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*Our Industry Needs Them:
Teaching and Learning Leadership*

Building Leaders for the Future of Agriculture

by Gaea Hock

Creating leaders for the agriculture industry is one of the foundational goals of agricultural education. Students in our programs are exposed to a wide range of opportunities to serve their school, community, and state and beyond.

If you were teaching in the early 2000s, you probably remember when the National FFA Organization created *LifeKnowledge* for us to use in our programs. I vividly remember going to an inservice training in which several teachers did not see the value in purposefully teaching leadership in their classroom/program. Fortunately, I had a supportive co-teacher who encouraged me to try new things to strengthen the program. From the curriculum, I created officer retreat training documents, integrated leadership concepts into my courses, and shared lessons with students to help them design their own leadership workshops.



When I was teaching, I thought I was doing a commendable job of preparing future leaders. We had students who stepped up to lead in a variety of capacities. When I left the high school classroom for graduate school, I became an instructor of agricultural leadership at Texas Tech University. I quickly realized just how much more in depth I could have went in the leadership development work I tried to do with my high school students.

I recently presented a workshop to the Kansas District FFA Officers. These forty-two young people, from seven different districts in the state, are elected to represent their district for a year of service. The workshop I presented focused on the agricultural education model. I challenged them to think about how they can strengthen the awareness and implementation of all three components throughout their district.

Pushing these young people to think about the total agricultural education model at a deeper level will allow them to better serve and advocate for agricultural education. I also challenged them to think about the activities and events they traditionally host and find ways to strengthen them or create a new event. I was impressed with the level of thought and innovative ways they plan to emphasize the complete model during their year of service.

Agricultural educators at all levels are striving to “up their leadership game” and better prepare our students for future challenges and opportunities. The authors of the articles in this issue all work to push us beyond training just the visible aspects of our leaders, to really diving in and helping students become better citizens. I hope you enjoy reading the articles in this issue as much as I did. As you read, reflect on how you can strengthen your own use of leadership and how you are building leaders for the future of agriculture.

For more on *LifeKnowledge* please read *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, January/February 2004 (Volume 76, Issue 4). It is available on the NAAE website for free.



Dr. Gaea Hock is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Education at Kansas State University and Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine.

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Rising to the Challenge of Developing Leaders

by Laura Greenhaw

In the preface to the seventh edition of her textbook *The Art and Science of Leadership*, author Afsaneh Nahavandi begins “Leading people effectively is a tremendous challenge, a great opportunity, and a serious responsibility.” Certainly, if the actual leading can be described as such, educating those who will lead is all of that and then some. It is no secret that as agricultural educators, it is incumbent upon us to help develop leaders who possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure our industry remains not merely viable but flourishing. I am convinced we are up to this tremendous challenge and relish the opportunity to shoulder this serious responsibility.

Nahavandi continues, “Our organizations and institutions, more than ever, need effective leaders who understand the complexities of our dynamic global environment, who have the intelligence to deal with complex problems, and who have the sensitivity and ability to empathize with their followers to motivate them to strive for excellence.” Her thoughts accurately reflect the contents of this issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*. In the following pages, you will find a collection of articles encouraging us as educators of future leaders. The first articles come from authors who have their finger on the pulse of our industry and guide us in critically analyzing *what* we are teaching and *how* we are cultivating students’ leadership skills for success in the future. Following, are practical pieces with tips and resources to use in your classrooms

and with your FFA members, from helping students identify and capitalize on their strengths to conscientiously fostering high quality relationships with and among your students. Finally, some articles will challenge you to consider *who* you are teaching and, perhaps more importantly, *who you aren’t* teaching but maybe should be.

We are a profession steeped in tradition. In many ways, those long-standing traditions ground us and bind us together. In other ways, those traditions can hold us back, preventing us from growing and changing with society at large, further widening what we recognize as the producer/consumer divide.

Leadership development is at the core of what we have always done as ag teachers. It is modeled in the relationships we build with our students, parents, school partners, and communities. It is taught in our classrooms, laboratories, shops, SAEs and FFA activities. It is practiced, tested, celebrated, and rewarded. It is even recited in our FFA creed; “I believe in leadership from ourselves and respect from others.”

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A dear friend of mine likes to say, “I don’t teach ag, I teach students.” For me, that is what this leadership-themed issue is all about. Leadership is an abstract concept for most people- we know

good leadership when we experience it, but it’s difficult to describe. When I think back to my years in the secondary agriculture classroom, I realize that I rarely taught leadership purposefully and intentionally. Although leadership development was inherent in many things we did in and outside of the classroom, it wasn’t until I became a leadership educator at the post-secondary level that I truly began to understand overtly teaching leadership. That journey began the first time I told a group of students that my job was to help them go beyond knowing what good leadership was when they happened upon it, whether it was from themselves or someone else, to purposefully and intentionally practicing effective leadership. My hope is that this issue does the same for you, whether it is learning new ways to teach your students or challenging *what, how, and who* you are teaching. May we all continue to believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life, and that we not only *can* but *will* exert an influence in our homes and communities which will stand solid for our part in that inspiring task.



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Are We Building Leaders or Trophy Cases?

by Blaze Currie

“Before growing up to become farmers, a startling number of America’s rural kids are taught how to build rockets,” begins an article by the Economist magazine (2013). The article highlights America’s rural youth programs, like 4-H and FFA, for being fundamental to the success of American Agriculture. About a hundred years ago, clubs and organizations set out to teach hard science to youth while also building character. While hybrid corn was met with resistance by an older generation of farmers, a youth movement encouraged its adoption. Today, young FFA members are tinkering with data-sensors, operating drones, and considering niche markets created by new consumer demands. Building young leaders is part of our organization’s DNA; however, just as the agriculture industry constantly demands change, our methods to developing FFA members into the leaders of tomorrow, along with the ways we demonstrate leadership ourselves, also demands change.

I recognize I’m painting with a broad brush, but I believe there are three fundamental areas where FFA has excelled in relation to leadership development. These areas are identity development, youth voice / agency, and hands-on experiential learning. While we have a rich history of implementing across these three areas, we are also being challenged to revise these approaches to remain relevant in a quickly changing industry.

Identity Development

“Let’s form an organization that will give them a greater op-

portunity for self-expression and for the development of leadership. In this way they will develop confidence in their own ability and pride in the fact they are farm boys.” – Walter Newman, one of the founders of the Future Farmers of Virginia.

This quote and many of the early practices of FFA support the focus of youth identity development, a theory further developed by Dr. Erik Erikson. From the FFA Creed to the jackets donning pins and awards to the ceremonial nature of FFA chapter meetings where students share remarks in unison, tools for youth identity development are woven into the organization’s blue corduroy. Through these various mechanisms we create a sense of belonging for our students where they also develop an affinity for leadership roles.

While our various mechanisms may be complex, the goal is rather simple: when students believe they are leaders, they act like leaders. And when students act like leaders, they become leaders. As an organization, we do this very well. Our awards and recognition systems, our student election processes, and the titles sewn on jackets all emphasize to students that they are, in fact, leaders. Perhaps one of the simplest measurements of this identity buy-in is when a student leaves an FFA experience or event and feels – or even verbalizes - “I belong here.” While many variables play into how our students

arrive at that mindset, ultimately, before a student can picture themselves leading in this industry of tomorrow, they must first believe they belong in it and in the midst of its challenges – some of which we can’t even conceptualize yet.

This great strength of developing a sense of identity for students can, at times, be a weakness. As we are challenged to become more inclusive, some of the tools for identity development can become barriers if we let them. In the past year some have debated issues such as, “should girls wear pants or skirts as part of our official uniform?” or “can students say the FFA Creed in Spanish?” These questions reveal that we have become lost in the mechanics of the FFA machine and forgotten the purpose of the machine in the first place. While we find ourselves debating the “how,” instead we should be celebrating the “why.”

As practitioners, we should be asking a more fundamental question when we think about our traditions: *Does this help*

Through these various mechanisms we create a sense of belonging for our students where they also develop an affinity for leadership roles.

students identify themselves as leaders? Or better yet, can we do this differently to help more students identify themselves as leaders? Tradition for tradition’s sake should never take priority over what these traditions were intended to do in the first place. When our student demographics and industry landscape change

change. The Texas FFA Association now hosts a Spanish Creed Speaking invitational because of a recommendation from a state FFA officer team. The National FFA Organization is piloting a new conference series recommended by student delegates. We often do not give our students enough credit and, therefore, enough agency to affect change and learn from the process. If we agree we need leaders for tomorrow, we need to let them start leading today.

As practitioners, this can often be difficult. After all, who wants a failed chapter banquet or an of-

simultaneously, it's only natural that we must adapt also. The good news is that we can do this while maintaining our larger purpose and values for developing youth and providing them meaningful leadership experiences.

Youth Voice and Agency

Working with The National FFA Organization's six student officers as well as student leaders in Texas, I can recall many occasions when students' recommendations, at times with some heat behind them, were met by the chagrin of adults like me. I'll be the first to

it." This is easier said than done, but if we set those expectations early with our parents, supporters, administrators, and most importantly, our student leaders, they will get the taste of real leadership – and it is not always sweet!

Perfection, Proficiency, or Problem-Solving?

When at our best, our profession champions experiential learning – as long as the “experiential learning” results in the perfection we expect. If there is one area of leadership development where I worry we may be drifting furthest



ficer team retreat to go off the rails? I've often read questions from FFA advisors like, “Our Ag Day event planning is not going well because the officers aren't doing their jobs, so do I let it fail, or do I take it over myself?” The advice they receive from peers is typically encouragement to, “let them fail and help them learn from

admit that their recommendations are typically imperfect, overly ambitious, and some are even a bit odd. They can, however, drive

away from our intentions, it is our pursuit of perfection for our students and our programs. We like to pick winners across all levels –

The good news is that we can do this while maintaining our larger purpose and values for developing youth and providing them meaningful leadership experiences.

local, state, and national. Our team events often outline a few skills we ask our students to perfect, rubric in hand, with a clear picture of what excellence looks like. I'll ask an uncomfortable question: *Why do we do it this way?*

If we care about career success for our students and want to equip them with relevant skillsets, our development approach should mirror the approach of industry. For example, in ag and tech companies alike, diverse cross-functional teams are assembled to solve problems. This pattern is being replicated in education. Look no further than the number of robotics teams springing up across middle schools and high schools. Most do not seem to celebrate the individual achievement as much as the end output or result. Students have individualized roles and skillsets; combined, they solve a problem.

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This can be replicated at the chapter level in FFA. Although many chapters already do this, they often do not recognize it as problem-solving. Members and officer teams come together often to plan and implement chapter activities. This can be expanded to a number of projects where hands-on skills are developed. Our industry values the ability of an individual to contribute to a team above individual skill proficiency. How can we more accurately reflect what will be valued in the workforce? It will likely have little to do with perfection.

A Tale of Two Chapters

I recently visited several chapters in the Midwest. Two chapters stood out to me as distinctly different in terms of their approach to youth leadership development. One chapter advisor mentioned to me a phrase I had not heard before – “The Golden Six.” The approach was to select the best six students each year and focus almost entirely on them. They were chosen because they were talented, coachable, and had invested parents. The advisors said they (i.e., the advisors) had planned an excellent visit for us, and it was.

The other chapter had a different approach. I could not identify six chapter leaders because there were dozens. As chapter members led us on tours through the school, each seemed to lead a special project or initiative. Their projects were their own ideas and creations.

They could all speak about their affinity for FFA and their chapter. Their execution was not perfect, but it was passionate.

The advisor was only a facilitator on this journey. The program visit and its execution belonged to the students, as did the chapter.

Of these two chapters, one had countless banners and national-level award distinction. The other was knee-deep in the messy process of building better leaders. Just as our industry redefines what holds value, so must we for the betterment of our students. Be it in industry, communities or farming operations, trophy cases are a poor substitute for good leaders.

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What Makes a Successful Leader?

by Ronda Hamm

Leadership is knowing when to speak up and most importantly, when to listen. I read somewhere that we have one mouth and two ears, so we should listen at least twice as much as we talk. And when we do speak, we must have either enough knowledge to contribute thoughtful comments or be willing to ask thoughtful questions to grow our understanding on a subject.

This balance of communication is powerful, but it's not necessarily innate. Secondary agricultural education opportunities give students a place to develop and grow their skills, while advancing their expertise around agriculture.

Leadership does not have an age limit. I was fortunate to be part of a competition recently

where eighth graders designed a solution to a problem and eloquently explained their idea to a group of professionals with ease. These students were owners of their idea, realized they were the experts on the subject and had the confidence to share their innovation. That's what agriculture needs. We are looking for the leaders that will join our companies, teach the next generation, and be farmers who bring innovation with them. It's not enough to just have great ideas. Those great ideas need to be communicated. These students also worked well together toward a common goal. That's exactly how our industry does business, together with a focus on the customer and the consumer.

Leadership incorporates many of the 21st century skills agriculture needs to continue to innovate. Critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, flexibility, initiative and productivity are all linked to great leadership. We tend to think of these skills as independent, yet there is often a connection between them. Those 8th grade students illustrated the

We are looking for the leaders that will join our companies, teach the next generation, and be farmers who bring innovation with them.

use of a variety of these skills which allowed them to be successful in the development of their solution. At Corteva Agriscience, we recognize the importance of inspiring and engaging the next generation of agricultural professionals. You are teaching our future colleagues and decision makers. The USDA estimates that more than 57,000 jobs will be available and may go unfilled over the next five years¹. We need students who can step in to solve the most pressing challenges we have such as global food security, mitigating climate change, and bridging the agriculture/consumer divide. It is through leadership skills, including innovation, which we will



continue to build successes and answers to these grand challenges.

Additionally, the agricultural education system has a plethora of options for students to exercise their leadership skills. The most obvious place is our officer teams that provide leadership for the chapter, section, region, state or national level. The challenge with leaning on officer teams to provide leadership opportunities for students is that only a limited number per team (typically six) are selected each year. Instead, more students gain leadership skills through other activities secondary agricultural education offers, from showing livestock at a county fair to participating on a judging team or competing in an agriscience fair. And that's all above and beyond the opportunities available for leadership development in the classroom.

As a former agriculture student and FFA member, I had an abundance of opportunities to help develop my leadership skills. My most memorable and life-changing example was being selected to work as an intern in a research lab over the summer. The professor explained the details of the project I would be working on, walked me through the process of preparing samples, and then left the project to me. The ownership of the project, the ability to manage my time and preparation of samples, knowing when to stop and ask questions, learning from negative results, and learning how to communicate the results, were the basis of building my leadership skills. The same could be said for my sheep flock. Leadership skills were developed every time I had to make a decision for my flock. When you are faced with your ag

teacher telling you that you're going to have to pull a lamb, that's a leadership moment, when you jump right in to tackle the problem at hand. Listening carefully to instructions was critical in this situation. In my classes, I was responsible for turning in quality work

As educators, it is up to us to show them that leadership is not always about overseeing people or holding an elected position.

on-time. There were projects that were completed as part of team. There were oral reports to present. All contributed to the development of leadership attributes.

What leadership skills do you see your students using at these events? Are your students aware of the skills they are using both in and outside of the classroom? Have you taken the time to point out that working as a team to make sure the animals are cared for and that the barn is clean for visitors is leadership? Do you encourage your students to have conversations with people as they walk through the county fair? Don't be afraid to point out where leadership is taking place.

Although students are developing critical leadership skills, they often do not see themselves as leaders because they do not have a certain role or title. As educators, it is up to us to show them that leadership is not always about overseeing people or holding an elected position.

Help your students understand their strengths and the skills they've developed in their agricultural programs, and then teach

them how to communicate those skills so others outside of agriculture can understand their qualifications. One of my favorite interview questions I offer to students is asking them to give me an example of when they have exhibited leadership. This is to help them connect dots for me and others in the room, but too often students give generic answers - or worse - students may admit they have not been involved in any leadership roles.

Students seem to have a narrow definition of leadership. One of the best things an agricultural educator can do for them is help them change that narrow definition of leadership, so their skills can shine when seeking their next opportunity.

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¹Goecker AD, Smith E, Fernandez JM, Ali R, Theller RG. Employment opportunities for college graduates in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and the environment. Purdue University and the USDA. Available at: www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/ (Last accessed January 2017).



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Focusing on What We are Good at: Utilizing Clifton Strengths in the Classroom

by Haley Rosson

Think of a time when you have been most successful, when something has happened where you felt “in the zone” and at your best. In that instance, what factors were at play that you believe enabled this success? More than likely, you were utilizing your strengths – those innate characteristics that are a natural part of your being and allow you to perform in a seemingly effortless manner. Sometimes, we may not even be aware a certain strength is being utilized because it comes so naturally to us and we don’t realize that others may struggle to behave in a similar fashion.

This is where a concept known as authentic leadership comes into play. Authentic leaders are known to be individuals “who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspective, knowledge, and strengths” (Avolio, Luthans, & Walumbwa, 2004). This article will discuss the benefits of utilizing a strengths-based philosophy and how to effectively implement the use of strengths in your classroom.

The Strengths-Based Philosophy

The premise of the strengths-based philosophy began with Dr. Donald O. Clifton, creator of the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment and widely regarded as the father of strengths-based psychology. The essence of this philosophy is that we focus our attentions on what we are naturally good at, our strengths, as

opposed to expending valuable time developing something that we’re just NOT naturally good at. All too often, we tout the desirous benefits of being a “well-rounded” individual; according to the strengths-based philosophy, however, it is more beneficial to continually hone and develop our strengths, while managing (note: not completely disregarding!) our weaknesses. Much like our muscles, we must continually flex our talents to gain strength.

A common misconception that my students sometimes jokingly put forth is the idea that they no longer have to do things they don’t like (i.e., “*I’m not a WOO, I don’t have to interact with people anymore,*” or “*I don’t have to do math anymore because I don’t have Analytical as a strength*”). Unfortunately, for these students, they still have to do math and they still have to interact with other people. What is important to distinguish, however, is that we can each utilize our unique talents to reach the same end goals of success, but the paths we take to get to the same said goals may vary.

Much like our muscles, we must continually flex our talents to gain strength.

What is a Strength?

It’s important when we begin discussing the strengths-based philosophy to understand the definition of a strength and re-

lated strengths-based terminology. In order to help my students conceptualize this terminology, I utilize the following equation:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Talent} & + & (\text{Knowledge} \\ \& \text{Skills}) & = \text{STRENGTHS} \end{array}$$

We first begin with talents: according to Gallup, a *talent* is defined as “a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied” (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006, p. 2). Decades of Gallup research through interviews with leaders across the globe has identified thousands of various talents, which were then condensed into *talent themes*, or categories of talents. The Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment measures the presence and intensity of 34 talent themes, (the term talent theme is used interchangeably with the term strengths), and highlights the top five strengths that are unique to you as an individual through your Strengths Insight Report.

In conjunction with the innate talents we each possess, when we are able to apply both *knowledge* (“facts and lesson learned”) and *skills* (“the steps of an activity”) (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 29), we have what is known as a *strength*. A strength is defined as, “the ability to consistently produce a positive outcome through near-perfect performance in a given task” (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006, p. 5). “Near-perfect performance” indicates that we are so adept at using one of our strengths, or perhaps multiple strengths synchronously, the activity becomes effortless.

Taking the Assessment

The Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment is the result of a culmination of over 50 years of research efforts with Gallup, Inc. The assessment is comprised of 177 paired statements designed to measure a respondent's natural patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Upon completion of the assessment, the respondent receives their *Signature Themes Report*, which provides unique insight statements for each of their top five strengths.

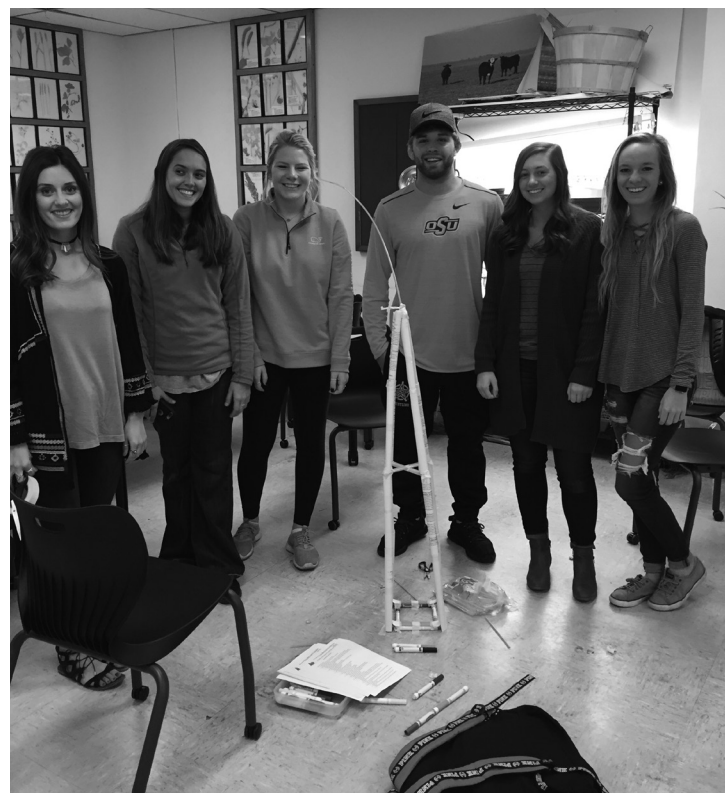
There are a few ways you can go about purchasing codes for your students to complete the assessment. The first and most common method that I have used as an educator teaching collegiate-level leadership courses is to purchase one of the many strengths-based texts from Gallup. With the purchase of the text, a one-time use access code is included in the book for students to complete the assessment. Students will be prompted to create an account in order to complete the assessment, obtain their results, and have access to their report at any point thereafter, as well as additional strengths-based resources. I have utilized several different strengths-based texts, including *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001), *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow* (Rath & Conchie, 2008), and *StrengthsQuest: Discover and Develop Your Strengths in Academics, Career, and Beyond* (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006). These texts also serve as a great resource for students who are interested in expanding their strengths-based knowledge beyond the scope of my courses.

Codes can also be purchased directly through the Gallup - *Clifton Strengths for Students* webpage. The codes can be purchased individually by students, or in bulk for your entire class. Be sure to check out the resources at the end of this article to receive the educator discount price as well. It is also important

to note that you can now purchase what is known as the "All 34" report, which provides your individual ranking for all 34 Clifton Strengths. While this report is extremely insightful, it is also substantially costlier. In keeping with the strengths-based philosophy, I would recommend that educators stick with the top 5 report – this will help students focus on what it is that they are truly best at and where they are most likely to experience success, as opposed to immediately seeing (and dwelling on) areas for improvement.

Activities for Interpreting the Results

Signature Themes Report – After beginning my strengths unit by covering the foundational strengths-based terminology, I like to have students read through their Signature Themes report and highlight, circle, or underline the words and phrases that resonate most with them. I then have



them share their findings with a partner or small group. This activity helps students unearth the various behaviors or thought patterns that are unique to them, or the "That's me!" moments.

Strengths "Speed Dating"

– While understanding our own strengths is crucial, it is also vital that leaders recognize the strengths of others on their team. For this activity, students will be paired up. If space allows, I set the room up in a circle with the two partners facing each other. The first partner will have 30 seconds to describe what they believe is their best strength. They should describe the strength in their own words and how they relate to it. After 30 seconds have elapsed, the second partner will describe their best strength. After 1 minute (both partners have shared), half of the students will rotate one seat, clockwise. Repeat the exercise until all students have shared their strengths with each other, or as time allows.



Paper Tower Activity – As a leader, being able to maximize the unique talents within your team is crucial. For this activity, the goal is to build the largest, freestanding tower using printer paper and tape (but feel free to get creative with what materials you use!). Groups will have five minutes to design structures and 10 minutes to build the structure. Debriefing questions include: What behaviors in your teammates can you connect back to a specific strength? – name them with specific examples. Which of your strengths felt “on” during this activity? Why was it important to understand our teammate’s strengths for this activity?

Strengths-Based Entertainment Media – Films and television are excellent visual mediums for cementing complex leadership theories. One film that I particularly like using in my agricultural leadership classes is *Temple Grandin* – students watch the

film and identify what they believe her top 5 strengths are based on her thoughts and behaviors. I also like having students try to identify characters’ strengths for various leadership-based television shows, such as *Parks and Recreation* or *The Office*.

Strengths Jeopardy – In order to identify and understand others’ strengths, we must have an understanding of all 34 strengths. For this activity, I modified a free “Jeopardy” PowerPoint template to quiz students on all 34 Clifton Strengths. I provide the “Clifton Strengths Quick Reference Card” (seeresourcesection) for studying.

These are just a few of the many strengths-based activities and resources available to educators. Creating a culture of strength takes effort and continual application, but has far-reaching, positive implications. I encourage all educators to help students achieve true authenticity through the application of what it is that they are best at.

Strengths-Based Resources

For purchasing Strengths Access Codes: <https://www.strengthsquest.com/home.aspx>

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Emotional Intelligence as a Tool for Developing Yourself and Your Students

by Haley Traini and Josh Stewart

Consider the following statements. Circle the items that are most reflective of your typical behavior.

I adjust my behavior depending on who I interact with (e.g., fun and kind with a child, professional and appropriate with my boss, etc.).

Sometimes I get so caught up in my own thoughts during meetings or conversations that I find I am not listening to the people who are speaking.

If a situation calls for it, I can be civil to a person whom I dislike.

Even during tough conversations, I am concerned about maintaining good, comfortable relationships with all parties.

I don't always notice when other people are feeling annoyed, frustrated, or overwhelmed.

In situations where I feel frustrated or angry, I typically am able to remain calm, cool, and collected.

In stressful situations, I sometimes respond too quickly, sharply, or disjointedly.

If you circled statements one, three, four, and six, you may be what psychologists and leadership scholars call emotionally intelligent. Congratulations! So, what is emotional intelligence anyway? Essentially, it's the ability to recognize, understand, and control emotions in yourself and use that awareness to manage personal behavior and relationships with empathy and compassion. It is about making your emotions work for you and not against you. Emo-

tional intelligence is often broken down into four general abilities or domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These four abilities are separated by two primary competencies: personal competence and social competence (See Figure 1).

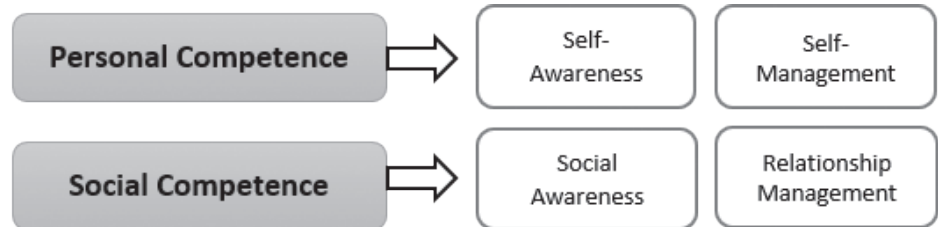


Figure 1. Four Emotional Intelligence Domains

The top two skills, self-awareness and self-management, are about identifying and managing your own emotions. The bottom two, social awareness and relationship management, are about how you understand and interact with other people's emotions in order to enhance your relationships.

It is about making your emotions work for you and not against you.

Specifically, **self-awareness** is your ability to recognize your own emotions and how they may be a strength or weakness. It's about discovering what makes you tick. **Self-management** is the ability to regulate your emotions so that you can effectively accomplish

tasks and goals. Even if you can't always control the way you feel, self-management is the ability to control your actions despite how you may be feeling. **Social awareness** is the ability to accurately perceive the emotions of others and understand how those emotions influence their behavior. It helps

you empathize with what others are feeling without letting your own emotions cloud your judgement. **Relationship management** is the ability to utilize your own emotions and the emotions of others to enhance your interactions and relationships with people.

At this point, you might be thinking, "this all sounds well and good, but I'm not the type of person who talks about feelings and emotions. What does it have to do with me and my students?" In response, we'd say, "good question!" Emotional intelligence is actually seen as an important leadership skill, one that can not only improve your professional success, but also your relationships and personal well-being. In fact, some studies identify emotional intelligence just as, if not more important, than cognitive intelligence. Individuals

who have strong emotional intelligence skills are able to regulate their own emotions and facilitate appropriate and beneficial interpersonal behaviors when working with others. There is even evidence to suggest those with higher emotional intelligence earn more money compared to their peers in the same profession. Given this, doesn't it make sense for us to think about emotional intelligence as it pertains to ourselves and our own personal and professional success as well as how we can build this skill in our students?

Emotional Intelligence for Effective Teaching

I think we can all agree the practice of teaching is chock-full of emotions. In any given week, you might be feeling a variety of emotions, from anxiety over having to make a difficult call home, to the annoyance and frustration you feel when a disruptive student speaks out during class (again), to the stress you may feel as the stack of ungraded papers grows on your desk, or the proud feeling you may get when you see those "ah ha" moments in your students' eyes. If we're not careful, we can let these emotions get the better of us. As former high school agriculture teachers, we can certainly testify to this (it often looked something like losing your temper in front of class then regretting it later. Not proud, but there you have it!).

Understanding your current emotional intelligence can help you make sense of the emotions that often emerge throughout the work day and teach you how to best manage them so as to enhance your personal and professional success. Some research has even shown teachers with higher

emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their jobs and have higher self-efficacy. So, where do you begin? We suggest you start with *EQ Applied: The Real-World Guide to Emotional Intelligence* by Justin Bariso. This easy read is nicely organized into chapters that give you specific strategies to enhance your emotional intelligence, including strategies on

and recommend administration purchase the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal Assessment for each teacher (an expensive, but very comprehensive assessment). There are lots of resources out there to learn about, measure, and improve your emotional intelligence. The evidence shows there are numerous benefits for very little investment of time and energy.



how to receive feedback (could come in handy for the next teacher observation), how to show empathy without getting physically and emotionally exhausted, how to cultivate healthy relationships, and how to respond to people who are emotionally manipulative. The audio version is only 5 hours long, perfect for those long classroom cleaning sessions during the summer or during your daily commute.

If you're really feeling bold, you can recommend future school/district in-service training to focus on emotional intelligence (instead of yet another training on data management software)

Teaching Emotional Intelligence for Student Leadership Development

We often use agriculture as the context in which we teach critical thinking and problem solving to help students become informed consumers. But we also teach agricultural content in an effort to provide the agricultural industry with a sustainable supply of skilled workers. We also spend a fair amount of time focused on developing the leadership abilities of our students through FFA and leadership coursework. Along with critical thinking and skill development, emotionally intel-

lignant students are confident, optimistic, sociable, empathetic, self-motivated, and able to manage their moods appropriately, set and achieve goals, and understand others' perspectives.

Incorporating emotional intelligence in your curriculum can result in skilled workers who can think critically to solve problems as well as manage emotions that arise when the pressure is on. An outcome of effective communication and teamwork, emotional intelligence has been found to be one of the most important predictors of what a team can accomplish. This begs the question, *how do I help students build their emotional intelligence?*

As leadership and agricultural educators, we've seen wonderful results when we do a "deep dive" into the topic of emotional intelligence with our students. This typically starts with each student completing an emotional intelligence assessment, which is a personality-type questionnaire that measures an individual's emotional intelligence (often called EQ or emotional quotient). This is followed with significant time for individual reflection and whole-group discussion. Depending on the assessment you choose, the results will indicate an overall EQ score followed by scores for each domain. For high school students, a great start would be the book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Travis Bradberry and Jean Graves. Each new book is about \$15.00 and comes with a unique passcode to an online EQ assessment. The book is short, easy to read, and full of exercises students can do to build their EQ in the four different domains. For example, one activity to build your

self-management is the *create an emotions vs. reasons list* strategy, which walks the reader through difficult situations with a series of questions then challenges them to get their emotions and reasons down on paper. This book and the activities in it could be a great resource for your chapter officers, especially if you take them on a multi-day retreat. Imagine training the trainers; your officers could return from the retreat ready to teach their peers about emotional intelligence through chapter workshops.

For group and whole-class activities, we suggest *The Emotional Intelligence Activity Kit* by Adele and Janelle Lynn. It contains 50 activities that promote introspection, empathy, and improved social skills. This resource could be great to have on hand for FFA meeting activities, leadership workshops focused on emotional intelligence, or chapter officer group activities. Not ready to purchase a book? A quick Google or YouTube search will reveal hundreds of resources, videos, and articles you could use in your classroom and with your FFA students. Thankfully, many scholars, teachers, and companies have developed quality curriculum and resources free of cost.

You may not be ready to start reading about emotional intelligence or incorporating it into your classroom and that's OK! We will however, leave you with a challenge: for the rest of the day, check in with your emotions every hour. Ask yourself, *what/how am I feeling right now?*, *why do I feel this way?*, and, *how is this influencing my behavior?* Who knows, you might discover something interesting about yourself!

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It's All About Building Relationships

by Lauren Lewis Cline and Cammie Grace Weaver

“There’s no doubt that the one place I felt like I fit in during high school was the ag building and it is mainly due to my ag teachers. There was a group of us who had one of our ag teachers since 6th grade so we had developed a pretty close relationship over the years. We were FFA chapter officers, and by the time senior year rolled around, given a lot of responsibility around the department. Some of my favorite memories were traveling with my ag teacher and friends during winter break for a ski trip and even traveling abroad in Europe for 10 days! The opportunities my ag teacher provided us with unique experiences that prepared us well for college and beyond. Looking back, I can see how my friends and I may have received special treatment in some other students’ eyes, but at the time and to this day, I still value the relationship I have with my ag teacher.”

“I played sports for the majority of my middle and high school career. While I was never the best on the volleyball team, I would give my best in workouts and practice. Despite the effort I put in, I got little-to-no playing time. Even during practice, I would be tasked with putting balls back in the cart or tossing one over the net to mimic a serve. With little practice time I could not perform well in games, which led to even less playing time. My coach was not happy with my performance, but instead of helping me to improve all I received was criticism. Constantly being left out of the lineup made me feel like a member of my coach’s

outgroup and led to the decision to no longer play a sport I love.”

Think back to your own school experiences and times when you knew you were part of the “in-crowd” or felt like a member of the “out-crowd.” What influence did your teachers, coaches, and leaders have on you feeling part of the group or not? When we look at teaching as a form of leadership, it is important that we remember how critical relationships are to the leadership process. Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is an easy leadership theory to put into practice as educators to help us be intentional in developing positive relationships with our students. LMX focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers, with the relationship the focal point of the process (Northouse, 2019). Rather than simply describing what effective leadership looks like, LMX theory gives us a prescription for how to be an effective leader and develop high-quality relationships with our students. According to LMX theory, we should always assume that the quality of our relationship with students can influence the formation of in-groups and out-groups within our classroom

and FFA chapters. In-groups are created when students (i.e., followers) feel like the high-quality relationship they have with a teacher (i.e., leader) results in expanded responsibilities and opportunities that are reciprocated. Out-groups are the result of low-quality relationships that are formal in nature with defined roles.

Why should we be concerned whether a student feels like they are part of our in-group or

In-group Characteristics

- Receives more information, influence, confidence, and concern from teacher
- More dependable, highly involved, and communicative

Out-group Characteristics

- Less compatible with the teacher
- Usually just comes to school, does the work, and goes home

out-group? To help answer this question, let’s first take a look at the difference between students in the in-group and out-group:

Whether we want to admit it or not, we can all probably identify which students are members of our in-groups and out-groups – and that’s okay! The problem arises when students begin to know or perceive who is in your in-group and out-group. As teachers and leaders, we should want EVERY student to FEEL as if they are a part of our in-group. Students who

are in your in-group are given more responsibility and higher ex-

LMX theory gives us a prescription for how to be an effective leader and develop high-quality relationships with our students.

expectations, which leads them to produce higher quality work. High-quality leader-member exchanges, or relationships between teachers and students can result in improved program retention rates, more positive classroom performance and learning engagement, greater commitment, better attitudes, more desirable assignments, greater participation, and faster progress among students (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The evidence is clear: we should want students to believe they are in-group members of our agricultural programs. Feeling like you're in the out-group as a student can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students in the out-group are viewed as lazy, uninterested, or different by teachers; however, these traits may not accurately describe them. Once

now: is it even possible to develop a personal, one-on-one relationship with every student? Maybe not, but the key is to make students FEEL like they have a high-quality relationship with you, and this can be done with just a little bit of effort and intention. Students want to feel like the teacher likes everyone in the program, not just a certain group. Here are some things to reflect on to help you start intentionally working toward all students believing they are a part of your agricultural program's in-group:

At the beginning of each class, who do I talk to most frequently? Am I engaging with every student on occasion, or only talk to the same five students about last night's game or their SAE project? Students pick up on who the teacher gives their

interest in their earthworm SAE when you actually prefer show stock, attending the games of sporting teams your students are members of, or celebrating with them at an awards ceremony outside of the agricultural program. Going this small, but extra mile demonstrates to students that you care about them as individuals.

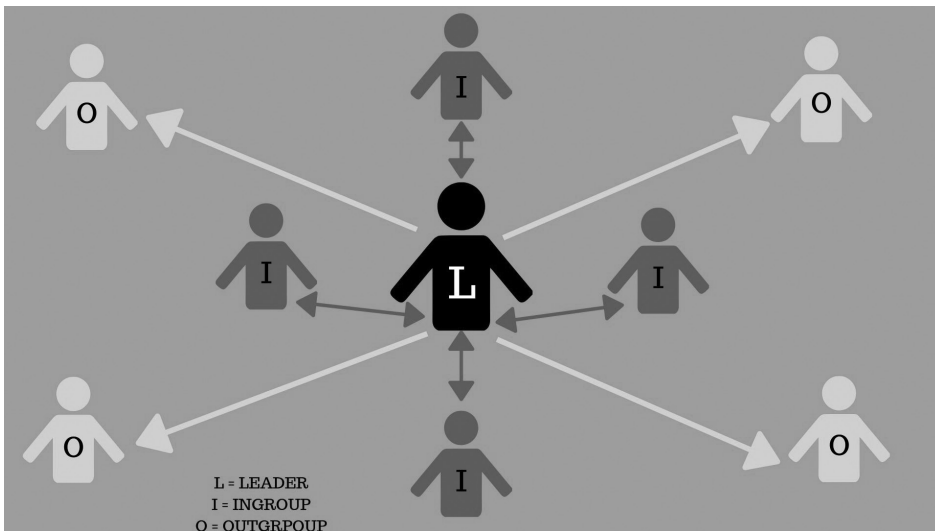
We should want students to believe they are in-group members of our agricultural programs.

During class discussions, do I only include those who raise their hands or do I include everyone in the conversation? Remember that if your students feel like they are a part of the in-group they will be more likely to participate and engage in class. What teacher doesn't want that?

Do the same few students make up every CDE/LDE team in my FFA chapter? You should put conscious effort into getting everyone involved in at least ONE thing with the chapter.

Do I apply rules and expectations evenly and fairly among students? Extra credit opportunities, late assignment policies, and classroom discipline should be applied evenly and fairly to all students. It is important to note that being fair doesn't always mean doing the same for each student. You should always self-check to make sure any differences in treatment aren't based on student in-group/out-group membership.

When thinking about LMX theory and how it applies to your agricultural program, it is impor-



students realize they are in the out-group with low or no expectations placed on them, they often begin to act in such ways. When we don't think about relationships intentionally, students will naturally begin to see themselves as part of your in-group or out-group.

We know what you're thinking

attention to, which may imply favoritism and contribute to initial in-group/out-group formations.

Am I interested in what my students are interested in, or do I only put time into subjects and events that matter to me? If your students are interested, you should be interested, too, whether it is showing

tant to also consider the relationships our student leaders have with other students. How can you provide leadership development to your student leaders to help them develop high-quality relationships with their peers? What can your FFA officers do to make sure every FFA member is part of the in-group? We know that in-groups and out-groups are natural and inevitable if we do not put any effort into relationship building. This story can be changed if student leaders will consciously think about building relationships with students in their classes and members in their FFA chapter. As you foster leadership development in your student leaders, focus on getting your students to think more about the quality of their relationships with their peers to at least try to build stronger in-groups. Some questions you can use to help guide your student leaders toward building high-quality relationships are:

What can you do to make sure every member feels like an important part of the FFA chapter at the end-of-the-year banquet?

Does every FFA member belong to a team or committee? Do these groups share responsibilities among the members and allow for accountability and feedback to achieve success?

Who do you sit with during class or FFA events? Are there other students you wish you knew better?

How can you encourage and support your peers outside the perimeter of the agricultural program? What small acts of kindness could be implemented on a daily basis toward one another?

As agricultural educators, our main focus is to help our students learn. While teaching methods and

approaches are an important piece of the learning puzzle, the relationship students have with their teacher may be most influential in determining their motivation to learn. By considering the implications of LMX theory, agricultural educators can intentionally work toward building high-quality relationships with and among the students in our classrooms and FFA chapters. In doing so, you may just wind up with more motivated, engaged, and greater performing students. When you step into your next class, don't forget: *it's all about building relationships.*

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The Need for Diversity and Culture in Leadership and Leadership Development

by Cecilia Suarez

“Who and where are you from? What has shaped the person that you are today?” According to many of my students, at both the graduate and undergraduate level, this is the hardest assignment they’ve ever had to complete. Framed as a “cultural self-reflection essay,” my students often do not know where to start. The number of questions is initially quite comical because the subject is themselves and there are no other parameters put on the assignment other than page length. However, it is not the act of writing, formatting, or length of assignment that causes students to hyperventilate - it’s the understanding of self.

What’s interesting about this phenomenon is that, although the majority of students in my classes have taken leadership development courses prior to having me as a professor, they don’t know they have a culture or identities other than the ones that can be found on their student ID. This leads me to question how individuals can develop as leaders, charged with serving and supporting others, without having an understanding of the holistic self? How can leaders be prepared to serve, support, and engage with society if factors that greatly impact communities are not understood, engaged, or are even known to exist?

Society is growing more complex and nuanced and, as such, the ways we develop leaders must evolve with the needs of the student, industry, and community. As an increasingly global society, it is

imperative that we prepare our students to understand, acknowledge, and utilize culture, diversity, and inclusion as it relates to leadership development and application. Here’s the catch...mention the words “diversity” and “culture” at the beginning of a workshop or class and you’re bound to be met with labored sighs, eye rolls, and my favorite, teeth sucking. While the reasons for reactions can be left up for interpretation, what remains consistent is that discussing diversity is uncomfortable for a lot of people - students, educators, and community members included.

Let’s face it, no one willingly signs up to feel uncomfortable. There’s no way I am going to happily want to put on a pair of pants that are now way too tight after the holidays because all they will do is remind me that I have got to do better. Trust me on this...I’ve been through this situation more times than I’d like to admit. Similarly, this is how I like to explain the feeling of uncomfortability that many face when discussing anything related to diversity, identity, and culture. The uncomfortability is simply a reminder that we have something to work on and perhaps something we can be doing better. Uncomfortability is not the issue, it’s what we do with it that is key.

A mentor of mine once told me, “*Not teaching students about diversity and racism is like letting a kid get hit by a train.*” Let me explain - Diversity and racism are very real things, with very real impacts and implications on society. If students are not prepared

and equipped with the knowledge to understand, engage with, and navigate diversity and racism, they will ultimately be crushed by these heavy issues that will show up in their daily lives, no matter what they do and where they go. The same holds true for leaders and leadership development. We are setting leaders up for turmoil, and ultimately failure, by not equipping them with the skills to work with diverse organizations, communities, and workplaces. Furthermore, one must question the impact a leader without knowledge and understanding of diversity and culture can have on a growing global society.

It is not expected that everyone is an expert on diversity and culture. If that were the case, I’d be out of a job. Please hear me when I say that *no one gets this work 100% right all the time*. Humans are complex, unique, and always changing so things that worked for a community or workplace one month, can be the worst solution next month. I am constantly learning, modifying, and reconstructing my level of understanding and application because people, communities, and problems change, and I get things wrong too. While there is no “one-size-fits-all” curriculum, strategy, or way to increase understanding of diversity and culture within courses or workshops, I’d like to offer some important things to remember that are small, but make a big impact:

It is okay to admit that you don’t know about diversity and culture. Diversity and culture

aren't things that get taught often and in-depth in general education, let alone leadership development.

Saying nothing is still saying something. It is okay for individuals to not always agree. It is okay for individuals to not understand each other. It is *not* okay for people to dehumanize, threaten, or utilize false information as truth. This is of particular importance when serving as the educator, facilitator, or leader of a space. Situations occur that leave us speechless, especially if we are unsure of how to handle them. However, in a class or education space, saying nothing about a comment/encounter that is fueled by disrespect, hatred, and/or bias still conveys a message to those you are leading. Not saying something often gives the message that you are okay with what has occurred and therefore welcomes future harmful occurrences. It also conveys to those hurt that you are not someone who will help and support them. Even if one is unsure of what to say, simply acknowledging that something has happened that has made the space uncomfortable is a start.

Uncomfortable does not equal unsafe. Simply because something is uncomfortable does not mean that it is unsafe. My tight pants are uncomfortable. Being sweaty in a meeting from speed walking across campus is uncomfortable. Talking about and engaging with diversity can be uncomfortable, because it is often emotionally charged and hard to ensure that everyone will be in agreement. However, none of these are unsafe.

Ask for help. I always tell my students that I know a lot about a little bit of stuff, but I know just a bit about a lot of stuff. There will always be things we don't know

and it shouldn't be expected that everyone knows everything. However, that doesn't give a pass to simply not cover a topic or address an issue occurring in class. Reaching out to other colleagues, offices, and departments can assist with navigating a new topic or space. It may also increase trust in the space if students see that even the teacher/professor can admit they don't know something and reach out for help.

Applying diversity and culture doesn't have to be a big scene. Small practices to include the application of diversity and culture can go a long way and also desensitize students to the "taboo" perception of these topics. Regardless of topic, a diverse and culturally inclusive practice and curriculum can always be applied. For example, when engaging in small groups, asking students to share their favorite past time as a child with their group members not only helps with any awkwardness and builds class community, it helps the group make connections across differences, while still acknowledging differences. Asking a simple follow-up question about what students learned about themselves and others in a quiz or discussion post can help students think deeper about *why* engaging in activities like this are important, regardless of course focus.

Just as everyone is connected to agriculture, everyone is connected to culture. Understanding this and knowing how to navigate our complex growing global society as leaders can ensure that we are making a positive impact

It is when we are most uncomfortable that we have the opportunity to grow the most.

on society while also acknowledging those very factors that impact how we lead. I invite

you to embrace the unknown and be a bit uncomfortable. After all, it is when we are most uncomfortable that we have the opportunity to grow the most.



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Teaching to Develop Allyship: Ensuring Youth Peer-to-Peer Inclusion in Agricultural Education

by Donna Westfall-Rudd, Jeremy Elliott-Engel and Courtney Lawrence

In our continued work to establish inclusive agricultural education classrooms that support the engagement of diverse students in our programs, we have the opportunity to teach our student leaders what it means to be allies to students who are marginalized within a local school system. Students who may feel marginalized or are a minority in their schools include those individuals whose culture or ethnicity is different from the majority of the student body. Minority groups may include those whose family's religion is not the same as most of the families in the community. Other minority groups who may feel marginalized include students whose families are homeless or those who identify as LGBTQ+. Each of these groups of students experience their own set of challenges associated with their minority status and would benefit from participation in FFA chapter activities if they felt welcome. Teaching student leaders the skills and knowledge necessary for appropriate inclusive behaviors builds their ability to become allies and creates a student driven effort to invite new people into the agricultural education program.

How do people become allies? Allies are individuals who have demonstrated through their words and actions that they are committed to supporting individuals marginalized in a given social or institutional context. As a result of this behavior, the minority individuals identify these supporters as allies. Individuals

must not declare themselves as an ally (Feldkamp, 2016). Allyship is not an identity, it is something that is earned based on the respect of others. Allyship is not a status of power; it is instead, the practice of making space for others to raise themselves up and then demonstrating support of their success. Everyone is an ally to someone; it is not static; it is a constant daily process. As student leaders work to include new groups in their chapter, they will model the behaviors of allyship to others, further supporting the practices of inclusion within their chapter.

Allyship is not an identity, it is something that is earned based on the respect of others.

To develop the skills and habits that can lead to allyship, we can be purposeful in teaching student leaders how to be advocates for others. As student leaders, FFA officers typically have some influence and power within the school community. They have the opportunity to use that influence to acknowledge and support the needs of their minority peers through effective communication practices. These are skills that are fundamental to FFA leadership development. One aspect of communication that we can continue to improve in our leadership training is the ability to listen and observe others before speaking out. This communication practice is especially impor-

tant when advocating for others and eventually serving as an ally.

How do you integrate allyship into leadership training? First and foremost, student leaders need to understand that it is their responsibility to learn the fundamental histories and traditions of others, and not to expect those who are already marginalized do the work of teaching everyone else. It can be exhausting and overwhelming for the minority students to take on this task. Instead, when a student leader demonstrates their understanding of and respect for another's culture, minority students may feel more welcome and accepted by their peers. This might be best addressed as a topic in a leadership training session where time is given to examine who the minorities are in the community and what the cultural traditions and norms are of the group. The important discussion would then be to determine how planned events within a FFA Chapter Program of Activities could be modified or promoted as welcoming opportunities for all students in the local school. For example, checking to ensure the dates of FFA events do not conflict with the dates of holidays or cultural observances.

How can students help make the environment safe? The process of learning about and understanding the culture and background of others takes time, and mistakes will be made. It is important to teach students to be gracious when they make an error and to acknowledge that it is a learning process. When student leaders learn to be

humble when people around them identify errors in how they are reacting or interacting with others, they will be demonstrating allyship and their acknowledgment that they are not experts. Student leaders need to be supported by advisors throughout their efforts to be inclusive and develop allyship since the process will be uncomfortable at times as mistakes are made or misunderstandings occur.

An important part of developing and maintaining a safe environment, it is to take time to help students learn about microaggressions. Microaggressions are statements or actions that make others feel of lesser value or in a lower position of power in a relationship (Sue, 2010). It is important to teach student leaders that while they may not be aware that others hear a statement they have made as something negative, those statements still have negative impacts on others. An example of a microaggression would be an officer team planning an event assuming that all of the students who are interested in attending can afford a registration or participation fee. Taking time with student leaders to explain microaggressions and look at common examples that could be experienced by their peers is a valuable learning experience that can equip students to interact more successfully with all students who might want to be a part of the local FFA chapter. As students develop their leadership skills in inclusivity and demonstrate allyship, they will remember to pause when planning a program and ask themselves if all aspects of the plans allow all of their peers to participate.

Developing communication skills and knowledge of allyship will be as much of a benefit to the

student leaders as it will be to the students the FFA chapter seeks to recruit and include. As student leaders become more comfortable working with diverse individuals, they will be more prepared to work effectively within teams when they enter postsecondary education and the workforce. They may also learn the value of teaching others who are part of a majority group, the need to be advocates and future allies to others in an organization.

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Integrating Service Learning Into the Agriculture Classroom

by Stephen Edwards and Heather Glennon

Service learning is defined as “a learning tool to empower students to solve problems in their own communities, or even globally” (Farber 2011, p. 5). The University of Mount Olive (UMO) has been very successful implementing this program with two separate agricultural classes, animal science and agricultural leadership. This article introduces service learning, provides a guide for how service learning was implemented into agricultural classes and reports reflections of how students have been positively affected by their experiences.

What is Service Learning?

Oftentimes, service learning is confused with community service, but there are several key differences between the two. First, community service opportunities typically focus on preexisting needs determined by the group hosting the community service opportunity (Farber, 2011). Adults usually determine these needs and if students help with the project, they must follow the predetermined guidelines of the organization. Community service projects allow little chance for students to practice critical thinking skills. Second, community service events are usually a one-time occurrence with no set learning objectives. The experience is usually meaningful for the participant, but the participant usually does not develop as a learner. Just because the student had an experience, there is no guarantee that learning occurred (Dewey, 1938). Finally, community service events do not encour-

age students to become active citizens in their local communities. Volunteering opportunities may meet scholastic, club, or court-ordered requirements, but there is no guarantee that the student will become engaged in the community. Students who are forced to volunteer are less likely to volunteer in their community in the future (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Community service is valuable for communities, but pursuing service learning opportunities can provide agricultural educators the chance to further develop their students.

grate the curriculum into the community. Agricultural education provides multiple opportunities to integrate real community-based problems. **The second difference is that the students should develop partnerships within the community.** It is important that service learning involves, “direct interaction with people in need rather than dealing with problems in the abstract or from a distance” (Musick & Wilson, 2008, p. 306). The instructor should help make the initial contact with community members. However, student inter-



Service learning opportunities are different from community service opportunities in multiple ways. **The first difference is that service learning can be directly “connected to the curriculum”** (Farber, 2011, p. 7). The instructor makes a conscious decision to inte-

action with the community allows students to realize they are helping real people with real problems in their local area. **The third difference is that the students need autonomy in the topic area, project design, and focus.** The students must assess the needs of the com-

munity, ultimately determining a problem or problems that they would like to tackle. After determining the problem, the students arrive at multiple solutions; select and implement the best possible solution; and reflect upon their actions. At all steps of the process, the students (with teacher supervision) have control of the service learning project, thus developing buy-in that does not occur with community service projects (Farber, 2011). **The fourth difference is that reflection needs to occur**

within the project. In order for students to learn, they must reflect upon their experiences. The reflections will guide the students as they make needed changes throughout the implementation of their project. **The fifth difference between service learning and community service projects is that the students have to determine a real life problem.** Many students would prefer for the problem to be shared upfront, but by searching for the problem, the students can come up with a

creative solution that has a lasting benefit for the community. **Finally, the instructor assesses students formatively throughout the project.** Frequent assessments help students complete their projects in a timely fashion. Formative assessments provide students with feedback that helps them implement their projects. Summative or graded assessments ensure students complete the projects within a certain timeframe. Service learning projects provide an excellent avenue for students to develop critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills while improving their local communities.

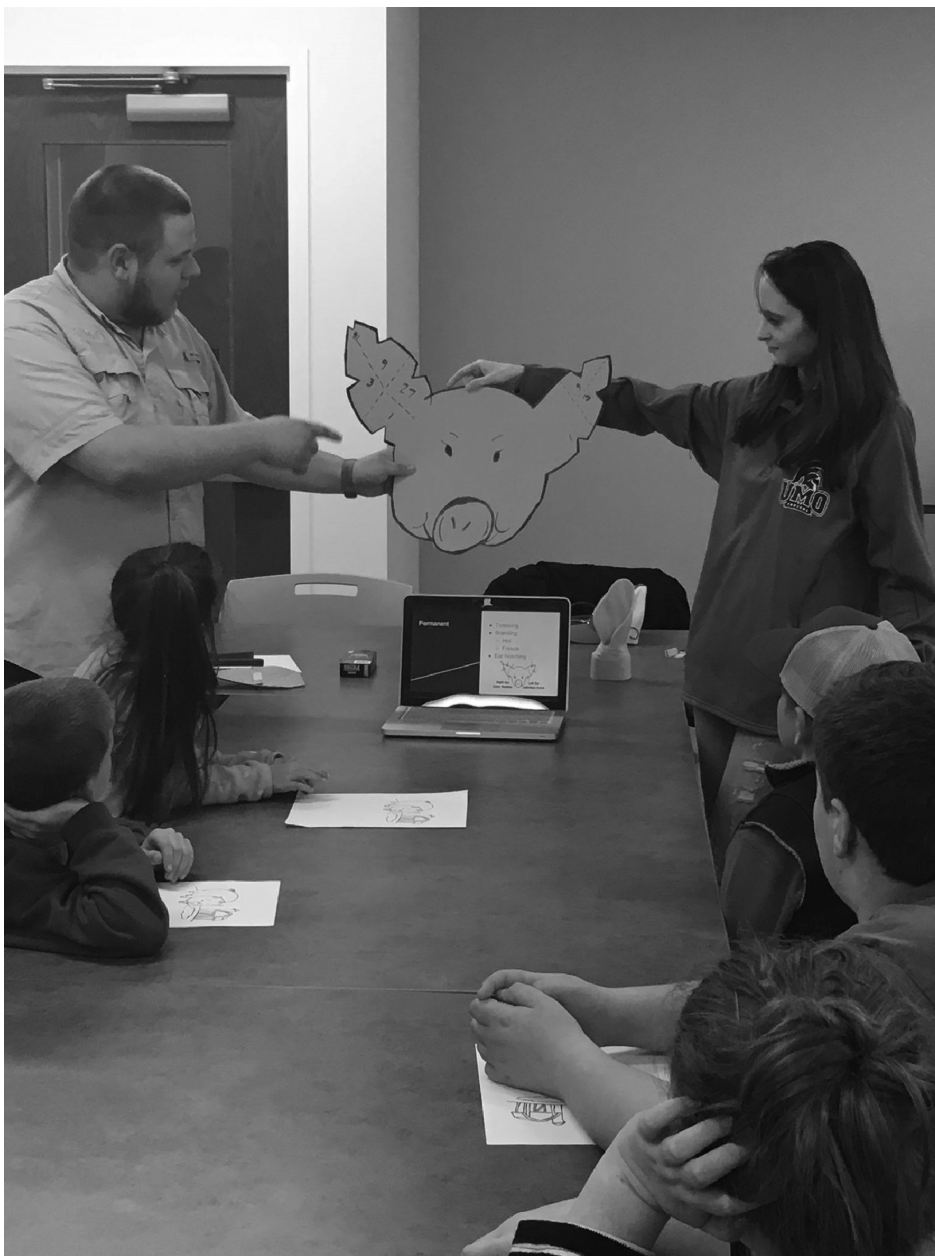
How We Implemented Service Learning at Mount Olive

Service learning was implemented at the University of Mount Olive in two agriculture classes, AGE 316 - Animal Production and Management and AGE 319 - Agricultural Leadership in Rural Communities during the spring semesters of 2016 - 2019. Both of these classes primarily enroll college level sophomores and juniors and are required courses for multiple agricultural majors at the university. These classes require students to work

with a preexisting community group, while at the same time students retained autonomy to select the overall project. The following section will outline how service learning was implemented in each class.

AGE 316 - Animal Production and Management

University of Mount Olive students worked with Wayne County 4-H livestock members (ages 5 to 19) to prepare and lead workshops in nutrition, equipment, breeds, fitting and show-



ing, meat quality, animal health/parasite control and careers in agriculture. The 4-H members are required to attend a certain number of educational workshops in order to be able to show and sell their project animal. At the beginning of the semester, the course instructor and the Cooperative Extension Livestock Agent choose three evening workshop dates that work for both groups. UMO students are able to pick their partner, topic, and presentation date. They have several weeks to research their topic and develop a lesson plan that includes student learning objectives, detailed activities, and needed materials. The minimal supply costs are supported by the UMO Agriculture Division. The lesson plan must be submitted and approved by the course instructor one week prior to the presentation. Three pairs of students present on each date. The 4-H members rotate between each of the three topics in small groups based on age. The students are quite creative in developing hands-on activities for the children. The challenge is planning for the wide range in age and knowledge level. In addition to teaching their workshop, the UMO students also have to observe their peers on another date and write a reflection paper. At the end of the semester, the students often assist with the county livestock show and sale continuing their relationships with the 4-H members, parents, and Extension Agent.

AGE 319 - Agricultural Leadership in Rural Communities-

The Original Free Will Baptist Church, a Protestant church denomination located primarily in eastern North Carolina, sponsors the University of Mount Olive. Developing the AGE 319 course

created a natural partnership opportunity for the agricultural department at UMO to work with the individual churches as a way to access local, rural communities in North Carolina. Prior to beginning the class, the instructor met with the University Chaplain to help identify several churches in the area that were willing to host a group of students for their individual projects. At the beginning of each semester, the students were educated about multiple leadership theories and community-based capital. Students self-selected groups and were paired with a pastor at a local congregation. Students worked with local churches to address capital needs in a rural area (Flora, Flora, & Gasteyer, 2016). After the existing need was determined, students developed a proposal to address and provide solutions. The students used the Boy Scouts of America *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook* as a guideline for how to develop the project. The project is tailored to the individual needs of the community. Prior to selecting partnerships, two main parameters are established by the instructor; the project has to be financially supported by the church and the project cannot require the students to lead or engage in a worship service. The students are required to submit a proposal, obtain permission from the instructor and the pastor to implement the project, to reflect on the project when it is ongoing, and finally to submit a portfolio at the end of the project. The Eagle Scout Workbook and previous successful examples are provided to the students for examples of the expectations throughout the service learning project.

How service learning develops youth leadership

Students improved their leadership as shown in their reflections:

I learned that an effective workshop leader should have all their visual aids in order beforehand and try to make a connection with students, so they pay attention.

I learned that I need to be more considerate of the people I am working with and not completely take over a presentation.

I realized when working in groups each person should have a specific role and be held accountable, so one person does not do all the work.

This project taught me to think quick on my feet and be flexible with my plans.

The most difficult thing about being a leader is knowing that you hold virtually all the responsibility.

We realized that we each have different skills.

We believe what is the most rewarding about being a leader is the satisfaction of knowing I am able to be counted on.

The most rewarding aspect of leading this community project was knowing it was for a good cause and we helped out people who couldn't necessarily do the project themselves.

Why Pursue Service Learning in Agricultural Education?

The fourth line of the FFA Motto is "Living to Serve." Service learning projects allow agricultural teachers to integrate their curriculum to solve community problems. Implementing service learning projects encourages our students to develop lasting relationships with the people who



live in their local communities. Service learning projects encourage autonomy in students and give them real life opportunities to assess problems, construct solutions, reflect on the implementation and ultimately to develop the skills that they will need to be leaders in their local communities. We hope that our experiences will inspire other teachers to use service learning as a part of their agricultural education programs.

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For more on service learning check out the July/August 2016 issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine, "Service Learning in Agricultural Education." It is available on the NAAE website.



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