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**LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR ALL
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

by Harry N. Boone, Jr.

Are leaders born or are they made? This is the age old question that has been debated for centuries. I have the answer – leaders are born and leaders are made. Some individuals are born with natural abilities that lead to leadership situations. On the other hand it is possible to develop leadership skills in an individual.

There is no doubt that some individuals are born with natural communication skills, charisma, creativity, fairness, humility, and a sense of humor that automatically surfaces as they assume leadership roles. Too often we only see what appears to be natural leadership skills and fail to see the work, time, and effort that the individual has devoted to getting to a position of leadership.

On the other hand all of us have witnessed the “diamond in the rough.” I am talking about that student that everyone has written off until he enters the agricultural education program. It could be the program, the dedicated caring teacher, or juts maturity; but something triggers a change in that individual. He/she is motivated to devote the time and energy necessary to develop leadership abilities. Because of their efforts and the opportunities available through agricultural education, their leadership skills come to the forefront and they become a respected leader at the local, community, state, and/or national levels.

Regardless of the leader being born or developed, the common denominator is intelligence. I didn’t do the research, but I am sure there is a relationship between intelligence and the characteristics commonly associated with leadership in the “born”

Are Leaders Born?

leader. If intelligence is present, the development of leadership skills will be faster and more complete in the “developed” leader. Regardless of the situation, there is no substitute for intelligence.

As an agricultural educator, your role is to provide leadership opportunities for all students. Over my professional career I have witnessed teachers select a key group of students and provide them numerous opportunities to develop their leadership abilities. The rest of the students in the program are left to “just exist.” In addition to being ethically wrong, the educators totally missed their educational mission. Every student should be given the opportunity to develop and practice their leadership skills. There can be only one chapter president each year, however, serving as a chapter officer is not the only way to practice and demonstrate leadership abilities.

This issue is devoted to ways that you can assist all students in the development of their leadership abilities. Dr. Shannon Arnold, Theme Editor, compared leadership to a prism. She argued that just as the faces of a prism are different, leadership does not look the same for everyone. The one common element in the development of leaders is the opportunity to develop leadership skills. James Brown suggested that teachers should be developing ten leadership skills in agricultural education students: communication, critical thinking, collaboration, global perspective, action, crisis management, awareness, engagement, information synthesis, and delegation.

How do you develop leadership skills in students that can or will not participate in FFA activities? Dr. Ann De Lay offered suggestions on how

to incorporate leadership activities for all students. Stephen Edwards and Dr. Eric Kaufman followed up on this theme by demonstrating how to develop leadership skills through service projects. Dr. David Jones also discussed the service component of leadership. He encouraged us to develop everyday leadership by “filling people’s buckets.” Having switched careers two years ago, Dr. David Kirschten looked at leadership from a different perspective. He also argued that leadership was service and not governance. Bill Jimmerson and Ramey Lunceford discussed ways that Montana is building leaders with the early recruitment of agricultural education instructors.

Just as there are numerous ways to provide leadership training within agricultural education, there are numerous organizations that also provide leadership development opportunities. Cody Stone examined leadership from a 4-H perspective.

As teachers/leaders, there comes a time when we must let go of the outstanding leaders in our program. Dr. Carl Igo and his son Caleb provided a personal account of the “leadership of letting go.”

I hope that you enjoy the suggestions on developing leadership skills in all agricultural education students.



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The Leadership Prism

by Shannon Arnold

A prism is “a transparent solid body, often having triangular bases, used for dispersing light into a spectrum or for reflecting rays of light” (Webster, 1999). There are many faces to a prism, and although similar in shape, each has its own unique colors and reflections depending on how you look at it. As a prism is turned, each side can become something new and different, yet remain the same. I believe a prism directly reflects the idea of leadership.

describes high quality interactions between leaders and followers as a focal point in the leadership process to help advance organizational goals and provide direction. He also states that leaders influence others to reach a common goal and make an impact on the lives of those being led. I believe the definition of leadership depends upon one’s personal perspective and is a process that can be learned by everyone. There are many theories, approaches, and conceptualizations concerning leadership, and each contributes its own unique elements.

Who is involved in the leadership of agriculture students?

Families, peers, agriculture teachers, professors, advisors, extension agents, and employers to name a few. All of these people have an impact on a student’s leadership growth. Whether it be in the classroom, in the hay field, at home, in church, at after-school practice, or during a state contest, youth are being influenced by someone somewhere all the time. Northouse (2004) and Kouzes and Posner (2007) both agree that leadership is about interpersonal relationships. Consider how you affect the leadership of your students and how you are helping them to develop essential skills. We all play an integral role in the development of our future leaders. I believe agricultural education allows students unique opportunities to become effective leaders not available in other youth organizations, but must be given guidance and support from those involved to develop.

We must realize that all students can be leaders in their own way and give them the opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

Leadership depends on how one perceives growth, change, and opportunity. As we engage in these life experiences, we learn to develop our own style and identity as a leader. As a result, a leader, like a prism, can be seen in many different ways, but still have the same qualities.

When asked to serve as the theme editor for this article on leadership for agriculture students, I began thinking about what leadership means and how students not only engage in the process, but act as leaders. Kouzes and Posner (2007), authors of the best-selling novel “*The Leadership Challenge*”, outline five practices of leadership: Model the way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. Northouse (2004)

Considering the various definitions and perspectives on leadership, I asked myself the following questions:

- (a) Who is involved in leadership development of agriculture students?
- (b) What does leadership look like? and
- (c) How do agriculture students engage in the leadership process?

These questions have different answers depending on who you ask. My goal as theme editor was to provide a broad range of perspectives on these ideas through the diverse articles in this issue. This is my perspective.

What does leadership look like?

Just like a prism, leadership comes in many shapes, sizes, and forms. There is no one formula to define a leader and no one correct definition of leadership. Northouse (1994) defines various leadership theories such as the trait approach, skills approach, style approach, situational approach, contingency theory, path-goal theory, leader-member exchange theory, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Why are there so many? Is it because leadership can be explained by several factors and influences? Regardless of the reason, leadership can be seen in agricultural education every day. Two common forms of leadership are those with an assigned formal title and

those that are emergent leaders which result from what one does and how one acquires support from followers. Assigned leaders can be chapter officers, 4-H Ambassadors, or state contest winners. Emergent leaders might include the student who mentors others after school, offers ideas on how to improve the agriculture program, or volunteers to assist with every activity. Again, we must realize that all students can be leaders in their own ways and give them the opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

How do agriculture students engage in the leadership process?

I believe leadership development is a continuous process that we engage in throughout our life. From Clover Buds to 4-H to FFA to collegiate agricultural organizations, we have all experienced leadership influences from a variety of perspectives, persons, and programs. Agricultural education offers a multitude of activities- career development events, officer positions, volunteer service, state contests, workshops, recruitment activities, SAEs, advisory councils, 4-H projects, International 4-H Youth Exchange, 4-H Congress, conferences and forums that allow students to be-

come leaders. As advisors and teachers, it is important for us to embrace these experiences not as separate activities, but as comprehensive youth development programs.

In-school or out-of-school, agriculture students are learning to become future leaders of the next generation. Each student develops in different ways and through unique experiences that are provided by those that advise, teach, and mentor them. How can you “Make the best better” and “Make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural edu-



Montana State University College of Ambassadors Recruitment Youth Event

cation”? Although the approaches to leadership may vary, the goal of every leader involves the “refraction and dispersement” of light to inspire followers. I hope you can be a prism of light for all agricultural education students!

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Montana State University Student teaching youth about insects at a service learning program



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Beyond the Blackboard: Developing Leadership Skills in Agricultural Education Students

by James Brown

Agricultural leadership has never been in higher demand. Before his death last September, Nobel laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug stated that farmers need to produce more food in the next 50 years than in the last 10,000 years combined. Launching the 21st century's "Food Revolution" requires pushing the boundaries of science to expand food production while educating the opposition. Agricultural education students must take a lead in educating others about technologies and processes used to increase global food supplies. This is why developing leadership skills in agricultural education students is vital to the future of American agriculture.

The current status of milk from rBST treated cows demonstrates why teaching leadership skills to agricultural education students must be a priority. In response to consumer mistrust of rBST, many national grocery chains, including Safeway, Wal-Mart and Kroger, only carry milk from non-rBST treated cows. This is despite the FDA stating that there is no significant difference in milk from treated and non-treated cows. This highlights the need for agricultural education students to correctly educate the public and take the lead in introducing new technologies to consumers. Feeding a growing world by leveraging technology and government policy requires 21st century agricultural education students to develop ten leadership skills:

1. Communication: Employers in agricultural trade organizations and businesses from the

National Cattlemen's Beef Association to Hormel Foods state the three most important skills they seek when hiring employees at all leadership levels are oral communication, written communication, and critical thinking. The Montana State University (MSU) Agricultural Ambassador program develops its members'

and in turn reduce global hunger?" Students must be trained to think critically. When students ask advice on how to complete a project, before giving your opinion ask, "What does your gut instinct tell you?" Then, you can ask follow up questions that train your students to approach decision making in a systematic way.

Leadership opportunities must be given to students so they have a vested interest in their actions' outcomes.

communication abilities by teaming up veteran ambassadors with first year ambassadors to allow first year ambassadors to observe experienced speakers and have a coach at their side to ask for suggestions. In addition, this group has all official documents peer reviewed to enable the ambassadors to improve their written communication abilities by giving and receiving constructive criticism.

2. Critical Thinking: Most modern agricultural issues, such as world hunger, are extremely complex. According to the United Nations, one in seven people worldwide are undernourished, but 30 to 40 percent of food in both developed and developing nations is lost to waste. It is up to agricultural education students to raise hard questions such as, "What actions can minimize this waste

3. Collaboration: The life cycle of agricultural products involves professionals from numerous disciplines. Therefore, agricultural leaders must be trained to work in interdisciplinary teams from production to marketing, quality control, product development, and beyond. This is achieved by creating groups for students to work in that they would not self select. At Montana State University (MSU), Dr. Jane Ann Boles, Associate Meat Science Professor, understands the power of interdisciplinary teams and designs groups of students with diverse academic backgrounds to develop hypothetical beef alliances in her meat science class.

4. Global Perspective: With the USDA reporting 2009 U.S. agricultural exports reaching \$99 billion and agricultural imports

totaling \$71 billion, American agriculture is steeped in global trade. Understanding the global context of agriculture requires providing students the opportunity to travel abroad and visit both end users of agricultural exports as well as the source of American agricultural imports. For the past 14 years, professors at MSU's College of Agriculture have been teaching courses, such as Follow the Grain and Extension in a Global Context which are semester long courses with guest speakers discussing global trade, differences in production, and use of commodities across the globe. These courses culminate in international trips, which, in recent years, have gone to Croatia, Chile, and China.

5. Action: Bill Gates says the secret to his success is his ability to take immediate and massive action. In agriculture, this requires training students to take action and requires teachers to stand back and let students act upon their ideas. For example, in student agricul-

tural organizations the role of an advisor is that of mentor and teacher, not leader. Leadership responsibilities must be given to students, so they have a vested interest in their actions' outcomes. Only then can they learn to carefully plan and execute their actions.

6. Crisis Management: Crisis management is the ultimate test of an agricultural education student's leadership abilities. As a teacher and student organization advisor, students frequently come to you for crisis solutions.



Montana State University's 2010 "Follow the Grain" class learns about new potato varieties at the Chilean government's potato research facility in southern Chile.



Montana State University's 2010 "Follow the Grain" Class touring Grenvic's fruit packing facility outside of Santiago, Chile.

Instead of telling them how to resolve their crisis, give them three possible solutions and let them make the ultimate decision. It is important to not take over when a crisis arises, as experience is the only

way for students to acquire crisis management skills.

7. Awareness: In agriculture, sometimes the most valuable skill is gathering knowledge of a particular circumstance of time and place. Developing this skill in agricultural education students can broaden their perspective and may be spurred by bringing guest speakers to the classroom and taking agricultural tours. Look beyond touring mainstream venues and visit operations students have never heard, such as an organic goat dairy. This challenges their traditional view of agriculture.

8. Engagement: Being involved is not enough, for the ability to engage others is what separates leaders from members. Leaders must discover other people's talents and create opportunities for them to be successful. For example, one agricultural education student at MSU is a member of many agricultural clubs, but never volunteered to assume large responsibilities. After it was discovered his true talent



Montana State University College of Agriculture Ambassadors practicing written communication skills.

was woodworking and he was asked to build gifts and displays from wood for club activities, he sprung to life organizing groups of people to assist him. In addition, he became more active in club discussions after having the opportunity to utilize his talents for the group.

9. Information Synthesis: While an intern at Cargill Corn Milling

last summer, a grain economist told me, "If Cargill only knew what Cargill knows, it would change the way decisions are made." In this age of information overload, agricultural education students must be taught to

summarize scores of information into short take-away messages that can be placed in the hands of those with the authority to act. Students can be taught to write concisely and summarize information by assigning them a research project with a large checklist of items to be discussed in a paper of given length.

10. Delegation: Herbicide resistant cotton was not developed overnight by one person. Similarly, great things are only accomplished with the help of many. Delegation is not just assigning people jobs, but motivating others to contribute to a common cause. The more people understand the importance of their role in achieving a common goal, the more willing they are to contribute. This is why, when seeking volunteers for events, such as a State FFA Convention, by explaining not only what the event is, but its impact on others and what volunteers can gain from the experience, you can increase your recruiting effectiveness.

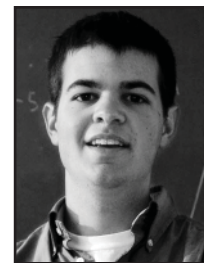
With the global population expected to increase from 6.9 billion people today to 9 billion people in 2050, the clock is ticking. As educators, it is up to you to instill leadership skills in agricultural education students, for the next Norman Borlaug may be in your classroom.

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Using 21st Century Technology in the High School Classroom

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Wanted: Leadership for All!!!

by Ann M. De Lay

The world is clamoring for leadership like never before. With financial challenges, environmental crises and the need to do much more with less, the rules of preparing students for life after high school have changed. Schools are recognizing the cries from industry and higher education for graduates who can implement a variety of leadership skills in a myriad of contexts (Fritz & Brown, 1998). With standardization at the forefront of administrative concerns, how can leadership education be integrated? Where can students gain access to the skills necessary for future success?

Enter... agricultural education.

The work of secondary agriculture teachers encompasses the realms of classroom, SAE and FFA, with FFA being recognized as the leadership outlet for the total program model (Talbert, Vaughn, Croom & Lee, 2007). Speak with any ag teacher and he or she will tell you their FFA responsibilities require a great deal of time. They supervise students at workshops and meetings, shuttle students to and from conferences, and train teams for competition in a variety of career development events. Those students who participate find they live the FFA's mission by developing their potential for premiere leadership, personal growth and career success daily (National FFA Organization, 2010).

Despite the opportunities for leadership development, not every student participates in FFA activities (Morgan & Rudd, 2006). Teachers who rely on FFA as the sole source of leadership training for students in their programs fail to offer access

to valuable life skill development to a significant portion of their student populations. What can teachers do to provide greater access for all?

1. Integrate LifeKnowledge into Lesson Plans

In 1999, National FFA began to facilitate the development of a series of 257 leadership lesson plans to better shape the way young people prepare for the future. The focus of the curriculum is leadership develop-

Providing every student with the opportunity to develop themselves as leaders can provide the relevance students crave.

ment for EVERY student enrolled in a high school agriculture program. Packaged as *LifeKnowledge: Real Lessons for Real Life*, the curriculum gives teachers the resources needed to help students develop mastery in the 16 leadership principles, or precepts, identified by industry as instrumental to one's future success. Many teachers have cited a lack of room in their technical agriculture class schedules to fit in additional structured learning. However, according to Mark Rearson of Centre Pointe Education, Inc., integration of these critical leadership principles can easily be implemented through the following ways:

- Believe – Assert the importance of leadership development for all students... not just the high performers. Allow this notion to permeate every spoken word, every thought, every action taken.

- Identify – Infuse leadership principles into technical content by identifying any concepts in the curriculum with natural connections to the precepts. For example, the topic of shop safety in an agriculture mechanics course, lends itself naturally to the discussion of planning effectively and practicing self-discipline. Another approach is to identify the precepts with which students struggle and connect the content to those. For example,

if the class fails to display positive human relations skills, spend time discussing how completion of tasks, cleaning up the shop, sharing tools and expertise, and accepting feedback on their work from both peers and the instructor are all ways they can develop in this area and increase their standing with others.

- Access – Use the online LifeKnowledge Integration Tool to search for keywords from your content area lesson. There is an “Integration Ideas” tab on the top menu which can provide further assistance. For example, if photosynthesis is the topic and the lesson centers on how plants convert things like sunlight and water into energy, students may struggle to understand. It may help to connect the abstract concept to something with which they have experience, like the subject of change and how it can be a positive

endeavor for an organization. The free resource can be accessed at: <http://www.agedlearning.com>

- Infuse – Teach leadership skills either by including a metaphor connecting the content lesson's topic to the precept or, for maximum impact, by teaching an entire LifeKnowledge lesson about the desired leadership skill. There are 257 lessons so there is a LOT of material to work with!

The LifeKnowledge page on the National FFA website provides additional tools and resources for integrating leadership into technical agriculture lessons. Visit the webpage and find information on e-newsletters, podcasts, articles, professional development and more. http://www.ffa.org/index.cfm?method=c_aged.LifeKnowledge_index

2. Identify Students' Strengths

Take a look at any agriculture class and you are looking at one varied group of people! However, teachers don't usually know their students' strengths until months into the school year. The passage of time often translates into missed opportunities for involvement and leadership skill development. To get a handle on students' strengths much sooner, have them complete the StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment through the Gallup Organization. For a low fee, students' top five talent themes are revealed, giving teachers the insight to connect students with activities and opportunities much sooner. This understanding can also help students focus on developing the skills and knowledge necessary to build their talents into strengths and maximize their potential. Do you have some relators on your hands? Encourage them to interact with a few incoming students so the new members immediately feel welcome in the program. Have

the students with positivity among their top 5 themes serve as the committee in charge of chapter recognition. They could also lead recreational activities at chapter meetings. With 34 themes, there is a chance for everyone to shine!

3. Implement or Revive Project Competition

SAE has struggled nationwide but examples of thriving programs providing leadership development for students are very apparent. At Shandon High School in Shandon, California every student in the program is required to participate in the local project competition. Students prepare visually attractive displays showcasing their SAEs, the skills acquired, improvements made, and their goals for the future. Every student then dons official dress and communicates his or her efforts to the official panel of judges. The top participants in the competition advance to represent the chapter at the sectional competition but every student emerges a winner. The opportunity affords every agriculture student the chance to showcase their leadership skills as they relate to communicating effectively, displaying the depth of their responsibility, expressing their goals, priorities, and decision making abilities, as well as demonstrating their employability skills.



4. Event and Banquet Planning

As the end of the year comes to a screeching halt, teachers may feel tempted to rush through and get the banquet done, rather than think about how they can use the event to help their students develop as leaders. Having an end of the year banquet committee can take a lot of the pressure off of an over-worked officer team and agriculture teachers who are likely ready for some down time. This special committee devoted to the planning and facilitation of the banquet can provide more students the chance to make an impact at the local level and may result in a fresh take on a traditional event. Planning a banquet allows students the opportunity to volunteer their service, to solve problems and think critically as they make decisions that invariably accompany event planning, to demonstrate their writing skills as they develop invitations and internal communications, and to work productively with others as they see the event through to completion. The March, 2010 issue of *LifeKnowledge At Work* offers connections to the appropriate LifeKnowledge lessons and ideas from other teachers about how to involve more students in banquet planning. [10](http://www.ffa.org/age-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

ducators/lifeknowledge/newsletter/lk_newsletter_1003.html#1

5. Restructure the Officer Team

Who says the chapter officer team must only consist of the core six? With chapter memberships on the rise, six officers can be far too limiting. The Tulare FFA chapter in Tulare, California decided to cast off the traditional structure to provide better representation for their nearly 950 members. Looking to their Program of Activities and the National Chapter Award program, they added three additional vice presidents in charge of students, chapter, and community to the team. Each newly elected vice president supervised subcommittees in each of their areas, a move which provided more leadership roles for the members. The change also brought greater balance to their chapter.

Central High School in Fresno, California also faced the problem of unbalanced representation for their sizable chapter membership. They opted to create an executive committee with a "student council" format. Comprised of members elected from each grade level, members of the executive committee join the chapter officers in the planning and facilitation of the chapter's activities. By conceptualizing a new approach to their chapter leadership structure, both chapters have embraced a new way of providing leadership skill development for all.

6. Teach Others

Agriculture teachers spend countless hours teaching the students in their programs about various facets of agriculture. This noble work deeply impacts the perceptions young people hold about the industry but stops just short of influencing others in the community. Students of the North

Salinas Agriculture Department in Salinas, California demonstrate year after year just how far-reaching their influence can be. In order to exhibit their SAEs at the Salinas Valley Fair, the department requires each member to prepare an educational display related to their SAE or their agriculture course content. Students work independently to compile accurate agricultural information for public consumption. Students have created displays on everything from a full-color poster on the retail cuts of a market hog to a scale model of an oxy-fuel welding system. In turn for their hard work and attention to detail, the fair awards ribbons and small cash prizes. Fair patrons spend considerable time reviewing the student work and often comment on the vast array of topics presented. Everyone (students, teachers and the community) learn more about agriculture as a result of this endeavor.

It is no accident society is petitioning for leaders. One student out of every four in American schools does not graduate from high school and a significant number of those who graduate and are accepted into college fail to earn a degree (Bottoms, 2008). Many cite the lack of meaning and challenge of their academic experiences as the reasons for their early departures. Providing every student in every classroom with the opportunity to develop themselves as leaders, to live the FFA mission every single day within the school day, can provide the relevance students crave. Want to make a REAL difference in the lives of students? Dare to implement some of these tips in your chapter to provide greater access of leadership for all students.

No one said the job of an agriculture teacher would be easy!

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Developing Leaders Through Service

by *Stephen Edwards and Eric Kaufman*

Living to Serve, the last line of the FFA motto for decades, succinctly sums up what we want from all of our current and former members: individuals who through their service will benefit the community-at-large. Seeing the importance of developing service in its members, the National FFA Organization has created the new service requirement for earning Chapter, State, and American FFA Degrees. Beginning in 2011, each degree will require service hours, separate from any hours reported elsewhere in the respective degree application.

Completing service projects are already goals of most FFA chapters. Many chapters operate food drives, volunteer at county fairs, landscape schools and other public buildings, build/repair equipment or structures for the community, visit residents in assisted living homes, or provide people power partnering with other community organizations. Service projects are beneficial in their outcomes for those affected, including the people who are providing the service. Leadership development potential for participants in service projects is a great way to incorporate leadership development in all chapter members.

It is natural to look at our chapter officer positions when we are evaluating our FFA leadership development process. Service as a chapter officer is a great way to develop leadership skills for the members' future endeavors, but most chapters only have from six to twelve officers per year. We also look at leadership conferences and state and national conventions,

but many of the members that attend the conferences and conventions either have or will serve as chapter officers. The problem that pertains for many advisors is how to develop leadership in all chapter members, not just the members that serve in our traditional leadership roles.

An option for local chapters is to use service learning as a tool for leadership development. Service learning characterizes a variety of experiential

planning. Because PALS visits have a specific length of time and a specific purpose, making some of your students responsible for planning a specific visit gives them a semi-controlled opportunity to start their leadership training. Assistance aides can be found at the FFA Unlimited website. Other great options include individual states' Agriculture in the Classroom programs and individual agriculture commodity associations. Another way that you can use PALS

Teaching leadership through service projects allows all members to become leaders.

education endeavors including volunteer and community service projects (Furco, 1996). Comprehensive reviews of research on service learning reveal that service learning has a positive effect on students' personal and interpersonal development, including leadership skills and the ability to work well with others (Astin, et al., 2006; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001). Service-learning also has been shown to have a positive impact on students' academic learning as well as their career development and ability to apply what they have learned in the "real world" (Eyler, et al., 2001; Rhee & Honeycutt Sigler, 2010).

The National FFA Organization sponsors many service opportunities that can also be used as leadership learning activities. One program that provides great one-on-one leadership training is Partners in Active Learning Support (PALS.) PALS can provide great leadership training in a few areas. One leadership area is program

to assist with leadership training is to make students responsible for arranging all of the materials before, during, and after a PALS visit.

Agriculture programs are attractive to special needs students due to the hands-on nature of our classes. Some of the special needs students in our classes, however, can have underdeveloped reading skills, lower even than the elementary students that we may be working with in PALS. If your special needs students feel uncomfortable working in a mentoring relationship, they can work wonders as an assistant in handling and monitoring any needed props and equipment for your lesson. It is amazing to see the confidence that some special needs students gain. After first working as an assistant, they may decide to become mentors in the PALS program.

A final way that PALS can develop leadership is through the inter-

action in the community. PALS Mentors interact with the community at large including elementary students, teachers, staff, and parents; members in the community from whom you may be purchasing merchandise, borrowing equipment or receiving donations; and finally the FFA members parents and other school staff. The interactions that they develop working with other people help them to develop the confidence and poise that they will need to become a successful leader.

PALS is not the only program that can be used for service leadership training; the National FFA Organization sponsors several programs. Information on National FFA programs can be found at www.ffa.org. If you are interested in other possibilities, you can always contact local civic organizations such as Rotary International, Kiwanis International, Lions Clubs International, Ruritan National, Knights of Columbus, and National Exchange Clubs. These organizations are designed as service organizations and are usually delighted to find partners in their service tasks, especially from young adults

The National FFA Organization prides itself as an organization that

provides “premier leadership” and “personal growth” for all of its members. Speaking from experience as former members and as former advisors, we know that leadership development efforts traditionally benefit only the most involved members of a chapter - those who serve as a chapter officer or attend events above the chapter level. Teaching leadership through service projects allows all of our members to become leaders and to see the outcome of their efforts.

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Comments

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From Theory to Practice - A 4-H Perspective on Facilitating Youth Leadership Development

by Cody Stone

For more than one hundred years, 4-H has been actively engaged in positive youth development. Through 4-H, youth engage in projects, learning experiences, and group activities that foster life skill development. Leadership development has and continues to be a key component of the 4-H experience.

The concept of leadership is an age old construct. As long as humans have interacted with one another, the practice of leadership, whether referred to formally or not, has been present. Individuals have attempted over time to observe, study, define, and develop models to explain this phenomenon. While no single definition or theory is universal, over time, key concepts have developed that are reflected in the progress towards establishing a general construct of leadership. In broad terms, much of the current research and theory in the area of leadership focuses on three concepts: action (active learning process), influence, and relationships (Locke, 2003).

Leadership is a process that is developed over time. The concept that leadership can be learned through practice and opportunities for service is the general consensus of contemporary leadership scholars (Bennis, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Parks, 2005; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). Furthermore, modern leadership theory supports the overarching theme that leadership involves influence (Lussier & Achua, 2003; Uhl-Bien, 2003). A leader's ability to succeed rests solidly on his or her ability to utilize influence in a positive manner to

affect change. Finally, the formation of authentic relationships is central to the construct of leadership. Developing skills in relationship building and focusing on interpersonal interactions are fundamental leadership development competencies (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Uhl-Bien, 2003).

While a prevailing construct of leadership has emerged through research and theory, putting the concepts of this knowledge base into practice within youth development

members.

Belonging is a fundamental human need. Effective youth development programs provide opportunities for youth to experience a sense of belonging through inclusion, encouragement, and establishment of community. These concepts are effective means of fostering leadership development. By providing opportunities for establishing connections with others and to an organization, youth development programs assist young

A leader's ability to succeed rests solidly on his/her ability to utilize influence in a positive manner to affect change.

organizations is far less discussed. How does the practitioner assist youth program participants in enhancing their leadership competencies? The answer, I believe, resides within a program's ability to provide experiences that afford youth the opportunity to grow and develop.

The cornerstone of positive youth development is intentionality, engaging youth in well thought-out experiences and opportunities for growth. Such is the case for effective leadership development. The 4-H program frames youth development in terms of essential elements related to opportunities to experience Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery. I believe these essential elements are the hallmark of facilitating leadership development among youth

people in building and sustaining relationships. By affording youth a broad range of opportunities for involvement, organizations are better equipped to meet the needs of a diverse population. Examples of intentional efforts to facilitate meaningful relationships include open membership practices, mentoring programs, committee work, small group activities, and intergenerational involvement. Providing opportunities for youth to belong and establish relationships helps foster the development of leadership competencies.

Cultivating a spirit of independence is an important aspect of positive youth development. Learning to make choices and take responsibility for actions assists youth in developing an internal locus of control and

enhancing leadership aptitude. Self-determination facilitates engagement in meaningful activity and helps youth establish a sense of influence over their own lives. Action and accountability are trademarks of effective leadership. Practitioners can help youth experience independence by establishing youth-adult partnerships in which youth and adult members are treated equally, encouraging individual selection of projects and activities of interest, and providing opportunities to accept the responsibilities of serving in leadership positions.

While taking responsibility for one's own actions is a fundamental component of leadership development, a sense of connection with and interdependence on a larger community is of equal import. Leadership development is enhanced by providing youth opportunities to experience generosity. Effective leaders understand that their position as leaders is one of service not entitlement; leadership is embodied through service to others. Practitioners can help youth understand the value of generosity by creating opportunities to engage in community service and service learning projects, mentor younger members, practice distributive leadership by sharing responsibilities, and learn active listening skills through activities and trainings focused on communication.

Opportunities for continual learning and mastery are essential components of the 4-H program and of youth leadership development. Effective leaders are lifelong learners. As presented by Preskill and Brookfield (2009), the concept of "learning as a way of leading" focuses on development and growth through individual, group, and collective learning. Intent on change, learning leadership is facilitated through listening,

relationship building, and reflective practice. Experiences that allow youth to develop and practice competencies support the active process of learning leadership and mastery. Intentional efforts to foster mastery include providing opportunities for youth to present acquired competencies to peers and adults through demonstrations and presentations, to engage in planning, implementing, and evaluating events and activities, to reflect on newly enhanced knowledge and skills through journaling and group discussion, and to apply lessons learned to other aspects of their lives.

To affect change, leadership development professionals must be well versed in the practical application of theory. Leadership is an active process not a passive characteristic. By providing opportunities for youth to experience Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery, practitioners help set the stage to assist youth in the development of leadership competencies.

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Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development	
<p>Belonging</p> <p>Positive Relationship with a caring adult An inclusive environment A safe environment</p>	<p>Mastery</p> <p>Engagement in Learning Opportunity for Mastery</p>
<p>Independence</p> <p>Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future Opportunity for self-determination</p>	<p>Generosity</p> <p>Opportunity to value and practice service for others</p>

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The Leadership of Letting Go

by Carl G. Igo and Caleb S. Igo

Carl: As people, places and things move through our lives, it is sometimes difficult to let go. As teachers, how do we let go of that outstanding special student so he or she can move on to better things in life? As parents, how do we let go of our children while also helping them learn the importance of letting go? Although we may live in a throw-away society, it is still difficult to master the leadership lessons involved in letting go. Sometimes it is important to hold on to people, places, or ideals. For our family, one of the things we have held onto for years is agricultural education and FFA. As the son of a career high school agriculture teacher, I was no stranger to FFA even before I became involved in the organization myself. Once I was old enough to take agriculture classes, I was thrilled to become an FFA member and get my first blue corduroy jacket. As a high school agriculture teacher and then as a university teacher-educator, I - and by extension, my family- have held on to agricultural education and FFA.

Caleb: The move from Texas to Montana after my sophomore year of high school was difficult and painful. I was angry about the change and about being expected to adjust to a different culture and environment. I struggled to fit into my new surroundings. Eventually, I settled back into one of the few things I could relate to - being involved in agricultural education and the FFA chapter at my new high school. In Texas, FFA was something I did to occupy my time, but now it was my niche; it was one of the few places I knew I fit in. In Texas, I had been a chapter officer, and had planned to eventually be the

chapter president. Due to the move, I obviously was not elected as a chapter officer my Junior year at Belgrade High School, which also put doubts into my mind whether I could even be a chapter officer the following year, much less accomplish the goal of becoming chapter president.

Caleb: Although the lack of an office was initially discouraging, I found other ways to get involved that were rewarding. Almost all of my new friends were also FFA members and I attended almost every FFA function that year. I had to let go of the notion that in order to contribute to my FFA

There is leadership in letting go. As an agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor, you must learn to let go.

Carl: What a year! It was not an easy transition for anyone, but especially for a 16-year old. As a parent, I was at a loss for how to help my son let go. I kept seeing all kinds of opportunities for him in his new school, new FFA chapter and new setting. What his mom and I heard was how much better things were in his "former life." At every chance, he was going back to what was comfortable, and perhaps safe. Through cell phone, texting, and MySpace; he was able to maintain the contact with all his Texas friends. We initially thought that was a good thing. We made arrangements for him to attend church camp with the youth group from the church we had attended in Texas. He made plans to spend time during Christmas break and summer vacation with friends from Texas. It seemed to me he was spending so much time hanging on that he was making himself miserable - and by extension, making the whole family miserable. Thankfully, he did begin to look at the opportunities available to him through agricultural education and FFA.

chapter I had to be an officer. I got a lot of enjoyment out of being able to show up and make an immediate, noticeable impact on the success of an event or project. Through involvement and taking advantage of those opportunities, I realized my goal of being elected as the FFA chapter president my senior year and continued to be very involved in agricultural education and FFA. The more I let go of the things I was holding onto for sentimental and anger reasons, the more opportunities I began to see open before me. I took every chance I could to be involved and meet new friends from across the state. During the fall of my senior year, I set a new goal of becoming a Montana FFA state officer. I thought that if I could show up in Montana and in two years accomplish enough to be elected to a state FFA office, then it would be a good example to share with members that anyone could accomplish whatever goal they desired with enough hard work and a little luck.

Carl: When Caleb told his Mom and I that he had decided to run for



state office, a whole new set of feelings surfaced with me. Of course, there was relief that he was really letting go of the anger, mistrust and hostility at me for “ruining his life” by transplanting him to Montana. There was also pride in my son who had made a decision on his own to pursue the opportunities available through agricultural education and FFA. But then, there was a whole new kind of worry. What are the chances for a kid who had lived in Montana only two years to get through the interview process to become a state officer? What would happen to his psyche and confidence levels if he was not successful? But what if he was successful... my mind began thinking of FFA state officers I had known through the years... some I would be proud to have my son emulate, but others were not the image I had for my son. Interestingly, I began to see just how much I would have to let go in order to let Caleb make those next steps toward that new goal.

Caleb: From January until State FFA Convention in March, getting a state office was almost my sole objective. What a great way to cap off a successful FFA career! Convention came and went, and long story short, I did not receive a state office. I was

very disappointed for quite a while. Although I was discouraged at not being picked for a state office, I still remembered my goal of wanting to contribute back to FFA and found ways to

help out wherever I could for the remainder of my senior year.

Carl: I stood in the back of the dark convention hall listening as the names were called. Like the other parents, I was there to either give him a congratulatory slap on the back or to put my arms around him and tell him things were going to be okay. I will admit there was a part of me that was relieved when his name wasn't called – after all, this was his dream, not mine. On the other hand, what parent wants to see their child defeated and their dreams dashed? There was a long drive on the back roads of the county the afternoon after we got home from the convention. Once again, I found myself trying to help my son understand the importance of letting go. At the same time, yet again, I found myself having to tell myself that I had to let go of him; that he had to be able to make his own choices.

Caleb: It took several months for me to really get over being upset. By that time, I was a freshman in college. Though I still dearly wished that I had been elected to an office, I realized that there was a reason for everything; in letting go I realized I

could still be involved in Collegiate FFA. Along the way I grew as an individual through the new experiences of dorm life, cafeteria food, and perhaps most entertaining, having my dad as a professor.

Carl: Kids grow up and move out. In Caleb's case, he just moved a few miles from our house to a residence hall at Montana State University. Even so, here we were learning even more about letting go. His decision to major in agricultural education – to follow in Dad's and Granddad's footsteps – brought more pride and more fear. As much as I would love for him to become an agriculture teacher, I wanted to be sure he was doing it for the right reasons and that it was his choice rather than something I had somehow, either consciously or unconsciously, put on him.

Caleb: The decision to run for state office the second time was more difficult than it was the first time around. I struggled with it for months beforehand, weighing the potential reward of being elected against the miserable feeling of putting your all into something only to fail—again! It was a decision-making process that involved lots of prayer and late-night talks with my parents, friends, and my high school AgEd teacher. I felt more confident, and thanks to my college courses, I was much more knowledgeable about Agricultural Education, current agricultural issues, teamwork, and personal leadership than I had been a year earlier. At some point, I came to terms with the fact that whatever happens, happens, and life goes on. If this was what was supposed to happen, it would; if not, it wouldn't. I went into the interview process a far calmer and more collected individual the second time. Finally, the last convention session came and as the officers were announced, I heard my name!

Carl: Oh no! Now we have a whole new set of challenges... how will we get through a year of having a son who is a state FFA officer? How will he keep up with his officer duties, while also keeping up his college course expectations? As I began to let go of those worries, I was able to watch Caleb grow tremendously. His speaking abilities improved, his confidence improved, and perhaps most rewarding, he admitted that perhaps the move to Montana was not only good for my professional career, but it had also been good for his life, dreams, goals and accomplishments.

Caleb: As my year as an officer flew by, I often thought about what I would do after it was over. FFA had been one of the main activities in my life for a long time, and I wasn't sure how I would react to the sudden absence of something that been such a huge part of my life. I had watched

past officers from several states who had never let go of their year, and others who had disappeared entirely from agricultural education and FFA. As my year ended and eight new individuals assumed the leadership roles, I tried to give them their space to do their job, while still trying to stay involved in my favorite organization. I may have had to hang up my jacket as an officer, but I have continued to find new ways to continue to be involved with agricultural education and FFA. I know that I can never really completely let go of my FFA connections, and maybe that's why, in this whole process of letting go, I've discovered what I really want to hold onto! There is leadership in letting go and I know that as an agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor, I will continue to learn how to let go.



Dr. Carl G. Igo is an Associate Professor at Montana State University.



Caleb S. Igo is an Agricultural Education major at Montana State University.



The FFA provides many opportunities for students to develop leadership skills.



The FFA also provides numerous rewards for students who excel in the development of their leadership skills.

Building Leaders: Recruitment of AgEd Instructors Starts Early

by Bill Jimmerson and Ramey Luncford

With a teacher shortage upon us, Montana has instituted a few programs which will help in recruiting our young FFA members into the agriculture profession. The

of our recruiting programs, there are more undergraduates seeking a degree in agricultural education than in the past.

“LEGISLATIVE HELP”

You might be interested to know that part of the increased demand for AgEd programs is a state-funded

translates into tax dollars they can use to fund the bill. Naturally, having FFA members testify reaffirmed to the legislators that the FFA continues to develop the leadership skills needed for the future of agriculture.

“BLUE JACKETS, OPEN DOORS”

Three years ago, our Team AgEd group met in Indianapolis at the AgEd Summit and identified the need to start a recruitment program to get high school students to at least consider a career in agricultural education. A program called “Blue Jackets, Open Doors” was initiated that year at our state FFA convention. Agriculture teachers were asked to identify students who would be good prospects to teach. Those students were invited to attend the state convention and over 40 were brought on stage and introduced. They were given some agriculture teaching paraphernalia and actually met our National FFA Advisor, Dr. Larry Case, who gave them a few words of encouragement. Since that first program, each state convention has offered a similar program. Dr. Carl Igo, MSU associate professor in the Agricultural Education Department, has planned and conducted each of the “Blue Jackets, Open Doors” programs as a recruitment tool for his department.

“AG OPPORTUNITIES TOUR”

Another successful idea Montana has instituted to recruit more students into agricultural education is our “Ag Opportunities Tour” conducted by our State FFA Foundation. A limited number of FFA members are selected for a tour of agriculturally-based businesses, partially based on their inter-

The future will demand even more creative ideas to meet the demand for agricultural education teachers.

days are gone when we can rely on enough students selecting agricultural education as a career choice by chance. The time is right to market the teaching of AgEd as a viable and exciting career to our next generation.

“NEW PROGRAMS STARTED”

Even as the K-12 school populations are declining in most of the 171 Montana secondary schools, there is an increased level of interest in schools to start an agricultural education program (Montana had 80 programs in 2010). In fact, Montana added six new programs for the 2009-10 school year and four more have already hired teachers for the coming school year. That’s ten new programs in two years! That’s ten new opportunities for teaching AgEd in Montana! Our teacher preparation program at Montana State University (MSU) is unable to keep up with the current demand, although because

program which will pay a school up to \$7,500 to start a program. The Montana Association of Agriculture Educators (MAAE) went to the legislature with a bill to fund our National Quality Program Standards initiative and the bill included funding for new programs. The legislature overwhelmingly passed this bill, indicating how strong our current programs are and how the marketing of them causes other schools to want the same opportunities for their students. Existing AgEd programs received \$500 each to conduct the National Quality Program Standards (NQPS) evaluation and another \$1,000 each when they provided their plan of improvement to the state AgEd specialist. State money will continue to be available to start new programs each year for eternity. Legislators bought into this bill completely when they were made aware that Montana agricultural education students earned over \$3.4 million on their SAE’s which

est in becoming an agriculture teacher. The FFA Foundation sponsors this tour as a way to “show off” these FFA members to existing and potential sponsors. The students rotate taking notes in a lesson plan format on each business visited and doing a video interview, conducted by the State FFA officers, which improves their communication and preparation skills and keeps them interested in learning as much as they can. The interviews processed into a video of the tour to provide a highlight production of the week –long event. Each student becomes aware of the importance of utilizing business and industry tours as an educational activity to incorporate into their curriculum, should they decide to become a teacher. The program works well to educate the students on the vastness of Montana agriculture, and does not focus on one particular industry, making it more applicable for future agri-

culture teachers. This last year, the video was utilized to market the tour at the State FFA convention. It is also available for viewing at the Montana FFA website: montanaffa.org.

“THE CHALLENGE”

Although we are proud of the activities we have instituted in Montana to make an effort to meet the need for more agricultural educators, we know the future will demand even more creative ideas to be put into action. The challenge in every state is to provide those activities to market agricultural education as one of those agricultural careers we are proud to train our students for. With emphasis on the positive aspects of teaching AgEd, we will meet the challenge to keep a supply of high quality young people eager to take on the opportunity of becoming a teacher.



Bill Jimmerson is Advisor of the Montana FFA Association,



Ramey Lunceford is Director of the Montana FFA Foundation.



The Montana Ag Opportunities tour members performing community service at the new “Farm in the Dell,” a place for the developmentally disabled to live and receive and have a higher quality of life.



Pictured with HB464 sponsors Rep. Jesse O’Hara (front row left) and Senator Taylor Brown (front row second from right) is the delegation from Montana that were successful in obtaining funding for AgEd programs.

“Bucket Filling” a Vital Behavior of Everyday Leadership

by David Jones

Although leadership may be defined as positively influencing others, this is only a part of what leadership is all about. An important part of leadership is the “us,” who we are “personally.” How we lead ourselves is often overlooked as we examine leadership theories. Our own leadership is our everyday words, actions and behaviors that make us who we are...the “who we are when no one is watching.” The behaviors that are visible to others are the ones that can and do have the greatest impact both in a positive as well as negative way. These actions or behaviors are what make some people “good” leaders and others “great” leaders. Each of us possess a certain level of leadership skill or skills. Leadership skills are like a new jig-saw puzzle; all the pieces are there, but it’s up to each of us to figure out how they fit together. The authors of *The Influencer: The Power to Change Anything*, (Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan & Switzler, 2008) state vital behaviors “can drive big change.” Vital behaviors are like the first few dominoes in a cascade of dominoes, if we do a few basic behaviors, the impact can be amazing. A vital behavior of an everyday leader is to Be a Bucket Filler. This behavior is about “being” in a way that values others. This then affects a second behavior which is behaving in a way that values ourselves with others.

Being a bucket filler is an analogy that Rath and Clifton use in their book, *How Full Is Your Bucket? Positive Strategies for Work and Life* (Rath & Clifton, 2004). The notion is that filling or emptying a person’s

bucket is taking place all the time and most people don’t even realize it. As we walk the street and enter and exit buildings we are emptying and filling others’ buckets. As we conscientiously start to fill people’s buckets and work toward not emptying people’s buckets our so called “everyday life” turns into a life that can become amazing. Here’s how it works:

Each of us has an invisible bucket. It is constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say or do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it’s empty, we feel awful. Each of us also has an invisible dipper. When we use that dipper to fill other people’s buckets – by saying or doing things to increase their positive emotions – we are filling their bucket as well as filling our own bucket. But when we use that dipper to dip from others’ buckets – by saying or doing things that decrease their positive emotions – we diminish ourselves. Like the cup that runneth over, a full bucket gives us a positive outlook and renewed energy. Every drop in that bucket makes us stronger and more optimistic. But an empty bucket poisons our outlook, saps our energy, and undermines our will. That’s why every time someone dips from our bucket, it hurts us. So we face a choice every moment of every day: We can fill one another’s buckets, or we can empty their bucket. The choice is ours. It’s an important choice – one that

profoundly influences our relationships, productivity, health and happiness. (Rath & Clifton, 2004, p. 15)

Some of the everyday ways we can be bucket fillers is to say nice things to people and give them compliments. So often we think people already know they look nice, but how often do we say it? Giving other people compliments is really about making other people feel good about themselves and building their self-esteem. Let’s think about our daily conversations. Are our conversations purely business? Do our conversations include personal compliments? Do we say nice things to our co-workers to make their days better? Do we sometimes even empty a person’s bucket by what we say? What if each person we work with tried for one week to make everyone’s job easier doing things not in their “job description.” Can you imagine what a difference that would make in our office? Instead of people setting up road blocks and trying to slow each other down, walls and barriers would deteriorate and we would accomplish so much more.

Let’s also think about that grouchy assistant that we all have. The one that never smiles and is always in a foul mood. My grandmother had a saying, “kill ‘em with kindness.” I’ve found that it’s difficult for mean people to be mean when the people around them are continually being nice to them. One of my mottos is, “Always be in a good mood.” Why??? Because people in a bad mood will do one of two things. They will either get in a good mood or they’ll go away. Either way, You Win.

I often wonder why we don't "fill" other's buckets more often? What is the deterrent of filling as many buckets as we can a day with as many compliments or words of praise? Does praising others take away anything from our own lives? Do each of us have a set number of praises that we are capable of giving? Does giving praise "cost" us anything? I think about how I felt the last time I was praised for something positive I'd done. How wonderful I felt inside for being recognized by another for that little something. No, it wasn't a large certificate or a ribbon or a trophy. It was an "atta-boy," "thank you," or "well done."

When we let others know that we notice the little things, a nice shirt, a nice note, a new hair cut, not only do we demonstrate behavior that shows others that we care, we are filling buckets, both theirs and ours. Doesn't it feel good to compliment others and see in their faces that we've made their day? Doesn't knowing that you've affected another's life in a positive way make you feel good about yourself? I'm sure it does. The pride of bucket-filling leadership is that when we fill others' bucket, we are simultaneously filling our own.

How else can we fill buckets? Think of bucket filling as helping one another, especially without being asked. I have an assignment I give in my leadership course. The assignment is to do at least one extraordinarily nice thing a day for someone and don't get caught. Huh? You might be asking. Yep...Do one thing that is extra-ordinarily nice and don't get caught doing it. For example, go through a drive thru and pay for the person behind you and make sure that they can't get out to thank you. Slip a quarter into an expired parking meter. Place a note in the box of a colleague without signing it stating you

appreciate all they do for your organization or department. You would be amazed at my student's reactions to this assignment. They begin the week saying they think this is foolish and are skeptical of the intent and even more so of the anticipated results. Yet by the end of the week they've turned it into a game and love it. I've had students claim this was one of the most memorable and impactful assignments of their college experience....impacting lives without their knowledge of who did it. This is often reiterated in the phrase, "random acts of kindness." Often people that need the most help are the least inclined to ask for it. How often do we do things intentionally to make others' lives better? Why don't we do it more often? If we all tried to make a positive difference in the lives we came in contact with...imagine? Each of us has the ability to make a difference in others' lives. It's up to each of us to make the decision whether to make a positive difference in others lives or not to. When we can do things that will make someone else's life or job easier, we are being a bucket filler.

Everyday leadership means constantly remembering it isn't about us, it's about other people. In his book, *It's Not About The Coffee* (Behar, 2007) former president of Starbucks Coffee, Howard Behar talks about how it's about the people, the relationships, the conversations we have with others that makes the difference. Bucket fillers demonstrate behaviors that value others and because bucket filling is reciprocal, bucket fillers usually have full buckets because the people around them are doing the same. It's the small tasks that offer the greatest rewards. We've all received a thank you note at one time and do you remember how this note made you feel? Do you realize your bucket was getting filled? Bucket fillers take time to give others that

feeling. We may not always see the instant reward for the nice things we do, but we receive the reward by having our bucket filled. Everyday leadership.

Filling buckets can happen at the least expected times. Last night I was sound asleep when out of the darkness my youngest daughter calls me. "Dad, can you cover me up and fill up my love bucket?" Man...I had already finished this paper and was ready to send it in when, slam...right in the face it happened. I walked into her room and covered her up, gave her a big hug, told her how much I loved her, how proud I was of her, what a special young lady she was. All she said as I walked out the room was, "I love you daddy." My bucket was over flowing. Everyday leadership.

I challenge you to be a "bucket filler." Find ways to fill others' buckets. Fill buckets of the people you know. Fill buckets of people you don't know. Fill the buckets of the people you work with, fill buckets of complete strangers. Fill buckets of your students, and especially don't forget to fill the buckets of the significant people in your lives because as you fill their bucket you will be rewarded in ways you never imagined possible. Everyday Leadership.



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Beginning Teacher Perspective on Leadership

by David Kirschten

I entered the field of Agricultural Education by a different path than many. Although receiving a degree in AgEd was my original plan when I started college over 20 years ago, I eventually changed my major to Animal Science, which put me on a different career path. I ultimately earned a PhD in Animal Breeding and Genetics from Cornell University and picked up many semesters of experience as a teaching assistant along the way. I thought that I might seek a career path in Extension, so I audited several Adult Education classes at Cornell. I also helped my wife design and evaluate her Master of Science Education experiment comparing the effectiveness of three methods to teach Biology topics that high school students find difficult. However, I returned to secondary education after being displaced from my field of training two years ago at the beginning of the economic downturn. I currently hold a Class IV teaching certificate in the state of Montana. This type of certification can be earned in a trades industry by documenting over 10,000 hours in a field related to the trade and with approval of Montana Office of Public Instruction. Although I don't hold some of the specific education credentials that others might have, I do have more than a casual interest in education, leadership and youth development. In short, I love teaching. I love learning even more, and my experience shows that we truly learn the lesson when we have to teach it. Perhaps the learning experience is best understood when we get to live the lessons we learn and teach.

My wife and I both volunteer as 4-H leaders. My wife was one of a small group of members that started

the 4-H Ambassador program in Montana in the early 1990's. I followed FFA as far as I could through high school and college and also served for a year as the National Collegiate 4-H Chairman in 1991-1992. Throughout the last twenty years, I have served on various committees and boards, and through work experience at Cornell and later in a national beef breed association, I have been

but I believe there are demonstrable differences between FFA and other youth development organizations.

Why do I hold such a favorable opinion of FFA members as leaders? What makes a good leader? These are difficult questions to answer. If you consult several textbooks that offer leadership instruction, you can find many qualities of good leaders

There is only one gift of any importance that we share with our students. That gift is our time.

exposed to many types of youth development programs and leadership activities. Involvement in leadership development of any kind is certainly beneficial for any student. Many organizations offer junior memberships to pre-adult members to encourage them to participate in the activities of the organization and gain experience in managing business policy. Most of these junior affiliates do have a structured organization, elect officers, and conduct business. Some of them have contests, including some similar to our own Agricultural Sales and Service and Livestock Judging CDEs. A few of these organizations offer philanthropic opportunities as well. I have seen firsthand the effectiveness of these organizations in my family and among acquaintances. I have little doubt that these other organizations are good at building leaders, but I am prejudiced; I believe FFA is the best leadership development organization available to students today. I know this is a strong view, and I realize that it is an opinion based on subjectivity,

defined. Your students can give you a long list as well. The difficulty in characterizing good leaders is that not all people have every good quality of leadership. Even great leaders have facets of their character that still need to be developed. I suspect that your experience tells you that although you may have several great leaders in your chapter, they are all different, and many are good leaders for different reasons. Some leaders are effective with one audience, but not so effective with others. My experience tells me that as difficult as it is to completely define leadership, it is virtually effortless to see the absence of leadership. We know true leadership when we see it, and we also know when the actions we see are not the actions of a leader. Leadership is service, not governance.

Earlier, I mentioned leadership differences that I had seen between FFA and other youth development organizations. I don't think we profit much from being critical of people, but we must critically evaluate con-

cepts, actions and results. So what is the FFA advantage in developing leaders compared to other organizations? In my opinion, many youth development programs aren't as effective as FFA because they fall short of the completeness of the AgEd program. Many were created to involve youth members in an auxiliary capacity to a larger, parent organization. Although often unstated, they have as a primary purpose to serve the parent organization first, with a secondary purpose of developing leadership potential. There is nothing inherently wrong with these organizations, in my opinion they just don't produce the same well-rounded leader that FFA does. These organizations can vary from highly philanthropic, which I do encourage student involvement in, to salesmanship based programs where the members are basically doing little more than regurgitating facts that they have little true understanding of in an effort to make a sale and further the cause of the parent organization. Self-confidence is developed through public speaking and sales contests, which is good, but in general the members are developed to further the interests of the organization rather than with the goal of total personal development of the individual. Within our schools, we have other organizations that students can join. I encourage you to work with your fellow CTE teachers and act as a chaperone to their state conventions to understand how the other CTE programs function and see firsthand the opportunities for leadership development within those organizations.

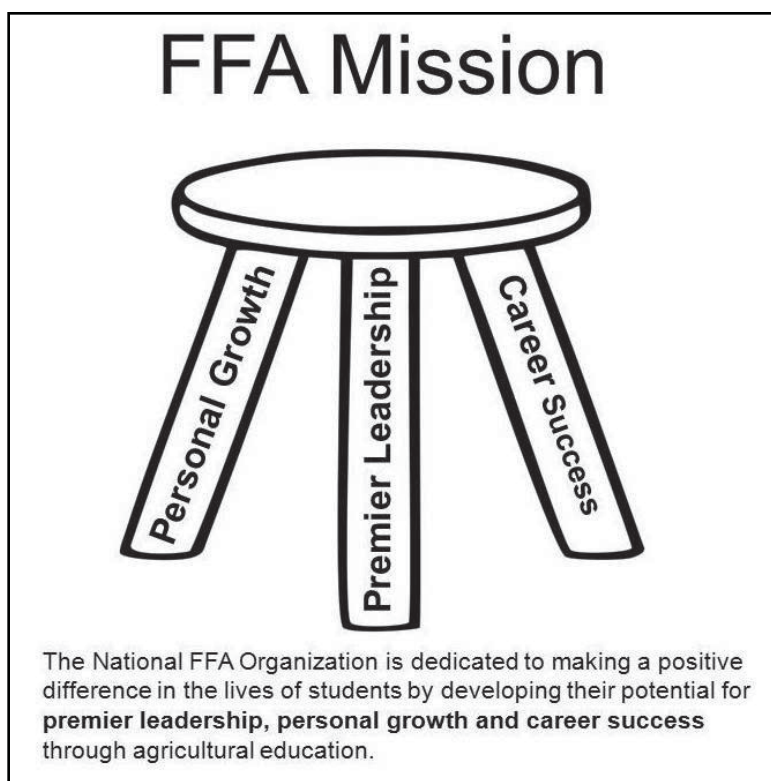
All these youth organizations have their place, don't misunderstand my point. My remarks about other organizations are not intended to be disparaging. To the contrary, I hope that I might bring to light some ways that we might all improve other youth organizations if we participate

in them, and I hope that you find the time to do so. I encourage participation in every group that a student has time to dedicate themselves fully. Often, FFA members will hold offices in these organizations on local, state and national levels.

I think you probably know the analogy of the three-legged stool. A stool with one or two legs isn't particularly stable. A stool with three legs is very stable, and a stool with more than three legs is no more stable. One three-legged stool we have in our education program is the circle created when classroom/laboratory instruction, FFA, and SAE function together. Within the FFA, a second three legged-stool is stated in our mission, "Premier Leadership, Personal Growth, and Career Success." I believe that is the singular reason why I can see differences between FFA and other youth programs. The difference is simply the structured time that we spend with our students dedicated to the purpose of their personal growth and development into adulthood. We hold this mission as our primary purpose for existence, not as a secondary result of some other course of action.

When I started teaching, I had quite a bit of doubt about how effective I would be since I didn't have

some of the specific training on subjects as other AgEd teachers. I was confident in many areas that I had extensive real-life experience in areas such as animal science and farm business management. I had weaker subject areas like mechanics, but I was sure I could stay ahead of most of the students and provide solid instruction. I was really worried about teaching leadership. I was visiting with a teacher I chose to be a mentor about my concerns. He gave me valuable insight when he told me to teach to my strengths to get started, but choose one or two key weak areas to improve each year. One thing he suggested to me was that I was wrong about my ability to provide instruction about leadership. He thought that leadership was actually one of my strongest areas, while I considered it my weakest. His advice really helped me get a fresh start in regards to my leadership instruction. I had experiences with leadership activities; I just didn't recognize them as assets that I could use to build and communicate my own leadership program.



What do I do to provide the best leadership instruction I can? I can tell you the advice I have taken and the things that I have done. What works for you in practice will vary depending on the size of your school and classes, your students and their parents, your working relationship with your advisory council and superintendent, as well as other extraneous factors particular to your situation. Here's my shortlist of techniques, but it isn't given in any particular order. Use what will work for you, and develop your own way of becoming a more effective teacher.

- 1) Consider the decision about why we are AgEd teachers.** At the core of our decision to become a teacher is the question: is our priority to ourselves or our students? I needed to answer that question for myself. When I did, my attitude toward teaching AgEd came into focus and I found it easier to develop my program and see my place within it.
- 2) Take ownership.** I serve my students, school, and superintendent, but it is my program. I am ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the program. Notice I say ownership of my program. I didn't say I take credit for the success of my program. There is a difference. I am responsible to make my program better, but much of the success of my program is the result of numerous other people that assist me in carrying out activities and the students in the program. The credit for success is theirs, as well as mine. To make another analogy, the program and its educators are the pipeline through which the fluid flows. The fluid (our students) is what is important.

- 3) Recognize your own capabilities and limitations and the same within your AgEd program.** I completed an assessment of my program with a member of my advisory council and my superintendent within six weeks of starting my employment. Choose a mentor to advise you in your areas of weakness as well as in your overall program. Work with your advisory council to get their input. Work with your superintendent. Find a process you can trust to evaluate and improve your program; then do it.

- 4) Recognize opportunities to teach and lead.** More than other secondary education classes, AgEd lends itself to guided instruction of leadership because we are not confined to strictly classroom instruction. We have the opportunity to weave leadership instruction into the lab/shop environment and SAEs. We travel with our members to CDEs. Sometimes it seems like we have to compete with other teachers, organizations, and activities for the attention of our FFA members, but this isn't always a detriment for the student. Show up for your students and support them in their other activities. It will make a difference in their lives. Instill a sense of service and responsibility through community, school service, and philanthropy. I believe this helps our FFA members develop a sense of who they are within their school and community.

- 5) Continue to be a student.** New information is emerging all the time. New techniques are tried and developed. Student lifestyles, values and attitudes are different now than in the past. As teachers, we need to keep current

with our knowledge and techniques to be as effective as we can be. Make use of recent technologies to present material and communicate with your students.

The concepts I use to improve my program are not particularly unique. Each of us must find, try and adapt tools to make ourselves better instructors. A phrase from the Vice-President's statement in the FFA opening ceremonies runs through my mind as I have written this contribution; "Without labor, neither knowledge nor wisdom can accomplish much." The responsibility to be productive within our chosen field is ours. Knowledge and wisdom is pointless if it isn't put into action. There may be only one gift of any importance that we can share with our students. That gift is our time. Spend time assessing yourself and your program. Spend time making your program better and more effective. Spend time with your students one-on-one in the lab/shop. Spend time with them and their parents on an SAE visit. See if this time makes a difference in the lives of your students. Time spent with my Ag teacher made a difference in my life when I was an FFA member years ago. It is now my opportunity, privilege and responsibility to do the same for the FFA members that I mentor.



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January/February

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