



September 2008

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### Local Program Resource Guide

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## Feature Stories

A Recipe for Improvement | New Standards Help Educators Improve Program Quality

Using an Evaluation Tool Brings Balance, not Perfection | Teachers Embrace the New NQPS Standards

Agriscience Prepares and Engages Students

### A Recipe for Improvement ~ A Note from the Editor

Everyone knows the macro nutrients for plants are NPK. The skilled horticulture professional knows how much of each of those ingredients to apply to meet plant requirements, to induce growth and blooming, to reduce deficiencies, and produce the optimum crop. But do all agricultural education professionals know the macro nutrients that support optimum growth for their programs? Do they recognize the proportions of each ingredient that is required for success and how to balance them to maintain an atmosphere that isn't too acidic or basic for all stakeholders?

This year, Making a Difference is focusing on the macro nutrients of agricultural education that are necessary for creating a growing and thriving department, with tips and discussion packed into each issue on how you can improve your department through program design and instruction; experiential learning; leadership development; school and community partnerships; marketing; professional growth; and program planning and evaluation. In this month's edition, we're going more in-depth on the National Quality Program Standards, providing some background and offering testimonials on those states/schools who have found success with the NQPS. While your program "recipe" will likely never be perfect, this tool will help you work to improve it and develop a balanced application.

Check out [New Standards Help Educators Improve Program Quality](#) to see how Nevada and Montana are utilizing the NQPS and how it has affected their state's agriculture programs. Then take a look at [Using an Evaluation Tool Brings Balance, not Perfection](#) to learn more on the history of the NQPS and see how St. Louis has incorporated the improvement tool into their programs.

And if you want to hear from a teacher's perspective how the National Quality Program Standards assessment tool has helped them improve their agriculture program, don't

miss [Teachers Embrace the New NQPS Standards](#), where we hear success stories from teachers in Arkansas, Louisiana and Montana.

Local Program Success specialist Kevin Keith further explains the need for NQPS in his [Perspectives](#) piece. And in our newest soon-to-be regular feature, [LK Spotlight](#), which will be a monthly editorial by a teacher who utilizes LifeKnowledge for program enhancement, Lance Jagers tells us how using LK materials has led to his positive work/life balance.

Don't forget to check out September's [Question for the Profession](#), where LPS specialist Nina Crutchfield asks, Are You an Ostrich, a Worker Bee, or a Beaver? How can the National Quality Program Standards help your program based on the type of worker you are?

And finally, you'll definitely want to check out this month's special [Agriscience Package](#), where we highlight the 2007 Agriscience Teacher of the Year, Melissa Braun, and get some valuable tips and lesson plans to incorporate into your agriscience program.

Summer is over and it's back to work! Count on Making a Difference to be your monthly source for tips and tools that can help you take your program to the next level and help you achieve the much sought-after work/life balance.

Welcome back!

Amber Striegel

Editor

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### New Standards Help Educators Improve Program Quality

*By Manda Newlin*



What's the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of your Ag Ed program?

How can you identify areas of your program that are flourishing—and pinpoint ones that need work?

How can you start a constructive dialog about your program's strengths and weaknesses with other educators, administrators and advisors?

To answer these questions—and ensure a high quality of agricultural education programs across the nation—the National Council for Agricultural Education created a set of seven standards that define the characteristics of successful high school programs. The guidelines, collectively called the National Quality Program Standards, can help programs assess their present status and devise an action plan for improvement.

#### Setting the standard

The National Quality Program Standards were developed to help U.S. schools provide high-quality agricultural education to students. These standards—each spelled out in one or more “standard statements”—can help schools ensure a uniform process and guide educators in the development, management, assessment and improvement of their programs.

To realistically evaluate their Ag Ed program, teachers, administrators, community partners, advisory committees and FFA alumni can work together using a convenient online improvement tool. They then can use the results to set short- and long-term goals that capitalize on strengths and improve upon weaknesses.

#### Rolling out quality

Last spring, the National Quality Program Standards were introduced to a pilot group of staff members, teachers, administrators and advisors from several states. In July, the participants attended a weeklong conference conducted by LPS specialists. By the end of that week, each program had completed an initial assessment process and created a detailed action plan to target areas for improvement. In the coming year, these same participants will present a conference to their own state's teachers to bring other Ag Ed programs up to speed with the standards.

The next phase of the rollout comes in early 2009, when the standards program will be launched in 10 additional states.

### **Measuring up in Montana**

Chad Massar, an Ag Ed teacher at Joliet High School in Joliet, Mont., participated in the pilot group.

"I'm our state association president this year, and I wanted to be in the know," Massar explained. "I wanted to learn about (the standards) so I could help other teachers. And obviously I wanted to make my program better and try to make my career and personal life a little more efficient, too."

Massar, along with an administrator and advisory council member, gathered to assess their school's Ag Ed program last spring using the online tool.

"It gave us our scores in each of those seven areas. I selected two of my areas that were the weakest, and I'm going to be taking steps to improve those areas of our program. Specifically, mine are in marketing and program planning and evaluation," Massar said. "I'm hoping to see more community involvement or awareness. I want our community to be talking about our agriculture program rather than our basketball program."

Massar feels the assessment tool can help programs identify areas for improvement, but he notes that it shouldn't be used to "score" individual educators.

"It is not a tool for administrators to evaluate their agriculture teachers or programs," he said. "I think if it's used properly, and people use it to its potential, it will definitely help improve the quality of programs out there."

### **Reaching higher in Nevada**

Aaron Albisu, a welding and agriculture mechanics teacher at Spring Creek High School in Spring Creek, Nev., was also part of the pilot group. He says the standards and assessment helped clarify areas of his program that needed attention—and identify personal goals.

"As far as personal professional growth, I've set a goal to get CWI-certified, which is Certified Welding Instructor," he explained. "It is a pretty good-sized test. It probably means

that I will have to go to a three- to five-day training program and then study my tail off to pass those portions of the test.”

### **Tools for success**

Massar and Albisu both offered advice to help other educators use the assessment to their advantage.

“Be honest when filling it out,” Massar urged. “It is not for administrators to critique or evaluate their instructors. It is for the agriculture program to become better.”

Added Albisu, “I’d definitely suggest that they become familiar with the standards. They have to understand that they can be used as a powerful tool in that partnership with administrators. You already are teaching to the standard or the criteria, so it’s just a matter of how much more growth you want or can have.”

Massar feels it’s important to involve administrators and community in the evaluation process.

“I’m one of those people that if I want it done right, I need to do it,” he said. “But including others in this process is going to help everybody.”

Albisu urges educators to keep expectations realistic: “You’re not going to score 100 percent on all of (the standards). It’s very important that you are doing something, that you’re at least at that ‘I’m trying’ stage. But you can’t work on all of them at the same time.”

“It is going to be a tool that you can make work for you,” Massar said. “You are going to get out of it what you put into it.”

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### Using an Evaluation Tool Brings Balance, not Perfection

By Robin Niehaus

For many agriculture educators, a strong, active alumni chapter, supportive school administration, and an advocating local advisory council are only a dream. While others wonder how they can have a successful FFA chapter balanced with rewarding family time and other opportunities outside of work.

These ideals can become a reality for more and more teachers nationwide when the National Quality Program Standards (NQPS) tool is used successfully, said national FFA local program success (LPS) specialist Nina Crutchfield.

Crutchfield and the team of LPS specialists recently introduced the NQPS improvement tool to nearly 70 local teachers, administrators, state staff and teacher educators through a 3-day pilot program in St. Louis. At the conference, teachers discussed best practices and identified specific ways to improve their own programs. LPS specialists plan to follow up mid-year to support local teachers and help

#### 7 National Quality Program Standard – A Brief Look

Below are the seven guidelines set forth in the National Quality Program Standards, developed by the National Council for Agricultural Education. With each standard is a “standard statement,” or model of quantitative characteristics for the development, management and assessment of Ag Ed programs.

#### Standard 1: Program Design and Instruction

##### Curriculum and Program Design:

A standards-based curriculum in Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources Systems is delivered through an integrated model that incorporates classroom and laboratory instruction, experiential learning and student leadership and personal development.

**Instruction:** Programs promote academic achievement and skill development of all students through year-round instruction.

**Facilities and Equipment:** The facilities and equipment support implementation of the program and curriculum by providing all students opportunities for the development and application of knowledge and skills.

**Assessment:** Programs utilize multiple methods to assess student learning that illustrates

them take the improvement tool at the end of the year to evaluate their own progress.

While the NQPS improvement tool was launched initially to ten states, the online program is available nationwide to help teachers choose one or two focus areas for improvement. The NQSP assessment includes 81 indicators, based on the seven keys of Local Program Success (see standards in sidebar). Each indicator is scored on a scale of “4” for exemplary performance, to “0” for nonexistent components. Crutchfield admits that the standard is high and likes to remind teachers that it was designed to serve as an improvement tool, not the description of what every program should look like.

“You’re comparing yourself against the perfect program,” Crutchfield said. “It’s OK to not be perfect in every area.”

Some teachers may fear extra work that could accompany implementing anything new in their program. But this improvement tool is actually designed to help teachers achieve greater balance in their lives.

academic achievement and skill development.

**Standard 2: Experiential Learning**

Education is enhanced through active participation by all students in a year-round experiential learning program.

**Standard 3: Leadership Development**

All students participate in year-round intra-curricular agricultural student organization programs and activities.

**Standard 4: School and Community Partnerships**

School and community partners are engaged in developing and supporting a quality program.

**Standard 5: Marketing**

Key stakeholders are continually asked, involved, recognized and informed about all components of the integrated program.

**Standard 6: Certified Agriculture Teachers and Professional Growth**

Competent and technically certified agriculture teachers provide the core of the program.

**Standard 7: Program Planning and Evaluation**

A system of needs assessment and evaluation provides information necessary for continual program development and improvement.

“We can openly communicate about strengths and weaknesses in the program,” said Boone, Iowa, FFA advisor Doug Dodd, who attended the July pilot program in St. Louis. “Then, organize plans, share stories of success, build on ideas to improve, and help us identify areas that are a lower priority.”

So how exactly do alumni and advisory councils become more engaged? The program is designed to include local advisory councils and administration in the process. “The improvement tool may provide the first opportunity for administrators to really understand what their local agriculture program is all about,” Crutchfield said.

The St. Louis pilot program that introduced the tool received overwhelming positive feedback, and teachers are already starting to see benefits from the program.

“Even though I have only been involved with NQPS for a short time, the program has been a wake-up call for my school administration and key community supporters,” Dodd said. “We are all looking at the program comprehensively and discussing how we can improve student experiences.”

Many teachers from the 10 states who participated in the St. Louis program have already expressed interest in passing along program information to fellow teachers in their states. Additionally, LPS specialists will continue to organize programs that introduce new teachers to the improvement tool. Find more information about the National Quality Program Standards by visiting the Educators section on [ffa.org](http://ffa.org).

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### Teachers Embrace the New NQPS Standards

*By Tamara Castleman*

Teachers will tell you that classroom grades are meant to be a tangible measure of a student's progress in the program. While students may fret over a test grade, teachers know that the grade is only one of many tools used to gauge each student's areas of strength, weakness and improvement. With that knowledge, the student identifies areas that need further study. In the past, agriculture teachers have had no way to uniformly compare or grade their programs and FFA chapters to others in the nation. Now, with the 10-state rollout of FFA's National Quality Program Standards (NQPS), they do.

According to Nina Crutchfield, local program success (LPS) specialist for the National FFA Organization, "The purpose of the NQPS is to 1) provide a concrete foundation, as a profession, that illustrates what a high-quality agricultural education program looks like, 2) provide guidance to new teachers so they know the profession's expectations at the beginning of their career, and 3) provide the teachers with a tool for making standards-based improvements. NQPS is strictly for improvement purposes only."

After using the NQPS to evaluate their programs, many teachers in the rollout states have identified and are working to fix areas of weakness within their program. Three teachers agreed to speak with Making a Difference about the changes they're making in their programs.

#### **Gary Mattheis, Sweet Grass County Schools, Big Timber, Mont.**

Mattheis has been an agriculture teacher for 18 years and felt very good about his school's program. After using the NQPS to evaluate his program last year, Mattheis said, "It was an eye-opener. You think you're covering all the bases, but you find out you aren't covering them as well as you should be." The evaluation revealed that his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program needed

improvements and the overall program needed to have and use an advisory council. Crutchfield explained that one of the goals of the NQPS is to “illustrate the importance of utilizing partnerships to create a high-quality agricultural education program.”

In Sweet Grass County, Mattheis said that “SAEs are so broad in scope and can encompass so many different things. An SAE can be as simple as showing an animal at the fair to having an agriculture-related job to something entrepreneurial such as breeding animals or raising hay as a cash crop.” After choosing an SAE, the student enters into an agreement with his parents and advisor. In January, students turn their record books for the previous 12 months in to Mattheis. In the interim, Mattheis reviews the record books when he makes site visits. For the most part, Mattheis said, “The kids are pretty good at keeping records. Most of my kids are in both 4-H and FFA, so they’re used to keeping records; but some kids are a little tougher because not all my agricultural education students belong to the FFA.”

One of the reasons that Mattheis is focusing on SAEs under the NQPS is because he believes good record keeping is an important key to student success. “Record keeping helps kids keep track of how they spend their time and money. SAEs allow students who are entrepreneurial to get a basic start on tracking finances. Plus, when all students are keeping good, up-to-date records, then filling out the paperwork to earn FFA state degrees is as simple as transferring information from one form to another.”

The National Quality Program Standards are very high, something Mattheis acknowledged. “The NQPS guidelines extend into the classroom. The criteria are pretty tough to try to attach to all students in your classroom and not just FFA members. Getting the non-FFA kids to maintain and understand the importance of maintaining good records can become a nemesis, but that doesn’t mean it’s a bad thing.”

The advisory council won’t be involved in SAEs, but Mattheis is looking forward to their input. “I’m looking forward to getting insight into different approaches. I’m anxious to see the difference between what I require and their vision of what should be required.” Sweet Grass has had an advisory council in the past, but they haven’t used the group to its full potential. Mattheis hopes to have a 5-member, staggered-term council in place later this month. Plans are already underway for the FFA advisors and advisory council to develop a needs assessment tool with a focus on the program curriculum and the FFA shop. The advisory council will then review the assessment yearly, giving them a chance to correct and improve the agricultural education program.

Crutchfield said that the NQPS aren’t intended to increase teacher workload. Mattheis anticipates that in the short run

following NQPS will “mean a little more work departmentally, but in the long run, working through an advisory council will ease the teacher/advisor workload because the council will be able to look at the overall picture.”

**Patricia Adcock, Stuttgart High School, Stuttgart, Ark.**

A 15-year Ag Ed veteran, Adcock can't say enough about how the National Quality Program Standards are going to improve her program. “NQPS is going to provide consistency among chapters across the nation. We're using NQPS as an assessment tool to find out where we're strong, where we're weak and what we need to do to fix any weak areas. NQPS will help us make our program better for the kids. Before, we had no rubric or anything tangible to assess where we were. With NQPS, we can evaluate our program without prejudices.”

After completing the NQPS, Adcock and her co-teacher, Barry Rogers, identified marketing and facilities as two weak spots in their program.

“We thought we were doing really well with our marketing, but it turned out to be a weak spot,” said Adcock. “Our marketing efforts used to be mainly word-of-mouth, but now we're taking advantage of technology by creating a Web site for our chapter, maintaining a presence on Facebook, and gathering student cell phone numbers so that we can text message them updates and reminders.” The need for a media focus became clear when the chapter realized that they really need to take their message to 5th and 6th graders so that “they'll be aware of FFA and Ag Ed before they're distracted by other opportunities.”

The Stuttgart program also sees a need to market themselves to non-traditional students while keeping its traditional student base. Adcock commented, “We need more females, more minorities, more diversity. The more diversity in the program, the greater the diversity in the types of agricultural careers that students go on to after high school.”

Adcock and Rogers have used NQPS to create some unique marketing strategies:

- **Pumpkin Patch rescue:** When Adcock heard that school budget cuts were going to force elementary students to forgo their annual trip to the pumpkin patch, she immediately thought about the pumpkin patch she planted with her horticulture class. “My FFA students will be delivering pumpkins to the elementary school and will also give a presentation about the pumpkins' growth and germination cycle. The kids get their pumpkins, and we foster a relationship with students in those earlier grades.”
- **Tulip planting:** During the school's Red Ribbon week, her students visited each 4th grade classroom and talked with the students about tulips. Each student was then paired with a 4th grader and together they planted a bulb.

- **Greenhouse and special needs:** Junior high students go to the high school's greenhouse and volunteer with special needs kids.
- **Biodiesel fuel presentations:** Students submitted a proposal to the state to give presentations on the process of making biofuels, which is one of the student-run programs. The proposal was accepted and students are presenting community workshops at community colleges up to 85 miles away.

To encourage community involvement, Adcock looks to her students. "The kids know what the community needs. They know before the teachers whether something will work and how to fix it if it doesn't." The advisors are creating online surveys, and they're putting up a "feedback box" to gather opinions from the community at large.

With so many exciting initiatives, the program's facilities are lacking. Adcock admitted, "A lot of the agriculture department's newer equipment has been purchased through the FFA chapter, not through the school district. The school district, though, has promised to upgrade our facilities. NQPS had minimum equipment standards, and we are working toward meeting those." Ever the optimist, Adcock sees a teaching opportunity in having facilities in need of upgrade. "In the real world, you may not have everything you need, so you have to think outside the box about how to get it. It's a real-world lesson that makes kids better ready to handle challenges later."

All in all, Adcock feels that one of the biggest benefits of the NQPS is that it "gives us the opportunity to push responsibility back to the kids because they have to own the program, too. Initially, that will probably mean more work for me, but only because I need to break some bad habits. We advisors need to change some of the ways we think. But, the standards are going to work, and they will make our program stronger."

### **Amy Green, Florien High School, Florien, La.**

Amy Green followed in her father's footsteps when she became an agriculture teacher. After a few years in the classroom, she left Louisiana and the school setting to work in an FFA field office. When her father retired after 31 years on the job, Green and her family returned to her hometown where she has filled her father's shoes for the last three and a half years.

Green believes that NQPS will make her a better teacher. "With any field—and in agriculture teaching in particular—people can become complacent. We do the same things over and over without justification for what we're doing. NQPS provides standards which, at times, push us; it provides tools that justify success or show shortcomings."

After completing the NQPS assessment, Green decided to focus on marketing and experiential learning because "I realized I wasn't doing justice to my students' hard work by

not pushing them to apply for awards. Also, we have a great chapter that does great things, but we're not always good at sharing that with the community. These two focus areas will give us the biggest impact in the shortest amount of time."

One excellent marketing tool is FFA's Mother's Day plant sale, which was started by Green's father a number of years ago. Green explained, "Every child on our K-12 campus can come to one of our greenhouses and purchase a plant for Mother's Day. The sale is great PR in the community, and it's a great way to introduce younger children to FFA and agricultural education."

Because all students on campus are aware of FFA early on, Green's marketing efforts will be community focused. She believes that her newly-formed advisory council will be an invaluable marketing tool. "Our advisory board will have 12 members, one of whom is a newspaper reporter. The newspaper has always been very supportive of what we do, but time constraints haven't always allowed me to call them. Hopefully, having a reporter on the council will take a layer out of our marketing efforts."

Green also recognizes a need to use electronic media as a marketing tool. As the chapter works to build its website, Green sees an SAE opportunity for a student who would like to gain experience by creating, maintaining and updating the site.

Green noted that most of her students already had SAEs, but they weren't formalized. As a direct result of NQPS, SAEs and appropriate record keeping will become a mandatory part of the curriculum this school year. With three working greenhouses and a blueberry orchard on campus, thriving poultry and forestry operations in the community, and a state park nearby, getting SAEs in place for students is fairly easy. Record keeping was proving problematic, though, because not all students have computers at home. Green solved the problem by giving students class time every Friday to electronically update their records in the agriculture department's computer lab. Students turn their record books in to her for review every six weeks.

Louisiana's agriculture teachers are on 12-month contracts, so Green can easily visit and monitor each student's SAE to check on their growth and scope per the NQPS quality indicators. "One benefit of a small town is that you know most everybody, so I can talk frankly with their employers and encourage expansion of student responsibilities."

All in all, Green felt that the standards are going to be very positive. The challenge, which many teachers understand, is getting out of the way. "NQPS will initially increase my workload, but implemented properly, it could reduce the amount on my plate." Then with a laugh she added, "It's the letting go that's hard."

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Agriscience Prepares and Engages Students

### Agriscience prepares and engages students

By Beth DeHoff

While some folks may think people who wear lab coats have little in common with those who wear field coats, most agriculture educators know better. Science—from aquaculture to botany—is an important part of agriculture. Yet, to many agriculture educators, teaching science can seem a bit intimidating.

Agriscience needn't be difficult to teach, as it involves subjects that engage students and prepare them for the future. Melissa (Goers) Braun is an agriculture educator through and through. However, a survey of her students at Gillett Secondary School in Gillett, Wis., revealed that their interests didn't match the agriculture curriculum. They didn't feel it was adequately preparing them for college or the workforce.

#### Your Student could be the Next FFA Agriscience Student of the Year!

By Beth DeHoff

Help your students who are interested in agriscience take it to the next level and achieve success by entering the National FFA Agriscience Student of the Year Award program. Along with the Agriscience Teacher of the Year award, FFA honors a student who shows the most promise and drive in agriscience-related studies. The deadline for both awards is July 15, so you and your students can use the school year to build your skills and prepare to apply.

"These awards offer fantastic opportunities for growth and development on both the student and teacher level," says Tyler Easton, program coordinator for FFA chapter and individual awards. "The students can not only further their studies started with their SAE's or agriscience fair projects, but they can put a substantial amount of scholarship funds toward their college expenses if they are named a winner." The 2007 Agriscience Student of the Year was Emily Arkfeld of Dunbar, Neb.

The award winner is announced at the national FFA convention, but students can receive multiple grants and scholarships along the way as winners and runners-up for each state. Students recognized in the program receive anywhere from \$500 to more than \$5,000 for the national winner. For

the teaching award, four finalists receive \$500 each as well as \$1,500 grants for their schools' FFA chapter. The national winner receives an additional \$1,500 and a plaque.

What creates an award winner?

"The main thing we're looking for in both the student and teacher programs is how they integrate agriscience into their research or curriculum," Easton explains. "An outstanding FFA chapter does not necessarily mean the students are actively engaged in agriscience studies."

"Agriscience is truly the future of agriculture. Better, more efficient, and safer ways to produce agricultural products are absolutely imperative to the industry's survival," Easton says. "Companies such as Monsanto (Agriscience Student of the Year sponsor) continually lead the way in research, design and development of new technologies, and they need to find the scientists of tomorrow in the FFA programs of today."

For more information on FFA's Agriscience Student and Agriscience Teacher recognition programs sponsored by Monsanto and Potash Corp., respectively, as well as the national agriscience fair, go to [ffa.org](http://ffa.org).



"When I came five years ago, the curriculum was primarily production-focused. It included the traditional agriculture curriculum and some agricultural mechanics," says Braun, who conducted the student survey in the fall of 2004.

"The response was overwhelming. Before long, three new science-driven courses were approved in the agriscience curriculum," she says. These courses included veterinary science, equine science and aquaculture. "Our emphasis has definitely shifted from production to agriscience principles," says Braun, whose initiative and diligence

helped her to win the 2007 National FFA Agriscience Teacher of the Year award, sponsored by Potash Corp.

The well-earned title didn't come easy. In addition to her normal workload, Braun works closely with the science department in developing her agriscience courses. "Working with the science department on these topics is extremely beneficial for our students," she says. "To see the students in my classroom bridge these concepts is amazing! Science concepts may be confusing to a student until they put it into more life-applicable scenarios in my department, and then it just 'clicks' for them."

Students focus on exploratory agriculture, small and large animal science, crop and soil science, food science, horticulture, greenhouse management, landscape design, veterinary science, aquaculture, and several other subjects in Braun's classes, many of which are taught on a rotating schedule. Braun takes these topics and engages students through hands-on labs, activities, field trips and real-world experiences. Students in her classes can expect to dissect a cow reproductive system, grow and market almost 5,000 plants from the school's own greenhouse, determine heart rates of several live animals, and hatch chicks, among many other experiences.

In addition to enhancing the classroom, agriscience has grown the school's entire FFA program. "Over the last four years, the program has doubled in size with more than 105 FFA members on our chapter roster," Braun notes. "We also have more students participating at the state level, including judging teams, degrees and proficiency applications."



Those 105 or so FFA members are particularly impressive, says Gillett Principal Sam Santacroce, when you consider that his school has an enrollment of only 250 students. "Melissa has revamped our agricultural

department and based our courses on what students want. Today, the program is growing continuously," Santacroce says. "She's done an excellent job promoting agriscience and FFA, and it's really been a benefit to the school and our community."

When students graduate from Gillett's program, they leave prepared to excel in college studies in agriculture, agriscience, and agricultural business and technology fields. They also are well-prepared to contribute to and take over their family farms or enter the workforce.

Amanda Tolzman-Lisowe is a senior in Braun's program and aims to follow in her footsteps as an agriculture educator. "We have done some really cool stuff—learning about artificially inseminating a cow, learning about aquaculture," Amanda says. "I grew up on a dairy farm, so I already knew agriculture wasn't just milking cows and growing corn. But this program gives me a lot of ideas of what I can bring into my classroom when I'm a teacher."

Curtis Horsens also was raised on a dairy farm. A 2008 graduate of Gillett Secondary School, Horsens is headed to University of Wisconsin this fall to study dairy farming and intends to one day take over the family farm. "Mrs. Braun's classes are really hands on, with a lot of labs and workshops," he says. "I learned a lot. The information she taught and the way she taught it were really helpful in preparing me for college and my future."

At the tiny Gillett Secondary School in Wisconsin, Melissa Braun has engaged nearly half the student body in FFA through agriscience. In the process, she is opening worlds of opportunity for students in today's increasingly technical agricultural world. Clearly, agriscience is rich with opportunities—for students and their teachers.

### **Melissa Braun's Tips for Enhancing your Agriscience Program**

- Go outside! Have students use sidewalk chalk to create large scale anatomy models and label (digestive system, external animal, flower, etc).
- In my aquaculture class, we create giant "fish hooks" out of metal coat hangers and use a length of rope so they can practice tying knots. Then we move on to being more nimble with our fingers when we get to the real thing.
- Get involved with the community! Work with the community using student projects. We've pruned the fire department's shrubs at the station, and we're just starting to design and install a major landscape project at the new historical society house in town.
- Repetition! In my vet science class, we study the different systems the students will need to identify the parts of a brain. They have a handout that we label together, they then make another to color code the parts and laminate it to put on their lab tables, and those match a color coded huge brain on the floor. They can easily reference it during dissections, lab, class, etc.
- Job shadowing is awesome! As part of a semester project in vet science, each student must set up a time to spend a half-day with an area veterinarian. They then have to write a reflection paper on it, and it's amazing what comes out of that paper. Every student loves the experience. They are excused from school for those hours and learn a tremendous amount from the real world field of medicine.
- Interact with the entire district's students. My small animal science students create puppet shows about the general care of having reptiles and amphibians as pets. They present these to the first graders in our elementary school. They have to research their animals, create the puppets, and write a

script that first graders will understand. It's a great evaluative tool that's a lot more fun than taking a written test!

- In dairy science, each student will create a fridge magnet using fun foam modeling the ruminant stomach. They must be proportional in size and labeled along with the path of food traveling through the stomach. We display them on the classroom fridge to review for the unit.
- Utilize your community businesses! We take quite a few field trips, and they are all local. Different dairy farms, a llama farm, greenhouses, fish hatchery, lakes/streams for water testing labs, etc.
- I use a lot of manipulatives to teach and reinforce topics. I order a lot of these out of science catalogs, but some can be made yourself, like a large Punnett Square with movable pieces so students can solve the problems. Parts of a plant window clings that allow them to label and understand functions of each. Anything hands-on!!!

## **Lesson Plans**

[Soil and Water Percolation Lab](#)

[Vermicomposting Lab](#)

[Water Filtration Lab](#)

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# ***Soil and Water Percolation Lab***

*(20 points)*

## **Required Materials:**

- 5 test tubes
- test tube rack
- masking tape
- skewer stick
- sandy soil
- loam soil
- clay soil
- graduated cylinder
- stop watch
- ruler (in millimeters)

## **Directions:**

1. Create five soil profiles. Label the test tubes 1 through 5. Make sure tubes are secure in the rack. Use the containers and skewer sticks provided to fill the five tubes.
2. Tube #1 ~ carefully fill the tube with sand up to the 4-inch line and tamp gently to pack it. Continue to add sand and tamp until the soil line is 3 inches from the top of the tube.
3. Tube #2 ~ Follow the same procedure using the loam soil.
4. Tube #3 ~ Follow the same procedure using the clay soil.
5. Tube #4 ~ Fill and tamp loam soil to a depth of 6 inches. Now add sand and tamp firm until you have a 2- inch layer of packed sand. Add loam soil on top of the sand and tamp gently until the soil line is 3 inches from the top of the tube.
6. Tube #5 ~ Fill and tamp loam soil to a depth of about 11 inches. Add clay soil to the top and tamp firmly until you have a 2-inch layer, or until the soil line is 3 inches from the top of the tube.
7. Simulate the water percolation process: Make sure you have a graduated cylinder, a stop watch, and a ruler that is graduated in millimeters.
8. Add 45mL of water to tube #1. Use the stop watch to time how long it took for all the water to percolate into the soil. Record the time on the data sheet.
9. Use the ruler to measure the depth of percolation at 30-second intervals until all the water has penetrated the soil or for 5 minutes (whichever is longer). Record your measurements in millimeters on the data sheet.
10. Wait 30 minutes after all the water has penetrated and take one more measurement with the ruler to see if the water continued to percolate into the soil. Record your measurement on the data sheet.
11. Repeat the process on tubes #2, #3, #4, and #5. Record your data on the sheet provided.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Soil and Water Lab Data Sheet**

Rate of Percolation (sec)	Profile #1	Profile #2	Profile #3	Profile #4	Profile #5
30 seconds					
60 seconds (1 minute)					
90 seconds					
120 seconds (2 minutes)					
150 seconds					
180 seconds (3 minutes)					
210 seconds					
240 seconds (4 minutes)					
270 seconds					
300 seconds (5 minutes)					
30 minutes					

1. Was the **rate** of percolation the same for all five profiles? Why or why not?
2. Was the **depth** of percolation the same for all five profiles? Why or why not?
3. What effect did the limiting layers have on the rate and depth of percolation?

# Vermicomposting Lab

## Materials:

- 2 clear plastic containers (one smaller than the other)
- piece of nylon stocking
- rubber band
- soil
- red worms
- organic matter

## Procedure:

1. Take the two clear plastic containers and place the smaller one inside the larger one, leaving a narrow space between the two containers.
2. Fill the narrow space with fresh soil (do NOT use potting soil). Make sure the soil is moist, but not drenched.
3. Place six red worms inside the narrow space. Add organic matter to the top of the soil.
4. Place the piece of nylon stocking over the top of the container and secure with a rubber band.
5. Watch how the worms move, tunnel, and aerate the soil. This is what they do to the soil in your garden and lawn, enabling plant roots to grow.



## Prediction:

How many worms do you think you think you will have by the end of the semester?

## Observations:

1. What do you notice about the "worm condo" today, the day that you designed it? Note the color of the soil, volume, etc.
2. Choose one day after about a month to observe your "worm condo." Describe what you notice in your jar in regards to your worms.

Date of observation:

What do you notice?

3. In another month, observe your "worm condo" again. What differences do you see since you looked at it last month? What changes have taken place? How has it changed since you started it two months ago?
4. At the conclusion of the third month, disassemble your worm condo. How many worms do you have now?
5. Is this an increase or decrease in your original worm population? Of how many?

## ***Water Filtration Lab***

*(15 points)*

### **Hypothesis:**

What color will come out the bottom with the sand?

What color will come out the bottom with the topsoil?

### **Required Materials:**

- Styrofoam cups (small and large)
- toothpick
- sand
- topsoil
- grape Kool-Aid®
- food coloring
- water

### **Directions:**

1. Poke 3-5 holes in the bottom of the larger cup using a toothpick.
2. Fill the larger cup half full of sand.
3. Put the larger cup inside the smaller cup. Put a toothpick between the cups so that the air can escape from the bottom cup.
4. Pour some of the grape Kool-aid into the top cup.
5. Observe: What color is the Kool-aid that goes into the cup? What color is the water that collects in the bottom cup?
6. Put a 2-inch layer of sand in the bottom of a new, larger cup that has holes in it.
7. Add topsoil until the cup is half full.
8. Put the larger cup inside the smaller cup. Put a toothpick between the cups so that the air can escape from the bottom cup.
9. Pour some of the grape Kool-aid into the top cup.
10. Observe: What color is the Kool-aid that goes into the cup? What color is the water that collects in the bottom cup?
11. Answer the questions below.
12. If time allows, create your own experiment using other food coloring in water and redoing the steps above. Explain what color you chose, why you chose that color, and your results.

**Questions:**

1. Is the water in the bottom cup the same color for both the sand and topsoil?
2. Explain the reasons why you answered yes or no to the question above.
3. Soil naturally filters water that falls as rain and goes into rivers. Why is this important to us as humans?
4. What did the grape Kool-aid represent in the lab?
5. How can the information gained and observed in this lab be applied to real life? What places or situations would you see this technique used?



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**FEEDBACK**

## Perspectives

### What are the National Quality Program Standards?

*By Kevin Keith, Local Program Success Specialist*

After several years of debate, we have finally developed National Quality Program Standards for agricultural education. We have taken the quantum leap by writing these critical standards, despite state and regional differences that were considered major obstacles in the past. The standards have been reviewed and approved by each member organization of National Team Ag Ed and now are now being piloted in 10 states across the nation: Connecticut, New Jersey, Iowa, Minnesota, Louisiana, Arkansas, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada and Colorado.

Five schools in each state have volunteered to participate over the next year, each having completed the improvement tool and scoring themselves using the rubrics designed within the standards. Each school then selected one or two areas of the standards to emphasize for improvement over the next year and will spend this year concentrating on making improvement in these identified areas. At the conclusion of the school year, the instructors will re-score themselves to discern the amount of program improvement that occurred over the course of the school year. This data will be used to suggest revisions in the standards, as well as to guide future implementation of the National Quality Program Standards across the nation.

One might pause to ask why we have developed national quality standards at this time and why they are needed. The truth is that many states have not maintained state quality program standards, due simply to a lack of sufficient state staff to maintain, update and assure implementation. The National Quality Program Standards have been developed by reviewing existing state standards and infusing current agricultural education and general education policy and laws. In the absence of any document to refer to, instructors were forced to make many decisions concerning program quality without the benefit of any guidance. For example, the National Quality Program Standards address experiential learning programs and outline indicators that will help instructors understand their role in supervising SAEs and involving partners in SAEs. The NQPS also address instruction, leadership development, program planning, marketing, partnership development and professional



development – many of which have previously not been reviewed.

I encourage you to access the National Quality Program Standards, review them, and use them as a support tool to strengthen your programs in cooperation with your local advisory committees and administrations.

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# Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators

Summer 2008

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## LifeKnowledge Spotlight

### LifeKnowledge helps Achieve a Quality Work/life Balance



By Lance Jagers, Eads High School – Eads, Colorado

*Lance Jagers is a champion for a positive work/life balance. The first monthly LK Spotlight feature finds Jagers, in his ninth year of teaching, explaining the importance of balance between work and life and sharing some insight on using LK to help achieve this balance.*

**Experience.** Over the years, I will admit, like most of us, I have had a problem saying no. But we as agriculture teachers choose to be that way; we are more involved in our students' lives than most teachers which, in itself, demands more time.

It really hit me after my wife and I had our second child. I need to be at home for her and for our kids. I don't want to miss all the little steps our kids take along the way. Over the last year, I have really been making an effort to keep that balance. I focus on utilizing time management, people in the community and resources.

One resource that is helping me better manage time spent preparing for class is LifeKnowledge. After being exposed four to five years ago at a summer conference in Colorado, I attended a professional development conference where I really had the opportunity to see the new bits and pieces and work hands-on with the tool.

I use LK more for upper-classmen and officers, integrating precepts and assigning them the Precept Indicator. I probably integrate a precept into my lessons on a weekly basis in my freshmen and sophomore classes and more like twice a week for the upper-level students.

The indicator assessment outlines their strengths and areas for improvement. It is a way they can truly take their skills and run with it. It is a confidence builder, encouraging the students to capitalize on their strong points and take more ownership in classroom and FFA functions while improving themselves.

This year I am teaching a leadership communications class. I am going to use LK almost exclusively in that class setting.

Using the information from the assessment tool, I can quickly and logically decide which lessons I should be teaching. With this method I have the opportunity to tailor lessons to the students' needs.

Having the lessons ready is going to lighten the work load, no doubt. They are right there, ready to use. Even though I don't usually use full LK lessons in my regular classes, I find incorporating parts or ideas into lessons at all levels is handy and saves time.

**Goals.** Another strategy in maintaining work/life balance is to use the resources I have in my community. The key is finding people who want to help. Using people to organize, sponsor and lead activities is awesome. If I can find willing and motivated volunteers, I do not have to focus all of my energy on planning the entire event and managing duties like making sure kids stay in line.

Chartering an alumni chapter is one activity the chapter officers are focusing on this year. It has taken some time to get the support built up, but it is well into the organizing and planning stages now. It all started by a community member asking me if that is something I'd like to have. After the program standards workshop in St. Louis this past summer; and listening to those chapters who do have an alumni chapter and hearing the significant contributions they make to the chapter, my officers and I decided to pursue it as a major project for this year.

My hope is that the alumni chapter can: 1. Support the organization, giving alumni members the opportunity to choose the activities they will sponsor. It is important to me that they are involved in the decision making process so they can feel a sense of ownership and success. 2. Organize themselves and build camaraderie. Our chapter already uses alumni as volunteers in many events, but if they can organize themselves, that should take away some strain on me.

**Advice.** Like all agriculture teachers, I want my students to look at me as a hard worker. I think this is why we tend to overload ourselves. We feel like we need to work extra hard to be a good example. What I have come to find is that working hard and doing a quality job includes showing the students where my priorities lie.

Especially in the last year, I hope I have shown them by example that, no matter what, I have to take care of my family first. Sometimes we can't have a practice or event on a certain night because of a family event. Teaching them to set those priorities in life is part of my job. Hopefully through actions, I show my students that being a good dad is just as important as being successful in your profession.

As we work to balance work and life, having a mentor is a must in our profession. It doesn't have to be the best teacher in the state—just someone who knows what is

going on and is always available to answer questions. With something as simple or complicated as filling out applications, mentors can help in all situations. Having my father and brother in the profession has been a big help. We advise each other even when advice is not wanted; but we are all better teachers and FFA advisors because of it.

Finally, work/life balance can be aided by using resources, especially the ones provided through ffa.org. I think the educator tab should be every agriculture teacher's homepage! From there I can reach LifeKnowledge and many other resources provided by national FFA. My advice is to admit that you cannot do everything, and learn to accept help from resources, mentors and your community. That is the key to achieving balance.

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## Question for the Profession

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### Are You an Ostrich, a Worker Bee or a Beaver?

By Nina Crutchfield, National FFA LPS Specialist

It's not really that outlandish of a question when you think about the characteristics of these three critters. The ostrich, not a gregarious creature by nature, walks along picking at insects, vegetation, pretty much whatever it can find. When challenged, it typically runs the other way, unless you back it in a corner and then it comes out fighting. The worker bee, named appropriately because its only purpose in life is to keep the queen happy and healthy while producing the mechanisms that feed the colony, is a mindless little thing, working day in and day out, doing the same thing, whether it's right or wrong. She gets riled when you disturb her work habits and is even known to attack without provocation. And the beaver, a pretty unassuming animal, toils away whether supervised or left to his own devices. A great problem solver, the beaver is always adapting when his work is altered by man or another animal, building a bigger and better dam each time. His work ethic is so good that it often takes dynamite to stop him.

So, which one are you? An ostrich, a worker bee or a beaver? I dare say that we all want to be likened to the beaver for his tenacity, skill and prowess. But when it comes to program improvement, I'd say most of us are more like the worker bee. We definitely don't shy away from work or run when the going gets tough, but we do not like to have our weaknesses pointed out or shared with others.

If we decide to use the National Quality Program Standards as a program improvement tool, that's exactly what we'll have to do. We'll have to point out our weaknesses and share them with others. Now, the ostrich will run away from this, hissing at those who suggest it be done and will attack anyone who dares to question his expertise as an educator. The worker bee will simply keep plugging away, just like every other day, hoping to make everyone happy rather than questioning her own abilities. On the other hand, the beaver will recuperate from the initial sting of identifying their weaknesses by working to solve the problems.

This month's Making a Difference articles focus on implementing the National Quality Program Standards as an improvement tool for the overall program. You'll read firsthand accounts of teachers who attended the pilot program in July describing how they are implementing changes to build a bigger and better agricultural education program. They even discuss how the standards will help them achieve better home/work life balance.

So, as you consider working through the NQPS improvement tool, my question for the profession this month is, "Are you an ostrich, a worker bee, or a beaver?"

<http://naae.ca.uky.edu:8080/clearspacex/thread/1334>

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## Teacher Resources

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### Agriculture Career Multimedia Packages

You have asked for more agriculture-friendly career lessons, PowerPoints, videos and enrichment activities. CEV has heard your requests and now has a multitude of multimedia lessons targeting the career cluster pathways. Explore the materials they offer at <http://www.cevmultimedia.com/index.php>. You'll find full multimedia packages that address agricultural science, animal science, judging, food science, horticulture, landscape design, agricultural mechanics, agricultural metal fabrication, agricultural power and personal skill development.

### Inside USA-Today Booklet

Give current events a new twist in your agriculture class. For \$10 you can get the Inside USA-Today booklet that has daily graphic organizers that correspond with any issue of the newspaper. Select issues that discuss agricultural topics and turn your students on to current topics in the industry of agriculture as well as reading the newspaper. You can even alter the graphic organizers to address specific skill sets you are targeting in your lesson, such as reading for content and meaning, vocabulary or problem solving. Order the booklet at [http://usatodayeducate.com/wordpress/?page\\_id=57](http://usatodayeducate.com/wordpress/?page_id=57)

### Writing Across the Curriculum

If your school is focused on improving writing skills for all students, the Writing Site is a must at <http://www.thewritingsite.org/resources/curriculum/default.asp>. Discover quick implementation strategies, best practices and tips for using technology to improve student writing.

### Making Chocolate Virtual Tour

See why Hershey is synonymous with the word chocolate and so much more! View this self-guided video tour of the chocolate making process. Incorporate it into a food science, processing or "Farm to Plate?" lesson. <http://www.hersheys.com/discover/chocolate.asp>. Keep in mind this is a high-tech marketing video by the Hershey Company. It can be used in an agricultural marketing or communications lesson as well.

## **Mythbusters & Dirty Jobs on iTunes**

Your students will love Jamie and Adam's antics as they employ scientific methods to prove or disprove a variety of myths, and Mike Rowe as he performs some of the dirtiest jobs in the world. You can use the podcasts to illustrate physics, geometry, mechanics, good old fashioned problem solving skills, and illustrate the boots-on-the-ground aspects of a variety of careers that your students might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience for themselves. Download iTunes at <http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcasts.html>. (This is also a great place to learn how to create your own podcasts for your classroom!) Once you've got iTunes installed, go to the iTunes store and type either "Mythbusters" or "Dirty Jobs" in the search window. The best part is that they're free!!!

## **Cow Eye Dissection**

This step-by-step laboratory experience is perfect for an animal science or biotechnology course. You and your students will love the high quality photos of the process and find it easy to follow. You can also watch a video of a dissection.

[http://www.exploratorium.edu/learning\\_studio/cow\\_eye/index.html](http://www.exploratorium.edu/learning_studio/cow_eye/index.html)

## **Sustainable Agriculture**

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education division of Cooperative Extension is interested in working with secondary agriculture educators to find ways to educate students about the opportunities for careers in production agriculture and the niche of organic farming. You can find valuable resources related to these areas at the SARE information service [www.attra.org](http://www.attra.org). Find a primer on local food systems at

<http://foodsys.cce.cornell.edu/primer.html>. Locate lesson materials, grant opportunities, videos highlighting innovations in agriculture, PowerPoint lessons and much more at <http://www.sare.org/about/>.

## **Small Engine Training Materials**

Are you trying to institute a small engine repair course and don't know where to start? Are you looking for teardown and reassembly scripts for your classroom, along with videos and easy-to-follow PowerPoint presentations? Training materials like these and many other supporting educational tools can now be downloaded free of charge from the industry's leading manufacturer of small engines. Briggs and Stratton® has created "The Power Portal" website specifically designed to assist vocational education instructors in the development of quality programs in engine technology.

For educational materials, visit [www.thepowerportal.com](http://www.thepowerportal.com) and use the following log-in information: User ID:

voed\_schools, Password: briggs. Then select the "Training Resources" tab for teardown scripts, training videos, presentations, instructor support materials and more!

Stay tuned, as this November Briggs & Stratton will be expanding its industry-leading training program with the launch of "The Power Channel," an innovative global Web-based training site. Stop by their booth at the FFA National Career Show in Indianapolis (booth 109-111) for a demonstration, and sign up for a 7-day free trial.

### **Agri-Entrepreneurship Award Program**

The National FFA Organization, with the sponsorship of the USDA Rural Development Agency, recently created a set of 14 lesson plans for entrepreneurship education. These lesson plans are now available free of charge to educators. The purpose of this resource is to encourage the teaching of entrepreneurship in agricultural education programs and to support increased participation in the National FFA Agri-Entrepreneurship Award Program. This program provides a cash award for a local entrepreneur from each FFA chapter in the nation. The program also provides students interested in entrepreneurship the opportunity for additional state and national awards.

Learn more about the Agri-Entrepreneurship Awards program and access the free lesson plans at [http://www.ffa.org/index.cfm?method=c\\_programs.AgEntrepreneurship](http://www.ffa.org/index.cfm?method=c_programs.AgEntrepreneurship).

### **National Animal Identification System (NAIS) Outreach Kit**

NAIS Outreach Kits are now available! This is an excellent resource for providing students with information on the ins and outs of the National Animal Identification System Premises Registration process. Discover ways to incorporate NAIS into the classroom, SAE programs, career development event preparation and community service projects. By utilizing the materials in the kit and completing the Chapter Enhancement Application, your chapter will be eligible to earn a trip to Washington, D.C., in the spring of 2009. Request your chapter's kit today by visiting <http://www.ffaunlimited.org/naiskit.html>. You can find additional information and resources about NAIS at [www.ffa.org/nais](http://www.ffa.org/nais) and [www.AgEdLearning.org](http://www.AgEdLearning.org). If you have questions concerning the NAIS Outreach Kits, please contact Karen Fredenburg at [kfredenburg@ffa.org](mailto:kfredenburg@ffa.org) or 317-802-4465.

### **"Focusing on Agricultural Issues" Course Available Online for Free at the Team Ag Ed Learning Center (TAELC)**

"Focusing on Agricultural Issues" was developed for agricultural education teachers and others wishing to

increase awareness of agricultural issues among students and the "non-agriculture" public. The materials are targeted for high school students but can also be used for junior high or adult education programs. Examples of issue identification, investigation and analysis are provided for eight major agricultural issue areas.

The course is available free of charge at [www.AgEdLearning.org](http://www.AgEdLearning.org). Click on "Classroom Tools," log in and enter the "Course Catalog."

But wait, what is TAE LC?

TAE LC is a great online, one-stop-shop designed specifically for agriculture educators. AgEdLearning.org features free and affordable e-learning, teaching resources, lesson plans, student assessments and much more. Lesson plans include PDF versions for easy printing, as well as online versions that offer search capabilities and electronic note-taking on individual pages. LifeKnowledge Online is now offered through the TAE LC and allows teachers to assign assessments to student lists, easily imported from the FFA membership database.

Log onto [www.AgEdLearning.org](http://www.AgEdLearning.org) to register for FREE and take a look around!

### **Ford Motor Company Fund's Driving Skills for Life Program**

Vehicle crashes are the No. 1 one killer of teenagers in America, claiming more than 7,000 lives each year. Crash rates are highest during a teen's first few months on the road. In fact, a 16-year-old driver is 10 times more likely to be involved in a crash than an adult. That's why every student in your school should see the Driving Skills for Life video, which illustrates driving skills important for safety.

Driving Skills for Life is a national safety initiative aimed at teenagers who have earned or are about to earn a driver's license. The program was developed by a panel of safety experts brought together by Ford Motor Company and the

Governors Highway Safety Association to teach students the skills necessary for safe driving beyond what they learn in standard driver's education programs. While buckling up and driving sober are fundamental rules that drivers need to follow, this program goes a step further and focuses on four key driving skills: Hazard Recognition, Vehicle Handling, Space Management and Speed Management. The result is a unique program that teaches teens these skills, which could prevent more than 60% of teen vehicle crashes.

The complete Driving Skills for Life program includes:

- A video that demonstrates the four key driving skills.

- A leader's guide that provides step-by-step directions for presenting the video and reinforcing its lessons through group discussion.
- A preview activity designed to introduce the video by alerting teen drivers to the increased risks they face and the skills they must develop to drive safely.
- An online quiz at the Driving Skills for Life website, [www.drivingskillsforlife.com](http://www.drivingskillsforlife.com), which tests students' understanding of the video.
- Brochures that summarize the program's key messages.
- A take-home letter that encourages parents to support the program by providing their teens with additional training from a professional instructor and by regularly accompanying their teens during their first year on the road.

The Driving Skills for Life video can be presented in a special assembly or used in health, life skills and consumer science classes. We believe you and your students will find that Driving Skills for Life can make a real difference by giving teens the know-how they need to be safer on the road. Please visit the website at [www.drivingskillsforlife.com](http://www.drivingskillsforlife.com).

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September 2008

**Print this Article**

### Local Program Resource Guide

The LPR Guide is now online! Handbooks, applications and more to help you manage your program.  
[www.ffa.org/lpr](http://www.ffa.org/lpr)

**STIHL**

The LPR Guide is sponsored by STIHL as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.



Join the Making a Difference mailing list and get Making a Difference delivered straight to your email inbox:

email address

**FEEDBACK**

## FFA Buzz

### New Horizons for Teachers

Be on the lookout for your free subscription to FFA New Horizons, compliments of the National FFA Organization. Beginning with the October 2008 issue, which hits mailboxes Sept. 19, one copy of every issue will be delivered to each chapter. The magazine is a great classroom resource for exploring agricultural education—from aquatic biology and planning for college to veterinary medicine and, of course, all things FFA. In the October issue, we catch up with national truck-pulling champion and Springfield, Tenn., FFA member Will Teasley for an exciting, up-close look at tractor-pulling. Also in the issue, discover 10 reasons why you can't miss the 81st National FFA Convention, and explore careers in food science. And coming soon: FFA New Horizons teaching guides will be available online at [www.ffa.newhorizons.org](http://www.ffa.newhorizons.org). These guides will offer plenty of ideas on how you can use each issue of the magazine with your students. If you have questions or even want to shoot us a story idea, contact Julie Woodard at [jwoodard@ffa.org](mailto:jwoodard@ffa.org) or 317-802-4310.

### Be a Scholarship Superhero to an FFA Member

2008 National FFA Alumni Benefit Auctions – Joining forces to raise funds for student scholarships!

#### ONLINE TIMED BENEFIT AUCTION

Open October 15-29, 2008—online for the entire World Wide Web to bid!

#### SILENT BENEFIT AUCTION

October 22-24, 2008—National FFA Convention, ICC, 500 Ballroom

#### LIVE BENEFIT AUCTION

6 p.m. October 24, 2008—National FFA Convention, ICC, 500 Ballroom

Simultaneously broadcast online for bidders at home!

Visit [www.unitedcountry.com/ffauction](http://www.unitedcountry.com/ffauction) to view the online and live benefit auction catalogs, register and bid from home! For additional auction information, contact Amber Smyer at [asmeyer@ffa.org](mailto:asmeyer@ffa.org) or 317-802-4294.

*Know anyone in need of a new tractor or a truck?*

New Holland and Ford Trucks commemorate 60 years of FFA support by donating to the FFA Alumni Benefit Auction! The auction will feature “BIG” donations by these long-time FFA supporters. Help us find buyers who might be interested in purchasing the following items while supporting FFA and raising funds for student scholarships:

From New Holland...

- *One-of-a-kind T6050 Elite Tractor with Custom Graphics.* The hood of the tractor will feature a dynamic, customized graphic that represents the traditional blue jacket and emblem of FFA. Available for pickup at your nearest New Holland dealership. Approximate retail value: \$97,550.
- *Tractor/Baler Lease Package.* 300 hours' use of a NEW Model T6050 tractor AND the winning bidder's choice of one season's use (up to 3,000 bales) of either a NEW model B7060 round baler equipped with CropCutter or a NEW model B7090 round baler equipped with BaleSlice crop cutting option. Available for pickup at your nearest New Holland dealership. Approximate retail value: \$12,000.
- *One-of-a-kind Celebrity-Autographed New Holland Sub-Compact Tractor.* Celebrities participating in the New Holland/Michael Peterson Celebrity Tractor Race at the CMA Music Festival Fan Fair each autographed T1010 Boomer Sub-compact tractors for charity. New Holland is proud to donate one of these to the FFA Alumni Live Benefit Auction!!

From Ford Trucks...

- *2009 Ford F-150 SuperCrew XLT.* Available this fall for pickup at your local Ford dealership with interior and exterior color options. Approximate retail value: \$32,000.

Visit [www.unitedcountry.com/ffauction](http://www.unitedcountry.com/ffauction) to learn more about these amazing items up for bid, and join us at 6 p.m. (EDT) on Friday, Oct. 24, either at convention or online to bid!!

For additional auction information, contact Amber Smyer at [asmeyer@ffa.org](mailto:asmeyer@ffa.org) or 317-802-4294.

### **Lund FFA Boat Design Challenge**

FFA members can win \$2,000 for their chapter with a winning graphic design treatment for the new Lund 1825 Rebel XL Vazer Edition multi-use boat. Lund Boats is looking for design talent, but not just any talent – FFA talent! Lund knows that FFA members are bright, savvy kids who love the outdoors and can express that love through a design for Lund Boats. Submitted designs will go into a competition gallery and the public will vote for their favorite boat designs. The challenge started Sept. 1, 2008, and all designs must be submitted by 12 p.m. (EST) on Sat., Nov. 15, 2008. For complete details and boat templates, go to [www.ffaboat.com](http://www.ffaboat.com).

## **Calling All FFA Chefs – Voyageur Press Needs Your Recipes!**

Voyageur Press, an FFA licensee, will publish a national FFA cookbook for release in fall 2009, and they need FFA recipes from current members, former members, past national officers, past state officers, alumni and supporters of FFA.

This cookbook will include approximately 500 recipes, plus information about the National FFA Organization and FFA chapters, programs and members—all highlighted with some great photos of FFA members and activities.

The publisher is asking for your help in gathering recipes in the following categories: Appetizers; Salads; Soups & Sandwiches; Meats, Main Dishes & Casseroles; Vegetables & Side Dishes; Breads; Cookies & Bars; and Cakes, Desserts & Pies.

Don't be shy! Send Voyageur as many recipes as you would like! All they ask is that you submit your recipes using the following format:

- Name of recipe and category
- Ingredients (quantity/measurement)
- Procedures (all those little tricks to turn out the best recipe, such as precise oven temperature; stir, do not beat; refrigerate for 10 minutes; etc.)

Then, they need to know who and where you are. Along with your recipe submissions, please include the following information: how you are affiliated with FFA, name of the chapter, chapter advisor's name, chapter address including city and state, and e-mail address.

E-mail your recipe submissions to:  
[amyg@mbipublishing.com](mailto:amyg@mbipublishing.com)

Or, send your recipes via U.S. Postal Service to:

Amy Glaser  
Voyageur Press  
400 First Avenue North, Suite 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Recipes must be received by Sat., Nov. 1, 2008. For complete details, visit  
[http://www.voyageurpress.com/Store/CustomPage\\_9643.ncm](http://www.voyageurpress.com/Store/CustomPage_9643.ncm).

## **We Want to Hear From You!**

Do you have a student with a unique or highly-successful SAE you want to brag on? What about your agriculture program or FFA chapter? What makes it unique and innovative that others could learn from? We want to help you share your story and highlight your students' (and your!)



achievements! You, your student or your chapter could appear in one of the national FFA's publications. That's right! Rise to stardom by being featured in New Horizons, our nationally-televised show FFA Today, or Making a Difference. Contact Amber Striegel at [astriegel@ffa.org](mailto:astriegel@ffa.org) to share your story.

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