



August 2006

LifeKnowledge[®]
At Work

To advance the integration of LifeKnowledge through local teachers.

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Our Founding Partners



JOHN DEERE



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Introducing the new LifeKnowledge Newsletter

This is the third issue of LifeKnowledge AT WORK, a newsletter created by the National FFA Organization to advance the integration of LifeKnowledge in local agricultural education classrooms across America. Designed with local teachers in mind, LifeKnowledge AT WORK is a free electronic newsletter featuring tips from teachers, education experts, leadership gurus and a host of other resources.

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LifeKnowledge Featured Articles

Five Steps to Spice Up Agricultural Education with E-Moments!

Christine White, education specialist for the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education, talks about five steps you can use to integrate E-Moments into your classes from the get-go. [Click here to read article](#)

Featured Precept

Defining Mental Growth – The Cognitive and Intellectual Development That Allows for the Effective Application of Reasoning, Thinking and Coping

Education Specialist Doug Kueker provides background on mental development and tips on what teachers can do to promote cognitive and intellectual growth in students. [Click here to read article](#)

Hot Tips

Covering the Content Versus Uncovering Learning

From the book *Super Teaching* by Eric Jensen, The Brain Store Inc. [Click here to read article](#)

LifeKnowledge News

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Five Steps to Spice Up Agricultural Education with E–Moments!

By Christine White, Education Specialist, LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education

I think you'll agree that the start of a new school year is the best time to establish class rules, FFA activities and new teaching methods. We experiment this time of year because the students are fresh and eager to learn, and we're energized for the start of another great year. This creates the perfect opportunity to explore new ways to integrate LifeKnowledge, and especially E–Moments, into your course materials.

"You have the power to influence your students' capacity to learn. As an educator, take this opportunity to re–commit yourself to providing students with the best practices available to create and maintain an engaging learning environment."

It is especially beneficial to try new things at the start of a new year because you have a new set of students – freshmen! This is a great audience with which to practice using E–Moments. Freshmen are not accustomed to your style of teaching, so it's the perfect time to add some playful and engaging moments to your lessons to capture attention. This style of teaching will seem like a natural part of your lesson to a freshman, so it's a great place to practice and begin the process of using E–Moments in all of your classes.

I know many of you are probably thinking, "E–Moments ... I cannot sing, dance or draw; how will I ever be able to make E–Moments work in class, especially with my upperclassmen!" Initially, using E–Moments may be a little awkward or uncomfortable for you. Keep in mind, however, that when we teach, it is not about our comfort. Instead, it is about how we can make the most impact on our students' learning. To overcome this hesitation, simply start using E–Moments and see how much more comfortable you will become. Following are some steps to help with the seamless integration of E–Moments as part of your

everyday teaching.

- **Step One:** Select an E–Moment. You need to be selective when choosing E–Moments to integrate into your lessons as not every one will work in all situations. It should complement the lesson/concept being taught and not take away from it. It should also add value by helping students become engaged so they grasp the material being taught.
- **Step Two:** Practice the E–Moment. The old cliché "practice makes perfect" applies as you look at how you're going to integrate the E–Moment into your lesson. Once you have selected your E–Moment and you have a good understanding of how it works, outline how it will flow within your lesson. Practice giving the directions to make sure you understand them and have enough clarity to direct the students to effectively participate. This is your opportunity for a "dress rehearsal" to address potential problems. Practicing will also enable you to capture some of the key components of the E–Moment while integrating your course material.
- **Step Three:** Teach the E–Moment. Now that you've had the opportunity for a dress rehearsal, it is time to use the E–Moment in your lesson. Make sure you're giving complete and clear directions. Remember to be flexible, especially if this is your first experience with an E–Moment. The students will need to adjust to this style of learning as well. If you inform them of your expectations for the activity, they will rise to the occasion.
- **Step Four:** Evaluate the E–Moment. It is always important to evaluate your lesson. In order to effectively integrate E–Moments into your teaching, you will need to reflect on aspects of the lesson, both positive and negative. You will hit some bumps along the way when trying new E–Moments, but instead of scrapping them all together, use the evaluation process to improve your and your students' experience. It might be something as simple as clarifying directions and checking for understanding.
- **Step Five:** Teach the E–Moment again. After you have evaluated and identified areas of improvement, use the E–Moment again. The more you practice and actually teach using E–Moments, the better you will become and the easier it will be to integrate them within your lessons.

So, as we embark on a new school year, take this opportunity to develop an environment where students become active participants in learning. You might even notice that your students start to like or even love the classroom portion of class just as much as the learning labs. If you are still unsure about how you can integrate an E–Moment into a technical lesson, consider checking out a new resource that is available in the FFA Core catalog – "Engaging Strategies for Ag Classrooms." This resource links multiple E–Moments to common agriculture lessons and provides the framework to help integrate them into your lessons to create dynamic learning for students.

You have the power to influence your students' capacity to learn. As an educator, take this opportunity to re–commit yourself to providing students with the best practices available to create and maintain an engaging learning environment. Challenge yourself to integrate E–Moments and let your reward be the engagement of your students in the learning process.

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Defining Mental Growth – The Cognitive and Intellectual Development That Allows for the Effective Application of Reasoning, Thinking and Coping

By Doug Kueker, Education Specialist – Research, Development and Sponsored Programs Division

What it is...

Although basic knowledge is the root of all mental and intellectual development, knowledge without reasoning, critical thought and creativity is hollow and weak. Students in agricultural education who actively participate in FFA learn to think analytically about agriculture and, in turn, experience cognitive and intellectual growth.

Although often measured only by verbal and mathematical skills, intelligence can be expressed in other ways. Multiple intelligences do exist and are exhibited in our students. The idea of multiple intelligences was introduced in 1983 by Howard Gardner and includes: logical – mathematical; verbal – linguistic; spatial – mechanical; musical; bodily – kinesthetic; interpersonal – social; and intrapersonal intelligences. The goal of agricultural education and FFA is to foster growth with each student by focusing on their intellectual strength(s) and moving them along the intellectual spectrum.

Cognitive and intellectual growth is demonstrated through critical and creative thinking, informed decision making and command of problem-solving skills. In addition, students who are committed to mental growth will have a clear understanding of their personal mental strengths as they compensate for their mental limitations. Our students will be known for their ability to reason, analyze information, present persuasive arguments, solve personal and professional problems and successfully employ decision-making strategies.

"Our students will be known for their ability to reason, analyze information, present persuasive arguments, solve personal and professional problems and successfully employ decision-making strategies."

The National FFA Organization associates seven skills with mental growth. Students should be able to:

- Think critically
- Think creatively
- Practice sound decision making
- Solve problems
- Commit to lifelong learning
- Persuade others
- Practice sound study skills

Noticing skill in mental growth...

A student who practices mental growth embraces: learning, critical thinking, reasoning, creative thinking, attitude, dependability, decision making and problem solving. Let's take a look at examples of different behaviors you may notice with students as they work on developing mastery of the skills associated with mental growth.

Students with an awareness of the skills associated with mental growth should be able to...

- Discuss the benefits of thinking critically
- Discuss the attributes of a creative thinker
- Explore the impact of decisions made by others

Students who currently use skills associated with mental growth should be able to...

- Develop a plan for lifelong learning
- Prepare a persuasive argument
- Practice critical thinking in a career development event

Students who have mastered the skills associated with mental growth should be able to...

- Lead groups in decision making using critical-thinking exercises
- Model sound decision-making skills
- Mentor others in developing study skills

Incorporating Mental Growth into Your Program...

***FFA and SAE** – Encourage students to use various problem-solving methods when planning for events and functions for the FFA chapter and in their SAEs. There are numerous Web resources available that can foster students' mental growth through critical and creative thinking. For example, the University of Missouri-Columbia Department of Agricultural Education has a series of templates that can be used as activity sheets or teaching masters when introducing students to six common approaches to solving a problem in a laboratory setting. These templates could be used by a committee of students when planning FFA events or as an exercise when a student is making a decision about how to best expand his or her SAE scope. Check out the templates available at the following links:

- <http://www.aged.missouri.edu/AgEd/resource/probsolv.html>
- <http://www.engin.umich.edu/~problemsolving/>
- [http://www.valpo.edu/afrotc/FTP1%20\(6-Step%20Problem%20Solving%20Process\).ppt](http://www.valpo.edu/afrotc/FTP1%20(6-Step%20Problem%20Solving%20Process).ppt)

***Classroom** – Students work in groups to create a mini-presentation about one of the seven skills associated with mental growth. The overall objective is to engage students in leading the class in a practical, real-world demonstration of the skill area as they understand it. Some useful components to set as requirements for the presentations include:

- Demonstration of how to use the skill area in a real-world setting
- Description of what the skill is
- Description of some possible ways to develop the skill

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Covering the Content Versus Uncovering Learning

From the book *Super Teaching* by Eric Jensen, The Brain Store Inc.

Our profession is not about filling up students with facts, but rather opening students to learning. Start with the premise that your students can learn and will learn. Avoid labels and make their genius your self-fulfilling prophecy. We're in the business of creating environments where exciting, fulfilling and empowering learning events can occur. We are in the service business and it is our job to make it work for students. If you maintain this attitude, your approach to teaching will be student-centered.

Course objectives are important, but how the objectives are achieved should allow for infinite possibilities. A good lesson plan will not make a poor teacher into a star. But a poor lesson plan can make even a well-intentioned teacher look bad. Contrary to the popular misconception that "the better you are, the fewer notes you need," the most competent teachers plan well and usually keep and use frequent notes. Creating the lesson plan provides clarity, and clarity leads to better-orchestrated classes. Masters can fail successfully, but the master always plans to succeed. Remember the saying, "If I fail to plan, I am planning to fail."

In essence, the process of planning is more important than the plan itself. The process ensures that you have determined the objectives, thought out the salient points and developed a road map for the trip.

Interested in more works by Eric Jensen like the above tip from Super Teaching? Go to www.jlcbrain.com to see similar cutting-edge learning products and teaching tools.

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*"What's changed?
Old: Lessons planned from
 teacher's perspective; focus
 was on content.
New: Learning is planned
 from the learner's viewpoint;
 focus is on methodology."*

What's New with LK

Omega Conference Planned

Thirty university teacher educators have been selected to attend the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education's Omega Conference. Omega, which focuses on powerful professional growth for university educators, will take place in Indianapolis, Sept. 13–16, 2006.

The Omega objectives are: to be a leader in the profession of agricultural education; to collaborate effectively; and to be scholars in education, outreach and research. The 30 participants represent nearly 25 institutions across the country.

LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education Contact: Randy Vlasin, 317–450–6156, rvlasin@ffa.org. Omega Lead Facilitator Contact: Dr. Jack Elliot, 520–621–7173, elliot@ag.arizona.edu.

LifeKnowledge Version 3.0 to Be Previewed at 79th National FFA Convention

It's here! LifeKnowledge 3.0 will be featured in the interactive classrooms at the FFA National Agricultural Career Show® at the national FFA convention. More lesson plans? Not this time. Take a look at the new precept indicator, a tool that will allow students to take online assessments in the 16 precepts of leadership, growth and career success, which in turn will allow teachers and students to get strategic about leadership development.

Also debuting will be the Coaching Guide, which is a turn-key tool teachers can use when providing feedback and coaching to students on leadership and personal growth. Finally, take a look at how LifeKnowledge products and lessons will be migrated to the World Wide Web. LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education Contact: Christine White, 317–802–4212, cwhite@ffa.org

LK 3.0 Schedules for the Interactive Classrooms at National FFA Convention

***Interactive classrooms are located in the Career Show in Exhibit Hall E at the Convention Center. ***

- Wednesday, Oct. 25
 - 3:30pm – 4:30pm
 - 5:00pm – 6:00pm
- Thursday, Oct. 26
 - 8:30am – 9:30am
 - 10:00am – 11:00am
 - 11:30am – 12:30pm
- Friday, Oct. 27
 - 1:00pm – 2:00pm
 - 2:30pm – 3:30pm
 - 4:00pm – 5:00pm

2006 Delta Conference a Success

In July, 50 teachers attended the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education's Delta and Delta II conferences. Teachers were selected to attend the conferences via an application process. Delta participants focused on integrating LifeKnowledge into technical content in the classroom and on developing and expanding their influence, and they received training and coaching in student engagement strategies. Delta II participants focused not only on their own personal development but also on how they can provide customized training for local teachers, state leaders and pre-service teachers.

Both conferences were funded by the National FFA Foundation, and participants received lodging scholarships valued at \$1,200 from former members of the National FFA Foundation's Sponsors' Board. Check out some of the strategic planning developed by Delta II participants by clicking on the following link: http://innovationlabs.com/Delta_II/.

LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education Contacts: Delta – Andy Armbruster, 317-802-4308, aarmbruster@ffa.org; Delta II – Randy Vlasin, 317-450-6156, rvlasin@ffa.org

New Core Products to Be Featured at 79th National FFA Convention

Check out the latest tools to help you be successful in your classroom. The newest products from the Core catalog will be featured in the interactive classrooms at the national FFA convention. You'll want to stop by one of these sessions to view some of the cutting-edge teaching tools that have been developed with teacher feedback and suggestions by the National FFA Organization. *FFA Contact: Tiffany Sanderson, 402-742-3561, tsanderson@ffa.org*

Core Catalog Demonstration Schedule for Convention

***Interactive classrooms are located in the Career Show in Exhibit Hall E at the Convention Center. ***

- Wednesday, Oct. 25
 - 1:00pm – 2:00pm
 - 2:15pm – 3:15pm
- Thursday, Oct. 26
 - 1:00pm – 2:00pm
 - 2:30pm – 3:30pm
 - 4:00pm – 5:00pm
- Friday, Oct. 27
 - 8:30am – 9:30am
 - 10:00am – 11:00am
 - 11:30am – 12:30pm

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