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Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders

Looking Forward to 2015

by Harry N. Boone, Jr.

Traditionally I have devoted an entire page to the explanation of the themes for the upcoming year. Because of limited space in this issue I have elected to use my editorial space to introduce the themes for 2015.

Agricultural mechanics was once a standard in the high school agricultural mechanics program. Over time I have observed its role diminish. In fact a number of preservice teacher preparation programs have either eliminated agricultural mechanics from the curriculum or found alternative ways for prospective teachers to learn these skills. In my curriculum course I argue that agricultural mechanics has a place in most if not all of the courses offered in West Virginia. For example, a “large animal” course should include instruction on structures and fencing. A greenhouse course would include instruction on plumbing, heating, and electricity. This issue will explore the role of agricultural mechanics in the high school agricultural education program.

When I say the word laboratory, most agricultural education teachers will automatically think of the agricultural mechanics shop. There are many other “laboratories” in the agricultural education program. There are school farms, greenhouses, meats processing facilities, forests, wetlands, and the standard “scientific” style laboratories being used in high school agricultural education programs, to name a few. This issue will be devoted to ways agricultural education teachers utilize laboratories in their day-to-day instruction.

An active agricultural education program could not function with the

<i>The Agricultural Education Magazine Themes 2015</i>	
Jan-Feb	The Role of Agricultural Mechanics in High School Ag Educ
Mar-Apr	Using Laboratories in Agricultural Education
May-Jun	Public Relations in Agricultural Education
Jul-Aug	Moving Forward by Looking Back: High School Teachers
Sep-Oct	Moving Forward by Looking Back: State Supervisors
Nov-Dec	Moving Forward by Looking Back: Teacher Educators

support of the local community. How does the local community learn about the program? In this issue the reader will learn about innovative ways agricultural education teachers use to promote their programs.

I plan to devote the last three issues of the 2015 *Agricultural Education Magazine* to leaders/former leaders’ reflections on the profession’s past and advice for ways the agricultural education can remain strong and productive. The July-August issues will be devoted to reflections by high school teachers, the September-October issue will include state supervisors, and the November-December issue will provide a perspective from teacher educators.

I would like your assistance in identifying individuals that would be willing to share their reflections, as well as their advice, with the profession in this format. Allow me to share my thoughts on the qualifications that I am looking for. I am looking for:

- Individuals with a minimum of fifteen years in the profession,
- Someone that is recognized as a leader in the region, preferably the nation,
- An individual that is knowledgeable,

able, if not active, in the profession, and

- Someone that is willing to share their knowledge and experiences with the profession.

Please provide me with their name, address, the category for which you are nominating them, and a brief statement on why you think they should be included in this activity. The brief statement will be vital in the selection of six to ten individuals to contact. Thank you in advance for assisting me with this effort. I am excited to hear from some of the “giants” of the profession.

In closing I would like to thank Jon Simonsen for his efforts in developing this issue on “preparing the next generation of leaders.” I think you will enjoy the variety of suggestions from the contributors to this issue.



Dr. Harry N. Boone, Jr., is a Professor at West Virginia University and Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine.

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Cover Photo: *Bringing officer teams together to not just set goals but to develop an attitude of service will encourage every student to be the best leader they can be.*
Courtesy of Rachel Bartholomew Kagay

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Article Submission

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor or Theme Editor. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the publication date of the intended issue. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Theme Editor and/or the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be approximately four double spaced pages in length (1500 words). Information about the author(s) should be included at the end of the article. Photos and/or drawings appropriate for the "theme issue" are welcomed. Photos/drawings should be submitted in an electronic format (jpg or tiff format preferred - minimum 300 dpi). Do not imbed photos/drawings in the Word document. A recent photograph (jpg or tiff format preferred - minimum 300 dpi) of all authors should accompany the article unless photographs are on file with the Editor. Articles in the *Magazine* may be reproduced without permission but should be acknowledged.

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Life is a Journey, not a Destination (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

by Jon C. Simonsen

He came in from the back parking lot of the school through the shop door at lunch one day. I hadn't really seen him since he graduated a couple years back but greeted him and asked how everything was going. We visited for a few minutes and then he said he just wanted to stop in and say "thank you" and "goodbye". Thank you for everything he had learned in the agriculture program and goodbye in case he did not see me again. He shared that in basic training many of the experiences brought him back to lessons about leadership he had learned in agriculture class and in the FFA. During that experience he connected with other soldiers quickly

the end the influence you play in the lives of your students is invaluable. The agricultural education profession has prided itself for many years on developing the next generation of leaders for agriculture and beyond. However, with that tradition comes responsibility for us now and in the future.

The articles you will read in this issue provide several viewpoints toward leadership. You will see articles written by current teachers that provide practical examples for your local program along with reflective articles that will cause you to stop and think about how you handle situations. There are articles from post-secondary individuals and professionals in the field. As you read, you will notice

You were placed here to make a difference by developing the next generation of leaders.

that had been a part of high school agriculture programs across the country and many may have even shared funny and embarrassing stories about their agriculture teachers. But it was also time to say goodbye because in the morning he would ship out overseas and the potential to not return was a reality. We shook hands and he exited the same way he entered.

That experience took place around 10 years ago but came to mind as I read through the articles shared in this issue. Every day you as a teacher of agriculture make a difference in the lives of students. Some days may appear to be better than others, but in

the different perspectives brought to the table, but you will also see some common threads that run through them. Those may include an attitude toward servant leadership, making sure we are demonstrating what we expect of the students, and not being afraid to give up control. As we work with the many students that will enter and exit our programs we need to begin with the end in mind. The end being that leadership development is a process and will be a journey for the students that will continue for the rest of their lives. We may see glimpses of leadership while students are in high school but we are striving to influence them for a lifetime.

Recently, I heard Jim Kouzes speak at a conference. He and his colleague Barry Posner are most well-known for their work with *The Leadership Challenge*. He posed these questions to the group: "Am I on this planet to do something or just something to do? If you're on this planet to do something, then what is it?" As an agriculture teacher our creed reads, "I am an agricultural educator by choice and not by chance." That choice was to influence students and assist them to be the best that they can be. You have chosen to be a part of one of the greatest professions in one of the greatest industries that can make a difference in the future. You were placed here to make a difference by developing the next generation of leaders.

If we are still around when some of our students turn 50 years old, I hope that they will have made a positive impact in their families and communities and are striving to develop future generations of leaders. That will be evidence that we have truly made a positive difference and that leadership truly is influence.



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Learning to Let Go

by Bibiana Giff

At the end of each school year I ask my Ag Leadership class, comprised of seniors, to think back on their four years of high school and reflect on what they learned from being involved in the agriculture program and FFA. When I asked them, “What is the single-most skill you gained from this program?” The responses rang out as one: “leadership.” For me, leadership was the top skill I learned from being active in a high school agriculture program. “Leadership cannot really be taught. It can only be learned,” is a quote by Harold S. Geneen that all agriculture teachers can refer to when determining ways to build strong leaders of their students. What methods do I use to instill leadership? Thinking back to my involvement, I noticed there are similarities in the way I gained leadership skills and in the way I encourage and involve students so they become strong leaders.



Students are challenged to take an active part in the phototropism lesson and take charge of their learning.

Before I entered high school I was active in other youth organizations. In one organization the adults were the decision-makers. They decided what our youth club was going to do and how we were going to accomplish it. I remember disliking meetings and activities, lacking the confidence to speak up, and yearning for my own voice. It wasn't until I entered high school and became involved in FFA that this changed. I noticed that students were the decision makers and the advisor offered his thoughts but never took over. We planned and organized events, with some adult help, but we were the leaders of our own group. This helped build my confidence, and I found myself being more involved, and in turn my leadership skills grew. Here are a few tips from these experiences that can be applied to developing leadership skills in students.

Learn to Let Go.

I distinctly remember being a high school student sitting in my high school agriculture classroom with my agriculture communications team deciding on our project. I am a competitive person, trying my best at every CDE, with a blue banner in my sights. Our advisor was nearby, and when

we thought we had the winning idea, he would offer his thoughts and advice, but ultimately the decision was ours. We continued to brainstorm, and finally came up with a topic that resulted in a state winning presentation and high placing at nationals.

Fast-forward to my first year of teaching. I was like most young teachers: excited, anxious, prepared and unprepared all at the same time. I had high expectations and goals for myself in regards to my instruction, FFA responsibilities, and professional development. My agriculture communications team was seated in my classroom coming up with ideas for their presentation. I, being new to teaching, led their planning session, told them their options for their project. The team didn't really understand the project ideas I offered, but because of my enthusiasm and the team being new to the CDE they went along with it. Looking back, I did that team a huge disservice. I did to that team exactly what was done to me many years earlier. I took over. I didn't trust my team. I became too competitive. I lost sight of the big picture. Needless to say the team didn't fair well at the state competition, and I learned a big lesson: LET GO!

“Letting go of the power” is more properly termed “learner autonomy.” Allow your students to take charge of their learning. They will gain leaps and bounds in leadership by being active in the decision-making and process of an event or CDE. I realize it will be difficult to do this at first, but you will notice a drastic change in your students' confidence levels, involvement, buy-in of the program, and ultimately their leadership development.

So just how do you *let go*?

1. Prioritize, and don't do work that students should do. Make a list of tasks for students and officers. Are you doing tasks that a student can accomplish to build leadership skills and at the same time lightening your workload? Are there things that you are not willing to let go? Make a list. Here are a few things students can do (that sometimes we as teachers do for them): write the National Chapter Application, organize a Greenhand week, help other students with record books and applications, correspond with elementary schools for Ag in the Classroom, maintain the FFA website/facebook page, update the bulletin board, write banquet scripts,

2. Inspire young leaders. Your seniors won't be here forever and someone needs to be there to take their place. Provide opportunities for younger members to be in leadership roles, which could include a speaking part at banquet, committee chairman or assistant, presenter at a school board meeting on FFA events, etc. This will build confidence, inspire students to apply for officer positions or be more involved, and will grow leaders.

3. Give many opportunities to lead. Leadership is an ongoing skill. Encourage students to take on more responsibilities as they grow in leadership skills. Involve older students in program evaluations, developing

5. Be patient, and recognize success. Leadership doesn't occur overnight. It will take time to implement a plan, and for students to develop their skills. As teachers and advisors it is our job to assist students when they need it, and step back and observe when we can. Sometimes you may feel like you have to take the reins, but if you offer advice and guidance students will still have ownership and you won't be doing the work for them. In the end, they will have learned something, and if the event/activity was a poor outcome, students can reflect on how to improve it for the future. Recognize the smallest success. Students will feel appreciated and worthwhile and will be more apt to volunteer for future events.

For me, it took time, practice, and many self-reminders to learn to let go. It's not easy, but it is worth it. Remember, the big picture isn't the perfect FFA banquet or a classroom full of blue banners, it is the vision that students will walk out of your classroom at the end of four years with the leadership skills to apply in all aspects of their future careers and personal lives. I'll leave you with a leadership quote by President John Quincy Adams that I like to share with my students: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."



Bibiana Giffit is the Agriscience Educator and FFA Advisor at Crane Union High School, Crane, Oregon.

Leadership is an ongoing skill.

contact sponsors, design banquet invitations, water the greenhouse on weekends. It may take longer for the job to get done, and probably easier to do yourself, but how does that benefit students?

At first I struggled most with allowing the FFA Treasurer to complete her duties on her own. I counted money, completed deposits, and she simply filed and tracked funds. So, I purchased a metal cash drop box and mounted it to the wall in my classroom. Students place their money in an envelope (with their name, date, and what the money is for written on it) and drop it through the slot in the dropbox. Each week the Treasurer deposits the money to the office. I unlock the box for her, she counts and fills out the deposit slips and we double sign them. I didn't realize just how much I was doing that the FFA Treasurer was very capable of doing on her own. The extra bonus was that I didn't have checks and cash floating around in my desk!

new events/activities, coaching creed speakers and other CDEs, etc. My older students take on "Greenhand Buddies" and remind them about FFA events, help them with homework, and inspire them to be involved. Think about ways your students can lead outside-school events, such as community events, 4-H activities sponsored by FFA, or assisting other members with their SAE programs.

4. Listen and question, don't criticize. Listen to your students. If your FFA is planning an event or deciding on a speech topic, listen to what their vision is. If you are unsure of their direction, ask driving questions so either you can understand their plan better or so students explain their reasoning. If they are off the mark, guide them back to it, but help them come up with an idea, don't do it for them. Don't criticize, it only builds walls between you and your students.

Impacting for the Future

by Nathan Torrance

Leadership has many faces and has multiple definitions. What I, as an agriculture instructor, strive to develop in my students is that Leadership Is Influence! Now what are you going to do with the influence that you have on a daily basis with those you come into contact with?

Over the past 16 years the way in which I have facilitated this has changed. When I first began teaching I started having a summer officers retreat where we would plan out our year's activities, have some fun, and talk about being a good leader. While I continue that same activity I have tweaked it to be more focused on each individual and how they lead and influence every day, everywhere they are. Each officer is challenged to reflect on how they include other students, attitudes of the members, and how much students are actively involved in activities.

I have challenged my officers that being a leader means more than just leading while in your FFA jacket or at

an FFA activity. The very core of being a leader means more than FFA but about you the individual student and the impact that you want to leave on your school and community. I challenge all students with this, not just my officer team. We as instructors can at times put so much emphasis on our officers and developing them as leaders that we lose sight of the other 95% of our chapter and their ability to lead, influence and impact others.

Setting a good foundation of leadership in your chapter must start with the actions, attitudes and beliefs of the instructor. Actions speak louder than words! Once students know that you are real and authentic, they are more than willing to be challenged and pushed to be all that they can be. Tools that I have used to be very effective are as follows:

- Effective, engaging, and fun officer retreat where you bond, plan, challenge, and grow as a team while setting goals and developing a vision for the upcoming year.
- Establish monthly officer lunches. Each officer selects a month that they will host the officer team for lunch on a Sunday afternoon. This allows for officers families to bond with the officer team and see first-hand how we work and plan each meeting and that month's activities. We talk about concerns,

successes, and what we need to do as a team that month.

- We always have an officer team Christmas meal together where officers draw a name of a fellow officer and buy them a gift. We take time to evaluate the first semester activities and determine if we are reaching the goals we set as a team.
- The weekend before we have our FFA Banquet we have a "Last Supper" together. This is always a great time of reflection.
- After the annual banquet, for about 30 minutes, the old officer team always takes the new officer team and shares with them some expectations and challenges them for the upcoming year.

One of the greatest things about the evolution of the leadership process in the chapters that I have advised is that so much of it is now student led and not by me because the students have "caught it." They challenge themselves and the other students to a higher standard and when you see that by your peers it is powerful and effective.

What about the "other 95%"?

continued on page 15



FFA students work to share the word about the benefits of leadership development through the FFA Organization.



Nathan Torrance is an Agricultural Education Instructor and FFA Advisor at Cheyenne High School, Cheyenne, Oklahoma.

Developing Leaders the Jerry Litton Way

by Lance Martin

Brian Tracy, once said, “The reason why most people miss opportunity when it comes along is because it comes dressed in work clothes.” That saying served Jerry Litton well in his life and for the last 65 years has also served the Chillicothe Agriculture and FFA Department as well.

Who was Jerry you may ask? Jerry Litton was a farm boy from Chillicothe, Missouri who rose to prominence as a National FFA Officer, public speaker, Charolais cattle breeder, and United States Congressman, all by the age of 35. However, Mr. Litton may have been best known for his unbelievable interrelationship and passion for people and his vision and drive for success. Unfortunately, on August 3, 1976, his brilliant career was cut short by a plane accident the night he won a hotly contested primary race for United States Senate. Through his foundation, his traditions and passions have carried on in the community and specifically in the Chillicothe Agriculture Department.

The best way to describe how the Department has developed leaders is through using the traditional three-circle model of agricultural education. We provide three distinct opportunities for students to engage in activities that will advance their leadership skills and make them well-rounded productive members of society.

The first program that allows for the successfulness of instilling leadership qualities in students is through the use of the Litton agriculture campus. The emphasis on Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) was so strong in 1994 we opened the

Litton Agri-Science Learning Center. The first priority of the center is SAE projects. SAE programs are a very strong focus in our department. We encourage and recognize all four types of SAE: ownership, placement, directed experience and agri-science projects. Students have the opportunity to house cattle, swine, sheep and goats at the center. These animals have been used for exhibiting as well as year around breeding projects. Students procure their own financing, sometimes with our assistance through local banks or our Litton funds. We have provided students opportunities to travel to various livestock shows and start their own swine and cattle herds. Allowing students to develop, plan and implement projects at the school farm provides students the opportunity to utilize cooperation skills they will need in the real world. The really exceptional part is we have been able to allow them to complete projects they have pride in and develop an ownership in our facility that will reap rewards for the department for many years. The school farm also becomes a learning

laboratory for one high school summer intern who focuses on grounds maintenance as well as providing customer service to the people and organizations that rent our facilities. We also provide an internship to a college student with no production agriculture experience who is looking to pursue a career in agricultural education. It has been very gratifying to help so many students pursue their interest in an SAE and watch each develop skills they will use as future leaders.

The legacy of Mr. Litton can specifically be found in the Chillicothe Agriculture and FFA Department today through our annual fundraiser. Our model for developing strong leaders through community service and agriculture awareness is making



Jerry Litton, while serving as a National FFA Officer, speaks with President Harry Truman.



The annual Barnwarming serves to develop leadership skills and instill a sense of community in the students.

an impact on thousands of students and community members each year. It starts with our annual FFA Barnwarming. One fundraiser per year is all it takes for the Chillicothe FFA Chapter to raise \$30,000 to benefit the department. But even greater, is the method at which the money is earned and the intangible qualities that are gained along the way. The event starts at the beginning of September and runs until the end of October, when the Barnwarming dance is held as the completion of the season. Students are asked to enter into the community and offer their services through manual labor to earn their money. Jobs range from cleaning barns and grain bins, fixing fence, washing equipment and cleaning out gutters. What we have found though is that through competition, greater obstacles are conquered and higher totals are met. Every student who earns at least \$75 receives a chapter t-shirt designed by the senior class and everyone who earns at least \$150 earns a sweatshirt. Also, each class is in competition with the other classes to earn the most money per student in their grade. Each class votes to elect a boy and girl Barnwarming candidate

that will serve as committee chairpersons. Their job is to coordinate work done in the community through advertising in the paper and ads on the local radio station; then once jobs are lined up, ask or

assign students to certain jobs. The culmination of the event all comes together the night of Barnwarming where the final money is turned in and the announcement of a king and queen are made. By the time the event is over 4,000 hours of community service have been logged by 200 FFA students, all without “selling” anything to the community. The greatest joy that I have found is when a student tells me that even after Barnwarming is over, they went back to that farmer or elderly person’s home to continue doing tasks, all without being paid. This aids in developing servant leadership in the students, something Mr. Litton believed in strongly.

The final program that has been an integral part of our effectiveness in developing leaders is our Litton Crusader’s Program. Agricultural education begins at a young age and continues throughout a person’s life. By exposing and teaching individuals about production agriculture, we hope elementary students are able to learn about this valuable industry and how it effects their everyday life. Each year, conducted through our Ag-

riculture Communications class, consisting of juniors and seniors in high school, educational programs are piloted to lower elementary students in Livingston County. Our school facility consists of a 36-acre school farm which is ideal to serve as a learning laboratory for students who may not have a daily exposure to agriculture. This year our students designed curriculum in the areas of plant and animal science, food technology as well as conservation and wildlife practices. Over 2,000 students attended our educational workshops this year. The other important reason that we have such programs are teachers are looking for individuals to teach subject matter pertaining to agriculture that their students may find on standardized testing. I can think of no better way to develop young leaders than to use the skills gained in the classroom to advocate for agriculture and help the next generation be more agriculturally-literate.

It is through our annual Barnwarming, Litton Crusaders and the Litton Agri-Science Learning Center that we are able to reach a wide-demographic of students and enhance their overall leadership qualities. No one activity can do it alone, it really takes our entire community to make each of these activities happen. It is an honor to continue the legacy of Mr. Litton through instilling in the students the passion he had for agriculture and the FFA.



Lance Martin is an Agriculture Instructor and FFA Advisor at the Grand River Technical School, Chillicothe, Missouri.

Making the Best of a Tough Time

by Jeff Moore

This article shares thoughts about the development of leadership in my local program in relation to the loss of one of our students to cancer. Up until this point I really had not reflected on this subject as I just worked our way through the year with the usual classwork, preparation for Career Development Events, State FFA Convention, and completing FFA Award applications. December 2012 for our program started a whole new way of leadership development in individuals, an FFA Chapter, and myself as a program leader. We learned that

raiser for families in our community is not a new idea but we wanted to make it easy to conduct and open to the public. Another goal was to involve the businesses where his parents work. It turns out that both his parents work for some of the larger agribusinesses in town and many of their employees were more than willing to jump in and take ownership in helping with aspects of the fundraiser. Braden's classmates were a pretty close bunch and once word of this event was announced many of them stepped up and wanted to help in some way. We now had the ball rolling on several forms of leadership from the students and community.

community. Numerous projects and missions type trips are completed by youth each year. Each of these experiences has a group of adult leaders who pass on the importance of service learning to our youth. Through these experiences the students gain leadership skills in teamwork, understanding different cultures, and working together for a common cause. These experiences are just a few examples of how the community strives to develop leadership and foster a sense of giving. The events related to Braden would be a testament to the giving and serving nature of the community.

Giving Ownership to Students

After meeting with some of Braden's parents' co-workers we had a game plan for the type of community benefit that we wanted to conduct for his family. By then Braden was just starting some of his treatments. The companies that his parents work for are very generous supporters of our program and the community in general. They took charge of the promotion and one of the two fundraisers. That left the FFA Chapter in charge of the other fundraiser. As I left that meeting I thought to myself, "This is going to be big and I have to find ways to turn a lot of it over to the kids." Normally, I need to have a pretty tight reign over what is going on, but I had a feeling that this would run smoothly. I knew the kids would pull this off. Within the school the word was out and I was getting some requests from classmates and FFA members. One of the first things I was approached about was t-shirts by one of my officers and my response was, "Ok, you are in charge of the whole thing!" I knew a lot would be sold, but I wasn't expecting over 700 when it was all said and done! This was a huge experience for this

The personal investment will make students more confident in their abilities and willing to lead other students.

one of our members, Braden, was diagnosed with cancer in his salivary glands. Everyone thought that this would be easily treatable and Braden would be with us like normal, but soon after we learned that was not the case. Braden to this point was a very involved FFA member and chapter officer with a very strong proficiency in the area of ag mechanics. His personality allowed for him to quickly connect with people and he had a plan for his career and life.

Once we learned that Braden would need a lot more treatment than what was offered locally, I met with two of his friends and we decided to hold some form of a fundraiser for Braden's family. The idea of a fund-

It Starts with the Community

Holdrege is a very giving community. The experienced generation of community leaders has set a firm foundation of giving back to the community. This can be seen throughout the town. A direct example of this is by doing some work with our local Community Foundation and a couple of grants we were able to secure about half of the funding for a school greenhouse. This experienced generation has made it a point to pass the tradition of giving on to younger generations.

Youth programs in the community have made it a point to stress service learning and giving back to the

student to learn organizational skills and customer service. She came to me with the design idea for me to approve and then went to our local screen printer and put them to work. Another student asked me about doing wrist bands and he received the same response from me. Again, this student experienced a major lesson in customer service and organization. Each of them went to other students asking for help with orders and distributing the items. I also know that they and their helpers gained a more personal connection and commitment to the processes.

As for the community benefit, it was a huge success with over 1,100 people in attendance and about 80 items that were sold on auctions to benefit the family for medical expenses and cancer research. Several of Braden's classmates personally reached out to individuals and businesses to get the donations put up for auction. Everyone that helped in some way served with a purpose and I really did not have to direct any major projects that night as each member knew his/her role. Something like this really enabled me to be able to trust students in developing plans for other activities and allow them to take an idea and make it work with less guidance from me as an advisor. Unfortunately, a few months later Braden lost his battle with cancer and passed away on June 25, 2013.

Growth of Our Chapter

Over the past year we have been in the local and state media quite a bit and it is not anything that we do special. The media exposure has helped in growing our chapter membership numbers. Students see that FFA is not just for the farm kids, but city students have a place in the organization with the increasing demand for ag careers, leadership activities, community involvement, and the ability of our

curriculum to cross over to other career areas outside of agriculture. This past year's freshman class started out at thirty-six students and next year's numbers are already over twenty. In the previous years an average of 14-15 students was a good size class. With this increase in numbers our participation in career development events increased. Finding enough transportation to events was sometimes a challenge, but a good problem to have. We had a record number of members at State FFA Convention due to the number of students who qualified in several events. This allowed more students to gain exposure to the State Convention and all that goes on there and see our organization at the state level. This fall we plan on taking a record number of students to National Convention as well. A major part of participating in these activities is making sure that members don't just go to say they went but getting them involved in the sessions and exposing them to several leadership activities found at convention.

Another area of leadership that has developed in our students comes from members of the community. Two examples of this are with student SAE's and community service projects. People in our community see that we are willing to provide service in the community and come to us for various projects. Our local Farm Bureau helped sponsor an Ag In the Classroom Project where we went to our local elementary schools and put on 4 one hour lessons on agriculture commodities and soils. Our officer team led this, but most of the lessons were presented by first or second year members. From this they saw the im-



Braden made an impact on many in his school and community.

portance of organization and preparation as well as the experience of working with youth in the community. One student gained an SAE project by helping put together a small display garden for our county fair this summer with the help of a local gardener. The frequency of inquiries that I get about having our chapter assist with various activities and projects has increased. Some of these projects we have taken on and with that I try to put students in charge of organizing and directing them so they learn and are more invested in the project. Along with this I encourage them to engage younger members to get them involved as well.

Parental Involvement

The support of the ag education program from parents has greatly improved. One thing that I have done differently as an instructor has been to get the parents more involved in our activities. Witnessing the in-



Many leadership lessons have been learned while serving as part of Team Braden.

involvement of parents from Braden's Benefit all the way through his funeral made me realize the value that they can bring to the program. Three or four of our major chapter activities involve holding meals as part of the activity. Meeting with senior parents before the school year and having them take charge of the food and help for each of the activities during the school year gave me more time to commit to my real job, which is teaching. From this the parents were more involved and tied to the chapter and our activities.

One thing that I was not expecting was the increased involvement from Braden's parents. They were always more than willing to volunteer time to our activities and help with transporting students or serving as judges for contests. They also became contributors to our State Foundation in Braden's memory. They were able to get behind the scenes and provide support at the state level, especially with the Proficiency Program. At the local level they came to me with some ideas on helping support the chapter by creating awards in Braden's memory based on the things he had done in his FFA career. At our chapter ban-

quet twelve chapter members were awarded some form of scholarship in Braden's memory based on their participation in various activities. I think that this will keep Braden's family involved in

the chapter until their younger son goes through the program and I am interested to see member involvement increase in a competitive manner because members see that there are monetary and intrinsic values that have been established by the family.

Growth of the Instructor

It takes something like writing an article to reflect on your personal growth from this type of situation. Mostly, I have just thought that working through the situations that were presented to me were ones that any teacher or FFA Advisor would do for others. With the increase in membership in our chapter and an increase of community participation it has been an increase in work. One person cannot direct all of this work himself. My willingness to turn more duties over to students and supporters has increased. Once younger students see the work of the older students in leading activities and the trust that I place in them, they will grow from it. I have to be willing to accept that sometimes there will be a possibility of failure and possibly the quality of work will decrease, but as we reflect

on the project we can gain from it for the future. The personal investment of the students will make them more confident in their abilities and willing to lead other students more willingly now and in the future.

I have also grown in some of my personal connections to students and their families. By working with families in organizing and seeking help for our activities, they see the work it takes to do the job of an agriculture teacher and we work more closely and develop a trust through improved communication and shared ideas. As a teacher-leader I have been awarded some nice public recognition, but honestly I think that I am doing what any other teacher would do in supporting a student and friend. When others recognize me and tell me "nice job" I do appreciate it greatly and I have learned just how much of an impact that I can have on others just by doing my job. Much of the recognition I have received is due to other forces such as students, parents, supporters, and the community. For that I am thankful that I made the choice to be an Ag Educator and part of the community I have chosen to live in that supports its youth programs and the value of service towards others.



Jeff Moore is the Agricultural Education Instructor and FFA Advisor at Holdrege High School, Holdrege, Nebraska.

Making a Difference

by Todd Everhart

Most of you have probably had this experience at least once. While traveling with your students to one of numerous FFA events, you are approached by the manager or a patron of the restaurant asking, "Are you with those kids?" Your immediate thought is, "Oh no, what did they do?" but you simply say, "Yes, they're with me," and the person goes on to tell you how much he or she appreciates the well behaved students and how respectful they were to the servers. For most of us, those probably aren't the things that we recognize at our annual chapter banquet... but maybe they should be. So, what really is leadership?

To answer the question, "How do you teach leadership in your classroom?" one must first have a clear definition of leadership. I personally embrace John Maxwell's definition: "Leadership is influence; nothing more, nothing less." The first time I heard that definition, I thought, "What in the world is that supposed to mean?"

Too often people think of the class officer, the student council officer, CTE officers, the person who wins the speaking contest or the parliamentary procedure contest or any other contest as the person who is the leader, but Maxwell goes on to explain that a leader without followers is just a person taking a walk. That may very well be true for those officers and contest winners. While they have developed a strong skill set that may contribute to their leadership skills, it doesn't guarantee they are leaders. The true mark of a leader is who is willing to follow them.

Do me a favor and read the following question, then put the article down and think about it for a minute. What are the traits and characteristics possessed by the people that you happily follow? Set the magazine down for a minute and think about it.

Do you line up behind them because they held a class office, won a CDE, were on the parliamentary procedure team, are an excellent speaker or because they are an officer in your teachers' association? I am willing to bet the answer to this question is no! By no means am I criticizing any of the accomplishments. I applaud each of them and encourage my students to attain these goals. However, the people I gladly follow, making them leaders in my eyes, are people like my father, my pastor, a few colleagues whom I consider dear friends, and now even some former students. What are the traits that truly make them leaders? This is not an exhaustive list but some of the most important ones I want to teach my students: integrity, honesty, humility, trustworthiness and success.

Integrity – Do their/my actions match their/my words? Honesty – Nobody wants to follow someone who is dishonest. Humility – The strongest leaders I know constantly defer

credit and give it to their teammates, students and colleagues. Trustworthy – If they say they are going to do it, you can count on it being done. Success – Taking leadership advice from someone who has never lead anything successfully is a little like taking financial advice from someone who can't budget money or relationship advice from someone who cannot build friendships. I will take my financial advice from someone who wisely handles money and my marriage advice from a couple that has been married 60 years. We are willing to follow people we trust, people who are honest, people who are successful in their own lives and people who give credit where credit is due.

You may be thinking to yourself, "That's an interesting theory, but how do I put this into practice?" For me it comes down to three main principles; relationships, seamless integration and kaizen. I have heard it said that nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care. In order to instill true characteristics



Students engage in leadership development through the many FFA activities that are offered.

of leadership into young people, we must first cultivate relationships. When I think about the previous question, the people I wanted to follow are those I have some kind of relationship with. That may mean taking five minutes of class time to ask how the weekend was, making sure you take time to say hello to students you pass in the hallway, and getting to know their families on home visits. Once that occurs, the students will realize you are really trying to help them become strong citizens. My dad is a retired agriculture teacher in his 70s. He was recently invited to a fiftieth birthday party for one of his former students. When the 50-year-

old honoree rose to speak and thank those in attendance, he thanked one person—his high school agriculture teacher. He said his success related directly back to this teacher. It wasn't thank you for that amazing soils lesson or for teaching him to weld. It was thank you for helping me get into college and for taking the time to really care about my success as an individual.

If we step in front of a class and say, "Today we're going to learn leadership lesson number 10," we're probably not going to have a lot of excitement or anticipation. That is where the principle of seamless in-

tegration comes into play. We must look for opportunities to integrate a leadership principle into the content we are teaching our students. Is it possible to teach character when teaching animal science? Yes, a simple question might be, "How many bad operators does it take to give the entire industry a bad name?"

I have always liked the question, "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer: One bite at a time. In my opinion that is how we should be teaching leadership, a little bit at a time where it seamlessly integrates into our curriculum. The number one thing we can do to teach leadership principles in our classroom is to model those behaviors we want our students to achieve. We have all been around people who say the right things, but their actions don't line up with their words. I, like most of us, sometimes wonder if what I am doing is really making a difference. Then, occasionally I have the good fortune of having a letter, a comment or an email delivered from a current or former student that lets me know just how important this profession is. The following is a letter I received from a student. I keep it in my desk so I can pull it out and read it occasionally when I begin wondering about the importance of what I am doing.

"It took me 15 years to become an overnight success" is the answer I have heard a colleague give to beginning teachers when asked how he gets his students to achieve year after year. To me, another important thing about teaching leadership is the principle of *kaizen*, which I first heard about at a Delta conference. It was explained *kaizen* is a term used by Japanese auto manufacturers. They realized they couldn't make any more wholesale changes for efficiency, but they could employ *kaizen*—small, seemingly insignificant, never-end-

February 4, 2011

Dear Ms.

Throughout junior high, I displayed a lack of confidence. I did not believe in myself. I had a low self esteem, few friends, and little involvement inside school. I stayed this way until I entered high school, specifically until I entered the agriculture classroom.

I became a student of Mr. Todd Everhart's at a time when I desired influence and direction the most. During a time when I felt so alone, Mr. Everhart touched my life with compassion, courage, and hope. He introduced me to agricultural education and the National FFA Organization. The blessings that he brought into my life have led me to become the man I am today.

Mr. Everhart made sure that I understood the class material and invited me to join the FFA – an organization that has changed my life. Because of him and the opportunities through the FFA, I had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C., China, Indianapolis, Louisville, as well as all over the state of Colorado.

Many times throughout high school I found myself going to the ag room for guidance and interesting conversations with Mr. E. He challenged me to think deeply about many issues that I feel strongly about now while never forcing his opinion on me. In fact, we still enjoy a good political, religious, or moral debate.

He provided me comfort while I was at school. He continuously pushed me to become more involved in the FFA. Soon, I began receiving offices and awards. I was elected chapter president, then district president, and finally, state president. By the time high school was over, I had entered almost every contest that the FFA had to offer.

Mr. Everhart's influence has had an everlasting impact in my life. Numerous times I have gone back to high school to sit and talk with him for hours. Recently I have enjoyed playing some games of golf with him. It seems as if I always leave the course with a new life lesson and some deeper thoughts for myself to reflect on.

Inside this application is a letter of recommendation from him. Although he may point out some of my strong points, he never mentions how much of an impact that he had on my life. I am planning on showing him this letter after I submit my application. It has been hard for me to show my appreciation for him, but this is something that can help me with that task.

The truth is that it is extremely difficult to summarize the relationship I have with Mr. Everhart and the influence he has had on my life and fit it on just one page. If I had not walked into that agriculture education classroom seven years ago, I don't know where I would be today. I owe a great deal of my success to Mr. Everhart.

He often cites John Maxwell. One such quote is "Leadership is influence – nothing more, nothing less." The first time I heard this quote, I loved it. And you know what? It summarizes Mr. E very well – he is a great leader, friend, and close person to my heart.

Regards,



The demonstration of leadership skills can be seen in the students when they work with younger students in the community.

ing subtle changes. How do we use the principle of kaizen to teach leadership? We look for those areas of improvement we desire in our officer

teams, advisory committees and students and think about what small, seemingly insignificant, subtle changes we can make to achieve the desired results.

Let's continue to train excellent speakers, CDE teams, and teach strong class content, but let's make a concerted effort

to incorporate those characteristics which truly make strong leaders. Model those characteristics you want

your students to attain. Seamlessly integrate principles of leadership in every class every day. Take the time and effort to cultivate strong relationships so that your opinion matters to your students. Keep some evidence that what you are doing is making a difference to encourage you, and maybe someday you will be honored at a former student's 50th birthday party.



Todd Everhart is the Agricultural Science Teacher at Merino High School, Merino, Colorado.

Impacting for the Future (continued from page 7)

Many times we as agriculture instructors focus on the 5% and lose sight of the 95%. I have made it a focus point to challenge every student, every day to become the leader that they can be. Most leadership is caught by example, instruction, and role play. Fridays

have typically been SAE and leadership instructional days. I use the LifeKnowledge Quote Series to drive the instructional side of leadership on Fridays. These quotes offer questions and activities that allow you to role play real life situations with students.

and they explain their choices both good and bad. Personal experiences drive home the point that everyone is a leader, whether you are by yourself or in a crowd of people.

As an agriculture instructor and FFA advisor, my goal has always been to challenge students to strive for excellence, whether that be in the classroom, FFA, or with their SAE. Even more than that I want them to look back over their FFA career and see that it was more than winning a contest or making the highest grade on a test, but it was all about what did I learn, who did I help along the way, and what impact did I leave on my friends, acquaintances, chapter, and my community? Leadership is Influence! What kind of intentional influence are you driving in your classroom and program for your students to be impacted by? Let it be one that will impact them for eternity!

Many students have never been challenged to think through scenarios and determine what would they do and why? What would be the impact of one choice over another? Over the years many students then bring up other situations that they have faced



The FFA officer team leads a school assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance and a flag ceremony.

From Today to Tomorrow

Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders

by Tammy Bartholomew

You have planted the seeds that will grow our future.” This quote by one of my FFA officers was featured on a piece of art given to me at my final FFA Banquet. This quote came back to me when I began writing this article. It led me to these questions: when agriculture educators evaluate the ultimate purpose of leadership instruction, do we truly take into account how our students will benefit in their future? Are we more concerned with the student competitive accomplishments today? Are we connecting the dots? Is our curriculum allowing us to teach leadership to all students?

The timeless Zig Ziglar’s book, *See You at the Top*, became the foundation of my leadership curriculum after reading his book as a beginning teacher. Ziglar’s books and curriculum were laced with the moral values I utmost wanted instilled in my students. His lessons were coupled with stories that emphasized the points of

vision, goal setting, loyalty, and ethics in the midst of acknowledging and accepting responsibility. *See You at the Top* became my total framework of leadership instruction because regardless of changing times and changing kids, these foundational principles are unchanging.

Successful leadership curriculum must have one primary objective and that is personalization. Personalizing curriculum may create annual curricular revisions but just as times change, kids change and industry expectations change. Personalized instruction involves annually evaluating the student about their goals and objectives and tying it to what industry expects. Freshmen leadership curriculum encompasses FFA as the foundation with goal setting as an emphasis. Personalizing the instruction really occurs in the sophomore year. Students develop their vision, author their own mission statement, identify their personality traits, analyze career and work values that emphasize industry expectations, coupled with guest speakers who reinforce these expectations.

By the second semester of the sophomore year, a change seems to occur in students as they think more for themselves and assert their beliefs. It is imperative that students by this time in their leadership training determine if they are going to embrace servant leadership with confidence without

arrogance. Service projects provide opportunities for communication and networking that eventually can lead to career opportunities. Great leadership training does not require community service; it should instill the desire to serve.

Time management, redefining goals and evaluating career objectives assist juniors and seniors preparing for that next big step into post-secondary education, industry training or direct entry into the work force. Career development events are one small function of leadership development at this stage. At this stage, speaking at civic organizations and providing opportunities to interface with agricultural professionals is imperative to polish learned skills.

A vital step in ensuring that the leadership curriculum is fulfilling the needs of students is post graduate surveys. Surveys provide a very clear rear view look of how students deem the training received in agriculture programs. Three common themes typically revealed themselves through these assessments. SAE programs were identified as reinforcing the leadership values of responsibility, diligence, work ethic and confidence. Networking and relationship building with integrity through community service were also recurring values. The third theme involved building confidence through problem solving and communication skills was deemed the most beneficial of leadership training. Collectively it was revealed that these standards gave students the ability to have successful job interviews, conduct meetings with assurance, and deliver convincing presentations in corporate leadership. In my experience the best



One of the first leadership experiences for Justin as a young student was presenting to elementary students.



Justin then transferred his leadership training to the college level and served as a State Officer for the Post-Secondary Agriculture Organization.

training for students came through exposing students to professionals in agricultural leadership positions and through numerous presentations in local civic organizations.

One former student who is responsible for the overall supervision and risk management of a \$60 million loan portfolio sent me these statements.



Justin's leadership experiences also showed through in career development. His SAE expanded his senior year to work at a major golf course and while a college sophomore he was selected as one of the top six in the country to work a major senior pro golf tournament in Arizona.

"The great thing about my FFA experience is that the leadership components needed in the workplace were taught. Contests and public speaking opportunities gave me confidence in myself and my abilities. Interacting with other students from across the state taught me how to come out of my shell and talk to people I've never met before. Fortunately, you won't find any feel good "participation medals" in an FFA event. Further, we practiced for contests frequently and at all hours. Whether it was after school, at a practice event hours away, or at a site visit on a nearby farm, we practiced and we studied. We were not forced; we were motivated to be there. From that we learned work ethic. Finally, I had an SAE project that taught me how to keep a ledger, track income and expenses, and taught me to appreciate a profit for my efforts. FFA instills a sense of pride in students. I cannot think of a single program available to students that better prepares them for the real world. FFA provides

students an opportunity to learn a skill, master a craft, and achieve success in a structured environment with a mentor/advisor."

Teachers that create an environment where winning and always getting the right answers are more important than learning the "why" behind the materials are just creating students afraid to fail. When agricultural instructors teach leadership we have an incredible responsibility to our students to reveal the big picture. Although there are no cookie cutter techniques, we must be cautious about using leadership and career development events as our primary measurement tool. Agriculture Education curriculum incorporates principles that align to curriculum standards but we must also equip students with tools and skills that meet industry expectations. Corporate leaders and human relation departments often indicate that resumes with FFA experience are given serious consideration due to the implied soft skills these applicants possess. Feedback like this needs to be embraced to empower ourselves to not only continue doing what we are doing but to inventory what society needs in their leaders. This feedback will continue to help us improve instruction in order that our students continue to be the best prepared for future endeavors.



Tammy Bartholomew recently retired as a high school agriculture teacher and is currently a Dual Credit Agriculture Instructor at Drexel High School / Missouri State University.

Student Perceptions of Leadership May Change Your Practice

by Rachel Bartholomew Kagay

“...leadership is complex, it is not a simple concept. Understanding and appreciating the complexity of leadership is a prerequisite to supporting and challenging teenagers to be the best leaders they can be,” (van Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 8).

Supporting and challenging teenagers to be the best leaders they can be is a primary goal within the FFA. The FFA mission states that “FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for *premier leadership*, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.”

We should be mindful to look for the potential within each student and work to develop that potential.

I firmly believe that every student possesses leadership potential, and every student member deserves the opportunity to recognize, develop and maximize their leadership potential through the FFA and agricultural education. Are we making this happen – for *every* FFA member? What do those members think about leadership and their own personal leadership development? These are the thoughts and questions that motivated and led me to some of my work in graduate school – an investigation into student self-perceptions of leadership.

Sitting down with upperclassmen FFA members from two similar,

but distinct FFA chapters was an enlightening experience. Some of these students were current officers in their FFA chapters, while others had never been engaged in a formal leadership role in the FFA. While the conclusions of my qualitative study cannot be generalized beyond those two FFA chapters, I do believe that as agriculture teachers you will be able to draw connections and assumptions from my results to your programs. I hope as you spend your time reading, you might be able to glean some new insight or challenging thought.

When asked to define leadership in their own words, most students

expressed the belief that leadership is about helping people, influencing others to be better, and making a difference in other’s lives. One female chapter officer stated,

“I believe that leadership is being able to stand out from the crowd and really make a difference in others lives. It isn’t about doing what everyone else is and sitting back and doing nothing. Leadership is choosing to use your own experiences to help someone else.”

Additionally, students believed that leadership is taking control of a situation, being in charge, and holding power. One student stated, “[Leader-

ship is] influencing people, making decisions for a group of people, and being in a position of power.” Both students that were serving and those that were not serving as chapter officers discussed that while they believe leadership is about working for others, leaders do receive personal satisfaction from the power, control, and recognition that accompany the formal position. Based on the leadership definitions discussed by these students, it is recommended that agricultural educators work to reinforce to all students that leadership is an opportunity to exercise great influence. Additionally, students should be led to recognize and responsibly handle the power and control that comes with formal and informal leadership roles. Chapter officers should be held accountable by their advisor for demonstrating the responsible exercise of their influence and power.

Students not only acknowledged the power, control and recognition that accompany formal leadership, but many of these chapter officers desired it. This implies that chapter officers may have sought their positions for the ability to possess power over their peers, to exercise control over decision making, or to receive recognition from peers and adults for being a leader. Some chapter officers were also motivated by or strongly desire to have an impact within their FFA chapter. One male leader discussed:

“My freshman year, I was lost in the FFA organization without proper guidance from the officer team that year. Since then, I have been motivated to use my leadership positions within my chapter to ensure that incoming students get the most out of FFA.”

There is nothing inherently wrong with pursuing chapter officer positions for the power the position affords. In fact in some cases, like with the student quoted above, this can serve as positive motivation. However, based on this study I would suggest that advisors should caution their chapter leaders that the potential exists for alienating followers if this desire over-shadows their desire to serve. Be alert to how this may be impacting your chapter. An understanding of why your chapter officers are seeking leadership opportunities based on their own desires may be beneficial as you seek to assemble strong officer teams and students that work efficiently for the betterment of the chapter.

Many students, both chapter officers and students without a formal leadership position, believe that leadership is a natural ability that some are born with. The implication of this belief is that some students are seeking leadership roles simply because they believe it comes naturally to them, while other students are not pursuing leadership opportunities because they believe they are not natural-born leaders. In fact, some students indicated that they became chapter officers because they feel they possess the skills needed and a willingness to accept responsibility for the position. Students also believed that there were individual traits necessary to be a good leader, such as organizational skills, responsibility, communication skills, and self confidence. Regardless of whether or not they believed they personally possessed natural leadership ability, all students identified that leadership was beneficial, both on personal and professional levels. Some students were even able to discuss personal examples of the benefits of leadership experiences:

“Whenever I was in middle school even if I wasn’t speaking to ev-

eryone, I would still just get kinda nervous if I was in a group of 20 people just sittin’ around. It would just be overwhelming I guess. Now it’s comfortable... Leading just has helped me become who I am.”

Some students, particularly those who had never pursued a chapter officer position, seemed to largely believe they did not have the potential to be a leader. Advisors should be sure to attempt to instill in their students that everyone possesses potential for leadership, and that everyone can develop their personal skills for leadership in some capacity. This is foundational in our organization’s mission, but some students seem to be missing the message.

One of the most eye-opening conclusions for me came through the discussion of student support systems. We all know that family life has a significant impact on student success that we can do little to control. Know that you, as agricultural educators, also play an important and critical role in student decisions to pursue leadership opportunities. Every student involved in the study, regardless of gender or formal leadership role indicated that support from others, or lack thereof, had a significant influence on their decision to pursue the opportunity to serve as a leader. Students expressed that they were much more likely to pursue formal leadership opportunities if their FFA advisor had spoken to them individually



Fostering a sense of teamwork aids in promoting a successful officer team and FFA chapter.

about the matter. One chapter officer spoke candidly about her experience when asked if anyone had influenced her decision to be a leader:

“Mr. Smith influenced my decision to be a leader. When starting high school I didn’t work too hard to be a FFA leader. He got me involved and was the reason I interviewed for an office. Without Mr. Smith I would not be a FFA leader.”

The implication of this discussion is that if a student does not perceive their FFA advisor has confidence in their potential to be a leader, and they are not receiving encouragement elsewhere, they are much less likely to believe in their ability to be a leader within their FFA chapter. One student even stated this directly when he said, *“My brother went through and he didn’t do any leadership positions, and seemed like he had a pretty fun go with it. So, I figured I’d rather just relax and not bother with leadership responsibilities.”* I have to wonder, did this student have tremendous potential that wasn’t tapped because he wasn’t encouraged to apply himself? As an FFA advisor, you may play a much larger role in your students’ pursuit of leadership than



Building trust in those around them helps students to reach their full leadership potential.

you even realize. After talking with these students, I recommend working to support each student in your program in their personal leadership development. We shouldn't assume that students do not have an interest in leadership simply because they have not outwardly expressed such a desire. Seek to show each student support and belief in their potential to lead if they so desire.

As part of our conversation, all students involved in the study discussed perceived barriers to serving as a leader in their FFA chapter. Communication, specifically public speaking, was overwhelmingly discussed by students as a barrier that kept some from serving as a chapter officer. Many chapter officers acknowledged that the ability to communicate was a struggle they believed you had to overcome to be a good leader. Several of the students that had not served in a chapter officer capacity discussed that they never pursued those opportunities because they had a fear of public speaking and communicating with others. It is well-established that public speaking ranks highly in the top fears of many people, so it should be of no surprise that many students expressed a fear

in communicating in front of others as well. Armed with this knowledge, agricultural educators should work to teach students that skill in public speaking is important, and can be developed over time, but is not an end-all trait of leadership.

Students in our classroom may have the potential

to be an excellent FFA chapter leader, but may be avoiding the role due to a fear of public speaking.

The perceived and real time commitment of the position was discussed as a second significant barrier to pursuing formal leadership opportunities. Pressures of life, expectations, and an abundance of options for high school students may be discouraging many away from the pursuit of leadership positions. Students are often involved in other organizations, athletics, part-time jobs, school work, and other responsibilities. Many students that have never served as chapter officers expressed that even if they have been interested in the role, they simply cannot afford the time commitment. One student even discussed that he felt his advisor had pushed him towards his part-time job as part of his SAE and never discussed leadership with him, therefore diminishing the importance of FFA chapter leadership in his eyes and constraining his time. Chapter officers saw time as a barrier as well, but discussed that they were willing to put in the work as they felt they were benefiting from the role, making it worth their time. Though it may pose a significant challenge,

FFA advisors should work to establish ways for their students to overcome this barrier. Perhaps there is potential within your chapter to create co-officer positions or to establish a junior or assistant officer team. This would allow a greater distribution of expectations, while also affording more students the opportunity to develop and exercise their leadership potential. Working to create high, but realistic, expectations and responsibilities for the schedules of student leaders may also help to alleviate this barrier. Additionally, students may benefit from advisors taking the time to teach them strategies to balance and effectively manage their time.

Another intriguing idea that surfaced during the conversations is that over time, FFA advisors begin to either inadvertently or purposely gravitate toward a certain type or group of students to develop and mold into chapter officers. When taking a hard look at your own program, reflecting on your experience as a member, or observing the practice of peers, you can likely concede to similar observations. Advisors may be naturally supporting likeminded students toward leadership positions, essentially cultivating their own personally influenced network of students to become chapter FFA officers. This may be resulting in perpetual selection, either inadvertent or purposeful, of

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Rachel Bartholomew Kagay is the Leadership Development Manager for the FFA Enrichment Center, Ankeny, Iowa.

Securing the Future with Leadership Fundamentals Learned in the FFA

by David Agnew

Today there are thousands of books on the subject of leadership. These contain many interesting ideas, theories and systems for understanding leadership, but it can be argued that the underlying principles of good leadership have not changed over time. Some variance over what constitutes “good principles” of leadership is based on the prevailing form of government, social or cultural norms, and expectations. For our western culture and our form of government, some core principles have stood the test of time. The FFA has been steeped in these principles since the beginning.

I often meet people in the community who were FFA members in high school and they recall with pleasure the lessons they learned in the FFA. In my own institution almost a dozen key administrators or leaders over the years were FFA members/leaders while in high school. Recently our institution honored a retired agriculture teacher who is serving as a state representative. To my surprise, the University administrator presenting the award brought his FFA jacket from his high school days, of over 30 years ago, and recalled his experiences in the FFA as part of the recognition ceremony. This is but one example of the FFA’s cherished past in preparing leaders for today.

Over time some of these core principles of good leadership, that have been so important, seem to have been diluted or even lost in the hustle and bustle of today’s culture. The FFA needs to continue the emphasis on these core principles and make

every effort to systematically instill these into the membership on every possible occasion. Our responsibility is to our current and future FFA members and to future generations of our society. These timeless principles are foundational to the success of the chapter, and to any organization and even relative to the success of our form of government.

Put simply the three principles are purpose, process and participation. With these fundamental principles in place, any organization, anywhere should flourish.

The *first* Leadership principle is the principle of “purpose awareness.” FFA members, why are we here? Through the opening ceremonies of the FFA, members are reminded of our purposes. The FFA has a very good track record for providing students with a clear awareness of our mission. This brief, but very clear statement of our purpose, as stated in the official FFA manual and on the official FFA website (National FFA Organization, 2014) says the “*FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.*” Following this statement is a list of ways to accomplish this mission. Every new FFA member is expected to learn the motto and that very well defined and poetic statement of our beliefs in the FFA creed, which gives us a sense of unity in purpose with other members. And like most organizations, we have a constitution that reveals our purpose. Yet how many members have seen the local, state or national FFA constitutions, let alone

studied what they say about our purpose or our process of operation? The knowledge of the organization’s purpose contributes to effective use of resources and increased productivity. The last step of understanding purpose is the personalization of the FFA for each student. Gaining an understanding of how our individual purposes and those of the FFA align is imperative. There are many different opportunities in the FFA that allows for almost any member to find a way for the FFA to help achieve their own purpose or place in society.

The *second* principle is related to “member participation.” Organizations need an active energized membership that is eager to get involved and advance the group’s mission. Organizations run by just a few elected officials or committees are not usually healthy. The governance of the chapter should be seen as a responsibility of all the students/members, not just an elected few. Ownership and commitment in the organization by the membership comes about from personal investment and participation. Advisors, upper level students and chapter officers need to help new or younger members feel like they each matter and that their involvement is important and needed. Members not participating in the day to day decisions and planning are not likely to feel compelled to participate in the activities others have planned. Involvement in decision making and planning leads to participation. Encourage discussion, get them brainstorming, get them proposing activities or solutions and get them voting. Members are much more likely to get involved and develop their leadership skills if this is the model.



All aspects of production in the greenhouse are managed by the students; from developing customer surveys, selecting plants, to designing hanging baskets. These responsibilities aid students in developing their leadership and employability skills. (Photo courtesy of Bibiana Giff.)

The **third** is the principle of “orderly process.” This is simply the use of a process like parliamentary procedure as defined in *Roberts Rules of Order* which allows for the orderly conduct of meetings. Some people see this process as too cumbersome or as a stumbling block to progress. I remind myself and my students that the reasons we have parliamentary procedure is that it is, 1) an orderly and fair process to conduct meetings and to dispose of business that, 2) protects the rights of the minority, while, 3) allowing for majority rule. Traditionally the FFA and agricultural education have been very strong in this area of leadership. Most agriculture programs are still very strong in this, but with the increased emphasis on specialization of the technical content, the focus on STEM, end of course exams, common core, and other trends it seems that time for parliamentary procedure is marginalized in the curriculum to the point that many students graduate high school after taking an agriculture course or completing a program of study

without the basic foundational knowledge of how to orderly conduct meetings. Students lose valuable life skills when learning how to effectively conduct a meeting according to *Roberts Rules of Order* is lost in the tug of war over time with other

subjects or topics. To be effective, students need to have studied and practiced these abilities. Another potential stumbling block is that in some cases agricultural education is so structured for completion in parliamentary procedure that we lose focus on the practical applications. In other cases teachers sometimes feel inadequate to properly teach this subject, so they skim over the basics and move on. It can easily be argued that it would take a whole semester or more to gain an adequate understanding of parliamentary procedure and most people would agree. But that approach is not practical for many schools. So integration or weaving the content intentionally and systematically throughout all courses seems to be the best possible answer.

Summary

Evidence for the need for individuals with a strong grasp of these fundamentals of leadership is all around us in society. Agricultural education

has made a positive difference in the past and we can still have a great impact on the future if we keep these three principles at the core of what we do in the FFA. These three principles are time-tested and proven to be effective. Help students develop the habits of purpose, participation and process now, while they are in school, so they can effectively carry these principles into the future for the benefit of all of society. We cannot expect the students to learn what we don’t teach. We should not expect them to become effective at what they don’t practice. And we cannot expect them to participate if we don’t provide opportunities which invite and encourage their involvement. Advisors, and to some extent the FFA officers, hold the key to these principles becoming operational through the tone they set for the organization to be student lead, open to all, encouraging and receptive to even the most unlikely student. Those unlikely students will often rise to the occasion and surprise us in very positive ways.

Reference

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Teaching and Learning Premier Leadership: Transferring Skills from Teachers to Students

by Debra Korte & Kari Keating

The National FFA Organization prides itself in developing students' potential for "premier leadership, personal growth, and career success." One of the most effective ways for FFA members to realize this goal is for agriculture teachers to model and teach leadership skills. As simple as this may seem, how do teachers learn and transfer leadership skills to students in and out of the classroom environment?

Gaining Leadership Experience in High School and College

The University of Illinois Agricultural Education Program is comprised of several students who were actively involved in FFA and other youth organizations in a variety of leadership roles. Many other teacher preparation programs can likely relate to this student demographic. During students' collegiate experiences,

they are encouraged to continue to develop leadership skills by enrolling in agricultural courses where they can learn and *practice* leadership theories; "learning by doing" is the predominant theme in most of the agricultural education and leadership courses. Students are also advised to take an active role in on-campus or other national agricultural leadership organizations. These opportunities, which occur in a somewhat controlled environmental context, enable college students to develop their own skills while learning the variety of leadership styles of others they may interact with.

In addition to agricultural education groups on campus, future teachers are encouraged to participate in organizations such as the Agriculture Future of America (AFA), Collegiate FFA, Alpha Tau Alpha professional organization, Ag Ed Club, and the Post-secondary Agriculture Students (PAS) at the local, state, and national levels. Also, students serve as Washington Leadership Conference (WLC) facilitators, National Association of Agriculture Educators (NAAE) Teach Ag Ambassadors, and National FFA Agriculture Ambassadors.

New Teachers – Transferring Leadership Skills to their Classroom

Graduates of the agricultural education program are expected to leave the

university with the skills and abilities to be effective and influential leaders for *their* high school students and FFA members. After students complete their teacher preparation program and begin their careers as an agriculture educator, it is important to encourage these young professionals to get involved in the state and national professional teacher organizations and participate in professional development opportunities. In Illinois, there is a well-developed support system to help *all* teachers, regardless of their level of experience or background knowledge. Beginning teachers learn the expectations for an agricultural education program, and are provided with funding opportunities to implement essential components of a quality program. They are also provided opportunities to gain insight and first-hand knowledge from a variety of mentors and other agricultural education leaders.

New teachers to the profession are also encouraged to participate in a course offered by the University of Illinois that provides them the tools and resources to "survive" their first year. Additionally, funding from the Facilitating Coordination for Agricultural Education (FCAE) project makes the course available free of charge for inexperienced teachers, who also earn master's degree credit for successful completion. The Illinois Association of Vocational Agricultural Teachers (IAVAT) also hosts a Beginning Ag Teacher's workshop and coordinates a mentoring program to help new teachers transition into this important career. Funding provided by Illinois State Board of Education grants allows the universities and community colleges in Illinois



A former Illinois agriculture educator (Mindy McDermott) provides instruction to a young agriculture teacher (Black Colclasure) about the Physical Science Applications in Agriculture (PSAA) curriculum and lab materials.



Twenty pre-service and current teachers in Illinois participated in a professional development workshop about welding instruction, techniques, and application.

to offer professional development workshops, often free of charge, for new teachers to enhance their knowledge in specified curriculum areas such as mechanics, horticulture, or lab-based coursework. The skills and knowledge gained from these opportunities, in addition to their expanded network of agricultural education contacts and resources, will help enhance new teachers' competency and overall confidence to teach leadership concepts.

Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders

Leadership is a complicated area to encapsulate into an agriculture education curriculum or FFA chapter program of activities. However, it is possible to focus on key principles to help your students *experience* the FFA motto of "learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, and living to serve."

Expand students' definition of a "leader." Peter Northouse (2007) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). Remind your students that leadership

is not a birthright, a fixed set of traits, or an elected position but instead the positive influential *role* they can play when communicating with others. They do not necessarily have to be an FFA officer to be a leader in their chapter, school, or community. Students who you may least expect to be "leaders" can often emerge as a leader when placed in the right situation. Opportunities for leadership are in front of them every day.

Allow them to fail. A major component of teaching leadership skills to your high school students is to allow them to fail. They may not reach their ultimate goal for a given project or task, but encourage them to reflect on the successes *and* failures of the project. What worked well? What didn't work as they expected? How or what could they have done differently to be more successful?

Get everyone involved. David Rosch, University of Illinois Assistant Professor in Agricultural Education, is conducting research on the potential advances students gain in leadership skills, motivation to lead, and their perceived confidence in leadership abilities based on their experiences and participation in extra-curricular programs. His research will also evaluate if students' perceived gains are universal across a variety of leadership organizations. Previous studies conducted by Dr. Rosch and others have indicated a "moderate" level (3-10 hours per week) of involvement in leadership organizations is the most ideal for

gains, enthusiasm, and transferability of leadership skills. Diligently strive to ensure *all* high school agriculture students at least experience a moderate level of involvement in FFA activities. In the end, this will help them experience their greatest potential for future success.

Doing to Learn, Living to Serve

The profession of an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor is not a "job," but rather a way of life. "Living to serve" is a major aspect of this chosen path. Regardless of your level of experience, strive to enhance your leadership abilities to more adequately prepare, equip, and teach your students leadership skills. To enhance your leadership skills, consider doing one or more of the following activities:

- Serve as an officer in professional agriculture teacher organizations or in your local school district.
- "Learn by doing" and volunteer for roles within your local community organizations. Your students will easily see and relate your participation in these groups to their own lives. This helps reinforce and demonstrate the value of leadership in local community groups.
- Volunteer as a counselor or group leader for state FFA leadership camp or other hands-on, leadership-based activities.
- Organize officer team or chapter leadership retreats.
- Participate in professional development workshops which focus on leadership development.

What can you do as an agriculture teacher to help *teach* leadership skills? The answer is simple – *be a leader!* Teach leadership curriculum

to your students, provide opportunities for *all* FFA members to participate in leadership experiences, and be an active leader in your school, community, and professional teacher organizations. Serve as a mentor, co-operating teacher for pre-service students, or as an officer at a variety of levels. Practice and model the leadership skills you teach your students to help them discover “premier leadership, personal growth, and career success” in their lives.

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Student Perceptions of Leadership (continued from page 20)

students that “fit the mold” of a personal idea of a chapter officer. Some students discussed their belief that their chapter advisor played a large role in determining who the chapter leaders were by investing more time and attention in particular students. We should be cautious about this cultivation of our own chapter leaders. Identifying and developing students for leadership early in their FFA careers is a good thing; however, there are potential pitfalls to continually fostering their own network within the chapter. The like-mindedness may result in missed opportunities for chapter officer teams. We may need to ask ourselves if we are truly seeking students that need support to thrive within the chapter. Consistently seeking the same “type” of student for chapter leadership may result in overlooking students that do not fit the mold, but may make excellent and beneficial leaders for the chapter. We should be mindful to look for the potential within each student, and work to develop that potential.

As a final recommendation, I would suggest that every FFA advisor take the time to hold an annual retreat for their newly elected chapter officer teams. Portions of this retreat time may be used to apply the aforementioned recommendations and engage in meaningful conversations with students that may not happen otherwise. Chapter officers should discuss their motivations for pursuing a leadership position, and be guided toward a service-oriented mindset for their year in office. Retreat times can also be valuable for encouraging chapter officers to recognize the interests and abilities of their chapter members and seek to empower them, not only focus on their own ideas and goals. Setting aside time to develop the team, identify leadership abilities and goals, discuss important issues, and plan for the year can be invaluable to the success of a chapter.

As Leadership Development Manager for the FFA Enrichment Center in Iowa, part of my role in-

cludes developing and facilitating leadership retreats for FFA chapter officer teams. Through this role, I have been able to apply many of the recommendations previously mentioned and have seen the results come to life. During these focused times with students, it is invigorating to experience the conversations students are willing to have when given the right space and opportunity. Teenagers want to accept responsibility for their roles as leaders and can have tremendous conversations about leveraging the talents of others with their own for chapter success. They are challenged by and think deeply about the potential to shift from a self-focused perspective to a service-minded approach to their year as an officer and have a desire to use their time in office to improve the success of their chapter. When given the opportunity, students can challenge us to take a closer look at our practice and ask ourselves: am I doing all I can to challenge every teenager I work with to be the best leader they can be?

Leading by Example

by Jon Wilson

As agriculture instructors, we constantly talk to our students about being involved in the FFA. We encourage our students to attend conferences, serve on committees, and run for office. We push them to excel in agriculture and the FFA. But are we missing an opportunity to show them leadership in action? There is no better way for an agriculture instructor to teach leadership than being involved themselves. By engaging in our professional organizations, we are gaining leadership experience that can trickle down into the classroom. Leading by example is one of the greatest tools we can use to foster leaders in our chapter.

My first year of teaching, I attended the Missouri Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (MVATA) conference. During my teacher education courses in college, my professor explained the organization to us and encouraged us to join. Without

hesitation, I paid my dues during that first conference in 1999 and have been a member ever since. I never imagined the road I would travel and where I am now. The professional development I have received, the network of contacts that I have made, and the various leadership roles I have served in have enhanced my classroom teaching and provided new perspectives for my students to see when it comes to leadership.

My first step into a leadership role occurred in 2004 when a few colleagues nominated me for a district MVATA office. Having taught only a few years, I was less than enthused at the opportunity to lead our district, especially since the vast majority of other teachers' experiences trumped my experience by several years. Though feeling inadequate, I was willing to serve. I accepted the challenge attending meetings, serving on the executive committee, providing input for our district meetings, and helping organize our district contest. The task appeared overwhelming and at times

I questioned my decision to serve. But as I became more involved, the job became less daunting and more manageable. As I grew professionally, I also grew personally. Looking back, my decision to step into a leadership role was the best

decision I could have made for my career.

Rising through the ranks of our district association, I knew the culmination would be the office of president. With that came some new responsibilities as well as the beginning of new opportunities. As president, I attended my first National Association of Agriculture Educators (NAAE) conference in Atlanta, Georgia. I would have been unable to attend this conference had I not been sent there by my association. My district was investing in me and providing me an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. This experience was worthwhile and stirred a desire in me to become more involved in our organization.

After my role as district president, I agreed to serve in the capacity of secretary for our state association. My first duty was to attend the Ag Ed Summit in Indianapolis. It was during this trip that I realized the importance of our organization and the need for active members. As we discussed issues and concerns from around the country, I began to see the importance of not only belonging to our professional organization but also being engaged. Up to this point in my teaching career I had simply belonged to MVATA, but now I saw the importance of being active as well. Sitting in discussion with state staff, teacher educators, and advisors from various states brought a sense of awareness to me of what could happen to agricultural education if our advisors become passive. Many states were facing attacks on 12 month contracts. Some were seeing inadequate funding. Others were experiencing lack of state support through staffing shortages or total absence of state staff. Hearing



The Litton Crusaders program develops communication skills in the students while fostering agriculture literacy. (Photo courtesy of Lance Martin.)

this made me realize the need for individuals to step up and be willing to serve their organizations in order to maintain the current health of agricultural education.

As I advanced through the offices of our state association, I began making new contacts through my involvement. Networking with others began to open many doors that would have been locked had I not been in a leadership position. Coordinating meetings on the Regional level with NAAE, serving on committees on both the Regional and National level, I met various people of influence who were able to provide input in my professional and personal life. From conferences to workshops, tours to professional development, I would meet people who provided insight that helped me maneuver through my tenure as a MVATA officer as well as the classroom. As I made contacts with teachers in other states, I was able to see what Agricultural Education looked like in other states. I was able to see the effects of a strong active membership with quality leaders as well as examples of states with lesser defined leaders and inactive members.

I was fortunate enough to serve as president of MVATA. This was not without its struggles. Agricultural education was facing an uphill battle against new regulations that would hinder our growth. However, with an organized effort, our organization along with legislators and other friends of Missouri FFA were able to influence the decision making that was happening at the state level surrounding agricultural education and career and technical education. Serving in the leadership roles leading up to this point provided the knowledge and experience needed to organize and defend agricultural education. Serving in the role of

president also provided unique opportunities through NAAE. Our state hosted the national conference in 2011 and the regional conference in 2012. Having been involved in the planning of our state's summer conference provided insight in planning professional development, tours, and social activities for these major events.

Through serving my state professional organization, I have gained a wealth of knowledge that I have been able to use in the classroom. Curriculum, teaching ideas, shop management, and officer training are just a few of the things I have picked up along the way. Gleaning information from others and applying it to what I already had in place has enriched my program providing new opportunities for my students.

One of the many responsibilities of a MVATA officer is to serve on the Joint Staff committee. This committee is comprised of our Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Ag Education staff, all of the teacher education institutions, a representative from a two year agriculture institution, and two high school agriculture instructors. Some of the tasks we headed up were professional development for our teachers, summer conference planning, and revising our program standards. Sitting on this committee provided opportunities to develop relationships with teacher training institutions across our state. After serving with these colleagues, I had a unique opportunity to enroll and begin taking graduate courses in pursuit of a PhD. Currently, I continue to take classes working toward the degree while remaining a classroom teacher.

Through my journey I have served on our Missouri Association of Career and Technical Educators (MOACTE) Board of Directors as well as serving

on the Professional Development committee for the MOACTE. These opportunities have allowed me to take things I have learned in leadership positions through MVATA and apply them to our state career and technical educators.

My current involvement with our state association is in the legislative department. I serve our MVATA and the MOACTE as the state legislative chair for Missouri. Traveling to our state and national capitols, I have developed even more contacts with legislators, staff, and friends of the FFA. These networking opportunities were all a result of my decision to become involved.

As agriculture instructors, we promote leadership daily through our curriculum and the FFA. We stand in front of our classrooms and challenge our students, explaining the importance of stepping up into roles that help guide and direct our local, area, state, and national organizations. Our members pick up that challenge and gain experience by sitting on committees and running for offices. There is no better teaching opportunity than practicing what we preach and stepping into leadership roles ourselves. Take the last line of the FFA Motto to heart, it can change your life.



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