



Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators

December 2008

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FEEDBACK

Feature Stories

Every student. Every classroom. Every day | Leadership skills:
Essentials for student success
Achieving the standard: Moving toward 100 percent FFA involvement
Serving Authentic Leadership at National Convention

FFA and leadership for all – Making the dream a reality
~ A Note from the Editor

Every student. Every classroom. Every day. How many times have you heard this mantra and thought, “Yeah, right! If only...” The National Quality Program Standards states that “ALL students participate in year-round intra-curricular agricultural student organization programs and activities.” That doesn’t mean that only the stand-outs or a few elite students participate. But you’re only one person; how can you possibly teach lessons, grade papers, review record books, perform labs and make sure that your students are participating in leadership activities and FFA?

Naturally, the latter seems to be the one that falls to the wayside.

FFA involvement and activities that develop leadership skills in your student are vital to the personal growth and well-roundedness of your students. You might have a kid who is horticulture genius. But if he’s terrified of speaking in public or even in small groups, he likely wouldn’t make it past the initial interview at a competition; or even worse, at a potential job.

You can’t make a student into a leader. But, you CAN give him the opportunity to develop the skills he needs to explore his potential. This issue of Making a Difference is devoted to helping you help your students by utilizing FFA and other leadership activities.

Schools like Natrona County High School in Casper, Wyo., and Douglas High School in Minden, Nev., create an immediate FFA opportunity for students. When a student enrolls in an agricultural education class, he or she automatically becomes an FFA member. In both schools, FFA content is built into the agricultural education curriculum. Read [Leadership skills: Essentials for student success](#), and learn what some schools are doing to promote FFA and leadership development and how they keep members engaged.

Is having 100 percent of your agriculture students as FFA members a dream? Find out how to make it a reality by reading [Achieving the standard: Moving toward 100 percent FFA involvement](#).

Each year, tens of thousands of students come to the national FFA convention. Read [Serving Authentic Leadership at National Convention](#) to see how some advisors make the experience a lesson in leadership development instead of just a few days away from school.

In our [Perspectives](#) piece this month, Kristyn Harms, Nebraska agriculture educator, shares with us her experience in getting acquainted with FFA and gives some advice on how you can maximize your efforts to incorporate FFA and student leadership in your classroom.

Bridging classroom content into FFA activities is one of the more challenging aspects of being an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. FFA activities and fundraisers all too often become a survival test for the advisor, moving them into a “just-get-it-done” mentality. Turn these activities into valuable learning opportunities for students by utilizing LifeKnowledge materials. Learn more in this month’s [LifeKnowledge Spotlight](#).

And finally, check out the [Question for the Profession](#), where we ask, “Are the standards in leadership development too much?” What do you think? We would love to hear what you’ve got to say. After all, you’re on the front lines!

We at Making a Difference hope you have a happy and enjoyable holiday season with your families. See you next year!

Amber Striegel

Editor

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Leadership skills: Essentials for student success

By Deb Brandt-Buehler

Cultivating the leadership skills of young people is at the heart of the National FFA Organization's National Quality Program Standards. Whether acquired through civic activities, FFA participation, or shows/contests, these skills take agriculture students one step further in achieving personal growth and career success.

100 percent FFA membership benefits all

Schools like Natrona County High School in Casper, Wyo., and Douglas High School in Minden, Nev., create an immediate FFA opportunity for students. When a student enrolls in an agricultural education class, he or she automatically becomes an FFA member. In both schools, FFA content is built into the agricultural education curriculum.

"I am a firm believer of what FFA does for students," said Brock Burch, agriculture educator at Natrona County High School. "Every student needs to be taught leadership skills, needs experiential learning opportunities, and needs to be responsible for record books and speech writing. What we teach in our agricultural education classes is relevant and applicable in the real world."

At Douglas High School, students begin learning about FFA as soon as school starts. They are immersed in activities and FFA opportunities because they are part of the course expectations.

"Each student is required to participate in four activities each semester," explains Jared Hyatt. "There are 2-3 activities to choose from each month. Any FFA activity outside the classroom is a leadership opportunity."

Starting early to gain FFA buy-in from students

"While FFA has really important content, it's hard to get our urban students to buy in," said Liz Kranyik, FFA sponsor at Bridgeport Regional Vocational Aquaculture School.

“Because students must pass the vocational agriculture exit test, all teachers—not just those here in the vocational agriculture program, but those in their home high schools—work together to address student weaknesses and to provide the information students need to receive.”

Agriculture educators Burch and Hyatt both begin the school year with FFA focused content. For Burch, students in the 8th grade begin by learning parliamentary procedure, work on writing speeches and learn the Creed. Hyatt says the first few weeks of school include the history of FFA, and courses include an expectation for FFA activity participation.

Members stay connected

At Bridgeport, students from seven school districts come to school for agricultural education courses. As a result, students attend the school in half-day increments, and the FFA officers form two teams: a morning and an afternoon team. FFA meetings and activities are embedded in the school day because students cannot return to the school for after school projects or programs.

“One of the ways we bolster unity between the two officer teams is by connecting and integrating the activities,” explains Kranyik. “Students work together, get to know one another and stay connected by phone, email and text messaging.”

FFA officers at Natrona County High School are responsible for planning all the chapter activities. “This year’s team has committed to weekly meetings for planning, reflection and evaluation,” said Burch. “They post meeting agendas, previous meeting minutes and the activity schedules. It’s all in their hands.”

The Natrona County High School officers host at least one community service activity each month. The leadership team decides what to do and how it will get done. “In our program, we develop people so that they can act and think on their own. We want them to have good leadership skills,” says Burch.

Douglas High School is a tenth through twelfth grade building and boasts a junior officer team and a senior officer team. Both are actively engaged in the planning and implementation. The junior officers are very motivated and most will pursue an officer position when they are eligible.

“As their advisor, I find that I need to remind myself to step back and let the officers take the responsibility,” explains Kranyik. “If they fall short, they will learn from the experience and take responsibility for it. My role is to facilitate their leadership learning. I have to give them the skills they need and allow them to go with it – knowing when to set back and when to provide leadership.”

Support from and for the community

“Every Douglas student has a responsibility for on-going record keeping,” said Hyatt. “We have two parents who come in one afternoon a week specifically to support students who are working on degree applications. We have a lot of support from parents, the district and our state.”

Bridgeport Aquaculture has also committed to a community service activity each month. The “Stuff a Sock” program has bloomed into an FFA leadership tradition. Students look forward to this project throughout the school year by gathering sample shampoo and soaps during family vacations and from parents who travel. Each February new pairs of socks are stuffed with the toiletries and given to a local church. The church distributes the much-needed items to soup-kitchen visitors during the coldest month of the year.

Cultivating future leaders

“We have a premier leadership organization in FFA,” says Burch. “What students learn is applicable to real life. By attending competitions, developing and completing community service projects, writing speeches and participating programs, we are helping create leaders. The way we are going to get through these tough times is by creating the leaders we need for the future.”

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Achieving the standard: Moving toward 100 percent FFA involvement

By Beth DeHoff

Around the country, teachers and schools are doing what many thought impossible: involving 100 percent of their agricultural education students in FFA membership and leadership opportunities. While this is no small feat, these schools aren't overachievers; after all, having every student as a member of FFA and involved in leadership development is one of FFA's seven National Quality Program Standards.

"We find many, many chapters that have 100 percent membership and involve every student," says Larry Gossen, senior team leader for FFA state relations. "If we truly believe in an integrated model of agricultural education, which includes classroom instruction, FFA and SAEs, why would we want to deny any student the opportunity for leadership development?"

Even if a school's FFA membership is a work in progress, teachers can take steps to increase involvement and leadership along the way. "If you can't get everyone in FFA, can you get every student developing leadership skills? Look at the standards and see which ones you can meet," Gossen says. "We develop leadership activities for the classroom, and every student should be able to participate in those. The focus is on every student, every classroom, every day."

In California, the state provides an agricultural incentive grant

Pilot program looks at dues alternatives

Clearly, one barrier in many states to achieving 100 percent FFA membership involves required student dues. From that fact grew a national FFA pilot program called Program Affiliation. The pilot FFA program charges a school fee based on the school's enrollment, but no dues per student. "As a student in a Program Affiliation pilot school, you pay no dues, and you become an FFA member when you enroll in an agricultural education class," Gossen explains. The program is in an early pilot phase this year at chapters in

to schools with 100 percent FFA involvement and who also make SAEs a graded portion of the class. Since this money allows the schools to pay for each student's FFA dues, most Californian high schools feature 100 percent FFA membership among their agriculture students. Yet though the membership hurdle is easily met there, teachers still work hard to reach every student, every day.

"There's a difference between 100 percent membership and 100 percent involvement," says Hugh Mooney, north coast region FFA advisor in California. "I don't think we have a program in the state with 100 percent of its members fully involved in FFA, but we have a lot of teachers working hard at it."

Mississippi and Florida, to be followed by a larger pilot in more states and chapters in 2009.

"After the two-year pilot, the national FFA board will examine the program. If it moves forward at that point, it would be an optional program," Gossen says.

"There is no intention for this to replace the dues structure completely, but we hope to make it an option for those who believe the students should not pay dues for an integral part of their classroom instruction."

Mandy Garner at Galt High School in Sacramento County, Calif., is one such teacher. "We incorporate leadership right into our curriculum," she says. "If we're doing an activity where students have to present, we teach microphone skills or public speaking strategies, too. We also compete in a major FFA activity each school year in class." At Galt, freshmen participate in the opening/closing ceremonies contest, sophomores compete in parliamentary procedure, juniors take part in the science fair, and seniors enter the marketing plan competition.

By making FFA activities and leadership development such an integral part of classroom instruction, Galt High School has built one of the largest and most active organizations on the school's campus. "This past year, students logged more than 1,500 community service hours, competed in FFA contests all over the country, worked fundraising events with more than 400 community supporters in attendance, and had the opportunity to attend more than 50 FFA activities at the local level," Garner says.

Garner's students represent a broad spectrum of her community. "Our student body is nearly half Caucasian and half Hispanic, and we have students living in town, on ranchettes and some large farming operations," she says. "We strive to provide availability for all students to participate." Galt High School offers a school farm, greenhouse and shade house for animal and plant projects, as well as a number of opportunities for projects in parliamentary procedure, public speaking and career development. Many students conduct the business of the chapter by serving as a committee chairperson, greenhouse officer or chapter officer.

Diversity in a student body is more a rule than an exception for agriculture educators today. "The demographics of students are different than they were 25 to 30 years ago," says Mooney. "We attract a lot of students other than those living on a family farm. Community service is a big part of a lot of very involved chapters, and that's a part of national chapter awards that any student can participate in."

Elk Grove High School, also in Sacramento County, sits in the fastest-growing city in the nation, and its agricultural program has transitioned from an originally rural program to one that is entirely urban today. To meet its students' needs, the agricultural program has evolved as well, with classroom instruction and experiences that meet FFA standards and provide urban students with an excellent background in both agriculture and leadership.

"The program at Elk Grove now has a strong agriscience focus, and we offer sequential curriculum that is University of California-approved," says Alyssa Mangan, an agriculture educator at the school. "We have a strong history of student involvement in both FFA leadership development and community service activities. We also have an extensive on-site school farm where approximately 200 students have their livestock, horticulture and aquaculture projects."

In addition, each student achieves 10 percent of his or her classroom grade from FFA participation. "The expectation is that all students are involved in a minimum of eight FFA activities per semester. These can be meetings, field days, community service, fundraising or many other activities," Mangan says. The six agriculture teachers are, she says, "kid magnets" who lead by example. "We believe our love of and involvement in the program is contagious!"

Mangan suggests one key to getting kids involved in FFA is to focus on their freshman year. "That first year is extremely vital, because it builds the foundation for each student's FFA involvement, ambition and destination," she says. Current students conduct an FFA orientation program for all incoming agriculture students and their parents as well as a huge FFA summer barbecue to which incoming freshmen and their families are invited.

Gossen agrees. "Every teacher has a story about a student whose life was positively impacted by FFA; students who needed the most help and got the most from it," he says. "The question is, how do you identify these students when they're freshmen? How do you know which ones need it—which ones you can make a difference for? The only way is to provide the opportunity to every student, and give them the chance."

It's simply one part of focusing on the needs of every student, every day, in every classroom. "We hang our hat on the idea that FFA is the premier leadership development program for students in the nation," he says. "Do we really believe that? It doesn't mean that just because a student is

an FFA member, we want them to be at every event or go to every convention. What we want is for every student to have a chance to grow and develop.”

The National Quality Program Standards and tips for involving students in FFA can be found on the Educator’s page at www.ffa.org.

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By Robin Niehaus

The national FFA convention is a pinnacle event for many FFA members. Some prepare all year for the agriscience fair, career development events, or the opportunity to share their talent in the band or chorus. Whether they participate through the competitions or just by attending, many FFA members must work hard for the opportunity to come to Indianapolis.

Regardless of their reason to attend national convention, most students are excited to spend a few days away from their normal routine at school. So how can you, as an advisor, channel this excitement back to the classroom and ensure that the time away is a learning experience and not just an extended fall break?

Even for the students who aren't developing their leadership skills as a competitor, delegate or performer, convention holds tangible opportunities to develop leadership skills and send students home with much more than a few days away from school. Members can learn about similarities and differences in the agriculture of their own state and other states, write an essay about how a motivational speaker will influence their leadership style, or apply etiquette in a downtown restaurant.

In the last three years, another opportunity has been developed for students to develop and apply their leadership skills. The National Days of Service consists of three days of community service activities, hosted by organizations in need in the greater Indianapolis area. "It's a real lab where kids can develop an attitude of service and leadership for themselves," said Jeff Adams, Lakota FFA Advisor in Ohio. He and his students have participated in the event all three years.

"It's a significant part of their convention experience," said Adams. During their first year, he and his students packed boxes at the Gleaner's Food Bank. Adams said one student

in particular was critical of people who would need such assistance, but after serving with other members for an afternoon and learning that the boxes were for elderly people in 29 Indiana counties, his perspective had changed to recognize a genuine need for charity.

In fact, Adams said his students are often the first to respond to needs at home. When their local Farm Bureau organized a group to harvest cabbage for a statewide food bank, his FFA members made up the most significant portion of the group, harvesting 21,000 pounds of cabbage on a rainy Friday. "My students jump at opportunities like this more than they ever have before," he said.

Adams said the National Days of Service provides an opportunity for leadership development and supports the organization's commitment to community service in an unprecedented way. "I'm just shocked that we didn't start this 30 years ago," he said.

In its third year, the 2008 National Days of Service coordinated 1,139 FFA members to take part in service activities at 10 sites in the Indianapolis metro area. Volunteer work provided by the FFA members was valued at more than \$91,000 in actual savings to the host sites, which included Habitat for Humanity, Agape Therapeutic Riding and the Indianapolis Museum of Art, among others.

"The value is huge, not only in terms of personal giving back to the community, but the sense of leadership it creates in the students and their sense of self-worth, self-esteem," said Damon Spight, national FFA program manager for the National Days of Service. "They leave Indianapolis with educational pieces and experiences that empower them to develop similar programs and integrate new ideas in something pre-existing."

Spight said students can also strengthen their skills as they work alongside experts in the Indianapolis area, like home builders or master gardeners. It's a sustainable model that students can repeat in their local communities, encouraging youth and adults to work together in the community.

It's also leadership in action. Community members notice the desire to serve demonstrated by FFA members, as well. It's why organizations like Toyota are willing to play a role in sponsoring the event each year.

"The impression left by our students is very memorable," Spight said. "The resounding compliment is that students would not want to stop – they wanted to work through lunch to make sure their tasks were totally completed."

Service opportunities range from landscaping and planting trees to mending fences and packing food boxes. Regardless of where students serve, the opportunity creates a one-of-a-kind leadership experience during the national FFA convention. Adams said that's one of the best parts of

the event; students with diverse strengths and skills are placed in a site that will suit some perfectly and challenge others to stretch.

“They actually give back to the community and complete an out of state experience,” Spight said. “They leave themselves rather than just taking away.”

The National Quality Program Standards for Secondary Agricultural Education says that one indication of a quality program is when students participate in FFA leadership and personal development activities/events above the local level. Whether you provide activities to follow up with each convention experience or participate in the National Days of Service, convention can be a time to create a unique leadership development opportunity for your students, school and community.

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FEEDBACK

Perspectives



Turning Struggles into Opportunities

*By Dr. Kristyn Harms, Agriculture Teacher,
Norris School District, Neb.*

Growing up in northeast Nebraska in the late 1990s, I wasn't much of a "blue jacket" kind of girl. In fact, I was more of a "clover kid." 4-H was all I knew, and, going to a school without an agricultural education program or FFA chapter, my knowledge of the agricultural program and FFA organization was minimal, at best. Little did I know that my future profession would lead me to form friendly relationships with those in blue and gold!

I am an eighth year teacher at Norris School District, just south of Lincoln, Nebraska. During my tenure, I have really gotten to know the agricultural education program at a much more personal level. Throughout an average year, the Norris agricultural education program will serve approximately 600 students in grades 6-12, with nearly 100 members in the Norris FFA Chapter. Throw in a Model of Innovation Award, two national proficiency award winners, and a National Star in Agriscience recipient, and I can safely say that I have learned a lot through agricultural education and FFA. I can also safely say that time spent as an FFA advisor is not always fun and games. Challenges definitely come with the job. How can you overcome the obstacles? An even better question: **How can you maximize your efforts to incorporate FFA and student leadership in your classroom?**

1. Provide Opportunities for All Students

At Norris, I teach two sections of "Introduction to Environmental and Agriculture Science." Comprised mostly of freshmen students, this class covers a variety of agricultural and leadership topics, ranging from the distillation of ethanol to parliamentary procedure. In this course, all students are given the opportunity to "try out" FFA to see if it's the right fit. Through district leadership workshops, the statewide agriscience CDE and numerous chapter activities, all freshmen agricultural education students are given numerous leadership opportunities where they can "Step Up and Stand Out" to see if FFA is right for them. Students end up making up their own minds to join FFA, thus forming long-lasting leadership

commitments between new FFA members and the Norris FFA Chapter.

The National Quality Program Standards provide excellent goals for encouraging 100 percent of all agricultural students to become members of the National FFA Organization. Although the Norris agricultural education program has not yet reached that pinnacle, I hope that the leadership foundation built within my courses will provide all students with that little extra push needed to become successful members of the National FFA Organization.

2. Mix in the Fun

It's easy to become lost in the hustle and bustle of FFA. From fruit sales to proficiency award applications, FFA can become quite stressful for a student. However, to recruit new and retain current FFA members, it is important to incorporate fun into all activities!

The Norris FFA Chapter is divided into eight different committees, or teams. These teams compete for activity points throughout the year. Which team sells the most fruit? Which team collects the most canned food for the Million Can Challenge? Which team has the most FFA members compete in a district or state competition? These team challenges provide motivation to participate in FFA activities, while adding an aspect of excitement at the same time. At the end of each semester, the winning team is awarded with a pizza party and movie passes—small but worthy rewards for the great effort put into the chapter.

In addition to committee assignments, regular recreational activities for FFA members provide opportunities to build healthy relationships and lifestyles. Norris FFA members hold a fall bonfire and hayrack ride, ice skate at the local ice hockey rink in January, and swim at the Island Oasis Water Park in the summer. Through these activities, members are able to see a different side of their FFA advisor and fellow members, creating opportunities to build relationships and grow personally. Throughout these activities, members' commitment to the National FFA Organization continues to strengthen.

3. A Member-written POA

At the beginning of the school year, Norris FFA officers and members sit down to create the year's Program of Activities (POA). Here, successes and failures of past activities are shared, with members aligning current chapter goals with possible activities. This self-evaluation process allows the chapter to create an action plan for the upcoming year.

A POA is only as strong as the member input utilized in creating it. The National Quality Program Standards encourages members to participate in all planning stages of the POA. Here, much of the responsibility is given to FFA members, with advisors serving as facilitators of the

process. With the FFA plan of action being put into the hands of its members, stronger leadership foundations are built among members.

Throughout my experiences as an FFA advisor, my knowledge pertaining to this organization has grown exponentially. With new students, different activities, and continuous opportunities for program growth and development, I look forward to the challenges that come before me. In providing opportunities for all students, mixing in the fun, and encouraging member involvement in POA planning, my challenges will turn from struggles to opportunities. I am proud to serve my students and the National FFA Organization as an FFA advisor!

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FEEDBACK

LifeKnowledge Spotlight



Bridging Classroom and FFA Activities with LifeKnowledge

By Matt Kreifels, Agriculture Teacher, Blair High School, Blair, Neb.

Bridging classroom content into FFA activities is one of the more challenging aspects of being an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor.

FFA activities and fundraisers all too often become a survival test for the advisor, moving us into a “just-get-it-done” mentality. This is when we must be careful not to overlook these activities as invaluable learning opportunities. Instead of another task on our already crammed schedule, we need to approach the activity from the perspective of purposeful learning. For example, instead of just making money, what else can our students learn from running a concession stand fundraiser? LifeKnowledge (LK) can provide you with the tools and resources to accentuate these areas.

First and foremost, it's important to remember that with everything we do, leadership and life skills should be practiced as often as possible. The classroom teaches students the concepts. Laboratory, SAE and FFA provide opportunities for students to experience those concepts and put them into practice. In all cases, leadership should be integrated. I often use LK as the curriculum for my human relations (leadership) class. In this class, I see a more diverse group of students who are not core agriculture students but who desire leadership training.

I also use LK to help me plan mini-lessons in my technical content classes. This can happen in one of two ways. Sometimes I use a leadership concept as a metaphor for a technical concept—for example, a comparison of the concept of diversity among people to the diversity in breeds of livestock. Other times I use LK to provide students with a skill they will need outside of class, like presentation preparation and other FFA events.

Like many schools, we fundraised to build a high school greenhouse. While preparing to speak with community members and local businesspeople, agriculture students benefited from the integration of LK skills along with their lessons. That approach eventually helped us raise more

than \$108,000 for the structure, which was ready for classes in August 2007.

As for using LK to bridge the gap between classroom and FFA activities, there are a few simple steps I've taken that make leadership development fluid in my program.

- Integrate learning objectives into the Program of Activities (POA). Involve officers and discuss with members as an event is planned. Prior to the activity, plan a short lesson to engage students and properly train them to do tasks. Students can gain valuable training in seemingly simple tasks such as welcoming customers, making change, closing a sale or any number of things.
- Plan to teach students LK skills prior to, during and after an FFA activity. When applicable, plan aspects of your curriculum around certain FFA activities so that you can seamlessly integrate leadership concepts.
- Make students part of the process and challenge them to teach their peers. Leadership development is not a stand-alone concept; it takes active participation. Empower students by applying LK concepts to every activity.
- Pair positive, experienced students with those who are learning. Take advantage of your role as advisor by utilizing the experience of other students to help you. It's good for inexperienced students to learn from their peers with your supervision and assistance. Provide LK as a tool to help your students do this.

One of the biggest things I have learned by applying LK resources and leadership development throughout my program is that students desire responsibility and accountability for their FFA activities. LK has helped me create an atmosphere of ownership. Students are more motivated and can proficiently perform tasks without my supervision. This relieves stress for me, and many times their work surpasses my expectations.

It's important for agriculture teachers to remember that LK is a more focused version of what agricultural education and FFA have been doing for more than 75 years: providing students with skills that will help them excel in life. Many teachers teach leadership, but it comes in small doses and at unscheduled times. Using the resources of LK, we're able to turn doses of leadership into a measurable and ongoing prescription of leadership experiences.

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FEEDBACK

Question for the Profession



Question for the Profession: Are the Standards in Leadership Development Too Much?

By Nina Crutchfield, Local Program Success Specialist

We've all heard it, even repeated it: "Don't bite off more than you can chew." For all practical purposes, a very wise piece of advice. We all know what happens when you do bite off more than you can chew...you choke!

Are the National Quality Program Standards for student leadership development more than we can chew? Just the first three are a mouthful—all agriculture students are members of FFA; all students have a leadership plan; and, all students participate in FFA activities. Each one is a huge bite to chew, much less try to swallow.

Consider what your program would look like if you were able to ensure that every student who enters your department is engaged in student leadership and FFA activities.

- Would your FFA circle become so large it would eat classroom instruction and SAE?
- Would you work harder than you already are?
- Do you even want all your students to be involved in leadership development and FFA?
- Would your partners help you?
- Would your traditional "ag kids" rise to the occasion?
- Would you choke if you tried to teach leadership to all students, not just a few elite?

How we answer these questions really defines who we are as agricultural educators.

This month's theme for Making a Difference is student leadership, and the question I pose to you is, "Are the National Quality Program Standards for leadership development too much?" Post your thoughts on the [NAAE Communities of Practice](#).

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Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators

December 2008

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FEEDBACK

Teacher Resources

Bring Alternative Fuels into the Classroom

Put more science in your forestry class or add alternative fuels to your mechanics lesson by introducing your students to the [BIOMASS](#) online magazine, [Ethanol Producers](#) magazine, and [Biodiesel](#) magazine. Students can read technical reports, search for careers in the alternative fuels industry and investigate the latest events around the world that impact the agriculture industry.

STIHL's iCademy, an award-winning online resource developed for STIHL dealers, is now available to select technical education institutions. The program covers technical training, business and professional skills like sales and customer service, and STIHL product specific lessons. Instructors who want to participate in the program can apply by logging onto www.stihlvotech.com. There, you will be prompted to enter information on your school and your OPE training program. Once enrolled, you will receive an iCademy overview, detailed operating instructions and suggestions on how to use it in your classes. Several free instructional materials are also available on ffa.org in conjunction with the LPR Guide. Visit http://www.ffa.org/index.cfm?method=c_aged.stihl for more information.

"Teach Ag" Page of NAAE Website Now Available

Agricultural education makes a difference in millions of lives. NAAE's "Teach Ag" campaign is encouraging students to "Do What You Love and Love What You Do" by becoming an agriculture educator. NAAE has also recently opened up a [new portion of its website](#) devoted to helping students find a place to earn their agricultural education degree. The site lists the colleges and universities in the U.S. with agricultural education programs, sorted by state. The site also has resources for anyone interested in helping promote agricultural education as a career choice.

Share the Gift of Ag Literacy

Partner with your local Farm Bureau to engage your future students by providing agriculture books for their classrooms. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has created a

book bundle of 22 children's books related to agriculture.

Visit

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/kids/maitc/bookbundle/sponsoring.htm>

for information about providing these resources to your elementary teachers and library.

Looking for Activity Ideas?

If you're coming up short on creativity or just want to spice up your next lesson, this is the site for you. [Teampedia](#) is a collaborative encyclopedia of team building activities, icebreakers, teamwork resources and tools for teams that anyone can edit! The site is designed by team leaders, trainers, teachers, managers, camp directors, counselors, and youth groups.

National Content Standards are available

Getting pressure from your administration to include more core academics in your program? Use the National Content Standards for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Food to document what you are teaching. Available from the [Team Ag Ed Learning Center](#), the National Ag Ed Council's content standards identify the math, science, language arts and social studies skills that are laced throughout agricultural competencies in all seven of the career pathways. Make it a favorite link for quick reference.

Ready-made Agribusiness Lesson

Revisit or get to know these lessons for the first time:

<http://www.ais.msstate.edu/age/lessons.html>. You will find it a great resource for introducing the global aspect of agribusiness to your students.

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FFA Buzz

2009 Collegiate Scholarships – Apply Now!

Each year the National FFA Organization awards approximately \$2 million in scholarships sponsored by numerous businesses and individuals through the National FFA Foundation. There are different types of scholarships designed to fit the diversity of our applicants, and FFA awards scholarships for a wide variety of experiences, career goals and higher education plans. FFA takes into account the whole student—academics, FFA involvement, SAE, community service, leadership skills and work experience. The 2009 application is now available on our website, along with the 2009 Scholarship Guidebook in PDF format. You'll also find answers to frequently asked questions and a list of Ford dealers participating in the scholarship program. For more information, visit www.ffa.org or e-mail scholarships@ffa.org.

Watch FFA Today Every Wednesday!

The FFA Today television show is now on every Wednesday at 6 p.m. EST on the RFD-TV network! It's new each week with a fun format and cool stories that you can use for classroom activities or chapter meetings. You can also watch the episodes on www.ffa.org. And if you sign up for our RSS feed, they'll download every week, so you won't miss a thing! Want to show off your chapter? Videotape your special activities and send us your story. Email ffatoday@ffa.org for more information.

National FFA Week Resources

The National FFA Week chapter mailing will arrive in early December. And we've got a treat for you! In the mailing this year, we're including a DVD that not only includes FFA Week promo spots you can use at your school or local TV station, but it also has the "Step Up, Stand Out" theme song video, the Stars video and much, much more! Plus, <http://ffaweek.ffa.org> will soon be updated with logos, templates and tons of great resources. Log on!

2008 National FFA Convention – A Year of Alumni "Firsts"

With more than 54,000 FFA members and guests from across the country assembling in Indianapolis from October 22-25, the national FFA convention set the perfect stage for the 37th National FFA Alumni Convention. This year's convention offered a series of firsts: the National FFA Alumni Association raised nearly \$199,000 for scholarships, hosted a fun and engaging booth filled with displays and competitions for students, and provided a live webcast that brought high impact workshops and alumni sessions to everyone who could not attend the convention. To learn more about the Alumni Association, contact [Frank Saldana](#) at 317-802-4292.

Changes to Proficiencies for 2009

There are 47 official award areas for 2009, with the following changes:

- Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance split into two categories:
 - Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Entrepreneurship
 - Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Placement
- Aquaculture is no longer a sponsored award area. Aquaculture applications will now be put into Specialty Animal Production award area.
- Veterinary Medicine – Entrepreneurship/Placement. This is a new award area for 2009 and was previously located in Small Animal Production and Management. Proficiency applications have been updated with the Veterinary Medicine award area in the drop down listing
- Wildlife Production and Management combined into one area, Entrepreneurship/Placement

Descriptions of all 2009 proficiency award areas are located on the proficiency home page at http://www.ffa.org/index.cfm?method=c_programs.Proficiency. Please contact [Rosalie Hunsinger](#) at 317-802-4255 for more information.

National FFA Wins Excellence Award

The National FFA Organization recently won the BKD Indiana Excellence Award for its online convention registration. FFA had been named a finalist in the nonprofit/government category and won the category and then the overall award. FFA will be featured on the cover of Indiana Business magazine with an article devoted to the online convention registration project. The BKD Indiana Excellence Awards honor business process improvements in companies and organizations located in Indiana. This is the second time the National FFA Organization has swept these awards. For more information, visit the News & Media web page on ffa.org.

Visit and Click Everyday!

Don't forget to visit www.helpgrowyoursoup.com and click on the red barn. Campbell's Soup Company created this great campaign to benefit FFA and our future agricultural leaders. You can log on and click everyday! And make sure to forward to friends, family and fellow supporters.

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