen. To my dismay, while the boot was in mid-air, I could see that it was headed for the basket of eggs that my father was to take to town to trade for groceries. Needless to say, my father used that event as a "teachable moment" to instruct me on the proper procedure for removing and storing my boots.

Even though I had been instructed several times in previous days about the removal of my boots, I was not then motivated to listen and learn. However, the "teachable moment" involving the basket of eggs provided the needed motivation for me to give attention to the lesson on proper boot removal.

*"Students are motivated to learn when they perceive that the learning task or experience is fun, interesting, personally meaningful, or relevant in some way."*

## Role of Motivation

Motivation commonly refers to anything that causes people to behave as they do - an arousal of behavior occurs. Arousal means being "stirred up" or "ready for action."

Students are motivated (aroused to action) to learn when they perceive that the learning task or

experience is fun, interesting, personally meaningful, or relevant in some way. Unfortunately, many learners are "turned off" by a classroom or laboratory environment in which much of an occupational program curriculum is taught. As a result, the teacher has a difficult time leading the student through the learning process to achieve the desired learning objective. Also, the classroom and lab do not, and cannot at all times, provide the highest quality stimuli in the learning process.

## The Learning Process

Let's examine the learning process and analyze how a teachable moment can be a positive factor in the learning process. Remember: To teach is to direct the learning process. The learning process as I have taught it involves four steps:

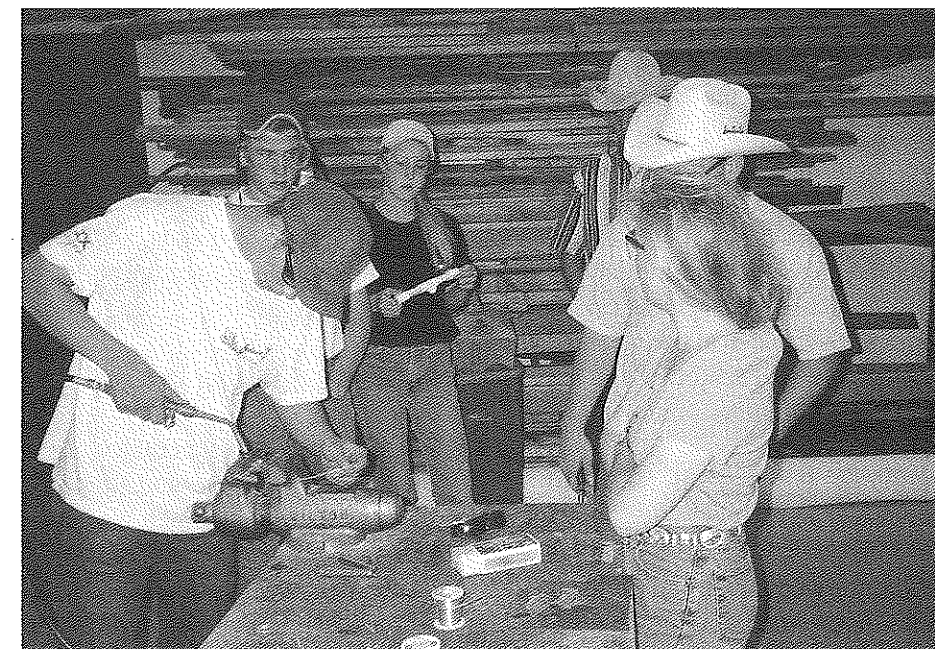
1. Selecting and presenting stimuli (a stimulus is anything that impacts on one or more of the five senses)
2. Receiving stimuli (a stimulus, e.g., sight or sound, is taken into the brain of the learner)
3. Perceiving stimuli (the learner gives a meaning to the stimulus)
4. Acting on perceptions (the learner decides what action to perform, based on the meaning given to the stimulus by the learner)

Learning occurs after the learner acts on his/her perceptions of the stimulus. If no serious impedance (restrictions, stoppages) occurs in any of the learning steps, learning occurs (a change in behavior in the cognitive, psychomotor, or affective domains of learning).

However, impedance can occur in all four steps, preventing learning from happening. Poor quality stimuli (for example, classroom discussion

on proper actions at a restaurant rather than actually dining at the restaurant) can impede learning. Distractions, both external and internal (outside noise; sickness on the part of the student, fear and anxiety, etc.) can prevent the learner from receiving the stimuli provided by the teacher. Lack of experience/knowledge of the stimulus, along with present teaching/learning conditions and present attitude of the learner, can prevent a correct perception (meaning) of the stimulus. Lack of sufficient opportunity to practice (acting on perceptions) the desired competency can impede learning.

Many learners are "turned off" by a classroom or laboratory environment, even though the teacher is attempting to teach appropriate lesson content. As a result, they don't receive stimuli. If they don't receive, they can't perceive. If they can't perceive, they can't act on perceptions - especially correct perceptions. If they don't act on correct perceptions, learning does not occur. The learning objective for the lesson is not achieved.



Hedges suggests that the FFA Career Development Events can prove to be effective teachable moments, when used in conjunction with the instruction in the agricultural education classes. (Photo courtesy of Jack Elliot)

## Teachable Moments in FFA

Teachable moments made possible by the FFA are many times the highest quality stimuli the teacher can select and use. The higher the quality, the greater the possibility for the learner to receive and correctly perceive (give meaning to) the stimulus, and thus act on correct perceptions. End result is effective learning - lesson objective has been reached.

Teachable moments provided by the FFA may include such happenings or situations as:

- ◆ When students prepare for officer interviews, instructions on how to dress, how to shake hands, how to ask and answer questions, are teachable moments for motivation to learn proper manners and etiquette.

- ◆ If a student has an auto accident returning home from an FFA meeting, a time of sharing feelings the next morning is a teachable moment for the motivation to remember safe driving rules.

- ◆ When a team loses a skills contest, it is a teachable moment to

reinforce the need for self-evaluation and to practice humility.

- ◆ When a student receives praise on her resume from an interviewer, it is a teachable moment to reinforce for the other students, the value of effective communication skills.

- ◆ When the curriculum includes a competency such as "Work as a team member," a teachable moment is a one-day team building leadership conference for the chapter.

- ◆ After discussing marketing principles in an agribusiness course, a teachable moment is an FFA Career Marketing Plan Career Development Event, in which students present a product or service of their choice.

Teachable moments can be planned, or they can occur unexpectedly. A wise teacher will be alert to both possibilities. Teachable moments can often be the highest quality stimuli in the learning process, successfully arousing students to be motivated to eagerly participate. The FFA contains unlimited possibilities for teachable moments. While you direct the learning process, utilize this virtual goldmine of teachable moments.

Is the FFA the teachable moment? Yes. Try it. You'll like it. And so will your students.



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# Make the Learning Theirs

By Kelly Horton and Melinda Findley

Over the past 30 years, a great deal of research on how the brain develops, how we learn and how learning can be maximized has been conducted and disseminated. This research has had a tremendous impact on schools, teaching, the teaching/learning process and even how programs and conferences are developed and delivered by the National FFA Organization.

From Rosenshine & Furst's (1971) research on effective teacher behaviors to Howard Gardner's (1983) work on multiple intelligences to Ned Herrmann's (1996) writings on the different types of thinking to *Quantum Teaching* (1999) — the breadth and depth of the available research is enormous. The challenge comes from synthesizing this research into a form that can be applied and put into practice. Over the last several years, building off the available research, we created seven guiding principles to assist our teachers in internalizing the findings. The principles were designed with two primary goals in mind: fostering a passion for student learning, and excellence in teaching.

## Principle 1: Learning Must Be Participatory

The average attention span of an audience is typically the same as the average age of the audience until adulthood where the ability to focus is an average of 20-30 minutes. With this in mind, we encourage teachers to model the "80/20" rule to keep teaching "student-centered." This simply means 80% of the time students are directly engaged in their

learning and 20% of the time is lecture or teacher talk.

We also employ the Content-Participation-Review & Reinforce (CPR; Pike, 1994) concept in relationship to flow of material. CPR allows the teacher to share information in a pattern or cycle that keeps the participant focused on the learning. The important point we share with our teachers is to use a technique called "chunking", in which they make sure that during each 20-minute chunk of their lesson, they cycle through CPR.

## Principle 2: Preparing Students To Learn

We have found that creating the appropriate mental and physical environment allows students to focus better on the curriculum. One of the techniques we utilize is peripheral learning — posting of objectives, icons and posters around the room. We also create contracts of expectations at the start of workshops. This is an important tool for instilling ownership in the student's own learning.

Helping students retain information is also a crucial piece of this guiding principle. It is essential that our teachers understand the importance of primacy, recency, uniqueness and chunking of information. In addition, room arrangement can play an important role in allowing students to interact with each other and assist with classroom management.

## Principle 3: Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners

For years, we have been on a search for techniques and philosophies that would help us with this quest. We've learned that there's no single satisfactory solution for

meeting different learning needs. Instead, there are several methods that, when used together, can help us teach with each student's needs in mind. We tap into the students' visual, auditory and kinesthetic modalities. Our teachers have also benefited from Gardner's (1983) research, as they've learned new ways to facilitate deeper learning by teaching to the multiple intelligences.

The Herrman Brain Dominance Instrument (1996) is another tool that we rely on. The HBDI profile is an illustration of the way people prefer to think, learn, communicate and make decisions. Different situations require different types of thinking. The HBDI profile simply helps our teachers understand the four thinking styles: pragmatic, cognitive, instinctual and visceral. The instrument provides information about how certain thinking styles naturally match up with specific tasks, skill sets and school subjects.

As our teachers become more familiar with the inner-workings of the four styles, they begin to tailor their lesson plans to make sure they are including activities and strategies that satisfy all four styles. While each of these theories has some similarities, each also adds pieces to the overall puzzle of meeting students' learning needs.

## Principle 4: Utilizing the EAT Model

EAT stands for Experience, Awareness and Theory, and simply refers to the order in which we plan lessons for our students. Research indicates that students learn better if they can bring knowledge and/or experience to the learning. Therefore, we begin each lesson with an

experience — game, simulation, brainstorming session, table discussion, role-play, etc. Next, we process the experience with a layered series of questions that help the students become aware of what they learned during the experience, and help them apply it to their situation.

- Layer 1: Ask students to share the results, reactions and observations from the experience.

- Layer 2: Ask students to process the experience by analyzing what was most important and if there were any common themes.

- Layer 3: The students generalize the experience by connecting it to real-life examples.

- Layer 4: Students apply what they learned during the experience to simulated or imagined practice simulations.

The last step in the EAT model is Theory. We find that the students have usually discovered some of the theory during the Awareness stage. We build off of that learning during the Theory stage to take them to an even higher understanding of the topic. This enables us to congratulate students on their discovery, and then give them even more information without lecturing.

## Principle 5: Good Teachers Improve and Evaluate

It is standard practice for teachers to measure student learning via pre-tests, post-tests and evaluations. We've been impressed with how many teachers commit themselves to learning new techniques and to learning what works for their students in the classroom. In our shorter programs, however, the evaluation data often came too late for us to implement the necessary change. We challenge our teachers to get on-the-spot responses from students to determine the degree of

their understanding and growth.

For instance, after teaching a new concept, a teacher can check for understanding by asking for a thumbs-up sign if the students understand, and a thumbs-down sign if they need clarification. Teachers can also ask the following questions: "Who feels like they have more to learn before they fully understand this?" "Who understands, but is not ready to share it with someone else?" And lastly, "Who thinks they'd be ready to share this information with someone else?"

*"When students feel engaged and begin to take ownership, they instinctively have fun and feel cared about."*

## Principles 6 & 7: Make Learning Fun and Show Students They Are Cared About

Overall, our findings have been that our most successful teachers live by the first five principles. When they do, they can't help but accomplish the final two guiding principles. We consider these principles to be over-arching.

Students feel engaged when teachers are teaching to their modality. They begin to take ownership in the learning when teachers use their experiences to build awareness. When students feel engaged and begin to take ownership, they instinctively have fun and feel cared about.

The guiding principles also create a sense of freedom for our teachers as they begin to see that students not

only CAN have fun while they learn, but they retain more of the learning when they DO have fun!

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## What They Could BE!

By Stacy Vincent and Jay Morgan

*"To be, or not to be".*

But how can students BE? How can I motivate, educate, and illustrate to them when I am only with them for a short time each day? How can I be that inspiring role model when all they see me as, "one of my teachers." Without the FFA, I cannot become this figure that I have wanted to be.

As teachers, we tend to forget about the agricultural education triangle - instruction, CDE's, and SAE's - on which our organization is based. This triangle exhibits that the classroom is not complete without the influence of a student's SAE, as well as the FFA.

In 1950, Congress passed Public Law 740, which granted the FFA a federal charter. This charter included the statement that the "FFA is an INTRACURRICULAR organization." When discussing with my students the meaning of the FFA Motto, I wrote the phrases on the board and then asked them to tell me their interpretation. After listening to their logic, it was clear that even my freshmen students could see how the FFA was an important learning tool.

However, many individuals, having not been previously associated with the FFA, have a sour taste in their mouths when they hear "FFA in the Classroom". What causes this? Do they think the teacher works with a few individuals to have them win a contest? Or, do they perceive the classroom and learning to revolve around older classical styles of learning where only lecturing and rote memorization take place. Whatever the stereotype, things must change. We must look to FFA as an educational tool.

Today's Career Development Events (CDE) are more intense and cover a broader variety of material that actually educates students for the real world. In the fall semester, I taught an Agriculture Sales and Marketing class. Along with showing students how to develop their own web page, excel projects, and stock market, I also taught the students about commodity marketing by following the guidelines of the Commodity Marketing Challenge. What a great way for students to learn by using segments of the FFA.

Besides CDE's, FFA develops premier leadership through community service. Our students organize an intense Food For America program. The students from the Agriculture Communications class organize, operate, and train all of the other FFA members on what needs to take place. Through the lessons I teach in the class, the students are not as nervous once they have to perform for a large group. Again, by using FFA activities in our curriculum we are allowing our students to gain more skills as they become successful leaders in our schools and communities.

In the February, 2001, issue of Techniques, an article was published on the results of a study comparing FFA members to high school students who were never enrolled in Agricultural Education or members of the FFA. The results were phenomenal. The study revealed that 83 percent of FFA members found their agriculture courses exciting as compared to only 32 percent of non-agriculture students who regarded their general courses as exciting; 93 percent of the FFA members believed it is important to do their best; and 89 percent of the FFA members believed in career success and were optimistic about

their futures (Balschweid & Talbert, 2001).

With this information, shouldn't we challenge ourselves to make every day a successful day in our classroom by using the organization that helps in our own personal success: FFA. Students desire challenges, they need encouragement, and they want a role model and educator that will allow them to succeed. Through FFA our students are LEARNING what TO DO, they are DOING it TO LEARN, while doing it they are EARNING a(TO) LIV(E)ing, and while they are earning a living, they will be LIVING TO SERVE their families, their schools, their friends, their churches, their communities and their FFA Chapters.

So as others continue to ponder the effects of student organizations on learning, or whether to be or not to be, we have made up our mind that we and our students will BE!

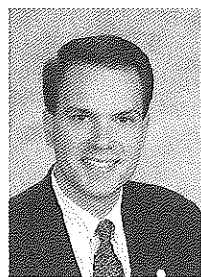
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## How Do You Spell FFA?

By Jack Elliot

Although the article's title is often used as a joke when associated with teaching methodology lessons about FFA, in reality, the high percentage of teacher education candidates without an agricultural education background demands that attention be given to Career and Technical Education student organizations.

The philosophy that FFA is an integral part of the educational process and "NOT" a club is a very foreign concept to many teacher education students, even some with a FFA background. Teaching about FFA only in a classroom setting is inadequate for today's future teachers. However, student teachers must have a comprehensive understanding of FFA and how it fits within the curriculum before they can use its activities to enhance learning.

### FFA is Spelled AED 462 and CDE

The junior level Agricultural Education Department (AED) 462 course is entitled "Curriculum Development." This course is divided into the three traditional agricultural education components: FFA, SAE and classroom. By design the faculty selected the title to emphasize that all three components are, actually, part of or integral to the entire program of agricultural education. In other words, all three are part of curriculum development. Beginning with the Local Program Success (LPS) manual, the course is taught the spring semester prior to the student teaching year. For many student teachers it is their very first exposure to FFA. As part of the course requirements, the students are involved with many aspects of the

state's Career Development Events (CDE) such as:

- ◆ Judging oral reasons in the livestock CDE's
- ◆ Judging agricultural issues CDE's
- ◆ CDE coordinators for most of the rest of the activities
- ◆ Tabulating all the scores and ranking students and teams
- ◆ Presenting awards
- ◆ Photographing winners

### FFA is spelled S.L.C.

During the summer prior to entering their student teaching year, the student teachers are involved with the State FFA Leadership Conference (SLC). Their involvement is rewarded as part of the student teacher course requirements in the fall.

At SLC registration the student teachers receive their advisor packets and some recognize for the first time that they will be perceived as teachers (adults) by the FFA members. The University of Arizona faculty coordinates the following activities for the student teachers:

- ◆ Judge Parliamentary Procedure CDE
- ◆ Judge Agricultural communications CDE
- ◆ Judge chapter scrapbooks, displays and web pages
- ◆ Judge Agriscience Fair
- ◆ Attend agricultural teacher dinner
- ◆ Attend district FFA meetings
- ◆ Attend SLC general sessions
- ◆ Chaperone evening student activities (e.g., dances)

The student teachers experience the integral nature of FFA during the three days of SLC. The experience reinforces the concepts taught in AED 462 the previous semester, and

it provides a common experience to draw upon during the fall semester by the faculty when emphasizing the relationships among instructional development, teaching, assessment, SAE, and FFA.

### FFA is spelled Louisville

Even though Arizona is quite some distance from Kentucky, all of the student teachers are expected (yes, it is part of their grade) to attend the National FFA Convention with their cooperating school. The student teachers are responsible for funding, but through grants and local support, most student teachers are fully covered. The following activities keep the student teacher busy:

- ◆ Chaperone chapter members
- ◆ Staff The University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences booth
- ◆ Participate in the ATA conclave
- ◆ Assist with National FFA CDE's
- ◆ Travel both ways with their chapter
- ◆ Attend general sessions

### FFA is spelled FFA

After being involved with CDE, SLC and Louisville, the student teachers have a firm grasp on the integral nature of FFA within the curriculum. This belief is further reinforced during the fall semester (the semester prior to student teaching) when the student teachers are preparing their lesson plans. By the time the student teachers are ready to actually student teach, they can spell FFA.

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# Creating and Measuring Success: Agricultural Education and FFA

By Anna Melodia and Becky Meyer

Great agriculture instructors do not teach FFA; they develop a classroom model that incorporates FFA as a vital part of the overall agricultural education strategy and

**“Great agriculture instructors do not teach FFA; they develop a classroom model that incorporates FFA as a vital part of the overall agricultural education strategy and curriculum.”**

curriculum. Yet, as we work with agriculture teachers to provide them with educational tools and resources, we are still inundated by requests from those teachers who want more information on how to “teach FFA.” Although we understand the “what” and “why” of this request, the perception that the statement “teaching FFA” creates among teachers, administrators and parents, who may not be familiar with agricultural education, is that FFA is not only separate but also a “club.” To overcome this perception, we need to be proactive in promoting agricultural education as a cohesive and integrated model that serves a diverse group of students with a wide range of skill levels, for an increasing array of careers. It is through this integrated model that we create and measure success—by what we teach, how we teach and why we teach.

The WHAT we teach is agriculture—not FFA. As a part of our curriculum and instruction we have strong math and science components, not simply to meet standards, but because it is necessary for understanding the content areas. For example, how can we teach horticultural

without having students understand the chemistry of photosynthesis; or building a shed without understanding the physics of load-bearing angles? We have also seen in some extraordinary classrooms a strong dose of history, English, technology and a range of other

academic subjects infused in to agriculture, often as a result of team teaching across departments or special academies. As part of our expectations for our students, we also promote character education by providing opportunities for student collaboration, teamwork, competition, volunteerism, career exploration and entrepreneurship. We engage key student development principles to promote premier leadership, personal growth and career success for our students which are at the core of the FFA mission.

The HOW we teach is what continues to make agricultural education an important force in secondary education. Our classrooms extend beyond the physical facilities of the school. They encompass living-learning laboratories, such as greenhouses, aquaculture tanks, working farms, and biotechnology labs. They also include other experiential opportunities or supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs) in which students create their own “living, learning and earning” educational experiences as well as offer opportunities for involvement through FFA that extends from serving in

local chapter leadership roles to participating in state and national workshops and conventions. All of which brings life to the curriculum and inculcates a sense of pride, ownership and self-esteem within the students as they see the culmination of their skills, knowledge and effort.

The teachers who hold their students to high expectations for performance and involvement in all of these facets of the extended classroom provide the critical keys to success. Students cannot self-select participation in SAEs or FFA; the teacher has integrated the classroom so fully that SAE and FFA are natural extensions of their pedagogical and curricular design. According to a recent study completed by Purdue University (Talbert & Balschweid, 2000), there is a difference between those students who are in agricultural education and FFA versus those that are only in agriculture classes. More specifically, those students who are in FFA are much more involved in extra-curricular and employment opportunities (in addition to FFA); have higher aspirations to go on to college; and have a greater understanding of their investment of personal effort in both school and other activities to their future success.

Even with this knowledge that the integrated model of agricultural education is more effective in engaging students, it can intimidate new teachers in the field. While

trying to navigate their way through the first few years as new teachers, they often take a segmentation approach: trying to teach a content area; helping students develop SAEs; and then interest them in FFA. Many new teachers feel forced to prioritize which of these areas they have the time and resources to teach to their students. Many end up feeling beleaguered and frustrated; not able to academically capture the spirit of agricultural education that had inspired them to become teachers and, unfortunately, seeing no way to reclaim that energy and synergism.

To prevent this erosion from occurring, we must call on the agricultural education community to be promoters of the integrated agricultural education model as well as mentors to our next generation of teachers. We need our teachers to survive and be successful in order for agricultural education to also survive and be successful. Therefore, we must remind and encourage them to develop their lesson plans through a “backward design” and not through topical segmentation.

Backward design simply means “begin with the end in sight.” There are three stages in this process: 1) the identification of desired results in which we must consider content standards and curriculum expectations; 2) the determination of acceptable evidence of mastery of the desired results that can include a range of assessment measures from informal checks to performance projects; and 3) the planning of learning experiences and instruction that will enhance knowledge and skill development in light of the performance goals. In teaching a section on agriscience, for example, it is

expected that students will have an understanding of the scientific process (identification of desired results); they will design and carry out an experiment based on their understanding of the scientific process (determination of mastery); the learning experiences includes not only classroom instruction, but working on their SAE and other opportunities such as participation in an Agriscience Fair (instruction). Throughout the backward design process, agricultural education adds relevance for its students in two important ways: 1) it provides a context for specific academic content areas to be taught in a variety of ways, from classroom delivery to hands-on experience and 2) it creates a meaningful connection to careers that motivate students to higher levels of understanding and relationship to their own future.

The WHY we teach is sometimes elusive. We see more and more teachers leave the field for a range of reasons, including lack of recognition and support, poor student behavior and motivation, and salary. Agriculture teachers also have an intense demand on their time that often goes well beyond the “normal” expectations of a day or week. Yet many of us remain committed to our careers, transforming them from a vocation into an avocation.

We know that we make a difference in the lives of our students. We see it every day. We see success:

§ In the student who will not speak in front of the class as a freshman, but goes on to win the extemporaneous speaking contest.

§ In the student who starts a college career in elementary education, only to switch to agricultural education because something is “calling” her back.

§ In the student who completes an English assignment about the person who has made a major difference in his or her life and it is about the agriculture teacher.

§ When the next generation of our students’ children become our students.

§ When a student has left the classroom and gone on to a career and after a few years finds a way to reach us and says “thank you.”

All of us have such stories to tell. They are the qualitative evidence of what we do and why we do it. We must continue to collect these stories—not just as vignettes or individual testimonials, but as viable and valuable forms of qualitative assessment that needs to be shared with key administrative and community leaders. When we think of the backward design—and ultimately what we want students to leave our classroom with—it is beyond content and knowledge. It is about changing lives.

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**“We know that we make a difference in the lives of our students. We see it every day.”**

# The FFA as a Learning Tool for Life in the 21st Century

By David Dwyer

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century gets underway, there are those who may inquire, "Does the FFA meet its primary mission of premier leadership, personal development and career preparation? As practitioners of agricultural education, we have taught students the FFA Motto, "Learning to Do, Doing to Learn,..." Accepting this motto is one of the tools used by agricultural educators to aid students in learning how to learn. Many educators know the value and importance of the FFA in the lives of young people. Constant reminding of its role in developing strong, proactive citizens often helps in reinforcing the role of the FFA.

## The Value of the FFA

Ask any former FFA member what value he or she placed on his/her career and technical education experiences. In agricultural education, comments often relate to the FFA as the drawing card to the specific educational program. Former members consider their membership as valuable as do today's employers. The skill of getting along with others in the world around them is very evident for those who participate in the FFA Organization. To support this, Vaughn (1999) reported, "Most people who lose a job do so because of a lack of personal qualities, rather than from a lack of technical knowledge. Employers want individuals who possess characteristics that are developed through participation in a vocational student organization" (p. 10). Such traits would likely include dependability, ambition, leadership, ability to follow, tolerance, responsi-

bility, understanding, initiative and a sincere interest in the career field.

## Learning Tool for Life

The FFA is said to be a "life" teacher in overlapping aspects. Staller (2001) indicated this in a recent model of agricultural education illustrating the "what" in teaching compared to the "how" of teaching. Of the categories identified: academic, technical, career preparation and life skills — the FFA was intensely strong in the life skills division. According to Stagg and Staller (1999), "Real learning means actual comprehension by the student. It implies an ability to use and apply information. Indeed, it is a series of experiences that allows individual learners to comprehend, internalize and apply the real world information they have learned" (p. 2). What you learn is as important as how you have been taught to apply it or

choose to apply it. An optimistic viewpoint would be to teach a student how to think — not what to think. To analyze each situation in context is vital. With this in mind, the FFA has proven invaluable in teaching students how to positively contribute to society.

## The Advisor's Role

The advisor holds a key role in developing the leaders of tomorrow. Serving as an advisor to their respective vocational student organization (VSO) befalls any career and technical education teacher. Vaughn (1999) reported, "In vocational education, you cannot separate the role of advisor from teacher. They are one and the same" (p. 11). A basic responsibility of the agricultural education teacher is to integrate the FFA as an organization (with appropriate activities) into their total educational program. As an FFA



*The FFA provides valuable lifelong skills, such as teamwork. Dwyer reminds readers that the FFA is a set of life enhancing experiences designed to teach students to be proactive in all they pursue and undertake. (Photo courtesy of Iowa State University College of Agriculture)*

Advisor, the teacher's role is to facilitate the activities, events and projects with his/her local chapter. FFA Advisors readily and willingly accept this as a given. According to Torres and Dormody (1997), FFA Advisors should "provide students with opportunities to apply learned skills, develop leadership abilities and gain recognition" (p. 11). This recognition can take the form of individual recognition (like proficiency awards) or team recognition (like career development events). It is said that every person has a certain level of recognition need.

Does personal membership in the FFA enhance the advisor's role in the teaching-learning situation? I'm sure that we all know individuals who were quite active and successful in the FFA as a student but almost ignore it now as an advisor. The reverse is also likely to be true as well for those who lacked membership but now serve as quality advisors. The key would seem to rest upon the individual and how they perceive their job as an advisor.

## Simple Reminders

Reinventing Agricultural Education for the Year 2020 is a document compiled as a result of a national initiative. In Missouri, the state document identified certain "vision themes" for agricultural education with subsequent goals to reach these themes. Vision Theme 3 states, "All Agricultural Education provides cutting edge knowledge, real world experience and visionary leadership," (p. 6). Sometimes, it's important to keep in mind the simple things that are often associated and assumed to be a part of the FFA when predicting the need of the FFA for the long term. While others are also identifiable, these are just a few that come to mind when determining the need of the FFA in "learning" during this new century.

1. The concept of leadership is synonymous with the FFA.

2. Students who participate in the FFA are positively directed and affected throughout their lives and careers.

3. FFA membership affords advantages to students like making contacts, skill enhancement, travel opportunities, etc. compared to those who may lack membership.

4. FFA offers opportunities for individual and team-related student recognition for those who pursue agricultural education.

5. FFA can positively reach students of all demographics, ethnicities, locations and genders.

6. The FFA is a set of life enhancing experiences designed to teach students to be proactive in all activities they pursue and undertake.

7. "Quality" is a word that coincides with the FFA and agricultural education programs. Quality refers to the program and the graduate(s).

## Summary

Learning should be life-long. The FFA embodies this statement. Agricultural Education certainly has its rightful place in making sure the graduates of career and technical education programs are productive, successful and employable. The FFA is one tool used to "build" the graduate from student status into citizen status. No chapter or program of activities exists that can't be improved or enhanced.

Will FFA meet the needs of students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? All in all, a resounding "YES" means that the FFA does and will serve a role in career and technical education experiences for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It served a vital role in the

20<sup>th</sup> century and undoubtedly will continue its mission of "premier leadership, personal development and career preparation" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## FFA: Learning How to Learn

By James Knight and Patrick Wellert

Schools exist for at least four major reasons: to teach students how to solve problems, how to transfer learning, to become self-disciplined and to learn how to learn.

In several recent publications, a new model for Agricultural Education has been offered as a way to think about the role of the various components in a complete program. This is a slightly different way to visually portray the program than a triangle or the three intersecting circles that are sometimes used. We have found this new model to be useful in thinking about the various components of the program.

The new model depicts classroom/laboratory work heaviest in the academic slot; Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) focuses more in the technical and career areas, and the FFA is mostly concentrated in life skills. This model helps us to make the connection that FFA, if done well, can be a laboratory for life. In other words, the FFA is a laboratory on how to learn to learn. We would suggest that it does this with independent, interactive, and cooperative activities.

In the classroom setting, students can learn about the various activities and programs of the FFA. The development of understanding and knowledge about the FFA can have a significant impact upon students' attitudes and ultimate skill levels that are directly related to the daily operation of their FFA Chapter.

SAE projects are a significant focus of the FFA awards and recognition programs. The more students can apply themselves to a specified field within their SAE projects, the greater the FFA will reward them for the success they have obtained with

proficiencies, degrees and other awards. Through SAE programs, students learn how to learn independently.

An ideal FFA program is one where students are responsible for the conduct of the projects and activities of the organization. From money making activities to service projects, the greater the involvement of the members, the greater the learning for the participants. When FFA chapters are student run, members learn how to interact with each other. For example, by serving on a committee students learn how to interact with others and how to facilitate the needs and feelings of others. Leadership skills and abilities are developed when students are involved in committee work through the delegation and communication between members, officers and the chapter. When students are involved in the operation of the FFA, they learn how to learn interactively.

With the FFA there are many times when students must work cooperatively. In this laboratory for life, the students learn cooperation and teamwork by participating on Career Development Events (CDE) teams and working on service activities and other projects. When a chapter takes on a service project for example, experience in learning how to work with others becomes essential. Students cooperate with community leaders and members by setting dates, outlining plans, and working together to improve their community. When serving the community, a student learns community pride and respect for property. This is also a learning experience for the community as it comes to recognize the FFA as a premier leadership organization.

People in industry repeatedly

seek employees who have good reasoning skills (common sense). Those skills are developed independently, interactively and cooperatively and a great laboratory for learning them is the FFA. In an era when heavy emphasis is being placed on cognitive skills (high stakes testing), the irony is that attitudes, values and the ability to interact with others is being valued more than ever. The FFA is attractive as a vehicle in this area because it is an organization designed to develop these traits in its members. As young people are involved in programs and activities of the FFA they are learning how to learn independently, interactively and cooperatively.

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## The Missing Link of Madeline Hunter

By Linda Burton

I was recently forced to yet again endure the teaching of Madeline Hunter. Not only did I dread spending eight precious Saturdays indoors trying to learn something, I also have to admit that I'm not a big fan of Ms. Hunter.

I find it almost comical that with every "new discovery" in education (outcome based education, graduation standards, Madeline Hunter, etc.), we learn that students learn best through "hands-on" skills, guided practice, and through using what they have learned. We have been doing all these things in our agricultural education classes since the beginning.

But, fear not - my Saturdays were not wasted. In my efforts to show that I was smarter than Madeline Hunter, I may have found an area of education that even agricultural educators are missing.

Any English teacher, speech professor, or agricultural instructor helping a student develop a speech, will tell you the first step in writing a speech or starting a presentation is to know your audience. Businesses spend thousands of dollars each year doing research in order to get information about their target audience. Ms. Hunter suggests making teaching decisions based on pre-assessment or what students know. But, she doesn't suggest we make our decisions based on what we know about our students.

We cannot assume our students arrive to class ready and willing to learn. They have a wide range of activities competing for their time.

I believe time spent learning about Generation Y is time well spent. According to *Generations:*

*The History of America's Future 1584 to 2069*, Generation Y is media sophisticated, easily bored, willing to contribute and multi-task oriented. In addition, Generation Y requires communication that is spontaneous, contributory and interactive.

Generation Y is quite demanding. Many times we feel more like entertainers than educators - if a student doesn't find a lesson interesting, he/she is less likely to learn. The research on Generation Y mirrors these points. Our students are demanding an interactive, spontaneous learning environment. However, they do believe knowledge is power and if they find a subject interesting they will be eager to learn.

This is good news! With this, agricultural instructors have an advantage over our colleagues. We visit our student's homes. We know their families (brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, sometimes more). We often know more about our students than we would like to, but do we think about all of these issues when preparing a lesson.

According to a Purdue study (Talbert & Balschweid, 2000), FFA members and agricultural education students are more likely to apply themselves to learning. They relate effort to success. This is a good lesson for teachers to learn.

Using the research about Generation Y and the Purdue study, I have tried to create a learning environment for my students that is spontaneous and challenging. I often remind students that I will be grading them on effort. Even if they cannot completely master a skill or if their research has been somewhat unsuccessful, they will not fail the class. Students need to know and understand that even if something is not graded, it still counts. Everything in

life has some value. Students should realize effort is important even if it is not the only focus of grading.

Students appreciate the opportunity to discover information and research on their own. Generation Y wants to be able to affect outcomes. The teacher is no longer the sole keeper of knowledge; students are able to learn from a variety of sources. This variety helps keep student interest in our fast paced society. Generation Y believes in its ability to be successful. It is our task as educators to help them.

I believe that as educators we can begin making our teaching more effective by knowing our students. Who they are and what they prefer. That connection will make our profession more successful and in the end our students will be better educated.

"Know your audience" — the missing link of lesson planning.

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# Learning Through Service: A Place for Collegiate FFA

By Rudy S. Tarpley

The National FFA Constitution and Bylaws has very little to say about the place of Collegiate FFA chapters and members. Collegiate chapters may be chartered in two- or four-year postsecondary institutions by state associations and are to adopt constitutions, elect officers, and members are to pay national dues (National FFA Organization, 2000). Historically, there have been regional and national conferences called in order to determine the role of Collegiate FFA, but many of the members still fail to see where they fit into the overall Team AgEd concept. Further, many universities with agricultural teacher education programs have replaced their Collegiate FFA chapters with other "Ag Ed" clubs and/or organizations. Therefore, where does Collegiate FFA fit into the agricultural education vision? Perhaps the time has come to re-examine the role of Collegiate FFA.

## Views of Collegiate FFA

Finding a place for Collegiate FFA is not new to agricultural education. Decades ago, Price (1969) summarized many of the roles that Collegiate FFA could fulfill. The last meaningful debate on the role of Collegiate FFA occurred in the late 1970's. Then, teacher educators discussed the pros and cons of utilizing Collegiate FFA as the organization for preservice students in agricultural education (Carter, 1978; Vaughn, 1978). Many colleges and universities continue to sponsor Collegiate FFA while others have agricultural education organizations that include Alpha Tau Alpha, Ag Ed

Societies, Ag Ed Clubs and a variety of miscellaneous other organizations.

In 1978, common mantras heard on university campuses included "irrelevant ceremonies" and that "high school club." One wonders if teacher educators still hold to many of the same perceptions of FFA. These attitudes on behalf of teacher education could explain in part why many programs do not stress FFA membership as part of the integral agricultural education program. Staller (2001) noted a continuous erosion of agricultural education students at the secondary level who "choose" to be FFA members. Further evidence of the wearing away of FFA in agricultural education can be found in our local programs. After all, how many chapters report that they do NOT have 12 regular meetings per year, do NOT conduct opening and closing ceremonies at regular meetings, and do NOT require recitation of the Creed by their incoming members? *One role for Collegiate FFA is to develop an appreciation for the National FFA Organization.*

## The Home to FFA Service

Moving from an emphasis of "what can the FFA do for me," to an emphasis of "what can I do for the FFA member" is one of the main objectives of university agricultural education programs. Perhaps the most important role for Collegiate FFA is to assist agricultural education majors as they make the transition from being served by agricultural education to serving the profession. Collegiate FFA is a natural place for professionals to teach the "service" component of agricultural education. While active FFA members are

competing in Career Development Events (CDE), showing livestock and participating in secondary activities, Collegiate FFA members can be involved through service. Instead of competing in an event at the national convention, Collegiate FFA members can be assisting with the contests. Instead of exhibiting livestock at a local stock show, Collegiate FFA members can be organizing the next class of livestock back in the barn.

## Roles of Collegiate FFA:

- ~ Develop an appreciation for the National FFA Organization
- ~ Serve Agricultural Education.
- ~ Develop the skills needed in future careers.
- ~ Bridge FFA activity at the secondary level to the post-secondary level.
- ~ University recruitment.

Instead of working toward winning awards, Collegiate FFA members can be working to improve agriculture, agricultural education and the FFA. Active FFA members are fulfilling their mission by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. Collegiate FFA members can *serve* the profession by focusing on the Agricultural Education Mission: to *prepare* and *support* individuals for

careers, *build* awareness and *develop* leadership for the food, fiber and natural resource systems. Notice the verbs, and therefore, the potential objectives for Collegiate FFA: prepare, support, build, and develop. All denote the action of "serving." *One role for Collegiate FFA is to serve agricultural education.*

Collegiate FFA at Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU) has become an important partner in the development of the overall agricultural education of our students. While students are learning and developing agricultural skills and knowledge through the coursework, field trips, internships and other academic activities, Collegiate FFA is used to build service into the program. Whether our students are participating in clean-up days or assisting at the county agricultural exposition, they learn about "service above self."

Agricultural Education faculty members at ENMU have taken the position that FFA is important and that Collegiate FFA can make the teacher education program stronger. We have found that our students enjoy the service component through further involvement in local, state and national FFA activities. Moreover, our collegiate students become role models for younger secondary FFA members and can encourage members to plan for academic careers in the agricultural sector. Our agriculture students are encouraged to attend secondary FFA activities as (a) learning experiences for preservice agriculture teachers, (b) service activities for future professionals, and (c) a way of staying active in the most important agricultural education organization in America. *One role for Collegiate FFA is to develop the skills needed in future careers.*

## Collegiate FFA is an Effective Recruitment Tool

Many if not most potential agricultural education majors are former FFA members. One could even say that their enjoyment of FFA activities prompted them to strive to be agriculture teachers and FFA advisors. These experiences can be used to recruit and retain potential agricultural education majors. When Kentucky Fried Chicken changed its name, the company kept much of its brand recognition by adopting "KFC." The "Future Farmers of America" used the same strategy by changing to "The National FFA Organization." This allowed the organization to update while continuing to enjoy the positive aspects of decades of goodwill and service. Collegiate FFA can use the same strategy. The organization at the collegiate level can update and offer a differing role of FFA while keeping its brand recognition. *One role for Collegiate FFA is to bridge FFA activity from the secondary level to the post-secondary level.*

Finally, Collegiate FFA members make great recruiters. The leadership skills developed through active FFA membership can be very useful as university students speak to active FFA members. When collegiate members attend FFA activities, they become representatives for the university. Members of ENMU FFA have designed caps and jackets that place the university's name side-by-side with the FFA emblem. These collegiate members function as walking billboards at high school FFA activities. *One role for Collegiate FFA is in university recruitment.*

## Serving Education

There are many roles for agricultural education clubs within colleges and universities. Collegiate FFA offers a unique opportunity of

bridging FFA service from secondary agricultural education to the post-secondary institution. Through service, skills development, and recruitment for the university, Collegiate FFA can use the organization's built-in brand recognition to continue FFA service through the university experience. Perhaps it is time to re-examine the place for Collegiate FFA. That place may be fulfilled through the need to teach/learn service.

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# Ten Rules of the Road - Career Development Events

By M. Craig Edwards and Paul Booth

In the November-December 1998 issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, the theme editor reminded us that the issue was intended to address "many of the basics that are sometimes misunderstood by those who are beginning a career in agricultural education," (Vaughn, 1998, p. 2).

In that issue, Lee (1998) stated, "The agriculture teacher's role is more than that of teaching classes. It involves running an educational program" (p. 11). Further, National FFA Advisor, Dr. Larry Case, and his co-author B. Kathryn Whitaker, reminded agriculture teachers to "Don't try to do it all; do what makes sense" (p. 27).

As a former and a practicing teacher, respectively, we have seen firsthand the challenges and choices a novice (or not so novice) teacher frequently encounters while preparing CDE teams. In this spirit, we offer the "ten rules of the road".

## Probe for Interest

Probe students for their interest while keeping in mind your expertise and what is relevant. In many respects, this speaks to Tyler's Goal-Attainment Model (Popham, 1993) and his precepts may be useful as you develop an approach to CDEs. That is, use Tyler's "three goal sources (the student, the society, and the subject matter [i.e., the industry]) and two goal-screens (a psychology of learning and a philosophy of education)" (p. 25) to guide and refine this process.

## Meet and Discuss

Have a general meeting with students to discuss options, practice

times, potential events to attend, and to set short- and long-term goals. At this time, BE SURE to discuss the importance of the students' academic eligibility currently and also later.

Regarding practice times and event dates, give students considerable lead-time to avoid and plan for conflicts. If possible, provide them with a calendar for this purpose. If invited students do not attend the meeting (assuming there were no unforeseen conflicts), they are probably not interested enough to be in it for the long-haul. For those students expressing interest and who appear to be keepers, encourage them to discuss what they will be doing and its importance with their parents and if applicable with their employers.

## Stick to It

Adhere to the agreed upon practice schedule with as few exceptions as possible. The old adage "PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE ..." is true!! Have your students keep a notebook of all of the relevant materials that you give them, e.g., handouts, pictures, examples, and notes. Also, if a substantial amount of travel is involved, these notebooks can serve as excellent study packets while in transit. For most of the events, a certain amount of rote memorization is required and that is just the "nature of the beast." Remember, if it is your first exposure to this material you will be a student as well.

## Breat-it-Down

Whichever event it is, break-it-down into its essential components, and teach, study, and practice these systematically. Keep in mind that point values differ. So, first emphasize those components that have the

greatest value. Also, try to identify automatics or can't/don't miss parts of the event and strive for 100% accuracy on those portions, such as opening and closing FFA ceremonies in chapter conduct, identification of parts in poultry, identification of cheeses in dairy foods, etc.

## Tie It to the Event

Whenever possible, "tie" the relevant curriculum in courses being taught to the contest or event. REMEMBER to use curriculum content to enhance event preparation, when and where it is appropriate and feasible. BUT, event preparation should not drive the curriculum or the instructional process.

## It's Serious Business

The old adage, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right" is an arrow that strikes right into the heart of this rule. The students and the teacher must be on the same page mentally to get the job done! Teachers with a negative attitude need to readjust their thinking.

Students have a sixth sense when it comes to knowing the sincerity and dedication of their instructors. If a teacher is not willing to give to the student all of what they are capable (i.e., preparation-wise), then the sense of mutual trust requisite for achieving success at the highest level, either never materializes or later breaks down and no one wins. Frequently, students can and do pick up on this type of attitude very quickly.

So, be very business-like when practicing. Set goals and objectives for each practice. Discuss with the students what these goals are and evaluate their progress towards them on a regular basis. Systematically, assist the students in the self-

diagnosis (Knowles, 1980) and self-evaluation of their progress and changing status. Practice the real or actual material as much as possible.

If cost is prohibitive, use the best substitutes available such as slides, videotapes, models, and the Internet. Also, conducting joint practices with neighboring schools may be a way to share the expense of practice materials as well as create an atmosphere of the belief that, "competitive and cooperative skills are both important for our students to learn" (Gamon, 1998, p. 4).

## Use What's Available

When applicable, have the students take the event study material, especially if it is new, and develop micro-lessons, teaching aids, worksheets, quizzes, exams, and other learning devices. Create an atmosphere in which students are teaching students. Obviously, this approach will require supervision and oversight on the instructor's part; but the strong sense of ownership it builds in the students for the learning process is immeasurable.

In addition, use any and all physical and human resources available, for example, an expert in the community, a meat locker, a poultry farm, or a local greenhouse facility. In short, build partnerships.

Following the event, use the contest itself as a practice opportunity; take maximum advantage of the animals, plants, soils, carcasses, machinery, etc. Review the material, discuss mistakes, correct incomplete or misunderstood concepts, and reinforce those things done correctly. If you do not know the "why" behind a particular official placing, grading, or skill evaluation, be honest with your students, and then ask an event official or a teacher whose judgment you trust for further clarification and explanation.

## Set Goals and More Goals

Discuss the importance of setting short-, intermediate-, and long-term goals for improvement with the students. For example, "My goal is to be at least 90% accurate on the dairy cattle event."

Frequently, we discuss the importance of students setting goals, and this should be at the top of the list when prioritizing your training scenario. However, concomitant with these student goals should be the goals that teachers set for themselves. As a coach or instructor, you must also set short-term and long-term goals. This process is no less important when preparing students for CDEs, than it is in your classrooms and laboratories where "good" teachers regularly develop and set high expectations for each lesson as well as each student's progress during the school year. In essence, follow a Tylerian approach (Popham, 1993), that is, compare outcomes to goals. To borrow one of Stephen Covey's (1989) familiar refrains, "Begin with the End in Mind" (p. 97).

## Celebrate Success

When your students do well, make a point to personally and publicly congratulate them. When they receive recognition and awards—take their pictures, submit an article to the school and/or local newspaper(s), speak to their parents, and share the results with all of your students and chapter. Be certain that the school administration is well informed of your students'/program's successes and recognition. Recognize the students at your chapter's awards banquet and at other appropriate student recognition forums.

Finally, **MODEL ETHICAL BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES, AND BE MODEST IN WINNING AND GENEROUS IN DEFEAT!!**

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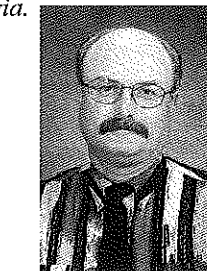
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# Challenges and Opportunities in the Agricultural Education Professoriate

By David Williams

The agricultural education professoriate offers challenges and opportunities. Challenges to current members to nurture the profession and opportunities for new people to enter a career in university work. Hopefully, readers will consider earning a Ph.D. with a goal of preparing to enter the professoriate.

The advancement of knowledge has resulted in specialization in the university curriculum and faculty. Faculty members in a specialization are referred to as the professoriate for that discipline. Originally, the agricultural education professoriate was primarily concerned with the preparation of vocational agriculture teachers for secondary schools and commonly called themselves teacher educators. Later, some became involved in the development of personnel for extension. Now vacancy announcements feature a variety of specializations for university agricultural education positions.

## Composition

According to Dyer (1999), the agricultural education professoriate includes 359 university professors located in 92 universities in 47 states (none in Alaska, Hawaii and Maine) and Puerto Rico as follows: (Listings with "visiting," "emeritus" and "instructor" titles were excluded.)

- 89 - Assistant Professors
- 106 - Associate Professors
- 127 - Professors
- 37 - Academic Administrators (no rank designation)

Assuming that the 37 with only administrative titles listed were at one

of the two higher ranks places three-fourths of the agricultural education professoriate at the associate professor or professor levels. The professoriate includes assistant professors, tenured professors and academic leaders, revealing opportunities for advancement.

Two-thirds of the professoriate are located at universities with one to three faculty members in agricultural education. Three universities reported programs in agricultural education but no faculty at the professorial level, while twenty-one had only one faculty member at the professorial level. Only nine percent of the professoriate is located in universities with ten or more faculty in agricultural education.

## Specialization

Each listing in the directory (Dyer, 1999) was reviewed in order to categorize it into an area of specialization. When a specialization was not listed for a person, the specialization recorded for the administrative unit was used. Thirty-seven different specializations were recorded for the 359 members of the agricultural education professoriate. The largest number, 93 or 26 percent listed their specialization as Agricultural Education, followed by Agricultural and Extension Education or Extension Education with 43 (12 percent). Specializations with 10 or more faculty follows:

- 93 - Agricultural Education
- 43 - Agricultural and Extension Education or Extension Education
- 28 - Agricultural Education & Communications
- 20 - Agricultural Science & Education or Ag. Technology

## & Education

- 16 - Agricultural & Biological Engineering or Agricultural Mechanization
- 14 - Agricultural Extension & Adult Education
- 13 - Agricultural Education & Studies or Agricultural Education & General Agriculture
- 10 - Agricultural Leadership, Education & Comm.
- 10 - Agricultural Information Science & Education
- 10 - Agricultural Resources or Renewable Resources

The remaining 102 members of the agricultural education professoriate had specializations in 27 different areas, including agricultural science education, human and community resources education, 4-H and youth, and agricultural services and development.

Specialization in agricultural education is important because a professor is unlikely to become a scholar in more than one area (Martin, Cano & Hall, 1994). However, the low numbers within some of the specializations limit opportunities for academic partnership and scholarly collaboration across universities and within the professoriate.

## Academic Leadership

Thirty percent or 106 members of the professoriate also carry administrative/supervision titles in their home universities as follows:

- 31 - Head
- 18 - Director
- 17 - Coordinator
- 16 - Chair
- 12 - Dean

## Suggestions to help focus the agricultural education professoriate:

1. Define agricultural education as teaching and learning in agriculture.
2. Announce new positions with a specialization in teaching and learning in agriculture and/or one of the processes in agricultural education, program planning, program delivery or program evaluation.
3. Develop a specialization (see 2 above) for the faculty within a university.
4. Form partnerships with other universities to target a specialization (see 2 above).
5. Partner with faculty in other disciplines to develop a specialization (see 2 above).

- 7 - Leader
- 2 - Teacher Educator
- 1 - Supervisor
- 1 - Chancellor
- 1 - Vice President

Most of these titles reflect leadership roles for programs or departments. It is a compliment to the agricultural education professoriate for its members to have the opportunity and the ability to serve in college-wide and university-wide leadership roles. However, the relatively large number (30 percent) of the professoriate with administrative/supervisory roles limits the amount of human resources available for teaching, research, and outreach activities, and limits the number of senior faculty available for mentoring and leadership within the discipline of agricultural education.

## Implications

The agricultural education professoriate is changing. But, is the change in the right direction? Per-

preparation for the professoriate by earning a Ph.D. degree with a specialization in teaching and learning in agriculture and/or program planning, delivery, or evaluation.

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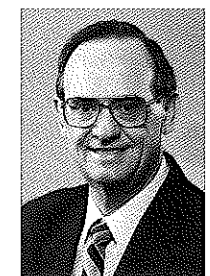
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\*Journal Paper No. 19359 of the Agriculture and Home Economic Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa, Project No. 3488, and supported by Hatch Act and State of Iowa funds.



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# The Value of CPR and First Aid Instruction

By Carlos Rosencrans

Picture yourself as a beginning agricultural education teacher. You are teaching in the laboratory when you hear a shout. You turn just in time to see one of your students fall backwards, limp to the floor. You rush to his/her side to find a deep cut on his hand bleeding profusely, and the student is unconscious. What would you do?

At New Mexico State University, we feel it is important for our pre-service teachers to be provided with training in first aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). This training is provided as part of a course in Methods in Vocational-Technical Laboratory Instruction. This course includes an intensive curriculum in CPR and first aid training; laboratory skill demonstrations; and instruction in safety, responsibilities and liabilities of agricultural & technology laboratories, facilities maintenance and management, planning and scheduling student activities in the lab, and integrating agricultural mechanics and technology education into career and technical education programs.

The CPR and first aid training is taught by Region II Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, at a cost of \$35.00 per student. The cost of this instruction is born by the Agricultural and Extension Education Department, underscoring the importance and value placed upon this type of training by the faculty.

Students receive instruction for two five-hour sessions. The first session covers CPR. Students receive direct instruction and training as to how to perform CPR, and practice on special CPR dummies. A written test is given at the end of the

five hours; students must perform CPR on the dummies and are evaluated on their achievement of CPR techniques. Upon successful completion of the course, students are certified in CPR for two years.

The other portion of the training covers basic first aid. Topics include bleeding and shock, wounds, dressings, burns, splinting the extremities, poisoning, bites and stings, cold-related emergencies and heat-related emergencies. Students receive a copy of the handbook "First Aid and CPR" published by the National Safety Council.

The students value this instruction very highly, as evidenced by their responses to the following question on their final exam for the lab methods course:

"In your opinion, how valuable was the CPR and first aid training to you?" One student responded, "We are prepared to take charge immediately and not have to wait for someone to show up to do anything". Another answered, "As agriculture teachers, the shop is a very important aspect of our daily teaching. This is a major safety concern and we must be prepared to handle emergencies if they happen to arise, and handle them in a manner that is safe to the individual involved as well as the other students and yourself".

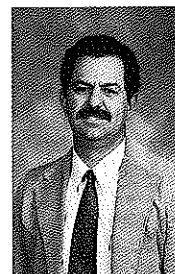
Students felt that the training would not only benefit them when they were teaching, but in other aspects of their lives as well. "I believe I will be more helpful as a citizen and a teacher in a serious situation now", stated one participant. Another commented, "I felt after taking the class that I had the confidence to help someone in need. It makes me a better person to have that knowledge".

Even students who had previ-

ously had some type of CPR or first aid training felt the "refresher" course had a lot to offer. "In my opinion, the CPR and first aid training were very important because even though I have had it every June for the past eight years, every refresher is gladly welcomed. A human life can hinge on the knowledge in someone else's brain. Students are important and often spend more time with their teachers than their parents. This training is needed by all".

Some educators might question CPR/First Aid training in the light that such knowledge and certification makes persons more liable if something goes wrong. Regardless of the drawbacks, the primary concern should be the health and safety of the students our graduates will teach.

Clearly, everyone should be able to perform basic first aid since most people will eventually find themselves in a situation requiring it, either for another person or for themselves, possibly at home, school or workplace. Certainly it is better to know first aid and not need it than to need it and not know it, particularly if you are responsible for students' safety and well-being. By including this valuable training in our pre-service curriculum, we hope that our graduates will be much more capable to handle an emergency situation should the need arise.



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