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**THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS -  
EFFORTS TO REDUCE TEACHER ATTRITION**

# Reducing the Attrition of Agricultural Education Teachers

by Harry N. Boone, Jr.

The profession is under pressure to expand the number of agricultural education programs in the United States. The National Council for Agricultural Education's 10 X 15 goal challenged the profession to have 10,000 agricultural science programs in place by the year 2015 (Team Ag Ed, n.d.). To meet this goal, the profession will have to generate over 2,500 additional certified agricultural education teachers.

Croasmun, Hampton, and Herrmann (1999) found that teacher attrition was the largest factor determining the demand for teachers in the United States. Approximately 20% of all K-12 teachers employed in 1994 were not in the same occupation 3 years later (Henke & Zahn, 2001).

It stands to reason that one way to increase the number of teachers in the profession is to reduce the number of teachers lost due to attrition. One way to reduce attrition is to provide support services for teachers during the critical first years of their career. There are a number of states that are providing innovative programming for their young teachers. Dr. Brad Greiman, Theme Editor, explored a number of these programs.

Bradley Leger shares the Louisiana Agriscience Education Induction Program (LAEIP). The program relies on building supportive relationships through a mentoring program between novice teachers and experienced agriscience teachers.

Wendy Nichols and Jim Scott share the concepts of the mentoring program established at the Tolles

Career and technical Center in Plain City, Ohio. Their program is dependent upon the participation by all stakeholders in the school system.

Dr. Shane Robinson shares the attributes of the program developed by Oklahoma for its alternatively certified agriculture teachers. While these alternatively certified teachers have a unique set of circumstances, they share a common need with all teachers - prolonged, sustained professional development.

Ellen Thompson uses her position as Coordinator of the Teach Ag Campaign to reflect on ways the profession as a whole is providing support for agricultural education teachers. She also reflects on how the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) helped her as a beginning teacher in Minnesota.

John Tummons reflects on the Missouri Mentor-Induction Program. The mentor-induction program includes all first and second-year agriculture teachers (protégés) and expert secondary agriculture teachers who serve as mentors.

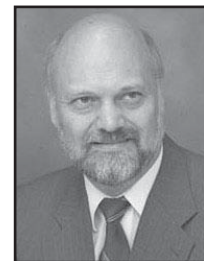
T. J. Brown, Chris Ovrebo, and Kevin Plante take a different approach to the retention of young teachers. They provide the answers to a number of questions that young teachers may be afraid to ask.

Nina Crutchfield uses information gathered through her position as Local Program Success Specialist to summarize the mentoring/induction programs of a number of states. She also includes the services provided by the National Association of Agricultural Educators and the National FFA Organization.

Dr. Lyle Westrom examines the costs of induction programming. He concludes that the profession cannot afford not to provide mentoring/induction programming for its young teachers.

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*Activities at Missouri's Summer Technical Institutes. Photo courtesy of John Tummons.*

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*Activities at Missouri's Summer Technical Institutes. Photos courtesy of John Tummons.*

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# *What Can be Done to Support Early Career Teachers?*

by Brad Greiman

**T**hink back to the time when you were seeking your first job as an agriculture teacher. Remember how you checked the job postings each day and spoke to your professors about the potential match of your abilities and the needs of the advertised teaching position. Recall the interview process that culminated in your first job as an agriculture teacher! While you may not be able to identify every beginning teacher who started teaching when you did, you likely can recall the approximate number.

Now fast forward to the tenure awards presented at the annual conference for agriculture teachers in your state. It is especially interesting to see how many individuals from your group of beginning teachers are still in the profession. Why do some teachers decide on a career as an agriculture teacher and others leave the profession? Who and what made a difference in each of our careers that impacted our retention. More importantly, who and what made a difference in our efforts to positively impact the learning and lives of our students. Understanding the answers to the previous questions are critical to the future of the agricultural education profession.

The advice I received during my first year of teaching helped me to establish a realistic tenure goal. Experienced teachers told me to be patient and recognize that foundation-building for a program takes time. The veterans reminded me that I would be the only agriculture teacher my students would know by the start of my fourth year at the school. By

that time, my student and program expectations would become more firmly established and I would become more knowledgeable about the school culture and politics. Relationship-building with students, parents, faculty, administrators, school board members and community partners would lead to new opportunities for students and the FFA chapter. I listened to the advice and attained my four-year teaching goal. Each day I found my job to be less and less of a challenge and more of a success. I enjoyed teaching so much that my four-year goal became a rewarding 21-year experience as an agriculture teacher.

I was fortunate that several neighboring agriculture teachers were my mentors during my early career years. They believed in my abilities and made me believe that I had a future as a teacher. I also appreciated the times that beginning teachers gathered at Iowa State University for professional development workshops. I recall driving to the workshops with another beginning teacher and found the trip valuable as we shared our challenges and problem-solved solutions. There was time for more of this conversation with other beginning teachers between the Friday night session and the Saturday workshops. In my current position as a university faculty member, I have been able to study and gain a deeper understanding of the beginning teacher induction experience. I am the Director of the Minnesota Teacher Induction Program (TIP) and organize professional development for a new group of beginning agriculture teachers on an annual basis. Following are some key aspects about assisting, retaining, and developing early career teachers

that I have learned.

## **Attitude Toward Teaching**

Each of us can recall the darkest moments of our first year of teaching and the roller coaster of emotions. The low-point in our attitude towards teaching was a critical moment of the school year. It may have required us to reach out to mentors and other supporters to seek assistance. What if a beginning teacher's support team of teacher induction planners, mentors, administrators, teacher colleagues, spouses and others had advance warning as to when this low-point might occur and the associated symptoms? It is likely that the support team could do a better job of assisting the beginning teacher with the dilemmas and challenges that may be contributing to their low-point if they were aware of the symptoms. If the support team was aware of this information, it is likely they could do a better job of assisting the beginning teacher with the dilemmas and challenges that may be contributing to the novice's low-point. Fortunately, research has been conducted that provides an awareness of the experiences and attitudinal changes of new teachers.

Moir's (1990) work with nearly 1,500 new teachers in California resulted in the identification of distinct phases through which new teachers move during their first year (see Figure 1). It is important to understand that the phases reflect what new teachers generally experience; not every new teacher goes through this exact sequence. An attainable goal of induction programs might be to flatten the roller coaster of attitudinal changes experienced by new teachers.



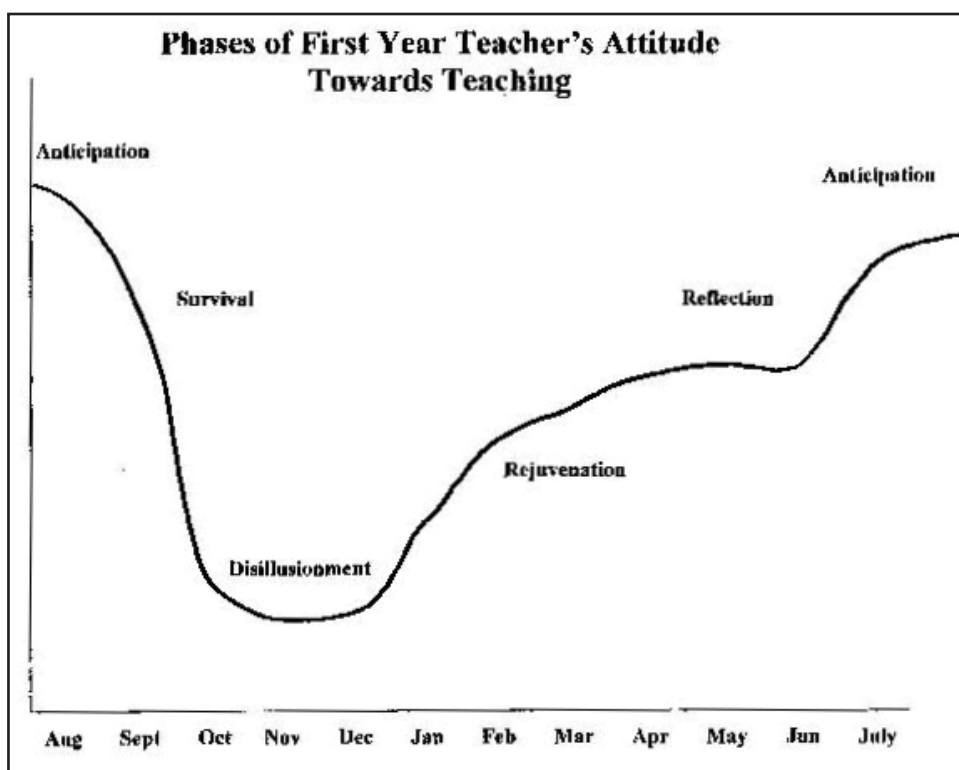


Figure 1. Phases of first-year teachers' attitude towards teaching. From *Phases of First-Year Teaching* by E. Moir, 1990, California New Teacher Project, California Department of Education.

## Mentoring

Mentoring has evolved to become the dominant component of teacher induction. There is consensus that the mentor-protégé relationship is the bond that makes the difference with induction programs, no matter how the program is designed or what activities are conducted. An effective mentoring relationship helps reduce the stress level of beginning teachers, increases job satisfaction, and assists the professional growth of novice teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Mentors can be conceptualized as having two distinct functions that revolve around providing professional assistance and psychosocial assistance to new teachers (Kram, 1985). Professional assistance refers to mentoring that supports new teachers in the development of knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the classroom and school. For exam-

ple, a mentor can share valuable advice and strategies regarding teaching methods, student motivation, classroom management, assessment, use of technology, program management, and interaction with faculty, parents, and administration (Greiman, 2007).

Mentors' second function is to provide psychosocial assistance which is designed to enhance new teachers' sense of competence and effectiveness through encouraging interactions. For example, a mentor who provides psychosocial assistance is accepting of the new teacher as a valued colleague, calls attention to successes, takes time to listen sympathetically to the problems and frustrations of the new teacher, and assists the new teacher to problem-solve challenges. Early career teachers appreciate the support, empathy, encouragement, counseling, and friendship of their mentors. Many

beginning teachers report that a mentor's psychosocial assistance was a key aspect of their retention in the teaching profession.

## Continuing Professional Development and Impact on Student Learning

Many induction programs for early career teachers have focused on retention. While the goal of retention is important, planners of teacher induction will increasingly be asked, Does new teacher support affect student achievement? One way to impact student achievement is to view the teacher induction program as continuing professional development (CPD). Increasing the duration of focused, in-depth CPD for early career teachers is a promising practice.

For example, CPD activities that are planned for the entire year and conducted each month are preferred over a singular workshop. Early career teachers appreciate the opportunity to meet, discuss, share, and learn on a regular schedule. In support, Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) determined that an average of 49 hours of CPD in a year improved student achievement; less than 14 hours had no effect on student learning.

(continued on page 10)



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# Teacher Retention - Louisiana Style

## The First Years

by Bradley Leger

A number of years ago I shared with a seasoned teacher that I was burned-out in my job as an agriscience teacher. I still remember his laughter when he learned that I was only in my first year of teaching. However, the experienced teacher quickly asked me about my feelings of burnout. At the time, I wondered if he thought our profession was soon to lose another one of its novice teachers.

Burnout can mean different things to different people. Carter (1994) defined teacher burnout as “physical, emotional, and attitudinal exhaustion that begins with a feeling of uneasiness and mounts as the joy of teaching begins to gradually slip away.” I don’t think that I was losing my joy of teaching, but I did feel overworked and exhausted, and I was aware that several of my peers had indeed left the profession early in their careers. I was just starting my teaching career and having some challenges in trying to build a fairly new program. I was getting stressed because I always wanted everything and everyone around me to be perfect. I knew that I desired to remain in the profession and was determined to give it my best effort. So, what was it that kept me in the profession? Upon reflection, I realized that:

- I had a good support system within my school and school district, from administrators to colleagues and peers. This included fellow agriscience teachers from the surrounding area with whom I could visit, ask questions, get advice, and share ideas.
- Graduate school: I began my masters program on a part-time basis during my first year of teaching. Besides learning great course content, this three-year odyssey allowed me to network with new peers including teachers from other disciplines, develop a wider support system, and stay connected with university faculty.
- I became active on the state and national levels in the professional education associations which represented agricultural education and career and technical education. I began holding leadership positions at a relatively young age and had the opportunity for professional development through travel, workshops, and networking with people within my state and from throughout the country.
- I established an Advisory Council which helped me to connect with the needs of the community and to provide feedback for the direction of my program.
- I developed a good relationship with my local and district school administration. This involved constant communication and transparency.
- I placed a high priority on community relations which involved building relationships with business and families as a result of supervised agricultural experience programs and meeting incoming freshmen students. I also became involved in local civic and church activities.
- After several years, I also learned to separate my personal time from school, although I dare say that most of us never totally master this! This meant leaving work behind at school, such as grading papers. This also included heeding the advice of a wise colleague who told me, “Don’t be a hero – take your summer vacation days.”
- I also developed a good rhythm of class organization and management. I recall a lunch time conversation at the teachers’ table in the cafeteria during my sixth year of teaching when I mentioned that I felt that things seemed to be getting much easier in the classroom with less stress. One of the more seasoned teachers remarked, “Well, Brad, that’s called *experience*.”

I certainly don’t claim that I had a perfect teaching experience during years one through seven, but my successful induction was a mixture of great undergraduate preparation and personal initiative coupled with the good fortune of working in a supportive environment. However, even amidst such a positive situation, I still had to do my part to make things happen. I challenged myself to further develop my teaching skills and to build trusting relationships with colleagues, the community, and administrators.

So, what have we been doing in Louisiana to provide tools and information to our novice teachers so that they will become successful and stay in the profession? Over the past several years, our state has made a concerted effort to identify the needs of our beginning teachers and to provide

the necessary resources for them to meet these needs. Louisiana Team Ag Ed made beginning teachers a priority several years ago by including this effort as a segment in its Strategic Plan. This article will describe three of the major initiatives which fall under this segment. It must be noted that several months prior to this writing, Louisiana Agricultural Education suffered a serious setback with a reduction in state professional staff which, among many other things, facilitated and coordinated the efforts of Team Ag Ed. However, members of Team Ag Ed are committed to continuing these efforts to the best of their capability with the resources that are available until future rebuilding can take place.

### **Louisiana Agriscience Education Induction Program**

After studying several models used in other states and by examining our own needs and resources, the Louisiana Agriscience Education Induction Program (LAEIP) was unfolded in 2008 and adopted by the Louisiana Agriscience Teachers Association. The basis of this program relies on building positive, dependable, and supportive relationships through a mentoring program between novice teachers in their first or second year and experienced agriscience teachers. The groundwork was also laid for a long-term agriscience teacher-specific induction program which would complement the existing program conducted by the Louisiana Department of Education for all new teachers. Goals of the LAEIP have been developed so that all novice teachers will:

- be provided with an experienced agriscience teacher mentor during their first and second year of teaching;
- be provided access to information to assist them with manag-

ing, planning, and conducting classroom/lab instruction, FFA activities, and SAE programs;

- be introduced to their professional organizations and provided with opportunities for active participation; and
- attend professional development workshops to build an educational portfolio with industry certifications and licenses.

Other goals and specifics are:

- at least 50 % of all novice agriscience teachers in Louisiana will participate in a quality post baccalaureate teacher education program and
- postsecondary institutions will identify all agricultural education majors during student teaching and forward names to Ag Ed Program Specialists for assistance in job placement.

The first and second years of the program involve phasing in resources at the appropriate time. This includes identification of qualified mentors, a mentor orientation workshop at the State Summer Teacher Conference, and fall and spring workshops for the novice teachers and student teachers.

### **National Quality Program Standards**

In 2008, Louisiana was selected as one of ten pilot states for the National Quality Program Standards initiative. This effort provides a structure whereby the local teacher(s), along with local administration and Advisory Council, conduct(s) a self-assessment of the local program based on seven standards: 1) Program Design and Instruction, 2) Experiential Learning, 3) Leadership Development, 4) School and Community Partnerships, 5) Marketing, 6) Certi-

fied Agriculture Teachers and Professional Growth, and 7) Program Planning and Evaluation. Several novice teachers elected to participate in the second year of this program with teachers from the pilot group serving as mentors. Although this initiative was not necessarily designed with the intent of involving novice teachers, it served as an excellent roadmap and guide for the new teachers to develop balance in their professional and personal lives.

### **New Graduate Level Programming At LSU**

Faculty within the LSU College of Agriculture's School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD) have also been attuned to the professional development needs of all our state's agricultural educators, including beginning teachers. First, a program has been developed in which agriscience teachers can fulfill all requirements for a Masters degree, and some for the Ph.D., via compressed video and web-based courses. Compressed video sites are available throughout numerous LSU AgCenter sites around the state as well as certain local school districts, civil parish libraries, or even other community col-

*(continued on page 19)*



*Bradley Leger is a former Louisiana FFA Executive Secretary and Agriscience Education Specialist. He now serves as a Coordinator in the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center's Organization Development and Evaluation Unit in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.*



# Learning to Drive a School Bus

by Wendy Nichols and Jim Scott

A wise man once stated that the first year of teaching is like driving a school bus loaded with children down a mountain slope and realizing you have no brakes. Is it any wonder we lose so many smart and talented teachers in the first years of their careers? Twenty percent of teachers leave at the end of their first year and half exit within five years according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. What is America's future when we consider students as they navigate the revolving door represented by one new teacher followed by another and another? Public education must reduce teacher attrition if there is any hope of making a positive difference in the lives of students.

## Skirt Hem and Splash Zone

Teachers are great story tellers. All of us can share horror stories of our first year in the classroom. I recall the first minute of my teaching career as I unknowingly closed the hem of my skirt into the door behind me and walked away with my usual brisk pace. Education literally came to a screeching halt in my classroom. The faux pas continue for those of us who remain in the classroom; we merely learn to handle them with greater ease. When you talk for a living, strange utterances will occur, and spit will fly into the area in closest proximity to the teacher which I refer to as the splash zone. Instead of fleeing the classroom we learn to laugh at our mistakes, hand a tissue to the unsuspecting victim in the splash zone, and keep at the business of education. So what makes one teacher remain happy and dedicated to the profession while others exit the bus

while it is still moving?

## You Are Not Driving the Bus By Yourself

The difference for me as a beginning teacher was having an experienced educator who I knew could answer all my questions, share her great wealth of experience, and never judge me harshly for my failures. I was fortunate to have a mentor whom I respected, liked, and trusted. Without her wisdom, caring, and encouragement, I would have been one of those teachers who would have ended up bailing after a year or two. The lesson I learned from my formative years of teaching was that I was not driving the bus alone; I could openly and honestly share my fears, mistakes, small successes, and growing confidence with a valued colleague. As the lead mentor teacher at Tolles Career & Technical Center, I have used my mentor's model to build what we believe to be an effective mentor program which provides support and a safety net to our early career teachers.

A truly effective mentor program must have buy in from all educational parties—the school board and superintendent through the building principal and supervisors and most importantly from the classroom teachers. Just like you do not learn to drive a school bus by yourself, a young teacher requires a team of individuals dedicated to providing unqualified support and resources with the goal of improving classroom instruction and student achievement. Mentor teachers must be highly trained and chosen selectively. A great classroom teacher does not necessarily translate into a great mentor teacher; training is essential. Selection of mentors and matching with first-year teach-

ers is completed through collaboration between the lead mentor teacher and the superintendent. Along with training, intangibles are considered to hopefully create the perfect fit. In the six years our mentor program has been running, we have only had one mismatch that was quickly corrected with agreement between the new teacher and the mentor teacher.

## Checklists and Reflection

The first two weeks of school are crucial to the new teacher. A strong relationship of trust must be built immediately for the mentoring to be most effective. We provide an informal luncheon for the mentor and mentees in which the dyads get to know each other and begin building a personal as well as a professional relationship. A checklist tailored by teaching assignment is provided to the mentor and the mentee consisting of to do items to be completed before school starts. This allows the new teacher to focus on preparation for instruction and not having to worry about forgetting a policy or a procedure. Monthly checklists continue to identify special events, duties, and assignments throughout the school year. For example, the new teacher is provided dates for parent-teacher conferences, deadlines for grades, preparation for exams, etc. During these informal help sessions, rapport and trust are established. The mentor teacher becomes that safe person for information, advice, and often simply a listening ear. All conversations between mentor and mentees remain in strictest confidence. Mentors never conference in an evaluative manner with supervisors pertaining to their mentees and certainly private conversations are never shared in the teacher's lounge or with other colleagues. The only time I, as lead mentor teach-



er, become privy to a conversation is when both the mentor and mentee agree to share.

Classroom walk-throughs are introduced by the end of September as trust between the mentor and his/her new teacher develops. This practice creates a comfort level of classroom observation in a safe non-evaluative atmosphere. The new teacher is encouraged to observe the veteran teacher as well watching for agreed upon practices and strategies. Reflective conversations following all walk-throughs are valuable in the development of a formative action plan. Interactive journals also promote the concept of self-reflection and planning of instruction. As with conversations, the content of the journals is confidential; the new teacher keeps the journal in an agreed upon location. It is incumbent upon the mentor teacher to check the journal regularly and provide feedback and suggestions to the new teacher. Venting is permitted and probably healthy as long as positive proactive solutions to the issue are brainstormed, offered, and discussed later.

### **Mentoring is Sharing**

The first few weeks of school for a young teacher can set patterns good and bad that can last for an entire teaching career. Providing tips for time management, assisting in planning of instruction, and encouragement of self-reflection should be the focus of any early mentoring. Bell to bell instruction is a must and planning, planning, planning must become routine. Bad habits of ending instruction early or being only a couple pages ahead of the students can lead to frustration and unhappiness in the classroom. Losing a talented young teacher may result but is unacceptable. Solid mentoring can reduce this risk. Mentoring might simply be described as sharing: share tried and

true lessons, share what works, and even share your own failures in the classroom. If we are asking mentees to trust us, we must be willing to trust them as well.

Mentors sharing failures became significant at our school a few years back. A young instructor who taught in our firefighter program at Tolles Career & Technical Center experienced what could have been a career-ending moment. In an ambitious lesson plan, the new teacher decided to demonstrate the hazards of smoke to students who aspired to become firefighters; the location was in his classroom. He turned on a newly purchased smoke machine to the delight of his class of high school students. The machine worked perfectly and promptly filled his classroom and our school with smoke. Of course, smoke alarms went off and all occupants exited the building—students, teachers, administrators, including our district superintendent who of course was hosting a conference with the Ohio Department of Education that day. Word spread quickly that one of our new instructors was the culprit and how ironic that it was the instructor in the firefighter program. This made for great fodder in the staff lounge but not so amusing to the humiliated instructor.

We quickly convened a meeting of our mentor teachers and the new teacher. I will never forget how forlorn the new teacher looked when he entered my classroom and faced the mentor teachers. However, the mentor teachers proceeded to share with him some of their not so fine moments in their first years of instruction. A long-time, experienced art



*Business and industry representatives serve as the final connecting piece of mentoring that is vital to the success of a new instructor.*

teacher shared how in his first year of teaching he became distracted by someone at his classroom door. This gave one of his art students just enough time to have a female classmate photographed inappropriately with a school camera. The picture happened to be developed by the instructor's supervisor and showed a clear depiction of the young lady and the first-year teacher in the background laughing and chatting at his classroom door with a colleague. The incident lasted only a few seconds but the photograph froze time. Fortunately, the shared experiences proved cathartic and took the new teacher's mind off his mistake. Later in the year, the young instructor went on to receive the highest score on the

Praxis III assessment of any of our new teachers—a one half point from perfect. Career saved!

### **Mentoring Provided by Advisory Committee Members**

Business and industry representatives serve as the final connecting piece of mentoring that is vital to the success of a new instructor, especially in the career and technical setting. Curriculum decisions guided by an active advisory committee offer immediate credibility to the program as well as allowing the new teacher to focus instruction aligned to industry standards as well as state curriculum requirements. The business and industry mentors may provide direct instruction to students as well as offering extended classroom opportunities to students such as field trips, job shadowing, internships, and even employment. A strong business and industry presence creates a lasting bond with the instructor that potentially reaps rewards throughout their ca-

reer. It becomes incumbent upon the school mentor to assist the new instructor in building a strong advisory committee and to utilize this resource in a very positive manner to improve classroom instruction, increase student achievement, and provide essential resources to the district. Utilizing a strong industry mentor helps create a high quality, rigorous, and relevant industry-based program.

Just as a mentor teacher made a difference in my career, I can only hope that building an effective mentor program makes a difference in the careers of the young instructors who get on the teaching career bus. As public education continues to be closely scrutinized by the public and the media, we must make every effort to provide the greatest opportunity for young educators to be successful. We owe it to them, their students, our profession, and our nation to nurture and retain the talents of these young educators. The bus is now leaving your school—who is driving?



*Wendy Nichols is a Lead Mentor Teacher and Social Studies Teacher at Tolles Career & Technical Center, Plain City, Ohio*



*Jim Scott is a Turf, Landscape, and Greenhouse Management Instructor at Tolles Career & Technical Center, Plain City, Ohio*

## ***What Can be Done.....*** (continued from page 5)

In conclusion, I am pleased that a number of authors from across the United States answered my call to provide their perspective on assisting teachers during a critical phase of a teacher's career, years one to seven. The articles in this issue offer helpful suggestions to retain and develop effective agriculture teachers.

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# *Learning to Do, Doing to Learn: The Need for Professional Development with an Emphasis on Alternatively Certified Agriculture Teachers*

by J. Shane Robinson

**L**earning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve." These words reflect the FFA Motto and represent the backbone of what agricultural education symbolizes. Agricultural education has always prided itself on experiential, hands-on learning. For many, there is no better way to learn than through real-life experience. As such, "learning to do" and "doing to learn" hold special significance in our profession because they insinuate lifelong learning and viability for our future.

## **An Induction into the Profession**

As a young child, I was brought up watching Westerns. John Wayne was my dad's favorite cowboy actor. I remember watching "The Duke" perform his antics almost nightly on our small, rabbit-eared television set. His classics have provided timeless entertainment for all ages throughout the years. However, as much as I liked John Wayne and his films, *Lonesome Dove* has always been my favorite cowboy movie. Captain Woodrow Call and Gus McRae forever changed the way I viewed westerns. To this day, my brother and I still enjoy reciting quotes from that movie. However, one stands out in my mind. For those who have seen the movie, Newt wants to "get an education" by hanging out with Woodrow and Gus. Yet, Woodrow knows better and shelters the boy from the things he does not yet need to be exposed. Their dialogue is as follows:

Newt: Captain, can I go with you

down to the river next time you go? I believe I'm gettin' old enough.

Woodrow Call: You get old quick 'sit-tin' out here on the porch talkin'. Best go on to bed.

Newt: It's still early, Captain.

Woodrow Call: You go on to bed now, like I told you to.

Gus McRae: Now, why did you do that? Best chance the boy's got at a education is listenin' to me talk.

Woodrow Call: What kinda education is that?

Gus McRae: You think he'll learn more shovelin' horse poop for you?

Woodrow Call: I shoveled my share of it, it ain't hurt me none.

Gus McRae: Well, it's fine with me if that's how you wanna make your fortune.

These lines resonate with me because I have been known to be like Newt. As a youngster, I often thought I was ready to learn things about the world that, in hindsight, I was not yet prepared for. During those times, I was fortunate to have seasoned mentors in my life, like Woodrow Call, who nurtured and assisted me in my development.

This guidance and mentorship was especially important to me as a secondary agricultural education teacher. I remember fondly my 12-week student teaching experience. I was placed 6 ½ hours from my home-

town in a community that was totally foreign and unfamiliar. As such, I was totally reliant upon my cooperating teacher to direct, guide, and council me through my internship. Fortunately for me, my cooperator took me under his wing and allowed me to progress at a speed in which I was comfortable. He never pushed too much on me at once, yet never let me get too complacent either. It was a perfect blend of allowing me to grow and progress at my own speed.

As beneficial as my student teaching experience was to my future as an agricultural educator, I often wonder about those teachers in our profession who, unfortunately, did not experience the student teaching internship (i.e., alternatively certified teachers). Who serves as their Woodrow Call? Who directs and guides them in their formative years as an early career teacher? Who "shows them the ropes" and helps them "understand the lay of the land?"

## **An Alternative Way of Thinking**

There are teacher shortages in American school systems (Hess, 2000). Agricultural education certainly has its share of teacher supply and demand issues (Camp, Broyles, & Skelton, 2002). As such, alternatively certified (AC) teachers have been employed, in part, to offset the shortages of agricultural education teachers in public school systems across the country.

In Oklahoma, a surge of AC agricultural education teachers has entered the teaching ranks in recent years. These teachers have college



degrees in agriculture and usually enter the classrooms with formal agricultural industry experience (Ruhland & Bremer, 2002). They typically have degrees in animal science, agricultural communications, and agricultural economics (Robinson, 2009). However, what they fail to have is preparation in formal pedagogy (Feistritz & Haar, 2008). They often know little about instructional design and implementation, classroom management strategies, and the characteristics that constitute effective teaching. At times, AC teachers struggle to adjust to the youth leadership development responsibilities as well as supervising student projects. Although these issues are not limited to AC teachers (as all teachers struggle with these issues to a degree), traditionally certified teachers have a cooperating teacher mentor to call on. Yet, where do AC teachers turn? Understanding that AC agriculture teachers in Oklahoma needed professional development and mentorship, a program was added in 2006 to assist AC teachers improve their pedagogical understanding and content knowledge in formal educational environments.

### Endorsement Program: A Three-Year Commitment

In 2006, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE), Agricultural Education Division, and the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership recognized a need to serve the growing number of AC agricultural education teachers in Oklahoma and enhance their pedagogical understanding. Because AC teachers enter the ranks via a “non traditional” route, they bypass vital teacher preparation coursework. As such, AC teachers rarely have any preparation in pedagogy or youth development. To that end, a require-

ment was made in which AC teachers would become “endorsed” into the profession once they completed the following three courses with a “C” or better within three years of their initial employment: AGED 3103 – *Foundations and Philosophy of Teaching Agricultural Education* (i.e., lesson planning, learning theory, and unit construction); AGED 3203 – *Planning the Community Program in Agricultural Education* (i.e., FFA and SAE); AGED 5990 – *Teaching Methods for Early Career Agricultural Education Teachers* (i.e., teaching methods).

### Engagement through Professional Development

The previously described courses have been offered to AC teachers in Oklahoma via a mixed delivery. Course content is uploaded onto a website for teachers who are enrolled in respective courses to access whenever necessary throughout the semester. Then, face-to-face professional development workshops are held to provide additional clarity to assignments and requirements of the courses. Specifically AGED 3103 is offered in fall semesters, AGED 3203 is offered in spring semesters, and AGED 5990 is offered in summer semesters. Realistically, AC teachers can enroll in and complete all three courses in one year and become “fully endorsed” as a teacher. However, the program is designed to be a three-year program to enable AC teachers to better utilize the course content by being emerged in continuous professional development throughout their first three years of teaching. If teachers fail to complete the three courses with a “C” or better within

their first three years, ODCTE has determined that their program funding will be retracted.

Professional development workshops are centered on course content. Further, in an attempt to be more “geographically-friendly,” workshops have existed throughout the state in various community colleges as well as on campus at OSU. Numerous AC teachers have participated in the workshops since the program’s inception in 2006.

### Outcomes of the Program

In all, 36 AC teachers have been employed in secondary agricultural education programs since July 2006. A breakdown of those teachers is as follows: 2006-2007 – 10; 2007-2008 – 10; 2008-2009 – 9; 2009-2010 – 7 (see Table 1). Of those 36, nine have completed the three required courses and are considered “program completers.” Three have changed jobs within the profession, and 11 have left the profession altogether in pursuit of another career. Further, a number of teachers remain deficient in coursework. Specifically, seven need AGED 3103, 13 need AGED 3203, and 14 need AGED 5990 (see Table 2).

### Opportunities for Continued Professional Development

Although this program has been in existence since 2006, more efforts should be devoted to ensure AC teachers are confident and knowledgeable of their role as secondary agricultural education teachers. Specifically, Communities of Practice (CoPs)

Table 1

*Breakdown of Alternatively Certified Teachers by Year (N = 36)*

2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
10	10	9	7

Table 2

Numbers of Students who Need the Required Agricultural Education Courses (N = 36)

AGED 3103	AGED 3203	AGED 5990	Completed Coursework	Left Profession	Changed Schools
7	13	14	9	11	3

should be established in which AC teachers pair with traditionally certified teachers to understand better the demands and responsibilities associated with teaching, advising, and supervising students in formal and nonformal agricultural education settings.

Further, opportunities exist for developing CoPs between agricultural education teachers and other teachers in the school system. Because AC teachers often have real-life industry experience, they can enrich the learning environment for students in practical ways. For example, agricultural education teachers should reach out to their science and mathematics colleagues to develop a set of lessons in which a more seamless transfer of knowledge would exist for students in science, mathematics, and agriculture. If agricultural education is truly experiential in nature, perhaps agricultural education teachers should focus on providing real-life, meaningful applications to the theoretical concepts to which students are exposed in their science and mathematics classes. This CoP would not only help increase students' understanding of core competencies in science and mathematics and hopefully increase test scores in those areas, but it would also assist AC teachers to improve pedagogical understanding and receive real-time professional development by collaborating on lesson plans, unit development, and assessment strategies with their colleagues.

### Summary

Agricultural education has long been associated with experiential learning. The FFA motto exemplifies the way agricultural education should be experienced - *Learning to do, Doing to learn, Earning to live, Living to serve*. Although this motto has served FFA members and agricultural education students well throughout the years, it cannot be taken at face value with novice teachers. What is inherent about the motto is the assumption that the learner has some prior knowledge and/or previous experience(s) related to what is being learned. Because alternatively certified teachers have little experience related to classroom and laboratory instruction, *learning to do* and *doing to learn* should not be equivalent to "taking a sip of water out of a fire hydrant." Instead, prolonged, sustained professional development should exist for all teachers, especially those who did not encounter the student teaching experience.

In the end, we all need a Captain Woodrow Call in our line of work – someone who understands the "lay of the land" and is willing to provide quality support and mentorship whenever appropriate. AC teachers are no different. What appears to be imperative is that sustained and prolonged professional development must continue. And, teachers should always strive to network, collaborate, and seek mentorship from those who are well seasoned.

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# *It Takes a Village to Raise an Agriculture Teacher*

by Ellen Thompson

**D**uring my new position as the Teach Ag Campaign Coordinator, I have had the wonderful opportunity to speak to a wide variety of groups, organizations, and teachers about the awesome profession of agricultural education. Many times the audience consisted of first-year agriculture teachers or those in agricultural education undergraduate programs. A common theme I presented was that it takes a village to raise an agriculture teacher. I know that my colleagues share this same belief and I personally experienced this theme during the eight glorious years of teaching agriculture in Minnesota. I lived through the days of despair and also experienced the rewards of this incredible profession. Never has there been a time more critical than now for the village to unite and support the retention of early career teachers.

Agriculture teachers are faced with increasing pressure from administration, parents, and themselves to do better with less money and less time. Agriculture teachers are being asked to teach courses that offer science, economics, math, and/or art credit while maintaining the flexibility and structure that allows a diverse population of students to succeed. Who is better positioned than agriculture teachers to face this challenge with chutzpah and vision?

We all know the latest push for greater inclusion of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in our curriculum. We also know that agricultural education has been implementing STEM into practical and real-life applications since the Smith-Hughes Act was established.

This is an example of agriculture teachers getting things done and getting things done right. Unfortunately, agriculture teachers sometimes become burned out in this process and leave the profession because of the do-it-all mentality. However, because of the do-it-right mentality, agricultural education has developed a plethora of resources and programs to support new and veteran agriculture teachers. Agricultural education is on the forefront of creating programs to ensure that good teachers are not lost because of burnout, isolation, or lack of support. So, just what is agricultural education doing right in this battle against attrition and burn out? A LOT! State and national initiatives have been developed to improve job satisfaction and maintain program quality.

## **Professional Development and Communities of Practice**

Agriculture teachers have to wear a lot of hats such as teaching numerous content areas, managing the many aspects of the FFA chapter, and assisting students in having a supervised agricultural experience. To accomplish these objectives, it is imperative that professional development be provided to agriculture teachers. State associations and the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) do an excellent job of providing workshops and seminars at state and national conferences. Other professional development options range from NAAE sponsored webinars taught by agriculture teachers to content specific training. Because agriculture teachers are often on an island in their program, professional development fosters collegiality and unity within the profession. There is probably no greater professional development than simply sharing ideas

so in October 2008, NAAE launched an aggressive new networking program called Communities of Practice (CoP). The impact of CoP on agricultural education has been immeasurable. CoP allows agriculture teachers to communicate with each other without the barrier of distance or time. Agriculture teachers can post questions, documents, discussions, or simply share thoughts through a blog. With over 1200 registered members and countless other users who visit the site daily, CoP has become an effective way for agriculture teachers to do what they do best, help each other. If you have not yet been to the CoP website, I encourage you to stop reading this article now and check out this free resource at <http://www.naae.org/communities>.

## **Mentoring and Teacher Induction**

During my first year of teaching in Minnesota I participated in a program known as the Teacher Induction Program (TIP). This was a structured, organized, and well-executed program coordinated by the University of Minnesota and designed for first-year teachers. The program matched first-year teachers with mentors who made school visits. The first-year teachers also meet periodically throughout the year to share triumphs, struggles, and suggestions. The Minnesota TIP continues today and recently implemented monthly web conference meetings and has involved agriculture teachers as regional mentors. This program and many like it in other states are successful because those involved make an effort to include new teachers in the profession. While this type of mentoring is quite formal, informal mentoring is just as important. This may be as subtle as inviting a new teacher to sit at your table during a



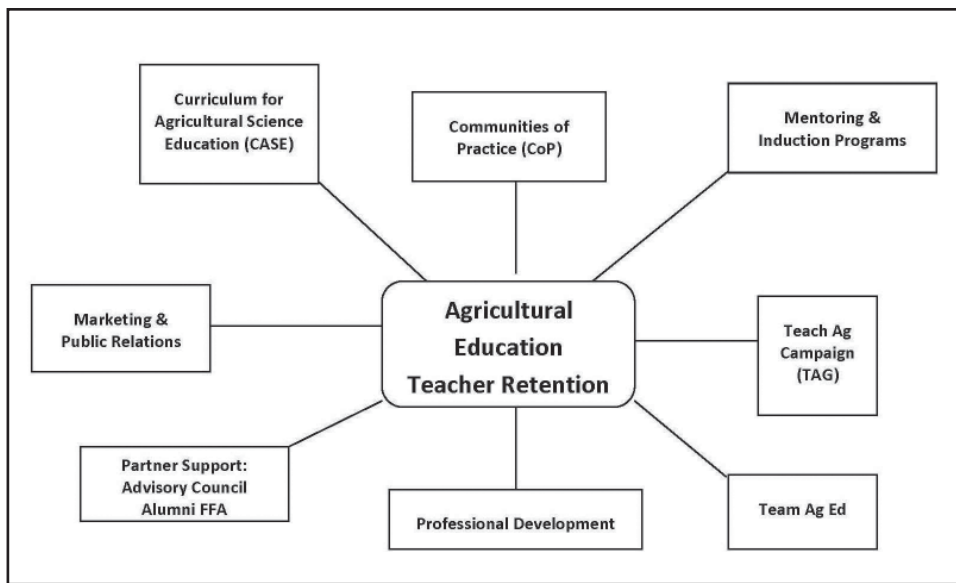


Figure 1. Resources that can improve the retention of agricultural education teachers.

summer conference lunch, or calling a new neighboring teacher and seeing what they need. So take a minute today and touch base with a teacher who has been in the profession less than seven years.

### The National Council for Agricultural Education

Agricultural education is fortunate to have The Council, which is basically a National Team Ag Ed. The Council is the visionary and strategic nerve center for agricultural education. Currently The Council has two extremely important initiatives being implemented. The Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) is an aggressive new curriculum designed by agriculture teachers with a framework intended to challenge students, provide extensive professional development, and focus on STEM concepts contextualized in agriculture. This remarkable curriculum is exactly what teachers need to validate agricultural education as a rigorous science curriculum while continuing the relevance and relationship components integral to our programs. Go to <http://www.case4learning.org> for more informa-

tion on the CASE Curriculum.

The Council's other major initiative is one very near and dear to my heart and that is the National Teach Ag Campaign that is delivered by the NAAE through a grant from Campbell's Soup and Landmark Nurseries. The Teach Ag Campaign is an initiative that creates an awareness of the opportunities for a career in agricultural education while also celebrating the contributions that agriculture teachers make in their schools and communities. The Teach Ag Campaign has designed an outstanding number of resources and tools. The Teach Ag website has everything from outlines for state Teach Ag workshops, a Teach Ag video, press release templates, lesson outlines, and so much more to promote agriculture programs while encouraging students to explore agricultural education. Check out more at <http://www.naae.org/teachag>

### Partner Support

During my first few years of teaching in Minnesota, I would attend the summer conference and listen to state supervisor Joel Larsen talk

about the importance of an advisory council and FFA alumni board at the local level. However, I felt too busy to even consider adding those aspects to my program. It was not until my fourth year of teaching that I finally decided to see what all the fuss was about. It turns out Joel was right; partnerships and support organizations for the agricultural education program are necessary. I am definitely one of those people who like to do everything on my own and scoff at the offer of help. I learned very quickly though that if I wanted to be able to provide a multitude of opportunities for my students, I would not be able to do it alone. The advisory council and FFA alumni became an important resource in advocating for the agriculture program, keeping me connected to agriculture, and creating a bridge between what the students were learning in the classroom and the real world application of the content.

I wish I could go back as a first-year teacher and remind myself that I don't have to do everything my first year and I don't have to do it alone. Figure 1 shows a mind map that illustrates this advice in the form of connections among resources that can improve the retention of agricultural education teachers. Sometimes all the resources that agricultural education has to offer can be a blessing and a curse. It is within each of us and is

*(Continued on page 19)*



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# Care and Feeding of the Young Teacher: Missouri's Model for Beginning Teacher Success

by John Tummons

Without a doubt, spring is my favorite season. Winter releases its icy grip of the countryside and life begins anew. For me, spring is the time when the fields turn green and new calves start hitting the ground. The newest generation takes their rightful place as the focal point of the group; the future of the herd is dependent on their success. Spring is also the time when a new crop of agriculture teachers move from the classrooms of the university to the classrooms of secondary programs across the nation.

These new teachers will soon make an impact on the learning and lives of their students. But who will support the new teachers? Would we take a newly weaned calf and expect it to thrive without special care and attention? Of course not! Good producers know that special care and support is required during this stressful transition period. Why would we not offer that same level of care and support to a beginning teacher in the stressful first years of teaching?

Young teachers have invested much time and money into pursuing agricultural education as a career. Additionally, teacher attrition and burnout among young teachers negatively affects the total population of available agriculture teachers (Boone & Boone, 2007). These facts demand current agriculture teachers and leaders take an active role in supporting our new professionals. Just like the herd depends on the youngest generation, the future of our profession depends on the success of our newest members.

## Missouri Mentor-Induction Program

Missouri has created a professional development model based upon a rigorous mentor-induction program and relevant technical training for young teachers. These programs are designed to provide proactive and individual support to beginning teachers. The mentor-induction program is specifically designed to provide assistance to the beginning agriculture teacher in a prescribed and systematic approach. The program includes all first and second-year agriculture teachers (protégés) and expert secondary agriculture teachers mentors. As the name implies, there are two aspects to the beginning teacher program; a mentoring component and an induction teaching component.

As a beginning agriculture teacher, I had questions each day about the many tasks of operating, leading, and developing a successful secondary program. Where does a beginning teacher turn for help? I really needed someone to advise me from time to time as the need arose. This is the rationale behind the mentor/protégé model. The mentor provides individualized support to each beginning teacher and shepherds them into the teaching profession.

Mentors guide the beginning teacher through the stressful transition period from their role as a student to their role as teacher.

Mentors serve protégés as experts, evaluators, and friends. As a content-specific advisor, mentors serve the beginning teacher as an expert in agricultural curriculum, and pedagogy in the secondary classroom. Additionally, mentors are expected to observe and evaluate beginning teachers in their school for one day and offer feedback. Finally, many new agriculture teachers find themselves in an unfamiliar community and may have a weak support network. Mentors provide a friendly face at agriculture teacher meetings, FFA activities, and Career Development Events. The mentor program provides an opportunity for beginning teachers to build relationships within the professional community.

State staff identify and assign a different mentor to each first and second-year teacher. Special efforts are made to match protégés with men-



Teachers gain small gas engine experience at the summer technical institute.

Activity	Date	Who attends?	Topics discussed
Induction kick-off (held at summer teacher's conference)	July	All first and second-year teachers and mentors	Welcome to the profession Introductions Expectations Role of mentor Role of protégé Assignments
State-wide meeting	September	All first-year teachers and mentors	Encouragement Lab management strategies FFA supervision Panel question and answer Behavior issues Review of assignments
Fall Area Seminars (held in each area)	October	All Missouri agriculture teachers	Current issues in Missouri Agricultural Education
District mentor/protégé meetings (held in each district)	November	All first and second-year teachers and mentors	Encouragement Novel teaching ideas SAE supervision Mentor/protégé meetings Review of assignments
Statewide meeting	January	All first and second-year teachers	Encouragement Novel teaching ideas Time management Managing FFA activities Career Development Events Completing state reports Completing FFA awards

Figure 1. Workshops for beginning agriculture teachers and mentors in Missouri.

tors who are similar in geographic location and gender. Mentor teachers cannot teach at the same school as protégés; this requirement promotes professional, not hierarchical, relationships within agricultural departments and gives protégés a chance to express departmental concerns to someone outside the situation.

The second component of the beginning teacher induction program is a series of planned workshops and assignments designed to empower young teachers with the tools needed for success. Induction workshops are scheduled in the first half of the school year to provide initial support for protégés (see Figure 1). The assignments (see Figure 2) are rigorous, specific, and help the beginning

teacher create a more effective teaching environment. Assignments are submitted to mentors for feedback prior to the due date, and revised assignments are sent to the professional development specialist for comments and grading. Beginning teachers can receive two hours of graduate credit each year from any of Missouri's teacher training sites for their efforts.

The induction program is revised and updated yearly by Missouri state staff, teacher educators, and the Missouri Vocational Agriculture Teacher's Association (MVATA) executive committee. All mentor and protégé paperwork, including the syllabus, can be downloaded at <http://dass.missouri.edu/aged/resources/induction.php>.

## Technical Institutes

The third unique component of Missouri's model is the incorporation of optional technical agricultural education for practicing agriculture teachers. As beginning teachers complete their first year in the classroom, many realize they lack the wisdom to effectively teach certain subjects. Suddenly, technical agricultural knowledge becomes a very relevant topic for those teachers. Agriculture is a very broad subject, and teachers need opportunities to learn specific skills and teaching techniques in each area. Missouri delivers technical agricultural content to teachers through technical institutes. Although there is little extra time in an agriculture teacher's calendar, technical institutes are scheduled in the least hectic times. Technical institutes are traditionally scheduled for early summer, but have shown recent success over winter break. Institutes are designed for intense instruction; 10-12 hour days are common and institutes will vary in length from two to five days. Instructors are generally veteran secondary teachers or teacher educators and a strong emphasis is placed on specific content knowledge and how teachers can best deliver the content in their own classrooms.

For a beginning teacher, the technical institute provides in-depth content knowledge and teaching strategies from veteran teachers. Institutes also offer an opportunity to network with teachers statewide. Many veteran teachers enjoy participating in technical institutes to recharge their batteries or to add variety to their teaching. Teachers may choose to take technical institutes for graduate credit or for continuing education units. Descriptions of the technical institutes can be viewed at <http://dass.missouri.edu/aged/summer-institutes.php>.



Induction 1 assignments	Induction 2 assignments
I. Behavior management plan II. Individual mentoring plan III. Professional development plan IV. Program description with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philosophy</li> <li>• Objectives</li> <li>• Course offerings/descriptions</li> <li>• Course rotation</li> <li>• Teaching calendars</li> <li>• Grading policies/procedures</li> </ul> V. FFA Program of Activities (POA) VI. Novel teaching idea presentation VII. FFA chapter constitution and bylaws VIII. For one unit of instruction, provide competencies, assessments, and resources IX. Annual program evaluation X. Mentor observation XI. Two principal observations	I. Individual mentoring plan II. Professional development plan III. Novel teaching idea presentation IV. Teaching calendars for all courses V. Two principal teaching observations VI. Five experiences from the following list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create, or revise, a plan for establishing an advisory council</li> <li>• Promotional (marketing) plan for you program</li> <li>• Annual program evaluation plan</li> <li>• Student handbook for the agriculture program</li> <li>• Annual program executive summary to share with stakeholders</li> <li>• Develop a student recruitment/retention plan for your program</li> <li>• Create a summer calendar</li> <li>• Write a grant for the agriculture program</li> <li>• Develop or update a written articulation agreement or dual credit</li> <li>• Develop a system for tracking mastery of competencies</li> <li>• Develop curriculum for student portfolios with appropriate assessments</li> <li>• Develop or modify three (3) instructional units to incorporate critical thinking/problem solving into the lessons</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Induction assignments for beginning agriculture teachers in Missouri.

Ninety-six teachers from Missouri and Arkansas participated in the 2009 summer technical institutes. Past topics include agronomy, forestry, turf grass management, teaching agricultural mechanics, small gas engine repair, large project construction, horse production, greenhouse production, and tours of Missouri agriculture. Additionally, 30 teachers participated in a two-day meat science workshop held December 29-30. Topics are identified through a needs assessment of current secondary agriculture teachers and are planned based on availability of quality instructors and resources.

### Beginning Teacher Retention in Missouri

Given the amount of effort and

resources dedicated to beginning teachers, what is the best measure of beginning teacher success in Missouri? In a word: retention. In a two year study, Watkins and Scott (2007) compared three groups of beginning teachers in Missouri: (1) first-year career education teachers who participated in the mentoring program; (2) first-year career education teachers who chose to not participate in the mentoring program; and (3) first-year teachers who were not in career education. The group with the highest retention rate from the first to the second year was the first-year career education teachers who participated in the mentoring program, with 96.0% of teachers returning for a second year. Among Missouri's non-career education beginning teachers, 78.1% of teachers returned for a second year

of teaching. The group with the lowest retention rate was first-year career teachers who did not choose to participate in the beginning teacher program, with only 64.6% of non-participants returning for a second year. All beginning agricultural education teachers are strongly encouraged to participate in the mentoring program, and 31 of 33 (93.9%) first-year agriculture teachers returned for a second year of teaching. The mentor-induction program has a substantial positive impact on teacher retention in Missouri.

Who has time to implement all of these activities? Missouri's agricultural education professional development activities are coordinated by a Professional Development Specialist. This position is funded through a

grant from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and is housed at the University of Missouri. This individual coordinates professional development activities statewide and serves as a liaison between secondary agriculture teachers, teacher educators, and state staff. The duties of this individual include coordinating the mentor-induction program, planning and implementing technical institutes, organizing the summer teacher's conference, organizing the state agriculture Career Development Events, and delivering the fall area seminars at various locations.

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tNotebook/2008-mentor-study.pdf



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## *Teacher Retention - Louisiana Style..... (continued from page 7)*

leges and universities. Teachers also have an option to earn an M.S. by taking all classes that are totally web-based, thus being able to participate from the comfort of their homes or offices. Hence, barriers to earning an advanced degree are being removed.

LSU SHREWD has also rolled out a new course which will be particularly useful for beginning agricultural educators and those working on alternative certification. According to Dr. Curt Friedel, Assistant Professor, this course will focus on sound practices which will assist a new professional on her or his march toward success. Assignments will be

practical in nature and will contribute to program improvement and professional development. Topics will include: service-learning, developing a three-year plan, developing an effective classroom management plan, organizing an advisory council, teaching SAE and FFA in the classroom, planning for professional development, and reflecting on the teaching and learning process.

### Looking Forward

As with most states, Louisiana has its challenges with recruiting, preparing, inducting, and retaining a cadre of qualified, dependable

agriscience educators. Even with the recent challenges of a loss in state staff and reduced budgets, members of Louisiana Team Ag Ed have taken this issue very seriously and wish to continue making strides in providing an agricultural education program of the highest caliber for the students of our state.

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## *It Takes a Village..... (continued from page 15)*

our responsibility as agriculture educators to help those new or struggling in the profession to suggest resources, provide timely assistance, and invite those teachers into the village. I am proud to be an agriculture teacher. The best people I know are agriculture teachers. My dad is an agri-

culture teacher so I grew up watching him devote his time and energy to helping students succeed. Being an agriculture teacher is a wonderful lifestyle and career. Please make sure you pass that message on to your students and fellow agriculture teachers today! All of us in Team Ag

Ed, including middle & high school teachers, farm business management instructors, community and technical college instructors, state supervisors, university faculty, and partner supporters, are part of the village that raises an agriculture teacher.

# Dear Agriculture Teacher: Please Answer My Questions!

by T. J. Brown, Chris Ovrebo, and Kevin Plante

**T**heme editor Brad Greiman asked three Minnesota agriculture teachers to identify questions that early career teachers commonly ask. The teachers then answered the questions based upon their personal experience as an agriculture teacher; T.J. is in his fourth year of teaching, Chris in his third year, and Kevin taught 17 years. In addition, each of the authors was coordinator of the Minnesota Teacher Induction Program (TIP) as a graduate student. As the coordinator, the authors had the opportunity to observe, talk to, and assist beginning teachers in Minnesota from 2004 to 2009. The following are the questions and answers.

**Question 1: I thought my life couldn't get any busier than it was in college but being a beginning teacher is crazy. How do I do manage my time so I don't collapse?**

T. J.: Time management could be one of the most difficult challenges for a beginning agriculture teacher. An ag teacher's schedule is demanding, but in reality we are often the ones who make our own schedule more hectic. I believe this is true because when each of us signed our first contract the word no miraculously escaped our vocabulary!

I was hired to revive a dying agriculture program that was once a powerhouse in the region. Everyone in the school and community had a list of things they thought I needed to do to get the program back on track, and I was stricken with the inability to say no. Trying to act on all of their suggestions nearly led me to quit; un-

fortunately, this happens to many beginning teachers.

While I'm not completely cured, I am recovering and beginning to use the word no. I had to realize that I could not fix any program if I was stretched to my limit. You have to recognize that trying to be everything to everybody only sets you up to fail. You need to know who you are as an ag teacher and use that knowledge to be selective about what you decide to be involved in during your first year of teaching. That strategy will help you manage your time by limiting your obligations in your new position.

Another item I found valuable in time management was making to do lists. I like to prioritize the list by making due dates for the tasks on my list. This may sound simple, but it helps me to be more efficient and productive with my time. I most often do this on a Friday afternoon or Saturday morning and again on Monday morning. That way I can correctly devote my time to tasks that need to get done on the weekend and those that can wait until next week.

**Question 2: The first year of teaching is an emotional roller coaster. What is your advice on how to deal with the highs and lows?**

Chris: It is very easy to become consumed by the job that first year. There is so much to do and learn and prepare for that it can put a strain on your emotions. One of the most rewarding things for me during the first year was getting to know the students and working with the FFA. This really helped me to build positive relationships with my students. I also spent a lot a time planning and pre-

paring for class that first year and had to step back every once and a while to see what I had done. I was often pleasantly surprised and pleased with how things turned out.

As I have grown as an educator and have seen the results of my efforts in the classroom, I am finding that I spend much more time on the high side of the roller coaster. There are many levels of satisfaction and rewards that you can experience as a teacher. There is the instant gratification of successfully teaching a lesson and seeing the students comprehend and find interest in the lessons that I spent so much time preparing. There is the intermediate gratification, that I call sustaining because it is successful experiences that keep me excited to teach and in the profession. It is these intermediate gratifications that are related to my personal and professional growth as a career teacher. I can look back and know with certainty that I am a better teacher this year than I was last year and the year before. I know the long hours and late nights I spent planning and putting together materials for my classes has paid off as I spend much less time planning and more time refining and the results have been better classes with more positive feedback from students. I know that my classes are managed better now than they were those first years. The FFA chapter is growing and finding success in new places while continuing to succeed in its traditional strong areas. I can look back and I can see progress and that makes me feel good.

Finally, I am starting to see the gratification that brings all teachers to top of the emotional curve – seeing their students succeed after high



school. I have students that graduated with my help. I have helped struggling students succeed and helped turn their school careers around. I have formed relationships with students that I know will last longer than their time in high school. I am so proud of what they have accomplished and it makes me so happy to see students using skills in their lives that I taught them. I expect that the longer I teach the more of that I will experience.

Teaching is not all highs though and it may be difficult to see yourself making progress during that first year. At different times I struggled with being prepared for class and handling classroom management issues. I also was trying to figure out how I, as an ag teacher all by myself in the furthest corner of the building, fit into the bigger picture of the education my students were getting. Preparing for class that first year is a daunting task that can easily get you down. The amount of time it took me to prepare for five different classes everyday that first year seemed endless at times. It seemed like I was always planning and never done. The school year marched on whether I was ready or not and finding out how to use my planning time effectively and get the most done in the least amount of time has taken me a few years to figure out. A new teacher must understand that it will take an enormous amount of planning time that first year and that can easily get you down. To help me get through, I relied heavily on my network of ag teachers that I knew. I got countless lesson plans and ideas from my old high school ag teacher, my cooperating teacher during student teaching, and the teachers from neighboring schools. They were great pick-me-ups because they understood what I was going through and made that first year so much easier. The hard work has paid off and it

certainly takes me much less time to prepare in my third year than it did my first.

**Question 3: I want to be a great teacher but why does it feel like I'm just a bad babysitter. How do you best work with students?**

Kevin: This question reminds me of the movie *Dangerous Minds* where Michelle Pfeiffer's character is a new teacher trying to work with a less than enthusiastic inner-city class of English students. Hopefully your class isn't as tough, but understand that it's not unusual to feel like your class is not responding to all of your strategies. Even seasoned veterans of the classroom feel this way from time to time. The first step to answering the question is to assess the root causes of student focus issues. There are a few areas that can be common obstacles.

**Classroom Management:** What type of guidelines have you developed for the classroom? How do you address disturbances in the classroom, unwillingness to follow directions, or disrespect to yourself and other students? If your best answer is to send them to the principal, you need to reflect and study this issue. Classroom management is your responsibility and students will consciously or subconsciously test you as a new teacher. Start by identifying a list of potential issues and the possible consequences for student actions. Talk with your fellow teachers about their classroom management guidelines and how they address issues. Allow for warnings prior to consequences, but beware of the naughty list on the board. This tactic might have worked in middle school, but many problem students in high school tend to use this tactic as their moment of fame. Remember to also reward positive actions as many students respond to teachers who are positive and who are encouraging.

To finish the process, review your classroom guidelines with students and post in the classroom. Also, don't forget a disclaimer clause at the end that allows you to change things as needed; you can't think of every situation that might occur.

**Student Interest:** A student that is interested in a subject is usually a behaved and focused student. However, you may end up with individuals who took your class to fill a schedule or had no where else to go. Talk with the students about their areas of interest and find out what they would like to learn by taking the class. Make every attempt to weave student interest into your vision for the class and the required curriculum components. This can focus student interest and give students ownership in the class. When possible, ask industry professionals to be guest speakers and have them connect the course content to the relevant real-world. Get students involved by focusing on student engagement strategies.

**Question 4: You're still alive after year one, now what is your improvement strategy? How do you become the teacher you want to be?**

T. J.: I remember right before I was to begin student teaching and how I was full of confidence about how great of a teacher I was going to be. I had an exceptional agriculture teacher in high school and I was going to do all the great things he did. Well, I still believe I will be a great teacher, but I found out pretty quick that it doesn't happen overnight. It takes time to establish a tradition of excellence. In my short tenure, I've been working to improve myself in two areas: my classroom teaching and my advising of the FFA chapter.

In terms of the classroom, I've been using some advice I was given during student teaching. Each semes-

ter I pick one or sometimes two classes that I'm going to spend extra time making awesome. I'm not telling you to ignore your other classes because you still need those kids to have a positive impression so they take another one of your classes in the future. It's just that with the number of different classes an ag teacher has to teach, it is very difficult to overhaul your whole curriculum at once, so I have been changing one course at a time. For example, I spend a great deal more time searching for ideas, projects, lessons, and multimedia to improve the specific class. I also spend extra time on the grade book and assignments so the points are allocated the way I want them to be. Lastly, if any lessons don't go quite the way I planned, I make sure to fix them immediately while the change is fresh in my mind.

My ultimate goal is to end the semester with a class that I'm really pleased with and can be taught again with very little effort put into preparation. At the rate of one or two classes a semester, I hope to have my classroom teaching to the point I want it to be in a few years. At that time, I plan to start over with the first class again and reevaluate because I will have evolved as a teacher and I know I will find ways to improve.

I use this same strategy by working with my officers to improve one thing at a time with the FFA chapter. For example, my second year we improved our FFA week activities, my third year we championed the banquet, and this year our major goal was to get the national chapter application done, start a chapter website, and have an FFA dance. This method of breaking things into manageable chunks has worked for me and my chapter. I know if we tried to fix or improve everything in one year, we would have failed. It is also likely

that I would have burned out all of my students, so just take it one year, or sometimes one day, at a time.

**Question 5: Now that your head is above-water after completing your first year of teaching, how do you improve and develop your program?**

Kevin: What is your vision for the program? Thinking about this question and formulating an answer is important as you seek support from stakeholders in the community. Remember that agricultural education programs are more comprehensive than the classroom so engage in visioning that is bold! Engage your parents, students, alumni, and ag business leaders who serve on the agricultural education advisory council to be part of a shared vision. Ask council members what they recommend for program outcomes, curriculum, community relationships, and public relations.

Many times teachers form an advisory council when they are in need of support and are reacting to a school issue, such as the school budget. It is more effective to be proactive and start your advisory council when the pressure of responding to an issue is not facing the agricultural education program. The juggling of teaching, time, and program management may have prevented the formation of an active advisory council during your first year. However, it is a critical priority to establish an advisory council and build positive relations with council members during your second year of teaching. Starting one can be as simple as sponsoring a parents and supporters night. Have a discussion about the past, present, and future of the program and what type of program the community will be proud of and wants to support. Close the meeting with a sign-up list of program needs they can assist with, such

as classroom guest speakers, curriculum assistance, CDE coaches, and chaperones for trips. From this group you can usually find key people to be members of the advisory council. Check with your administration about policies and guidelines on advisory councils. You will need to develop a structure for the council; I suggest staggered, three-year rotations, two meetings per year, and annual communication with the school board.

Look throughout your community to identify other resources for

*(continued on page 25)*



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# *Mentoring Strategies to Assist Early Career Teachers*

by *Nina Crutchfield*

**T**he day I arrived on campus at my new school, I was met by the retiring agriculture teacher. He had a grin on his face like he had just eaten one of Grandma's homemade apple pies. He walked me through the building, sharing information and advice. After about an hour, the grin had returned and he handed me a wad of keys. His parting words were "have fun and good luck." I remember standing on the steps outside the building, watching him drive away. I was filled with excitement and anticipation, and a lack of understanding about his enthusiasm for leaving. I spent the next month and a half getting the place ready for the start of school, inventorying equipment and supplies, learning how to order what I needed, lamenting the sad state of the greenhouse, and planning how I was going to get all my students to start SAE's and join FFA. Those days were full of naivety and idealistic designs.

The first day of school arrived. In the blink of an eye, that first day turned into the first week, then the first month. As everyone reading this article knows, it did not take me long to realize that all my planning did not hold up under the weight of a real classroom with real students. In a very short period of time, I was swimming in a sea of exhaustion, anxiety, and self-pity. I was staying at school until 8 p.m. trying to stay one step ahead with my lessons, figuring out how to fix equipment that was at least as old as I was, and juggling FFA activities. I actually gave up on SAE's in those early years. I felt it was just something that I could not focus on with so many other issues competing

for my attention. It did not help that my husband barely recognized me since I saw him so irregularly. How I longed for someone to talk to who had been there and knew what I was feeling, who could tell me what to do, who had lessons I could copy!

Those were the days long before the idea of mentoring new teachers became normal practice; long before internet and email; long before it was ok to admit you didn't know everything and needed help. When I think about how accessible help is today, I have to say, those were NOT the good 'ol days. It used to be the only contact beginning teachers had with other agriculture teachers was at contests, conventions, conferences, and camps. Now that we have cell phones, e-mail, social networking, and websites, assistance and mentors are just a tap away. Directly or indirectly, formal or informal, mentoring has shaped us. It is ok to seek help and to provide it, now more than ever before. Agriculture teachers have always prided themselves on being a collegial group, and today's technology allows communication beyond a few face-to-face interactions during the year. Support and assistance is instantaneously available for early career teachers as well as experienced agriculture teachers.

However, the challenge of time still remains. Where do we fit mentoring of early career teachers into our daily, weekly, and monthly activities? The answer is simple; we make time for the activities we determine are the most important. There are a number of examples, all over the country, of agricultural educators making the time to provide mentoring.

## **Kansas**

The Kansas Association of Agricultural Educators (KAAE) took ownership of mentoring their newest teachers. They receive a small funding package from their state FFA Foundation, pay a practicing teacher a stipend to lead the efforts, and provide several opportunities for the new teachers to meet jointly, observe their mentors' teaching, have the mentors' visit the mentee's program, and attend KAAE conferences. Veteran teachers, who value the profession and want agricultural education to be around long after they retire, volunteer to serve as mentors. They commit to contacting, visiting, and providing resources to the new teachers. It is a challenge for all parties to make the program work but it's paying off in the long run. Kansas' new teachers are staying committed to the profession and the veteran teachers are reporting rejuvenation in their own sense of engagement and commitment to teaching.

## **Georgia**

Georgia has a retired teacher, paid part-time, to fill the role of a formal mentor. He travels the state, visiting, coaching, and serving as a solid presence for new teachers to call on when in need. I have listened to new teachers extol the virtue of having someone visit them, make suggestions for improving their teaching and facility, walking them through their online reporting system, and coaching them when they feel like they just cannot go forward.

## **Mississippi**

Mississippi's state director has assumed the role of mentor for the



state's new teachers. He organizes four formal meetings during the school year to bring the new teachers together. These events are on the state department's calendar and contribute to state required hours for professional development. Each meeting targets information and resources the new teachers will need in the next few months.

## **Florida**

Florida has a Leadership Institute during the summer. Teachers must apply because seats are limited. Once accepted, they are taken on an agriculture industry tour of the state. Teachers experience all of Florida's major commodities from the perspective of the growers and spend a week traveling with their fellow teachers. During the trip, teachers share insights about the how and why of teaching. Regardless of background, new or veteran, traditionally trained or alternatively certified, urban program or rural program, participants have endorsed the value of the tour and its impact on their instructional practices, their commitment to teach agriculture, and their sense of belonging to the profession. In addition, the Florida Association of Agriculture Educators (FAAE) has a new teacher retreat in the fall as a part of their outreach and value-added activities to benefit their members.

## **Alternative Licensure**

A number of university agricultural education programs are finding themselves charged with mentoring new teachers as an extension of their efforts with undergraduates. University faculty see the value of supporting new teachers; more and more they are working with members of our ranks who did not get a bachelor's degree in agricultural education. As these new recruits work in the classroom during their first year of teach-

ing, they must also take part in alternative licensure courses provided by universities. Alternatively certified agriculture teachers have much to learn during their first year of teaching. They must learn new content areas and pedagogical practices, as well as indoctrinate themselves in the three-circle model philosophy and the agricultural education culture. It's a real struggle for them and the university personnel who support them. This group will benefit from the support of Team Ag Ed members in each state.

## **Communities of Practice**

The National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) recently launched an electronic message board called the Communities of Practice as an approach to provide informal mentoring. New and experienced teachers from around the country ask questions, post lessons and ideas, and provide resources for everything from instructional strategies to how to find a particular vendor they saw at the National FFA Convention. Communities of Practice allows agriculture teachers to connect with one another instantly rather than having to wait until the next FFA event before sharing advice and asking questions. The best part is that resources are archived so teachers can find relevant information simply by searching key words or phrases. If you haven't already, check it out at [www.naae.org](http://www.naae.org).

## **Mentoring**

Informal mentoring can take on a lot of different forms. I have had the pleasure of spending an evening at the Tennessee Fireside Chat where the icons of Tennessee agriculture teaching shared advice with new teachers. It was an opportunity for the new teachers to ask questions about anything and everything they had struggled with during their first

semester of teaching. I was humbled by the passion exhibited by the veteran and new teachers alike.

We have all been the benefactor of informal mentoring. Whether its a phone call, visiting over the supper table, hanging out while students participate in FFA events, or at professional development activities, there's always an opportunity to ask questions, share advice, and exchange ideas and tips. It is so true that many agriculture teachers beg, borrow, and steal the best ideas from their peers and apply them at home. Of course, none of us are engaged in larceny, but we all believe that it is easier to use someone else's circle blueprints rather than reinvent the wheel.

The need for mentoring doesn't necessarily stop at year four or five. Great teachers are life-long learners and are always seeking new and innovative content for their classrooms. We all assume the role of mentee at various points throughout our careers. It is helpful to have fellow teachers attend professional development workshops and then bring new knowledge home to share with other teachers. Innovative and enthusiastic agriculture teachers will teach you how to make bio-diesel, find alternative funding sources, and implement reading strategies in your classroom. This sharing process is a testament to how great agriculture teachers are and their value as a resource that can directly impact our classroom practices.

The mentees eventually become the mentors. An example is Keith Gundlach, a teacher I met at an NAAE national conference several years ago. A wonderful man and a sensational teacher with a great sense of humor, Keith shares everything. I have heard numerous stories about Keith inviting teachers from all over the country to visit his pro-

gram and copy anything they want. Not unusual, until you find out that Keith has probably had more national proficiency award finalists and star finalists than any current teacher. He has had a number of visitors take him up on the offer through the years. I would like to mention that Keith is an amazing classroom teacher, not just a great FFA advisor. He will tell you that he has no secrets and he wants all teachers to love their job as much as he does and be as successful in and out of the classroom as he has been.

We all must understand that the benefits of the mentor/mentee relationship reach beyond the personal gain of increased confidence, engagement in innovative practices, and amplified professional commitment.

Obviously these benefits assist agriculture teachers to impact the lives of students in their local programs. However, consider that this positive influence extends to other students and programs when an agriculture teacher mentors a fellow teacher. Be conscious of your mentoring impact the next time you find a young teacher hanging on every word you say, you participate in a professional development workshop, or you sit next to an early career teacher at the breakfast table during leadership camp. Regardless of formality or stage of life, teachers are both a mentor and a mentee throughout their career.

There are a number of great examples of formal mentoring programs across the country. If your state

doesn't have one, be the catalyst who turns those informal activities into an organized teacher induction program. Early career teachers will appreciate this support and will feel valued during this process. As a result, new and experienced teachers will likely remain in the profession longer and will be better prepared to positively impact more students.



*Nina Crutchfield is a Local Program Success Specialist with the National FFA Organization.*

## *Dear Agriculture Teacher.....* (continued from page 22)

the program. I was lucky enough to have a state park in our school district. After discussions with park managers, I was able to connect park projects with my construction, horticulture, natural resources, and youth leadership classes. The students were able to apply their learning to real-life situations via the service learning concept and the park gained valuable resources. Many communities have these types of needs that can be identified if you ask the right questions of the right people. In turn, you can connect with area experts who can provide a positive influence on your program.

### **Question 6: Even with all of the challenges faced by early career teachers, why do we teach?**

Chris: I can't answer this question for anyone other than myself. The first year of teaching was certain-

ly a challenge and I know I asked myself why I changed from a successful career in ag-business to teaching on more than one occasion. The good news that I have for new teachers is that each year has gone better for me. There are always new challenges and I can't say it's easier but it has certainly gone better. I have had the opportunity to teach the same class more than once and the enormous effort to plan and prepare has paid off; I continue to refine and polish my courses each year by adding more current content or use different instructional strategies. The hard work pays off and the long hours have paid dividends that you simply don't and won't get in any other career.

I have seen success grow in our FFA chapter, have built positive relationships with members, and have helped members grow and become leaders. I enjoy promoting agriculture

and the FFA, and motivating students to get involved in both after they originally had never thought about those areas. I know of kids who are going to college in careers they learned about in my classes. I have students building projects they didn't believe they could build and finding success in the FFA after lack of success in other areas of their lives. I wake up each morning excited to share my passion, excited to teach something new, excited to reach a different student, and excited to see students get excited. I know I make a difference, everyday. I reach kids that don't get reached in other parts of the school and I get kids to consider careers in the industry that impacts everyone's life. I see the future everyday and I am a part of it. I couldn't do that in business – I wanted to reach kids and make a difference and that is why I teach.

# Retaining Beginning Teachers: What is the Cost?

by Lyle E. Westrom

Every teacher remembers their first year of teaching. The best possible pre-service preparation and student teaching experience doesn't exempt anyone from facing challenges that can be overwhelming. Yet, those challenges can be overcome; doing so can mean the difference between someone who leaves the profession and someone else who makes teaching a career. In a profession where many states face a shortage of teachers, keeping teachers in the profession can be the key to keeping the agricultural education profession strong.

Research indicates that 50 % of teachers leave the profession within five years of entering the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Beginning agricultural education teachers face a multitude of challenges; many are unique to managing a program in addition to traditional classroom problems. Few would argue that mentors and teacher induction programs can be valuable but is the cost worth the investment?

## Cost of Teacher Retention

Organizers of teacher induction programs are many times asked how many beginning teachers did their program retain that would have left teaching. This question is difficult to answer as some beginning teachers will stay in the profession without any mentoring, while others will leave even with mentoring. Research has been conducted on this topic and studies have found that retention of beginning teachers can be improved by 12-22% as a result of conducting an effective induction program (In-

gersoll & Kralik, 2004).

The Minnesota Teacher Induction Program (TIP) was created in 1999 as an effort to help beginning agricultural education teachers have a successful start in the profession. There have been 137 beginning teachers who have participated in the Minnesota TIP from 1999 to 2007. Cash and in-kind costs to operate the Minnesota TIP during this time period have been estimated to be \$342,500 or an approximate cost of \$2,500 per beginning teacher who participated in TIP. Applying Ingersoll and Kralik's (2004) retention range of 12 to 22% and selecting the midpoint of 17% reveals that approximately 23 agricultural education teachers have been retained in Minnesota as a result of the TIP. Spreading the total cost of \$342,500 over the 23 retained teachers results in a cost of approximately \$14,891 per teacher (Westrom, Jo-

erger, & Greiman, 2008). At first glance that may sound expensive, but consider the replacement cost of preparing another young teacher to replace the teacher who left the profession. It is likely that the preparation cost would have been more than \$14,891 and the following discussion confirms this belief.

Finding a new student to major in agricultural education is not cheap since it includes recruiting costs and preparation costs. The cost of education varies from university to university, but few would argue with a minimum cost of \$15,000/year or \$60,000 for a four-year degree. Quickly the \$14,891 looks like a bargain. In addition, one could argue that finding a new teacher to replace the departing teacher may not be possible given the severe shortage of agricultural education teachers today.



Figure 1. Three levels of mentoring.



## Multiple Mentors Support Beginning Teachers in Minnesota

What type of mentoring is necessary for beginning teachers? The Minnesota TIP includes three mentors, one of which is a fellow teacher assigned by the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE). Numerous schools assign a fellow teacher from within the school system to teach a new teacher about the nuances and requirements within a school. The Minnesota TIP also encourages this mentor. It is the third mentor, called a senior mentor, that is a unique feature of the Minnesota TIP.

A senior mentor is usually retired; previously they were a successful agricultural education teacher, community college instructor, or university professor. As a result of their lifetime experiences and continuing passion for the profession, the senior mentor is able to provide advice and support regarding almost every possible challenge faced by a beginning teacher. In addition, the senior mentor has a unique role that is different compared to other mentors. They have no ties to the community where the beginning teacher is located and they do not have a vested interest in competing FFA CDE's or the regional FFA decision-making. An example would be a beginning teacher who finds themselves thrust into a local county fair responsibility as part of the extended contract prior to the first day of school. Local politics may not allow a young teacher to seek advice locally as they don't know who a neutral person might be or if they can discuss issues confidentially with them. A school administrator may not have knowledge of how county fairs operate. A senior mentor has often dealt with similar challenges such as the county fair. Since senior mentors are not associated with the begin-

ning teacher's school, community, or county, they can offer neutral advice.

Beginning teachers often ask for advice on classroom management issues, teaching ideas, reference materials, and first day of teaching suggestions. Sometimes beginning teachers simply need someone to talk to for psychosocial support or a person who will take the time to listen. A voice of experience can be helpful in these examples. Again, a senior mentor can offer a safe haven for a beginning teacher to ask about how to deal with a student situation without fear of a conflict of interest or of reprisal. This level of support is totally formative in nature.

Senior mentors meet at the beginning teacher's school from three to six times during the school year. There is no cost to the school district or the beginning teacher. In addition to mentoring, beginning teachers in the Minnesota TIP participate in four face-to-face professional development seminars. To be efficient with the valuable commodity of time, monthly web conferences are conducted to further assist with support and professional development. In addition, resources for beginning teachers are posted at the Minnesota TIP website <http://sites.google.com/site/agedtip/>. Funding for the Minnesota TIP has been obtained from the Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC), MAAE, Minnesota Department of Education, and the University of Minnesota.

In summary, one can conclude that the cost/benefit ratio of an effective teacher induction program is preferred when the alternatives are considered. Specifically, costs to retain beginning teachers through induction programs seems to be much more desired than spending money to recruit, prepare, and replace the school's ag-

ricultural education teacher every few years. Can we afford not to mentor beginning teachers and conduct induction programs?

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## *2010 Themes*

### **September/October**

#### **Leadership Skills for All Agricultural Education Students**

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### **November/December**

#### **Using 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology in the High School Classroom**

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