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M A G A Z I N E

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Do I Make a



Difference?

# The Influence of One

By *Jamie Cano*

The Ohio State University student teachers have just returned from their quarter-long field experience. One of the assignments the student teachers complete is an interview with their cooperating teacher. In reading through the interview, one of the “required” questions asked by the student teacher of their cooperating teacher is how many hours on average, do they dedicate to the job. The cooperating teachers indicated that they averaged between 60 and 70 hours per week to the job!! That is incredible!! Now the question really is critical, do I make a difference in the lives of students? If one is investing between 60 and 70 hours per week, I am sure that we must all have stopped and asked ourselves the very same question: Am I making a difference?

Most of the teachers at your local schools teach a subject matter...math, English, language arts, biology, physical education. As a teacher of agriculture, we do much more than teach subject matter. Along with the job of being a “teacher,” comes the related SAE oversight, FFA activities, CDE participation, numerous state and county boards and activities, and overall management of a program, just to name a few.

How is it then that we measure if we are making a difference for all the investment one makes. One thing I have learned, and I learned this long after I left the high school classroom, is that the “rewards” from being a teacher of agriculture are not always immediate. Unlike a soccer coach who can measure if he or she is making a difference immediately by comparing

the win – loss column, agriculture teachers can’t do that. Also, as we look at other professions across this country, most of them can measure their success, which I translate to making a difference.

There is no doubt in my mind, however, that we do make a difference in the lives of students, high school or university. I am sure that my undergraduate and graduate advisers have asked themselves those very questions. I can assure my past academic advisers, Dr. Leon Wagley, Dr. Paul Vaughn, and Dr. L. H. Newcomb, that they have certainly made a difference in the life of at least one individual. As one reads the tributes written by several undergraduate students from Penn State and North Carolina State in this issue of the *Magazine*, and comments shared by the 2004 – 2005 Pennsylvania State FFA Officer Team, it is clear that as teachers of agriculture, each one of you makes a difference in the lives of students.

Let me share a personal experience with you about how one knows that someone has made a difference in your life. Every year at the National FFA Convention, on the Tuesday evening before the convention kicks-off, there are a group of former advisees of Dr. Leon Wagley who get together for dinner with Dr. Wagley. By listening to the comments shared by those at the tables, it is very clear that Dr. Wagley made a significant difference in the lives of all of us sitting at the table. However, as I mentioned earlier, those acknowledgements did not come immediately for Dr. Wagley. Now that Dr. Wagley is retired, and now that his former advisees are “more mature and wiser,” the advisees can clearly relate to the lessons which Dr. Wagley so cleverly instilled in all of us.

I am absolutely sure that there are many Dr. Wagley’s in Agricultural Education. I am sure that every one of us has a Dr. Wagley in our life. I recall one time that one of my undergraduate advisees met Dr. Wagley. Dr. Wagley quickly asked my undergraduate advisee if I was treating him fairly and professionally. Immediately, the undergraduate student indicated “yes,” and Dr. Wagley then turned to me and stated: “If you ever get to the point that you don’t take care of this young man as you wanted to be taken care of, then it is time for you to get out of the business.”

Those words resonate with me to this very day. Those are the very words that revive me every morning as I drive to work. I am sure that many of you out there today in the profession of Agricultural Education resonate with those same words. It is because of our “creed” to believe in the power of those words that we know we make a difference in the lives of students...high school or university! As MeeCee Baker so eloquently states in her article which follows, “agricultural education is the profession of choice, not chance. Make a difference today.”



*Jamie Cano is an Associate Professor at The Ohio State University and is Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine.*

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### Article Submission

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# Making a Difference

By MeeCee Baker

Years ago, a gentleman looking something like a thin Ben Franklin using a walker, knocked on our front door. He asked for my Mother. He wanted to take her to lunch. She shrieked in delight when she saw Earl Fisher. Some fifty years prior to that day, my Mother brought a wagon to school to pull Earl in the annual school Halloween parade. He was a student in her second grade class in Yeagertown, Pennsylvania. He did not participate in the first grade because he could not walk, but he never forgot my Mother's simple kind gesture that allowed him to be fully involved in the festivities. He came to thank her. They both laughed as they recalled that day which happened so many years before. My Mother claimed Earl's arms flapped liked a little bird because he was so excited. Earl remembered the event like it just occurred. My Mother obviously made a big difference in Earl Fisher's life.

When my Mother and I go to town, I still repeatedly hear, "Hello Mrs. Baker!" by person after person after person. Not surprising I guess since Mrs. Baker enjoyed a 52-year career at the head of the classroom. Tom Boyer stopped my Mother one day and told her she was the only one who had faith that he could graduate. All the others told him he would fail. This now prominent citizen credited my Mother for his success. So it has been throughout my childhood and teenage years and continues now even in my midlife. My Mother, the teacher, positively impacted so many lives. So have the educators who read this publication.

Making a difference in the lives of students gives the most rewarding experience in teaching. Seeing new teachers succeed due to mentoring also gives gratification. This edition of *The Agricultural Education Magazine* focuses on making a difference in education and features a wide variety of contributing authors from university faculty to both undergraduate and graduate students to awarded National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) members.

Agricultural  
education  
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Make a  
difference  
today.

Within this edition you will find how the teachers of the Pennsylvania State FFA Officer team made such a difference in their lives. Furthermore, two of my university classes have responded to the prompt, "What teacher most influenced you?" Additionally, Nancy Grudens-Schuck from Iowa State tells us about the magic of unobtrusive means and Carrie Ann Fritz of

the University of Tennessee Knoxville shows the Highway to Success. Linda Baxter, high school agriculture instructor, delivers an inspirational letter from a student's mother.

Also found in these pages, four NAAE mentor awardees (Jim Summers, Bill Kittinger, Tom Sawyer, James Craddock) will explain their passion for the profession and share their mentoring tips. Two of the winners' mentees honor their mentors with fitting tributes. These agricultural education legends give this edition soul. I was so proud after reading their submissions. You will be too. Remember, agricultural education is the profession of choice, not chance. Make a difference today.



*MeeCee Baker is Past National President of NAAE and Education Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Education*

# Take Time for that Beginning Agriculture Teacher

By Bill Kittlinger

“Put aside some of your competitiveness and be a little more helpful.” That was my theme as President of the Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association back in 1997. You know, it has not changed to this day. Agriculture teachers must remember where they came from. They were those young, first-year teachers just a few years back.

Mentoring of today’s beginning teachers is as simple as taking someone under your wing and showing him or her the ropes. Sometimes it is a hard thing to do - passing along some of your secrets, years of knowledge, and expertise - but to that young teacher it might just be the beginning of a life-long friendship. Over the years each teacher has done this at least a dozen times. You mentor and help develop your agricultural education students, your college observers, and your student teachers, so why not a new teacher who is now the competition? The help that you pass on to them will make you feel good in watching their progress and success.

In Illinois we are in a continually changing era of agriculture teachers. In 1997, there were a large number of openings in the state caused by an early retirement incentive program. In the 1990’s, over 300 agriculture education teacher jobs opened, with only approximately 100 new agriculture graduates to fill those positions. Thus there was (and continues to be) a shortage of agriculture teachers. However, some of those that did begin teaching left the profession after only a year or two. Those teachers

needed support and guidance. Consider mentoring the rookies in your area. It will help keep new teachers in the profession.

Mentoring is available to every beginning agriculture teacher in Illinois. New agriculture teachers can attend a beginning teacher course sponsored thru the FCAE (facilitating coordination of agriculture education) and the University of Illinois. Here, new teachers are paired with an experienced teacher in their section. Illinois offers agriculture incentive funding dollars to teachers who serve as mentors or student teacher supervisors. In addition, mentors can arrange to have their substitute’s wages paid in order to visit their mentee. Every agriculture teacher in Illinois who serves as a mentor can qualify for CPDU’s toward recertifying their teaching certificate.

Mentoring is available to every beginning agriculture teacher.

I have been very proud to help our new teachers in any way that I can. My last three student teachers are now teaching agriculture here and doing very well. They know that help is only a phone call or email away. Their students may beat mine in contests and Career Development Events, but it makes me feel good knowing that I helped them get started in the greatest profession that I know, agriculture education.

*Mr. Bill Kittlinger is an Agriculture Instructor at Eldorado High School, Eldorado, IL*

## March - April 2005 Issue Theme: *The Mechanics of Teaching*

This issue will look at the development of a “program” for agricultural education at the secondary level, identifying needs, determining what content to teach, determining sequencing of the content, developing an actual course for agricultural education at the secondary level such as writing objectives, determining teaching strategies, and developing student assignments. This issue will look at the things that teachers need to do to teach ...getting things done before ever walking into the classroom.

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# The Highway to Success

By Carrie Ann Fritz

**M**aking a difference in the lives of students is one of the most important aspects of teaching. However, some teachers view this process as challenging, does it need to be? Reflecting back on teaching, we've struggled to come up with creative and innovative ways to capture students' attention and make them take ownership of their learning. What we didn't realize was when we challenged ourselves to be innovative in the classroom we were also sending a message to our students to be innovative. Experience, along with reading research literature, books, and several educational documents has taught us that teaching must be unique to each teacher. However, components discussed in this article can be applied to any classroom to make a difference in the lives of students.

## *Encourage the Heart*

Kouzes and Posner (1999) identified seven essentials for leaders to employ with individuals in which they are affiliated. Essentially, teachers are leaders in the classroom and should consider these seven essentials when working with students. The seven essentials are: setting clear standards, expect the best, pay attention, personalize recognition, tell the story, celebrate together, and set the example. Teachers that communicate clear, concise standards for students to live up to will essentially challenge students to meet those standards. Furthermore, expecting the best from students encourages students to achieve their best. If you expect a student to fail, he will. If you

expect a student to succeed, he will.

Pay attention to students and understand the significance of their actions. Students appreciate and respect someone who recognizes their achievements. Finding something great in each student and then recognizing him for the achievement sends a message to the student that the teacher cares. In addition, telling a story of someone's achievement can supplement the recognition. Storytelling can be one way to elaborate on a student's accomplishment and make him feel

special. Celebrate accomplishments as a group and don't isolate the experience for the student. Why not let other students share in the celebration and become motivated to achieve their best? Most importantly, the teacher must set the example. If you want students to achieve, you must promote achievement and create an atmosphere that makes the classroom meaningful.

## *Engage the Learner*

Creating a meaningful classroom essentially promotes the idea of an en-

## Seven Essential Elements for Leaders to Employ

1. Setting clear standards
2. Expect the best
3. Pay attention
4. Personalize recognition
5. Tell the story
6. Celebrate together
7. Set the example



gaged learner. Why teach students about a topic that is not applicable to their advancement in education and life? Do your students think class is boring and tedious? If so, engaging learners in their schoolwork can revitalize a classroom and strengthen a program. Teachers who provide opportunities for students to be involved in their learning (problem-solving), create a new and fun environment, connect to students' lives, and make learning fun, will engage the student.

### *Teaching: The Entertainment Business*

Teaching should be entertaining. This doesn't mean you should show up everyday and play games with students; however, it does mean you should entertain them to some degree. If you constantly lecture and give notes, you will bore students and lose their attention. However, if you constantly "spice" up your teaching and make learning fun, you will capture their attention. Reflect back on a recent

movie you have watched? Did it entertain you? If so, what made it entertaining? If not, what made it boring? Movies utilize suspense, humor, and action to maintain audience attention and those movies are considered excellent. The same holds true for your classroom.

### *See Beyond the Classroom*

Teachers who help students see the importance of education beyond the classroom are impacting the lives of students. Students need to be provided the tools to survive in the real world. Some of those tools include communication and critical thinking skills. Students typically complain about developing their writing and speaking skills; however, these skills are some of the most important to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, students must be able to think critically beyond the walls of the local school system. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to self-direct some of their learning, search for meaning in life, connect

subject matter content to society, explore complex issues, and then clearly express their ideas. Teachers that help students explore these concepts will aid in their overall development.

### *References*

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (1999). *Encouraging the heart : A leader's guide to rewarding and recognizing others*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass



*Carrie Fritz is an Assistant Professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.*





# An Inspiration Letter from a Mother

By *Linda Baxter*

As an agriculture teacher, I can influence a student's success in many ways. My attitude in the classroom and the attention I show students goes a long way toward building a positive relationship and helping students learn and interact in class. How does the student/teacher relationship develop?

As an agriculture teacher, I typically have students for more than one term and sometimes I will have students for all four years of their high school career. The time spent with these students is helpful. Additionally, I get to know them and their families. With this level of familiarity, I can gauge a student's progress and convey to the parents if there is a problem. Furthermore, parents feel more at ease and are more likely to talk about their concerns.

When a student witnesses his parents' positive and even comfortable relationship with a teacher, he may become more likely to express concerns and realize he is speaking to someone who genuinely cares about his success. Moreover, the student is more open to accepting advice or an honest critique of his work. Over the years, parents and students have thanked me for pushing them to do their best.

The Future Farmers of America (FFA) is also an integral part of agricultural education. How can you teach agriculture without FFA? In my opinion, you cannot. FFA gives students an opportunity to realize their potential and it opens new doors for them. FFA provides students an opportunity to belong

to a respected group within their school community and be recognized for their achievements. Because of the unique student/teacher/parent relationship, parents trust agriculture teachers to take their children on the road to FFA sponsored competitions, camps, and conventions. What path would the student take if they hadn't gone to the State or National FFA Convention? We will never know, but we hope that it gave them a glimpse of the possibilities their future holds.

The agricultural education classroom is not a classroom of straight rows and stay in your seat students. Students are working in the shop or greenhouse. Furthermore, students are busy solving problems and taking the initiative to organize things on their own. Students are learning by doing and applying what they learn to real life situations; therefore, the learning process has meaning to students. Moreover, the

"hands on" learning approach that is utilized in the agriculture classroom is starting to crossover to the academic classroom.

You may not realize the impact you have on a student until after graduation or beyond. Years ago, a mother wrote me a letter explaining how I helped her child realize her own self worth and not to live in the shadow of her friends. She thanked me for opening new doors for the student through FFA and taking her to events where she could compete and gain new experiences. I have kept that letter and others to inspire me. That inspiration helps me stay positive even when dealing with some of the problems inherent in today's educational system.

*Linda Baxter is an Agriculture Instructor at Union County High School, Maynardville, TN.*

Ms. Baxter with a class working outside the classroom





# Mentoring Can be a Win, Win, Win Experience

By Jim Summers

Mentoring agricultural education student teachers has become an annual tradition ever since I completed the requirements for my graduate degree at Utah State University. I have been privileged to serve as a cooperating teacher for twenty-seven student teachers as they prepared to enter the agricultural education profession. I can honestly say that I look forward to each year and the opportunity to meet and work with a new teaching candidate. Everyone can benefit from the ten-week supervised teaching experience; high school students, the student teacher, and even the cooperating teacher. As I considered what techniques or suggestions I might offer to

others involved in teacher training and preparation, I realized that my ideas may not be unique, and some may be “old school,” but they have worked well for me.

*Become acquainted with the student teacher well before the internship begins.*

Arrange a time to meet and discuss the internship with the mentee two to three months prior to the actual teaching experience. During this initial visit, provide curriculum guides, texts and offer available resources you have for the assigned units in each course of instruction. This will allow advance preparation and less daily stress later. .

*Inform the candidate of your expectations for him or her and of*

*your willingness to assist.*

Talk openly with the mentee about goals and planning as it relates to your program and student learning. Stress that his or her time in your school needs to be a positive experience for everyone concerned, your students, you as the mentor and him or her. Outline individual goals for all involved to achieve success.

*Provide a working area for the intern to use, if possible, a desk, computer, and file cabinet.*

This is a positive step in building confidence. Your mentee needs to know that he or she has a place to call home during the stay in your department.

*Provide building and lab access, issue keys if district policy allows during the internship.*

Mr. Jim Summers with State FFA Degree recipients.



My district allows me to issue a set of department keys to my mentee during student teaching. This allows a more flexible schedule for the mentor and mentee. If keys cannot be made available, coordinate the times to arrive and depart from school.

*Involve the prospective teacher with your students early on in FFA planning and C.D.E. events.*

Student interaction is essential; mentees need to understand that becoming an FFA advisor is not an 8-5 job. Whatever you are doing with students, they need to be involved.

Introduce your new recruit to administrators, faculty and staff

Mentees need to feel a part of your school as well as your department.

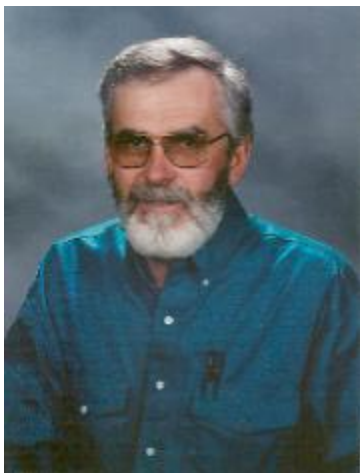
*Be willing to offer suggestions even after the internship is completed.*

I enjoy hearing from former mentees as they encounter problems that need a second opinion. It is also rewarding to hear of their successes.

*Offer comments and an objective opinion as to potential job opportunities.*

I try to access job information as it becomes available in our state. If necessary, I help the mentee weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each position. Signing that first contract is a key decision that can either make or break even the best candidates.

Mentoring is something that I do because I enjoy it, not because it is required. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously. A philosopher once said, "The power to lead is the power to mislead and the power to mislead is the power to destroy." My only hope is that as I stand by the owl, my advice really is "based on true knowledge and ripened with wisdom."



*Jim Summers is Agricultural Instructor and NAAE Mentor Award Winner, Region I, Idaho*

## Techniques for Mentoring Student Teachers

Become acquainted with the student teacher well before the internship begins.

Inform the candidate of your expectations for him or her and of your willingness to assist.

Provide a working area for the intern to use, if possible, a desk, computer, and file cabinet.

Provide building and laboratory access; issue keys if district policy allows during the internship.

Involve the prospective teacher with your student early on in the FFA planning and CDE events.

Introduce your new recruit to administrators, faculty, and staff and tour the facility.

Issue a roll book to the student teacher with only student names to eliminate grade bias.

Highlight the importance of belonging to professional associations, local, state, and NAAE.

Conference with your intern about confidentiality when working with all students.

Inform the new teacher of IEP students with disabilities and special needs.

Instruct your student teacher in the statewide testing procedures and district criteria.

Be available to assist during teaching, but not overpowering or intimidating.

Be willing to offer suggestions even after the internship is completed.

Offer comments and an objective opinion as to potential job opportunities.

# The Magic of Unobtrusive Measures

By Nancy Grudens-Schuck

Get other people to count your beans. Or make your own bean-counting work double. It involves less work than you may think. The procedure is called “using unobtrusive measures” (King, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbons, 1987, p. 60). It is a well-regarded method for collecting data for the evaluation of programs. For agriculture teachers, the best thing about this type of measure is that it does not involve testing or surveys. Here are three ideas.

- ◆ Use the power of lists.
- ◆ Rely on the clarity of calendars.
- ◆ Take advantage of the Internet.

## *The Power of Lists*

You make lists. The district makes lists. Make them work for you. For example, I used a list from a service learning internship program as an outcomes measure for my undergraduate agricultural leadership course. The staff person from the internship program made the list. The list showed that one third of the students in the internship program in 2004 from my college had taken my course, which has a service-learning component. I had struggled to measure the impact of the service learning assignment (Grudens-Schuck, 2001). Documenting the fact that former students were highly represented in the internship program enabled me to claim some success. My “borrowed books” list produced data, too. I started the list to get my books back. I was surprised to find that in a

single year over 40 books had been borrowed (and returned). I used the data to argue for library purchases. I also put the information in my annual performance review as a measure of service to students and colleagues. Other potentially useful lists: career day sign-up sheets; GPA cut-off lists; students who receive scholarships; number of students receiving special services (IEP); and computer lab and equipment sign-in sheets.

## **Making it work**

The most difficult part of making it work is scanning the flurry of paper. Check: attendance lists, building newsletters, and school columns in local and school papers. Some lists are confidential. Ask how you might use the data while ensuring privacy. When you see a good list, get a copy immediately. Dedicate a file or box for safekeeping.

## *The Clarity of Calendars*

Got Palm™? Got Meeting Maker™? Evaluation measures are 90% done for people who use calendars. For example, last year administrators asked me to provide average weekly student contact hours outside of class or office hours. This was a new request. I had not kept track. I was able to count half-hour slots of appointments with students by reviewing the last 9 months of my electronic calendar. It turned out that I had spent more time with students than I had realized. I am glad I did not guess because I would have undercounted. Agriculture teachers do not help themselves or the profession by undercounting workload. Other potentially useful data include numbers of: professional development activities, talks to community groups, trips and

contests, phone calls to parents, and observations by college interns and international guests.

## **Making it work**

First, keep past months accessible. Second, use specific titles. Don't write cryptically, e.g., “Harry 4:40”. Instead, write: “Japanese Ag 1 observation.” I paste information about an event into the Notes section *when I schedule*. This avoids reconstructing details later.

## *Internet Ease*

If you aren't using Internet, here is another reason to start: Internet makes outcomes and indicators easier to track. Consider this use of Internet by a teacher (true story):

*A local science teacher changed his parent newsletter from paper to e-mail attachment. Instead of being crunched in the bottom of a backpack, the newsletter was delivered intact and on time. In this district, e-mail access was high. An attempt was made to deliver hardcopy to parents who did not have e-mail.*

For the first time, the teacher got feedback. Parents wrote back. Some parents asked questions, giving him a chance to solve potential problems early. Other parents described how their child used classroom activities at home. This year, the teacher put the newsletter on a class website. There are 4 ways to make data from this type of activity.

**1. Evidence of effective practice.** In combination with other sources of information, notes from parents can



support the claim that you make professional practices ‘work’. The evidence can be used to paint a vivid portrait of your strengths (and weaknesses) as a teacher. It is especially exciting when agriculture teachers are able to provide feedback from parents about practices that are effective with students who have particular gifts, such as students taking multiple advanced courses in high school; students with special needs (IEP); or students who are in the minority racially or socially with respect to historical enrollment in your agriculture program.

**2. Evidence of parent and community contact.** Some certification processes, and some school districts, require data about the frequency and type of contact with parents and community members. Many agriculture teachers enjoy higher levels of contact than other content matter teachers. Drive home the point with evidence. One way to do this is through a “counter” that automatically adds “hits” (instances of access) to a web site

Get other people to count your beans. Or, make your own bean-counting work double.

where a newsletter, field trip site photo display, sales or class project results are posted. For example, this semester I counted 288 hits to a web site that featured a single student’s project.

**3. Evidence of support.** Consider this sentence.

Parents send about 35 e-mail comments every term. 75% of those comments specifically mention the positive impact on their child of [hands-on activities/FFA/SAE].

A sentence like this could underscore support for your program. This type of information is useful when budget cuts surface. If you don’t have the data, you can’t write the sentence. Providing actual numbers (i.e., *35 comments, 75 percent*) is more credible than stating, “Many parents have told me.”

**4. Evidence-based identification of problems and needs.** Professional development workshops, job performance reviews, and building/district surveys often ask teachers to list “areas for improvement.” Review e-mail messages for patterns. For example, multiple parents saying “*student having difficulty remembering dates of trips/contests/ assignments*” suggests students need more help with organization. Statements like “*club/trip/activity fees are too high*” may provide evidence that students need scholarships.

### Making it Work

1. File every response into a dedicated e-mail folder with a specific name, like ‘newsletter’ or ‘website data’. Periodically review responses in the file.

2. Make honest counts. Bound them by time (e.g., 215 students *over two years*). While reviewing, jot notes into an e-mail note with a subject header, e.g., “Sum data parents fall 04”. Send the note to yourself. File as above.

3. Consult with a computer technician to choose web counters that avoid spyware. Obtain written permission from individuals who write to you before forwarding, quoting, or posting comments and photos from others.

Check district policy.

4. Follow the rules regarding quotations: (a) *every time* you use the exact words of a parent (or anyone else), enclose the sentence or phrase in double quotation marks (“Like this.”), and (b) avoid using double quotation marks unless the selection contains the *exact words* that someone else said.

### Conclusion

No matter how many types of measures are mandated, they never tell the full story. Hand select data in order to emphasize the aspects of your program that otherwise remain invisible. To cut down on the work, use unobtrusive measures. These measures handily compliment existing outcomes measures.

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Nancy Grudens-Schuck, is an Assistant Professor at Iowa State University

# Get to Know Your Students

By *Jim Craddock*

Webster defines the word teach as “to show or help to learn how to do something, to give lessons in or to provide with knowledge”. He further states “Teaching is the basic, inclusive word for the imparting of knowledge or skills and usually connotes some individual attention.” The last words of this definition, individual attention, in my opinion, are what make the difference between a CTE teacher and an academic teacher.

Academic teachers do a wonderful job of distributing their wealth of knowledge to their students, but, to no

a formal classroom. We get to see them at their work sites. For me, this is an opportunity to get to know the student on their ground, a location where they feel comfortable. I can learn about their likes and dislikes, their hobbies, how their school work is progressing and who their family is. I am in a rather fortunate situation here at Chatham High School in that I graduated from this school more than 30 years ago. In a large number of cases with my students, I either went to school with their parents, their grandparents, or I taught their parents. In a large number of instances, I already know the home situation and I think that this makes it easier for the students to relate to me and thus, the agricultural program. For most of our first year students, this gives them a sense

ful. We encourage them when they fall short of their goals and push them even harder when they obtain success.

Getting students involved in CDE’s also gives me the chance to spend extra time with them. This also allows me to get to know them better, on a more personal basis. Of course, this carries over to the classroom and allows these students to feel more of that personal security as well. Becoming a chapter officer does the same thing. Both of these allow me to spend extra time outside of the classroom with the students and I feel that this makes them want to be a part of our program. These two activities, especially, allow me not only to work with the students and help to train them, but it allows us to have “fun” while we are doing it. These are the activities that I think makes it all worthwhile.

“Teaching is the basic, inclusive word for the imparting of knowledge or skills and usually connotes some individual attention.”

fault of their own, tend not to be able to individualize their instruction. CTE instructors in general and agriculture teachers specifically are noted for being able to work with their student’s one on one. Instruction is often customized to meet the needs of the students.

One of the best tools for customizing the student’s instructional program and also making the student feel successful is their SAE program. We, as agriculture teachers, have the unique opportunity to see our students and work with them in a setting other than

of security. They seem more likely to come to the ag department if they have questions or problems about school. This gives us as agriculture teachers the opportunity to really make a difference in our students’ lives. After all, everyone knows that ag teachers are more than just instructors to our students. We are career counselors, financial advisors, big brothers, parental figures, and just friends.

Getting to know these students on a personal basis allows us to work closer with them to help them find within themselves their strengths and talents that will make them success-

Chatham High School, thanks to block scheduling, also gives me the chance to get to know some of my students better because I may have them in class for two or even three times per day. I teach mostly juniors and seniors in class and teach several specialty classes that they wish to take in the same semester. Therefore, I get the opportunity to work with them more than once per day.

The activities that I have discussed in this article that help me to make a difference in the lives of my students can be summed up very easily; Spend more time with your students outside of the traditional classroom. Get to know them personally and show them that you care about their success.

*Jim Craddock is an Agriculture Teacher in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, and a 2004 Mentor Award Winner, Region VI*

# What Are You Doing For Your Students?

By Jason Ince

The goal of all educators, not just those in agricultural education, is to make a positive impact in the lives of our students. But do we ever really recognize our successes? Sure, we might find out today, tomorrow, or next week. Of course, we could also go through our entire careers and never realize the impact made on students. We take it as part of the job, but it takes a lot of unrecognized hard work to make those students better people.


We all affect our students on a personal level in classrooms and laboratories. But do we ever know the extent? I am certain that virtually all members of the agricultural community from across the nation would agree that agriculture was vastly different thirty years ago. It is also a given that students are different too. There are, to note, a few teachers who have seen these changes happen. Take for example James Craddock, a thirty-year veteran agriculture teacher in rural Pittsylvania County, Virginia. Mr. Craddock has seen a time in Southside, Virginia, when tobacco was king and textile production was queen. Though those days have long past, Craddock has adapted to the changes, and his students, past and present, are proof. In his career he has taught or come in contact with thousands of students, many of whom have gone on to become successful leaders in the community.

I am sure many of you know someone like Craddock. Some of his former students include 13 past Virginia FFA Association state officers,

the current Pittsylvania County Farm Bureau president, and a vice-president of Dimon Tobacco Company, the largest tobacco leaf processor in the world.

Robert Mills, a local beef, poultry and tobacco producer and past state FFA president, credits Mr. Craddock for his positive start in agriculture, as well as a sense of independence that all youth need, as part of his success in agriculture and the FFA. “Mr. Craddock was always very good about letting students run their organization. He made sure we had all the tools we

Chris Johnson, a manager of James River Equipment Company in Danville, Virginia, also gives Craddock much credit for his success as an employee of the John Deere Corporation. “Mr. Craddock always encouraged us to try new things, even if we didn’t think we’d like them.” Chris also commended Craddock for never pushing one or two subject areas, but rather for seeking student excellence in as many areas as possible. This contributed to well-rounded students who retained more knowledge and an appreciation of agriculture in their lives.



The goal of educators is to make a positive impact in the lives of students.

needed and always encouraged us to get involved.” Robert also praises Craddock for maintaining connections with former students and local agriculturalists. “Resource people from the community are often who students learn most from,” said Mills.

Often in our careers, we participate in activities for our own betterment as educators, but don’t realize the indirect impact these have on our students. Professional development activities make us better teachers, and help





Mr. Jim Craddock, a thirty-year veteran teacher, and Mr. Jason Ince, a third-year teacher, working together. Both teachers benefit from each other.

us create and maintain contacts with other educators. Mr. Craddock has influenced his and other students across the Eastern region through his involvement in the NAAE, serving as a member of the advisory council for the Virginia Association for Career and Technical Educators (VACTE), and as a former President of the Virginia Association of Agricultural Educators (VAAE). His leadership in these organizations has helped other educators better themselves and their profession. Better teachers mean better students. Craddock has also served on a committee to establish Equine Science as a curriculum in Virginia, adding it to the ever-expanding list of popular courses Virginia offers. Finally, as a member of the search committee for a new Agricultural and Extension Education faculty member for Virginia Tech, Mr.

Craddock impacted the future teachers and students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century through his guidance and leadership.

Mr. Craddock has also made a personal and lasting impact on me as a new teacher. As my assigned mentor, he has shown me everything from how to deposit money at school to where to find necessary supplies and materials. Possibly the most important thing Craddock has done for me is to be a friend. He is available to talk any time, and will do anything to help me. We can all learn from this positive attitude. Often, a minor inconvenience to us is a lifeline to someone else, and Craddock understands that. He has taught me this and numerous things that I will carry with me throughout my career.

When we look back on our careers and lives and ask ourselves, “Did I make a difference?” the answer will be a resounding yes. Just look at the James Craddocks of the world and remember that every little thing we do as educators and people, has the potential to change lives. That is not something any of us take lightly, and none of us easily forget. We could use the title of this article as a powerful defense for our programs and to build the rest of our careers on: “What I AM DOING for my students.” I hope I can do for my students as James Craddock has done for his.

*Jason Ince is an Agriculture Teacher in Chatham, Virginia*

# The Role of the Mentor

By Tom Sawyer

*“Mentors are guides. They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers, and point out unexpected delights along the way....”* Laurent A. Daloz

Mentoring provides a unique opportunity for a stellar, experienced teacher and a new teacher to form a cooperative relationship for the purpose of inducting the beginner into the teaching profession. However, not every experienced teacher should be a mentor. Rather, it is those veterans with superior skills in the classroom and with the desire to improve the teaching profession who should be selected. Effective mentors share a number of characteristics including knowledge of their field, respect of their colleagues, and solid work ethics. To sum it up, mentors provide leadership to the beginning teachers.

Primarily, a mentor of a beginning teacher is a coach who provides appropriate support and encouragement during the induction period. While the roles of mentors are as varied as the personalities of the teachers, there are three specific roles the veteran must fulfill. These roles are that of a role model, a helper, and a colleague.

The first role is that of a role model. Role models display a positive attitude and practice and encourage

reflective thinking. They set goals and know how to achieve them. They are lifelong learners who promote thinking, analysis, problem solving, and planning. Mentors are leaders who guide and set examples. They are motivators who encourage and challenge, as well as facilitators who enable the novice teacher to discover and build on new skills.

The second role of the mentor is that of a helper. This is done by giving time and support, providing the beginning teacher with resources, and making suggestions for teaching techniques. Mentors have developed their own

**Mentors  
provide  
leadership  
to the  
beginning  
teacher.**

style and method of teaching. Sharing these with the novice might prevent them from making mistakes. Mentors are trying to build confidence in the beginning teacher, celebrate their successes, help work through the failures, take the time to listen to what the novice teacher is saying, and give them encouragement to try new things.

The last role of the mentor is that of a colleague. One should advocate

for the beginning teacher and the teaching profession while demonstrating a caring and helpful attitude toward the novice. Many beginning teachers are new to the area, having come straight out of college. They may not know many people and just need someone to talk with. Above all, mentors need to be a confidant who listens, but does not share the confidential information. In short, one should be a friend.

In closing, it is important to remember that education is one of the few professions where “the novice assumes the same job requirements that the 20 year veteran does, but on the first day of employment” (Huling 1989). With this kind of career introduction, it is no wonder many new teachers feel isolated and unsupported. By serving as a mentor, one has the power and opportunity to help the beginning teacher develop into a competent professional that will ultimately benefit the students and strengthen the profession.

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*Tom Sawyer is an Agriculture Teacher East Carteret High School, Beaufort, NC, and 2004 NAAE Mentor Award Winner, Region V*

# The Real Tom Sawyer

By Nick Armendariz

I do not recall the first moment that I met Mr. Tom Sawyer, agriculture teacher at East Carteret. You see, after all, I went to West Carteret, on the other side of the Intercoastal waterway, in Eastern North Carolina. However, I do remember all of life's lessons in, and out of the classroom that he has taught me. Growing up, he was the leader of the competition, and later a mentor for my future.

The mainstay of our relationship was formed in the spring of 2002, when I was placed with Mr. Sawyer for my student teaching. I will never forget the first day that I was at East Carteret. I was lucky in that the students were changing semesters and my first day was a workday. "This is great," I thought, thinking that I would be able to get a firm grip on everything before I started to teach.

I had a notebook in hand and pen ready to write. I sat across from Mr. Sawyer at his desk. There was a list of about twenty or so questions that I had prepared to ask Mr. Sawyer, that I

thought would help me know what I *thought* I needed to know. Mr. Sawyer took a deep breath after I asked my question; he leaned forward and looked at me. Then he said, "Why don't you put the pen and paper up, and I'll tell you how it is, without the sugar coating." I was nervous, because the man behind the beard, plaid shirt, Dickies, and boat shoes, had always been a little intimidating. I would find, there was no reason to be.

You see, Mr. Sawyer is really a man who loves his students, whether former or current, about as much as one man can. My sister, a former student of his, Ashley, would describe him as "a cuddly old man." He took me under his wing and treated me no different. It was as if I had graduated from ECHS. He trained me and taught me as if I would be the one replacing him, caring for every detail.

The thing I love about Mr. Sawyer is the style in which he teaches. He doesn't believe in being hasty or too firm in the way he teaches you. It was never him coming down on me telling me that I had "done something wrong." It was a gentle, father-like figure sitting me down and helping me think through what I needed to do to make an improvement. He was helpful in making sure I knew about the behind-the-scenes issues of teaching agriculture that I didn't think of as a student. One such time was during a horticulture unit, I chose to use a plant that did not germinate for at least two weeks. I had not accounted for this in my planning, and he suggested I use a plant that germinated sooner, and bailed me out.

Out of the classroom, he has

meant as much to me and been as much a mentor. I have numerous e-mails saved in my inbox from Mr. Sawyer, especially from my first year, where I would e-mail him about something in a lab gone wrong, or not knowing how to train a team for a CDE. He would always reply quickly by e-mail or phone, to help me, no matter what time of day or night. It was a personal 24/7 "help Nick" hotline run by Mr. Sawyer. I know he is the same always because he is always there. Post-Hurricanes, you will always recognize the red pickup pulling in the drive to offer help cleaning up, and to check on our family. He has a habit, post-storms to check on those around him first, then worrying about his home. That is just another fine example of the character this man has.

He is a person who always puts others first. A man who at a random meeting at a gas station, helped remind me why I became a teacher. He is the person that has shown me how to become the teacher that I am today. There are a few people out there who may giggle when they first hear his name, Tom Sawyer. There is not a person, though, who knows him, who doesn't admire, love and respect him—fellow teachers, his wife, his friends, his former students, his dogs, and me. The man, the husband, the outdoorsman, the teacher, my mentor, Mr. Tom Sawyer, thank you.

*Nick Armendariz is an Agriculture Teacher at Ayden-Grifton High School, Ayden, NC*

He is a  
person who  
always puts  
others first.



# What Teacher Influenced You the Most?

By MeeCee Baker

What teacher most influenced you? Why? The aforementioned questions were posed to the theme editor's two classes during the fall 2004 semester. Responses follow below in no specific order.

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*Cameron Lowe, Extension Agent  
4-H & Youth Development Agent  
Graduate Student  
North Carolina State University*

The teacher that made the biggest difference in my life was Mr. James Guard, Agriculture Education teacher at Currituck County High School. Before becoming immersed in agriculture classes, I really had no idea what my professional interests or career goals were. Whether consciously or not, Mr. Guard surveyed my talents and interests and got me involved in the appropriate areas of the program. I learned a lot about agriculture under his tutelage, but also, I learned a lot about my ambitions and myself for my future.

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*Olivia Calandrucchio  
PSU Student Teacher  
Keith Junior High  
Altoona, Pennsylvania*

My favorite teacher was a young, vibrant, caring chemistry teacher. She showed me that women can succeed in science and helped me realize that I wanted to spend my life teaching science to the younger generations.

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*Lucee Flint Kossler  
University Employee  
Graduate Student and Proud  
Daughter  
North Carolina State University*

The teachers who have made and continue to make the biggest difference in my life are my parents. Not only are they (in my completely unbiased opinion) the best parents in the world, but also they are fair, honest, hard working, and admirable. They have taught me the importance to live by the Golden rule, to strive to bring out the best in others and to give others the best in myself. They teach by actions, not just by words. To many people in our small hometown, they serve as mentors and it shows in the respect that they receive.

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*Amy Mallard Andrews  
Agriculture Agent- Livestock &  
Forages  
Graduate Student  
North Carolina State University*

The teacher that made the biggest difference to me was my high school Spanish teacher. Her name was Janice Fisher and she was always so full of energy! She laughed and smiled and used every minute of class time to teach us something about Spanish. She allowed us to pack our book bags, and while we waited for the bell to ring, she used flashcards during the last few minutes of class. When something happened at school that made us upset, she would always listen to our side of the story and encourage us with good advice. She was our friend and teacher.

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*Shane McKee  
Businessman in Livestock Nutri-  
tion  
Graduate Student  
North Carolina State University*

The teacher that I valued the most was my high school agriculture teacher. He was the type of man who made learning fun for the entire class and me. He cared about his students and their well being and helped us strive to be the best at everything we do. My high school agriculture teacher is the main person that has inspired me to hopefully one day become an agriculture teacher.

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*Kim Coons  
PSU Student Teacher  
Moshannon Valley High School  
Houtzdale, Pennsylvania*

My favorite teacher that I have ever had made me see the world in a different way and be more creative than I thought was possible. He was able for the first time to show me that in the real world things weren't separated into subjects like in school. He was able to restore my faith that it was still okay to make believe in high school.

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*Matt Hubbard  
PSU Student Teacher  
Tuscarora Junior High School  
Mifflintown, PA*

The teacher that had the biggest influence on me was Mr. Drysdale, my seventh grade life science teacher. He

was a father of three, my wrestling and football coach, and owned a pizza place in the same little town as the junior high. He worked part-time in the pizza place and employed some of the local youth to help them learn the value of working hard for your money. He had a love for life that infected his students and he related with them as if he was only 13 years old himself. He was part of what made me want to become a teacher.

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*Tanya Heath  
4-H Agent  
Graduate Student  
North Carolina State University*

To describe a memorable first impression of a person in Extension would be to describe my 4-H Exten-

sion Agent. The first time I saw him, he had a smile on his face, a warm and friendly disposition and you could tell that he enjoyed his job. He was dedicated and determined to make the program grow. He is an individual that goes beyond the call of duty in everything that he did. His genuine care of the 4-H'ers, families and projects showed me that he is an individual/role model and one that I would like to become. I guess you could say...that I'm still following in his footsteps. He went on to receive his master's and doctorate degree while working and just like him....I'm trying to do the same thing.

Without his drive and determination, I'm not sure that I would have turned out to be the person that I am today. I just hope that I can impact some of my 4-H'ers lives like he did mine. I am forever indebted to his ser-

vice and he knows that I would do anything to help him.

To better describe a positive image of an agent would be to describe Travis Burke:

T= Time spent helping others

R= Reliable

A- Ability

V= Versatile

I= Intelligent

S= Sensible

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*MeeCee Baker is Past National President of NAAE and Education Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Education*



Mr. Tom Sawyer tutoring students.

# Our FFA Advisors Made a Difference in Our Lives

By 2004 - 2005 Pennsylvania  
State Officer Team

The Theme Editor asked the Pennsylvania State FFA Officers to share a quote or two about how they believed that their FFA Advisor had made a difference in their lives. The following is the response from the 2004-2005 Pennsylvania State Officer Team. The comments were collected and submitted by Mike Brammer, Pennsylvania FFA Executive Director.

They are two great friends that I know I can go to and talk to when I need help or have a problem, with anything.

The possibilities of our achievements were endless.

They were both there for me, and were supportive throughout my high school career and after.

Helped me to understand that someone's opinion of you is just that, an opinion.

Helped me realize, it's okay to ask for help, and that I'm not alone. He also made me realize that I need to listen to everyone's ideas, and that you can combine them to make a great plan.

He showed me how much he cared for each student by devoting many hours in and out of school to help anyone. He was concerned for each student's future, and helped many plan their college choices and/or careers.

They never showed any doubt in me because I was new to the school.

The possibilities of our achievements were endless.

Without their guidance, I could have never accomplished my goals as an FFA member.

My advisor saw potential in me to succeed that I never would've found on my own. Failure was never an option in my chapter. If I needed help with an application, Career Development Event, or shop project, he made the time to give me the help I needed.

Without my advisor's encouragement, trust, and guidance, I would never have known that I could climb as far as I have in the FFA. Because of my advisor, I have learned that I cannot only set my goals high, but, with hard work and dedication, I can reach them!

Dedicated, Mentor, Coach. Three words that describe my advisor, who never let me quit!

When I entered his classroom in

tenth grade, I was a shy, quiet girl plagued by self-doubt. His selfless dedication and confidence in my abilities continues to help me overcome my own insecurities. Looking back, he was the first teacher in my life who didn't need a GPA, SAT score, or PSSA test to say, "I believe in you."

Dedicated  
Mentor  
Coach

They were always there for me with a smile and their "owl's" advice, if I ever needed help with my SAE and CDE's or had to talk about issues in my own personal life.

To teach is a gift, not only for the teacher, but for the students as well.

My FFA Advisors had a gift to give and they gave it to everyone of their students. In my opinion, it is called the gift of love, understanding, caring, and overall concern for an individual – NOT just a student.

My advisor took a rough-around the edges freshman in high school and turned me into a polished gem by my senior year. His words of wisdom have taught me life lessons and they have helped to shape me into the person I am today.



# AgriCULTURAL History in the Classroom

By Chansi Williams and  
Antoine Alston

*A man without history is like a tree without roots.* (Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, 1917).

From the First Morrill Act of 1862 to the founding of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) in 1928, historical events have not only shaped current issues in agricultural education, but they also hold the keys to understanding the future of the field. Without any knowledge of the strong history of agricultural education, students would lack access to the documentation of the foundations which were laid to prepare them as leaders in the agriculture industry. One major aspect of this history that is often overlooked or misunderstood is the contribution of various cultures in the development of agriculture, a component that the primary author of this article has termed “AgriCULTURAL” history.

Simply stated “AgriCULTURAL” is a term created to describe the importance of educating all students in an agricultural program about the contributions of ethnic minorities to agriculture. This can be achieved by integrating a multicultural curriculum within the classroom. Tackling issues like cultural diversity in agriculture should be a major concern for educators because barricades still exist between the agricultural industry and minority participation. For the context of this article the focus will be African-American students.

Today, African-Americans com-

prise a very small percentage of the agricultural workforce in the United States. According to Foster and Henson (1992) the agricultural industry is the foundation for any society. However, in the United States ethnic minorities and women involvement in the field of agriculture is limited. Various demographic estimates indicate that ethnic minority populations are steadily increasing, and more of these students will need to be recruited into agricultural related careers in order to sustain the agricultural industry for the future



and to help ensure that the United States remains competitive in the global economy (USDA Fact Book 2000). As agricultural educators, it is important to link relevant facts of the past with present opportunities for the future. Wakefield (2003) indicates that students should have access to documents displaying the role of Blacks in Agriculture and FFA; additionally, they should be given the opportunity to take part in FFA events.

If agricultural teachers do not start to define their roles as educators in more diverse ways and acknowledge the history of Blacks in agriculture, African-American students will

continue to miss out on the growing employment opportunities in agriculture due to a lack of awareness and interest in the field. According to Luft (1996), agricultural teachers need training in multicultural education because more than likely, they will utilize their pedagogical skills in classrooms which are comprised of a wide of array of students, often different from the teacher’s own racial or ethnic background. The needs of culturally diverse students should be a priority for all agricultural educators (Luft, 1996).

An important aspect in educating agricultural students about cultural diversity lies in creating a warm and inclusive classroom environment. Imagine African-American students sitting in an agriculture class, and never observing any sign that African-American professionals in agriculture exist? Or, even more problematic, imagine a classroom discussion that never acknowledges the contributions of any ethnic groups at all, particularly those of African-Americans? What might be done to reverse these images? One of the first ideas that come to mind is a lesson plan that elaborates on the contributions of African-American agricultural scientist such as George Washington Carver, botanist/crop scientist, Dr. Alfreda Webb, the first African-American female veterinarian, and Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, who was the founder of the only black School of Veterinary Medicine in the United States at Tuskegee University. Students could additionally learn about minority agribusiness enterprises such as the Bill Picket Rodeo, the first and only black owned touring rodeo circuit in the United States. In order to combine technology with “AgriCULTURAL” history students could be assigned to small groups to

do web-quests for information regarding prominent individuals in agricultural science, and then generate book reports along with a Power Point presentation.

Another significant part of “**AgriCULTURAL**” history is the often untold story of the New Farmers of America. After looking for literature on the New Farmers’ organization to prepare a presentation for a pre-service teacher education course the primary author of this article was taking, they were curious about how many other students in their class knew about the history of the organization. Their peers knew it was the “Black version of FFA,” established around the time of FFA, but that was the extent of their knowledge. This is one valuable lesson that can be incorporated into the curriculum.

In addition to making sure that students are aware of the historical contributions of African Americans in agriculture, it is also important to discuss the growing number of opportunities that exist in the field today. Agriculture is the nation’s largest employer with more than 22 million people working in some aspect growing food and fiber to selling it at the market place (American Farm Bureau, 2003). How does the agriculture teacher educate students and promote the numerous career opportunities that exist in agriculture? First, they must recognize that there will be a great demand for employees in the upcoming years as the baby boomer generation retires. Educating and “advertising” occupations to students through information presented within the curriculum units is valuable; however, inviting guest speakers from diverse racial groups might be more effective. After exposing African-American students to a realm of opportunities, teachers might suggest that their students explore internships with major agribusinesses. Students should additionally be encouraged to partici-

pate in summer academic agricultural programs to gain insight into agricultural careers. Programs such as the Institute for Future Agricultural Leaders (IFAL) – NC A&T State University and The George Washington Carver Internship Program - Iowa State University are two examples. Students should be encouraged to become involved in agricultural student organizations like 4-H, FFA, and MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences).

The recruitment and retention of minorities in agriculture is an obligation of agricultural educators (Wakefield, 2003). They need to step out of the traditional role of an agricultural teacher and teach history from a perspective that differs from the mainstream. “**AgriCULTURAL**” history should be taught through the eyes of all students. If the purpose of education according to Grant (1978) is to prepare individuals to function in an ethnically and culturally diverse world, then how will agricultural education as a profession respond? As America increasingly becomes more ethnically diverse, “**AgriCULTURAL**” history will become an imperative component of an agricultural educator’s daily program planning in addressing the academic and personal needs of all the students they serve.

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# Strategic Planning During Times of Uncertainties and Opportunities

By Eddie A. Moore

Some years ago, America possessed a budget surplus of more than \$300 billion, and the stock market was at an all time high. Recently, Goldberg stated that “from March 24, 2000 through October 9, 2002, Standard & Poor’s 500-stock index plunged 49%. That surpassed damage from the 1973-74 bear market by one percentage point and made this the worst bear market since 1937-38.” Prior to the downturn in the economy, most sectors, except a few, including production agriculture, were enjoying a level of prosperity not seen in contemporary times. Today, the nation is confronted with a large projected budget deficit as well as serious budget problems in most states.

Considering that production agriculture to a large extent had experienced a number of challenges prior to the downtown in the general economy, it is conceivable that current economic conditions are more severe in many rural communities as compared to more prosperous areas of the country. Moreover, national and international events are likely to have deeper adverse affects on rural and urban communities. In light of these challenges, professionals in agricultural education must provide bold, innovative, and result-oriented leadership in order to position programs for the future. Strategic planning during these times of uncertainties and opportunities will be crucial, and the steps to follow should assist groups in their planning initiatives.

*Determine who should be involved, assemble groups, and*

*charge them with the responsibility for strategic planning*

The success of future programs will be determined by the extent to which the profession is willing to accept an inclusive attitude to build a coalition with traditional and non-traditional groups. School officials, parents, alumni, representatives from the private sector, government, and non-traditional community groups should consist of such inclusive body. Clarity of purpose, responsibilities, and outcomes should facilitate the work of this local strategic planning group. The group should be encouraged to be fu-

sheet of paper” in order to encourage the planning group to think outside of the box or from a futuristic perspective. A vision statement should answer: 1) what do we want to be?, 2) where do we want to be?, and 3) when do we want to be there? For example, the vision statement may read: “to be widely acknowledged as one of the top five agriscience programs in Michigan by 2010.”

*Prepare mission statement*

The mission statement of an organization is its essential reason for being; it is the identity of the organiza-

**Professionals in agricultural education must provide bold, innovative, and result-oriented leadership in order to position programs for the future.**

turistic, innovative, and creative in its thinking in order to position programs for the future.

*Develop vision statement based on issues, trends, challenges, and opportunities*

Understanding local, state, national, and global events or the “big picture” is paramount in the strategic planning process. In some cases, it may be important to start with a “blank

tion. A mission statement should answer: 1) who are we?, 2) what business are we in?, and 3) why do we come to work everyday?. An example may include: “The mission of the Spartans School District agriscience program is to prepare students in grades 8 – 12 for succeeding in life including the preparation for a career in agriculture, food, natural resources, and related occupations.”

*Develop a philosophy based on*



## *values and guiding principles*

For example, serving a more diverse population in schools has received additional attention in recent years. The statement, “leaving no child behind” seems to be resonating well in many sectors, particularly in speeches throughout America. Turning these buzz words into reality will be a challenge for much of society including agricultural education. The issue is one of valuing and respecting people, irrespective of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, lifestyles, sexual orientation, and opinion. The issue is whether the intellectual capacity and strengths of each individual should be fully developed and utilized. Another example would be a commitment to offering high quality programs for various clientele groups. This commitment should be linked to planning for improvements, incorporating actions to achieve results, assessing progress, and acting to further improve.

### *Determine needs*

An inclusive local strategic planning group is likely to be successful in determining area needs as well as possible initiatives for meeting such needs. Utilizing this vision statement as one starting point, the strategic planning committee should carefully consider a number of factors. The discussion may focus on a more integrated and contemporary curriculum, state-of-the-art facilities, instructional resources, funding, employment prospects, and overall program enhancement.

### *Conduct an analysis of resource allocations*

Eighty to ninety percent of public school budgets are usually required to cover the costs of salaries and fringe benefits. In large multiple departments, conducting an analysis of resources allocations is likely to be more impor-

## Steps to Use in Strategic Planning

Determine who should be involved, assemble group, and charge them with the responsibility for strategic planning

Develop vision statement based on issues, trends, challenges, and opportunities

Prepare mission statement

Develop a philosophy based on values and guiding principles

Determine needs

Conduct an analysis of resource allocations

Identify groups to be served

Develop and prioritize program goals for the future

Determine programs to be offered

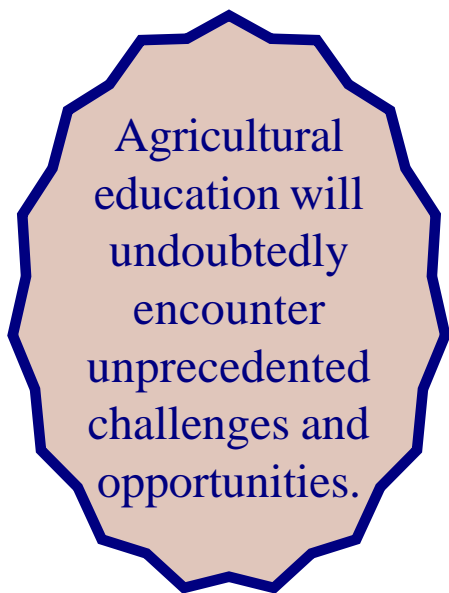
Prepare plans for programs

Develop and implement a result-driven evaluation process

tant than in a single department. Projected budget shortfalls in the next year or so will require educators to look carefully at how monies are being spent. During difficult economic times, the tendency is to focus on program curtailment and elimination rather than creating a climate for renewal enhancement. The proposed planning process encourages elements of creativity, and innovation in order to position program for the future.

### *Identify groups to be served*

In order for agricultural education programs to remain viable, the profession must aggressively pursue an agenda of serving more groups in soci-



ety. Considering that a majority of funding for current programs are locally based, this strategy is in order. Many groups around the US have played very significant roles in addressing agricultural literacy, and these groups should be commended for their efforts. Much work in this area remains and agricultural education should give this challenge a higher priority. First and foremost, the profession should examine how a larger portion of the student body, including 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, might be served. Research shows that studying agriculture, food, and natural resources

helps students learn their basic academic subjects. As the American population grows, this sector of society should be given the opportunity to be served whether it is career oriented or avocational.

### *Develop and prioritize program goals for the future*

This process should be linked directly to the vision, mission, philosophy, needs, resources, and groups to be served. In this case, the reference is being made regarding overall program goals and not goals that are related to the curriculum. For example, if the need exists for a new greenhouse or a certain number of computers for a farm/business management program, then such a goal should be developed. Once the goals are developed, then the committee should prioritize these statements based upon local school district, community, and state conditions.

### *Determine programs to be offered*

Careful attention should be given to determining what programs should be offered based upon mission, employment opportunities, student interests, and other related factors. A case in point, a biotechnology program may be offered jointly with advanced placement science courses, or an integrated horticulture program taught with biology staff could be offered to 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

### *Prepare plans for programs.*

This process is perhaps the most difficult of all the recommended steps and will require both short-term and long-term planning. An inventory of structures, personnel, curricula, resources, and other factors regarding potential partners will be crucial. Upon completing the inventory, potential

partners should move forward in developing more coordinated, connected, a multi-disciplinary program plans that will help students succeed in a contemporary global society.

### *Develop and implement a result-driven evaluation process*

Evaluation is done basically to prove the worth of programs as well as to improve them. It is recommended that the focus be on impact or results rather than process. Moreover, this evaluation should be on the outcomes of this strategic plan initiative and the program thrusts resulting from the work of local groups.

### *Conclusion*

In the months and years ahead, agricultural education will undoubtedly encounter unprecedented challenges and opportunities. World events, budget shortfalls, corporate scandals, and a host of other factors will place tremendous constraints on communities and their educational systems. Deliberate and careful attention to strategic planning within the agricultural education academy could provide the foundation for positioning programs for the future during times of uncertainties and opportunities.

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# Web-Based Learning and Its Role in Preparing Agricultural Education Teachers

By Greg Pfantz

In recent years computers have become an important, almost everyday, aspect of our lives. Even more recently has been the onset of college and universities using online course delivery systems for some or all of their offered classes. The issue that this raises is one of great importance when we consider that it can be used to prepare future teachers. Therefore I believe that although online learning can be good for some classes, it should not be used excessively in preparing agricultural teachers, a position that is highly hands-on learning.

I believe that it is fine for some classes that are required for completion of the teacher education to be conducted online, for example general education requirements could be met us-

Many instructors of online courses do not make it clear what is expected of the students, causing “learning displacement.”

ing online learning. Courses that require hands-on learning, such as many agriculture classes are, should not be offered as online course options. Supplemental websites for agriculture classes are allowable, and in fact they are usually great resources for extending the understanding of the course content.

Many students find that online courses are hard to navigate and these students are easily frustrated and just give up on the course. As found in a study by Hughes and Daykin, “The most noticeable issue to arise was an initial anxiety about online learning” (p. 219). Many instructors of online courses do not make it clear what is expected of the students, causing “learning displacement” (Hughes/Daykin p.220). I feel that this is the case in many situations; I know that many times I have not completely understood what a professor wanted and had to spend extra time e-mailing to get clarification. The time spent at the computer is also a factor, while some students are comfortable spending hours on end in front of the computer completing assignments; others rush to complete the assignment so that they can get away from the computer. This causes frustrations on both the side of the instructor and other students as well. Since many web-based courses rely on chat rooms and threaded discussions, a poorly written response or argument can lead to disaccord with the whole group. (Hughes/Daykin p.221)

I believe that agriculture classes that prepare a student for a teaching position in a field where the learning in hands-on should also be taught hands-on. Imagine how hard it would be for a first time teacher to teach a shop class without actually ever having any shop

experience. How would that teacher be able to show a student how to light the torch or how to solder a pipe back together? These are things that will never be able to be learned online; instead they are taught by trial and error in an actual classroom.

In the coming years web-based courses are going to continue to take a more prevalent place in most colleges and universities as we as a nation move to a more computerized way of life. I think that as agriculture teachers our jobs will also deal more with computers in the classroom. However, there is still going to be a need for hands-on instruction and therefore a teacher who is able to teach in a hands-on way will be essential. Web-based learning is going to have to be a secondary source when it comes to preparing teachers for a hands-on profession.

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Hughes, Mathew & Daykin, Norma. (Aug 2002). Towards Constructivism: Investing Students’ Perceptions and Learning as a Result of Using an Online Environment. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International*, 39, 217-224. Retrieved September, 28, 2004, from Academic Search database.

*Greg Pfantz is an undergraduate student at Northwest Missouri State University. His essay published here was the 2004 Alpha Tau Alpha winning essay.*



# The Agricultural Education Magazine - 2005 Themes

The focus of The Magazine is to be a “hands-on,” practical approach journal. Articles should share specific steps one can to make teaching an learning in and about agriculture more efficient, enjoyable, and effective. The best articles for the The Magazine are ones that have a clear point and share practices that can be used in the “real world” of teaching agriculture.

## January – February 2005

The Science of Teaching

Teachers of agriculture have often been accused of “teaching from the hip.” Perhaps it may be that many do not really understand the “science” of teaching. This issue will look at the principles of teaching and learning, teacher behavior and student achievement, learning styles, objectives, and other related “science of teaching” components.

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*Due to Theme Editor:* November 15, 2004  
*Due to Editor:* December 1, 2004

## March – April 2005

The Mechanics of Teaching

This issue will look at the development of a “program” for agricultural education at the secondary level, identifying needs, determining what content to teach, determining sequencing of the content, developing an actual course for agricultural education at the secondary level such as writing objectives, determining teaching strategies, and developing student assignments. This issue will look at the things that teachers need to do to teach ...getting things done before ever walking into the classroom.

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*Due to Editor:* February 1, 2005

## May – June 2005

The Art of Teaching

This issue will look at the broad topics of delivering instruction to learners. Included will be articles on effective lecturing, active learning strategies, problem-based learning, case methodology, and the use of technology for the delivery of instruction.

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*Due to Editor:* April 1, 2005

## July - August 2005

The Assessment of Teaching

This issue will look at the assessment of student learning such as formal and non-formal sources of assessment and feedback, assessment of teaching including student feedback, self-assessment and peer observation, and the philosophy of teaching which reflects assessment of teaching and learning.

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*Due to Editor:* June 1, 2005

## September - October 2005

Resources for Teaching

This issue will look at the resources available for teachers. The previous issues for 2005 address the science of teaching, the mechanics of teaching, the art of teaching, and the assessment of teaching and learning. This issue will incorporate information on resources in each of the prior theme issues.

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## November – December 2005

Learning as a Function of Teaching

This issue will look at the concept of learning as a consequence of effective teaching. The previous issues for 2005 have focused on the teaching aspect of the teaching-learning process. This issue will focus on learning as a function of teaching and would incorporate information on how students learn as a result of how teachers teach.

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