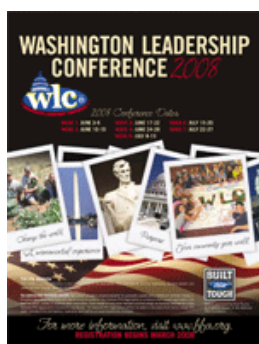




February 2008

Feature Stories



Cover Story: Whose Job Is It? | Meet Your New National FFA Secretary
Arizona Jumpstarts Plans After National Ag Ed Inservice

Cover Story: Whose job is it?



By Mike Womochil
Local Program Success specialist

It's the university's responsibility...
The teachers should play the primary role...
State staff has the time and resources to make it happen...

National FFA should be leading the way...



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FEEDBACK

Have you heard these comments in your state when the topic of teacher recruitment arises? While discussions have occurred about whose job it is to recruit teachers, we have quickly entered into a severe shortage of available, quality teachers to fill the middle school and high school classrooms across the country.

We continue to pass the buck on recruitment; meanwhile, we are closing programs, not opening new programs and filling classrooms with any warm body that remotely



resembles an agriculture teacher. The number of open positions across the nation is not a true reflection of the total problem. Look around your state and identify how many teachers we have in alternative certification, long-term substituting and retirees returning to the classroom to keep a program open. This is an indication that we are not sending enough students into teacher education, not graduating enough and not getting those who do graduate into the classroom to experience the profession.

Even if we are filling all of our openings with graduates from teacher education programs, we are still deficient. Let's be honest here, not every one entering a university's teacher education program is cut out to teach. Teaching is a talent that some are masterful at and others, well, aren't. We need

a large graduate pool from which to select the best and most talented. Those who discover that the profession isn't for them should have the freedom to pursue careers elsewhere without feeling like they've abandoned it in dire straits. Just as a rancher cannot obtain genetic improvement by retaining all offspring for the breeding herd, we cannot improve quality of education in our classrooms by hiring anybody who applies.

Along these same lines, we not only have to get our graduates in the classroom, we have to keep them there. Filling a water barrel with holes in it is a difficult task. Plugging the holes first allows you to fill it quicker, easier and with much less water. The teacher recruitment task is not completed until we have those new teachers established, proficient and comfortable in the profession. Those in the profession must become involved in not only the recruitment, but also in the retention of our teachers if we are to maintain and grow our program strength.

So, the million-dollar question is, "What can I do to solve this problem?" What influence can an agriculture teacher have? Two words: tremendous impact.

Research has shown that the agriculture teacher is the most influential person in the career decision making of the agriculture student—even more so than the parents. If this is true for all agriculture students, then it should be even stronger for those entering the teaching profession. We need to capitalize on this influence and use it to our advantage.

We also need to realize that we are the closest contact a beginning teacher has. We have the power to help that teacher be successful in the profession. It is our responsibility to provide the support for that beginning teacher to allow them to mature in the profession. With this in mind, I've developed a list of the top 10 things agriculture teachers need to do to help solve the teacher supply challenge.

1. Clarify and identify.

Think, for a moment, why you are successful as a teacher of agriculture. Is it your competitive spirit? Your knowledge of agriculture and FFA? Or, is it your personality, your character, your flexibility and your work ethic that make you successful? The traits that make a quality teacher are far more than just our past success in FFA events and a general knowledge of agriculture.

Think about this as you take stock of your classes to look for future teachers. They don't have to be the best students, the best speakers, the most dynamic officer or best judger. The best teacher might be that student who handles adversity well, sticks to the task with passion and has the personality that allows them to interact with all types of students, not just the most talented.

2. Stop complaining.

We work long, hard hours; our salaries aren't as nice as other professions; and principals, coaches, parents and school boards can cause stress. What else is new? Our profession has its challenges—always has and always will. It is not unlike other careers. Other professionals work just as long and as hard as we do. No one is forcing us to teach; we *choose* to do so. So let's stop complaining! Our future teachers are watching our every move and are very perceptive of our messages.

When we focus on the hours, pay and frustrations of the job, we are sending the message “stay away from this career” to a future generation of potential teachers. Stop wearing your long hours like a badge of honor. Step back and find that purpose that drives us to teach and wear *that* as your badge. Let the next crop of teachers see that it is the satisfaction of seeing students develop and succeed that provides the motivation to teach. Let them see the emotion that we try to hide as we watch a student walk across the stage at graduation, knowing our involvement in that person's life made a huge impact. Let them see the passion you have and the excitement you feel when your students finally understand a concept, master a skill or excel at an event. This is the message our potential teachers need to see. As for those who are hung up on the negative side of the job, build a bridge and get over it. We've got to much work to do!

3. Maximize on-the-job opportunities.

It has been said that before a new teacher even steps into the classroom, he already has 12 years of on-the-job training. We need to capitalize on that.

Experiential learning is a foundation of the agricultural education program. We put tremendous effort into assisting students identify and develop their SAE in entrepreneurship, placement, research and exploratory programs, covering a multitude of agricultural interests. Do we put the same effort into developing the SAE for those students that will become future teachers? Do we stress too much their production programs, their show stock or the job at the feed store as the main SAE for them? While these are important things a future teacher should be exposed to, shouldn't we also provide the opportunity for them to develop an awareness of and skills in teaching?

These are the students who can assist with a lesson in the freshman class, train a greenhand team and help with many other educational events in the program. Make sure you work with those potential students to help them identify the activities in agricultural education that provide the experience to build their interest and skills in the profession. We're talking about the “good” things. We don't like to grade papers and record scores, so don't expect your prospective

teachers to like it either. There is more to this life than grades and tests, so make sure they experience it.

A perfect example can be found in schools that have a requirement for a senior project. Utilize this as an opportunity for those future teachers to develop their lesson, teach it and assess the learning. Let them find the joy and excitement in helping others learn and then have them present that passion to their senior project panel. This simple process can be the key step in firmly planting the desire to teach.

4. Persist, persist, persist.

Earthworms are great fish bait and are pretty easy to find. All it takes is a flashlight, an early morning rise, a good eye and a quick hand. Those who have caught earthworms know that when you grab the worm, he quickly heads down the hole to escape. If he gets a start into his hole, it is a slow, persistent tug-of-war between you and the worm which, if patient, you'll eventually win. The same applies when selecting potential teachers from your pool of students. Some students come to the profession at first suggestion and pursue it with immediate passion. Others, when approached about a career in teaching, may tell you *no way!*

In sales we are always told a *no* doesn't mean *no*, it just means *not yet*. The same applies here. If the student has the skills to teach, don't give up. Just like a firm pull on the worm halfway in its hole, keep in contact with the student and keep the teaching option in their view. It may be 2-3 years after high school that they finally decide they want to teach. If we quit at the first no, we'll never get them.

5. Don't be a LTNKDI teacher.

How many times have you been in a meeting of agriculture teachers, and a request is made for someone to chair a committee, host a CDE or run for office? Ever heard someone say with a chuckle, "Let the new kid do it?" Admittedly, I have. Looking back, I realize that letting the young teachers pick up these extra responsibilities and duties does not help them become established in the profession. In fact, it leads to their overflowing plates and, eventually, burnout.

I began teaching 20+ years ago. It was tough, and I remember when we started there was no No Child Left Behind, no high stakes testing, no ELS, no 6 trait writing, etc. Today's beginning teachers are dealing with all of these, plus the demands of the classroom, FFA and SAE. We are not doing them a favor when we pass additional responsibilities on to their plate. Let them become established in their teaching first, and then they can start to assume responsibilities in professional organizations and other events. We have the wisdom of the years; we need to use it in the leadership roles of our professional organizations—hosting the events and serving on the committees.

6. Share and support.

Don't let our competitive spirit and our busy schedules get in the way of sharing with our young teachers. We teach not to win but to educate students. If we withhold lessons, tips, ideas, etc. from young teachers because of our desire to be on top, then we've lost sight of what we are all about. Why should your students be the only beneficiary of the lessons you develop or the teaching aids you've created? If you share with other teachers, you share in the education of many additional students besides the ones who pass through your door.

Participate in the Communities of Practice on NAAE.org, post your lessons on the state file sharing site or through the listserv. We should be teachers for all students in agriculture. Helping our young teachers is the best way to make this happen. Besides, they'll share their wealth with us, and they've got a lot of great ideas that can help us as well. The strength of the agricultural education profession has always been the camaraderie between teachers. Make sure this is extended to beginning teachers and includes those items that can make them successful.

7. Stay in contact.

Moving from high school to college can be a rough transition for some. The agriculture program and FFA is a home in high school that many of our students can't find when they enter college. It is this loss of identity and a home base that lead many students to question their college careers and choice of study. We need to maintain our communication with our future teachers while they are in college. They need to be able to visit with us when they have questions, concerns or complaints. We all know the teacher preparation programs in any university have courses, procedures or policies that can cause students to stress out. Continued communication with you, their high school agriculture teacher, can assist them in working through all the hoops the system presents and keep them headed toward graduation and certification. You need to work in partnership with the teacher educators at the universities to provide the support when needed by the student. Even if that support might be saying, "Suck it up, kid, and get it done."

8. Pass the wisdom on.

The years in the classroom temper us and make us wiser. Much of this wisdom we've gained has come from the teachers before us. Don't miss the opportunity share it with the new teachers in your state. Simple things that we take for granted can make all the difference to a beginning teacher, such as...

- Don't try to paint the entire barn if you only have enough paint for the door.
- Pick you battles carefully.
- You can win the battle yet lose the war.

- Don't use a 10 pound sledge to do a job requiring a 10 ounce ball peen.

These simple bits of wisdom, when applied to situations young teachers face, can help them make the decisions that will reduce their stress, manage their workload and keep them thriving in the profession.

9. Teach monster management.

We've either seen it happen to others or have done it ourselves: The youthful exuberance of the beginning teacher, doing all he can to build the best FFA chapter, the most successful CDE teams and make sure all students have as many opportunities for success as possible. They throw themselves into the job, are accomplished at reaching their goals and, all of a sudden, they've created a program so large and successful that it controls them and their lives. We need to work with them before they create these monsters. We need to explain to them that slow, controlled growth is critical to long-term success. Pull them aside and visit with them when you see them planting monster seeds in their professional lives and offer a word or two of advisement.

10. Look for outside influence.

Don't forget the power of organizations like FFA alumni associations and state FFA foundations in providing support for beginning teachers, as well as encouraging students to pursue teaching as a career. The financial assistance to conduct recruitment and retention programs provided by the state FFA foundation adds increased impact to the "Teach Ag Ed" message.

When local and state alumni are involved with potential teachers, it nourishes the idea planted by the FFA advisor. More importantly, the alumni members are the closest people to those new teachers. They are the ones present in the local community to provide the assistance, support and advocacy for the program to be successful. Help young teachers effectively utilize the alumni organization and communicate with your state FFA alumni association to become involved in the teacher supply challenge.

(Editors note: So much for only 10 items...)

11. Get involved.

The teacher supply will not be solved by a few, nor will it be overcome quickly. It is an ongoing challenge that requires involvement from everyone in the agricultural education family. Play your role. Every state had a delegation at the National Agricultural Education Inservice. These teams of teachers, state staff, teacher educators, alumni and foundation representatives developed plans of action to implement at the state level to address their state's teacher shortage. Find out what that plan is in your state, determine where you fit into the plan and do your part. No one is going

to solve this problem for us. It takes each and every one of us to get involved.

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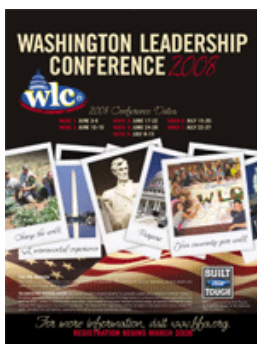
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February 2008

Feature Stories



Cover Story: Whose Job Is It? | Meet Your New National FFA Secretary
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Meet your New National FFA Executive Secretary



The National FFA Organization is proud to welcome Dr. Steve A. Brown of Missouri as the new National FFA Executive Secretary. He will begin his position as Agricultural Sciences Program Specialist with the U. S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., effective March 3, 2008. Brown replaces C. Coleman Harris, who retired in September after 46

years of service to agricultural education.

As national FFA executive secretary, Brown will provide leadership for FFA and agricultural education, while coordinating all meetings of the National FFA Organization Board of Directors and the National FFA Foundation Board of Trustees. He will assist National FFA Advisor and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Larry Case in overseeing, developing, maintaining and implementing policy for the National FFA Organization and the National FFA Foundation.

Brown will also support the work of the National Council for Agricultural Education, an umbrella leadership organization that shapes and strengthens school-based agricultural education at all levels in the nation. He will be instrumental in helping to drive the profession's long-range goal of achieving 10,000 quality agricultural education programs by 2015.

Brown has dedicated more than 27 years of service to agricultural education and FFA. He has served as the Missouri state FFA executive secretary and district supervisor for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education since 1985.

Prior to becoming state executive secretary, Brown taught agricultural education and served as one of two FFA advisors for five years at Macon Area Vocational School in Macon, Mo. He shared in coordinating chapter activities and fundraising in addition to developing and delivering coursework and leadership development programs. Brown currently serves on the National FFA Board of Directors, a consultant to the National Council for Agricultural Education



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FEEDBACK

and is a former member of National FFA Foundation Board of Trustees.

Brown received his doctorate in Agricultural Education, as well as his master's and bachelor's degrees, from the University of Missouri. He and his wife, Rhonda, have four daughters and two sons-in-law, and are the proud grandparents of two grandsons. During the coming weeks, Brown and his wife will relocate from Missouri to the Washington, D.C., area as he assumes his duties with the U.S. Department of Education and FFA.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Steve Brown!

Q&A with Steve Brown

We sat down with Steve to get some more insight on his new position and what he sees for the future of agricultural education.

1.) What has the last month been like for you?

The last couple of months have been both challenging and rewarding—Challenging from the aspect of trying to learn some of the responsibilities of a new position and the unknowns of all the changes this new role will require. And rewarding in that I can reflect on the progress made in agricultural education and FFA in the past 28 years and know that in some small way I was a part of that positive change.

2.) What was your reaction when you found out you got the job?

Humbling. I received many emails, notes and messages of support when it was announced I had accepted the position. This outpouring of support from the agricultural education profession helped reassure me that I made the right decision. From a very young age, all I ever wanted to do was to become an agriculture teacher. Regardless of the title or position, I still consider myself an agriculture educator and want to do whatever I can to help students be successful in an agricultural career.

3.) What are you looking forward to most when you settle in Alexandria and begin your duties?

I'm looking forward to a few things: the opportunity to continue to be involved in agricultural education and FFA, which has always been my passion in life; the opportunity to try to make a positive difference in agricultural education, the FFA and students we serve; and the opportunity to learn and work with others from around the nation and help communicate their successes. There are great people, programs and initiatives across this nation that need to be shared and replicated. I hope I can play a role in communicating and sharing those successes.

4.) What has been the most challenging part of this transition?

The most challenging part of this transition is leaving my current job. I have worked as a district supervisor and state

FFA executive secretary for almost 23 years and was an agricultural education instructor for five years prior, for a total of 28 years in the profession. You don't work that long in this profession without building a healthy appreciation for your colleagues. I will sincerely miss the people that I have had the opportunity and pleasure to work along side on a day to day basis. They have taught me many valuable lessons that I rely on each and every day.

The move is only location. Building professional relationships with others, based upon honesty, trust and clearly-defined expectations takes time to develop and last a lifetime. My hope is that I can continue to build professional relationships in this new role and help them to understand the positive difference agricultural education and FFA can make in student success.

5.) It's clear that you are devoted to agricultural education and FFA. When did this begin, and who has influenced you the most?

My first recollection of agricultural education and FFA was when my older brother was involved in the program and a new agriculture teacher named Larry Case came to town. The example he provided to a young elementary student instilled a desire to pursue a career in agricultural education. This was followed by my high school agriculture teacher, Roger Wolf, who was an excellent role model and source of encouragement.

6.) What accomplishments do you hope to make for agricultural education and FFA during your time as National FFA Executive Secretary?

The success of agricultural education and FFA depends on teamwork, building relationships and accountability. It is my hope that I can help agricultural education and FFA continue to grow and prosper by encouraging teamwork, by building long term sustainable professional relationships within and outside the profession, and to promote the development of accountability to show the difference agricultural education and FFA can make.

7.) You have big shoes to fill. What do you admire most about Coleman Harris, and how will you use those traits in your new role?

I have always contended that you never fill someone's shoes...you follow in their footsteps. Coleman Harris had a quiet caring disposition that caused everyone to listen when he spoke. He provided a wealth of insight and history that can't be duplicated. It is my hope and desire that I will be quick to listen and learn and can have the patience of Coleman Harris to contribute helping the profession be forward thinkers with positive results.

8.) What opportunities do you think lie ahead for agricultural education?

Agricultural education is the best kept secret in the education community. We must continue to demonstrate

and communicate the difference and impact the agricultural education profession has on students.

We must make a difference by building a bigger box for agricultural education that engages a rigorous curriculum; pursuing a clear set of program standards; engaging **ALL** students in a supervised experience program; involving **ALL** students in a leadership and personal development process; developing a recognition program that recognizes the achievements of **ALL** students; and embrace and develop accountability measurements that show the value of agricultural education.

We must make a difference by influencing and showing others the value of agricultural education and encouraging our children to become agriculture educators—one of the most rewarding professions in the world.

We must make a difference by planting seeds of hope for **ALL** students by showing we care and helping them to succeed through a team effort by everyone in the agricultural education family.

And finally, we must make a difference by having a **WE CAN** attitude.

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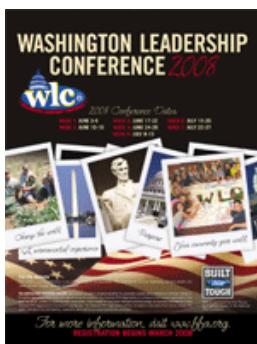
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Arizona Jumpstarts Plans After National Ag Ed Inservice

By Dennis Fiscus
CTE Student Organizations Team Director
Tech Prep Director
Arizona Department of Education



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FEEDBACK

What is the greatest value of the National Ag Ed Inservice? Talking!! Talking to other states, talking to national FFA staff members, talking to our LPS representative, talking to our national CEO and COO and, most importantly, talking to your own state!

With a common theme developed each year by The National Council and national FFA staff that relates to an important issue faced by the agricultural education profession, Inservice provides a valuable tool for each state to talk, review and plan for the future.

Over the years Arizona has utilized Inservice to assist us in things as simple as the development of an Arizona Team Ag Ed logo and institutionalizing AZ Team Ag Ed



meeting times and locations, to more complicated projects involving State Agricultural Education Program Standards and a system to review those programs that all AZ Team Ag Ed members support and promote. Many more projects and programs have evolved out of our talking and meeting at the National Ag Ed Inservice.

What did we take away from this year's Inservice? Many, many good ideas that we wanted to put into place were put on paper. With the help of our LPS regional representative, Mike Womochil, we narrowed it down to about five goals

and projects that require attention.

The most immediate goal was to have a special dinner and presentation at our State Leadership Conference in June 2008 for those FFA members who had been specifically identified by their agriculture teacher as having a sincere interest in teaching agricultural education. The students will not only be served a nice meal, but will also be given a presentation regarding what it takes to be an agriculture teacher and how AZ Team Ag Ed can help them become one. They will also be starting a one-on-one relationship with the person who identified and invited them to the conference. The goal is to start a mentor relationship with each of these prospects.

How did we determine this was important? We figured it out by talking and listening during the main Inservice sessions, our regional sessions and in our state Team Ag Ed meeting. We all seemed to have a story about a single individual that had made that personal impact in *our* lives and how that personal relationship led to our careers as agriculture educators. We decided we want that to happen to more of our students. Talking and sharing our experiences helped us get to that point.

Another immediate project for Arizona is as simple as it will be powerful. Arizona already, like many states, has a New Teacher Mentoring program. It seems to work pretty well around the country. By listening to other states talking about their mentoring programs, it became apparent that we all have a similar need within our collegiate student-teacher ranks. Before they enter into the field, we seem to lose many of our potential teachers, even though we have gotten them in the agricultural education program and almost to the student-teaching experience. Why? They are lost, afraid, overwhelmed...you name it. But what can we do to alleviate their fears?

Arizona Team Ag Ed decided that we would take our existing New Teacher Mentoring program and drill it down a little deeper. With the agreement of the teacher's group, the teacher education group, and the Foundation and business partners along with the support of the state education department, Arizona's New Teacher Mentoring program will now *start* during the student's junior year at the University of Arizona Agriculture Education teacher education program, beginning this fall. We believe this will give the students experiences and resources that they have never before had available. They can actually go to real classrooms, attend real FFA events, discover real agriculture job experiences and interact with all those scary folks at the state department! We believe starting this mentor relationship sooner will help alleviate some of their fears and help us develop even better and more prepared new teachers.

Both of these projects will come about because we had the opportunity to listen and talk to colleagues that gather at

only one place during one time of the year—the National Agricultural Education Inservice. If you missed it, be sure to check out the videos and presentations on The Council website later this month. (It can also be linked from the Educator's Workroom on ffa.org.)

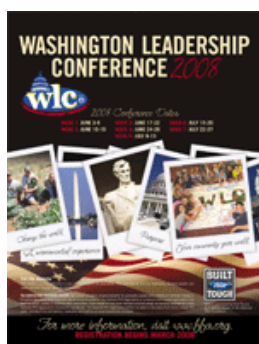
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February 2008



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FEEDBACK

Perspectives

2008 National Ag Ed Inservice – An Ag Teacher's Perspective



*By Ken Couture,
Agricultural Education Instructor,
NAAE Region VI Vice President*

The National Ag Ed Inservice was recently held in Indianapolis. As many of you know, the Ag Ed Inservice is an annual event sponsored by National Team Ag Ed. It serves as a way for each state's Team Ag Ed to receive an update on the "State of Agricultural Education" at the national level. Each state's Team Ag Ed then makes plans to implement what they've learned in the areas that need strengthening.

This year's Ag Ed Inservice was different because of the concentrated focus on one issue. The theme, "Teacher Recruitment, Development and Retention" addressed what is recognized as one of the biggest obstacles to achieving the goals of the 10 x 15 initiative. Ten thousand quality programs by 2015 will require that we recruit new teachers, retain the teachers we have and provide professional development to assure that all of our programs are quality programs.

Recruitment

Recruiting agricultural education teachers needs to begin in our classrooms. We need to identify students who have the potential to become good agriculture teachers and encourage them every step of the way. This generation of students is looking for a different kind of workplace, one that rewards collaboration, problem solving and flexibility. Are we modeling a career path for those potential teachers that will attract them into our profession?

We heard from a panel of presenters from Missouri, Oklahoma, Colorado and Illinois, all of which are promoting an "Ag Ed Academy" concept. Agriculture teachers are asked to nominate promising students to attend a conference to discuss the profession. If your state is doing this, make a nomination. If not, work with your Team Ag Ed to initiate one. Oklahoma has started a "Who is Going to Fill These Shoes?" marketing campaign. Colorado is actively targeting college students who may be undecided. They are making recruitment central to every event and publication.

Illinois' goal is to utilize collegiate agricultural education clubs to create a connection to the profession prior to the last year of college. They also hold yearly conferences for college students run by agriculture teachers.

As agriculture teachers we have tremendous influence with our students because of the relationships we build with them and their families. We need to market our profession as dynamic, rewarding and enjoyable.

Development

The panel presenters consisted primarily of teacher educators. Texas highlighted a four-day student-teacher retreat program where student-teachers attend workshops, have time to collaborate and make visits to area high schools. The school visit includes a mock interview with an administrator. Oregon offers a Summer Agriculture Institute program and gives their student-teachers an opportunity to prepare an integrated science lesson to present at the state agriculture teachers' inservice meeting.

While much of the discussion involved programs for pre-service and early career teachers, we all need to take advantage of professional development opportunities. Attending your state conferences and NAAE regional conferences this spring and summer are great opportunities.

Retention

The importance and necessity of mentoring was another theme from the panel. Most states have instituted mentoring programs that pair an experienced teacher with a young teacher. They vary in formality and duration, but they all need dedicated and experienced teachers to help new teachers become a successful addition to the profession.

Missouri has a two-year program, which includes a teacher stipend and four statewide meetings per year to look at FFA planning and summer work programs. Kansas has a three-part process including mentoring, new teacher induction and partnerships with state universities and foundations. Arizona's program assigns a professor to each new teacher who makes four visits per year. The program also includes a series of workshops for credit. Their state staff also aids teachers in the certification process. Georgia has an informal mentoring system that works for them.

As teachers, we need to broaden our view of mentoring to include prospective agriculture teachers and pre-service students, as well as young teachers. The message of this inservice was loud and clear: Salary, budgets and facilities are not driving teachers from the profession. Workload, lack of guidance, unsupportive administrations and feeling totally overwhelmed are the issues we need to address. Through mentoring, whether formal or informal, we can make a difference.

The 10x15 initiative is an ambitious goal. It will require an all out effort from the partner organizations of Team Ag Ed to make it a reality. That means attracting people from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities and career fields to fill the new classrooms and maintain the programs we already have. Once they are in the classroom, we need to build quality programs through targeted career-stage professional development. Finally, we need to retain quality teachers through a variety of mentoring experiences, which recognize the needs of each individual.

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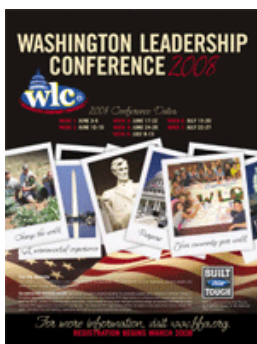
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February 2008

Question for the Profession

"How is it we are here, on this path we walk..."



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FEEDBACK

This line from a 1970's Moody Blues song continues on to question many poignant issues of that time period. While I have no intention of revisiting the past, I use the same line here today to offer the **Question to the Profession** for this month. If we are to effectively recruit teachers into the profession and keep those beginning teachers in the career, it is important to be able to convey to them *why* you teach. Ending up in a classroom as an agriculture teacher is not an accident of nature. There is a reason why you have pursued this occupation and continue practicing in the art and science of education. What gets you through the difficult days, the new initiatives from administration, and all the other challenges you face on a daily basis? What gives you the high that makes you say, "Dang, I love this job!" It is this message that we need to convey to our prospective and beginning teachers. This passion for the career is what we need to define, refine and promote to fill our future classrooms with new teachers of agriculture. Help us gather that message by logging on to the NAAE Communities of Practice at <http://naae.ca.uky.edu:8080/clearspacex/thread/1152> and post your comment on the "Q to the Profession" for this month.

Tell us... "Why is it you are here?"

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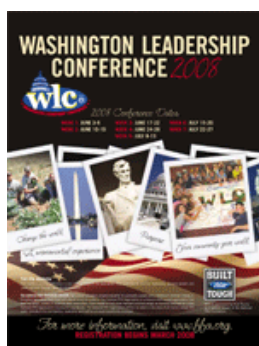
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Teacher Resources



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FEEDBACK

Videos and More for the Classroom

Visit learn.genetics.utah.edu/ to see great learning modules and classroom activities, ranging from DNA sequencing, genetic mapping, cloning and even stem cell research. Animated videos teach it all from the basic structure to protein synthesis. There is even a fictional court case where DNA is used in a trial of suspected looters of an archeological site.

Prediction Market Contest for the Classroom

FarmetricsSM, the first prediction market tailored for U.S. agriculture, introduced the FarmetricsSM Prediction Market Educational Program and a new website for agricultural education teachers and students. At <https://www.farmetrics.com/Scholar>, classroom participants submit predictions for yield, acres planted and acres harvested for crops like corn and soybeans. Schools then determine in which of these weekly contests their classes will participate. Class performance is measured against that of other classes around the country by the accuracy of predictions, as determined by official U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics. The schools with winning classes earn reward points that can be redeemed for award cards to be used by the school in purchasing necessary goods and services.

Designing and Creating Earth Science Lessons with Google Earth

If you're teaching to earth science standards, introducing students to geospatial concepts or touching on topography in environmental science units, then take a tour of this manual. Created to enable teachers to utilize the amazing tools found on the Google Earth site, this manual shows you at least three unique ways that Google Earth can be used in a classroom setting: 1.) A demonstration tool that allows students to "fly" from one location to the next (with a brief pause at each stop) and view locations that have been identified by the instructor as "geologically important;" 2.) Use it as a supplement to previously-established lab activity; And 3.) Use it as a stand-alone, technology-driven activity with questions embedded directly into the place marks that allow students to take a "virtual fieldtrip" from one location to the next. Visit

<http://www.stevekluge.com/projects/dlesege/dlesege>manual/manual.htm> to learn more.

Free Classroom DVDs from ABC Networks

Professionally-developed programs from ABC networks are available from the “Stossel in the Classroom” DVD series. Topics such as foreign aid, price gouging, oil supplies, vaccine fears, ethanol fuel, food donations and medial scares are all examples of DVDs available on the 2007 and 2008 series. The best part? They're FREE! Order yours at <http://stosselintheclassroom.org/index.html>. Downloadable teacher and student guides are also available on the website.

Urban Agriculture News Clipping Service

How does a news clipping service that covers all the topics of agriculture as they relate to your unique urban setting sound? If you said, “Great!” then this website is for you. Find out what is happening worldwide in urban agriculture. This informative site offers the latest news in agricultural technology, community development, garden design, landscape planning, organic agriculture and many more. It's also a good resource to show your rural students the diverse agriculture in our cities and to drive home the opportunities available in agriculture to our urban students. Visit <http://www.urbanagriculture-news.com/current.php> to learn more.

Learn More about Biological Sciences in *Scientific American*

If you are looking for more connections between agriculture and the biological sciences, check out the biological sciences section (<http://www.sciam.com/biology>) of the *Scientific American* journal. Each issue features cutting-edge articles about what's new in the biological sciences field. Check out the genetic engineering page listed in the Biology Topics section. There is also a great science podcast that you might want to consider viewing as well, called *60 Second Science*. *Scientific American* is a long-standing, well-respected journal of science. Make sure your agriscience students are familiar with the publication and its valuable contents.

Brainteasers, Puzzles, and Riddles

Check out <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/braint.htm> if you're looking for some brain exercise! This family-friendly site of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences provides a variety of puzzles and problems to challenge your thought processes. Scientists are charged with solving puzzles every day by using research and trial and error to discover solutions from the clues they are given. Just like with brainteasers and riddles, the answers to science mysteries are not always easy to see at first. With time and effort, they eventually become clear.

“Explore More” with Iowa Public Television Learning Materials

[What are the biggest threats to water quality in your area?](#)

[Can we protect our natural areas and still use them?](#)

[How can we meet our energy needs in the future?](#)

[How should we use genetic engineering?](#)

These four questions are links to great sites that explore energy, water, land use and genetic engineering topics. Created by Iowa Public Television, the “Explore More” website offers students an in-depth study of the current issues, videos of key players giving their viewpoint on the issue, as well as teacher resources, additional web links and even information on career opportunities. View the site at www.iptv.org/exploremore.

Virtual Farm Perfect for Middle School Chapters

Virginia Extension Service has created a “virtual” 4-H farm! This site would be a good resource for middle school programs or for chapters conducting a Food for America program with grade school students. Areas covered include horse, beef, dairy, aquaculture, poultry and wheat production. The site includes videos, interviews with producers and much more! Check it out at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/virtualfarm/main.html>.

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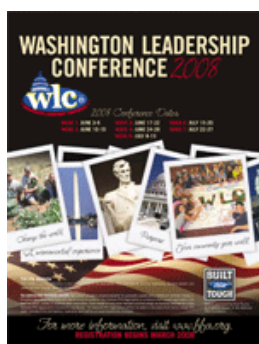
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FFA Buzz



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FEEDBACK

In the Classroom

Proficiency Award Example Applications Now Online

Eight additional example applications have been posted on the [Proficiency Awards home page](#) for chapter/state use.

The added examples are Agricultural Education - Placement; Beef Production - Placement; Dairy Production - Placement; Diversified Crop Production - Entrepreneurship; Emerging Agricultural Technology - Placement; Grain Production - Placement; Small Animal Production and Care - Entrepreneurship; and Swine Production - Entrepreneurship. E-mail questions regarding the example applications to proficiency@ffa.org.

HOBY Leadership Training Opportunities

Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership, like FFA, is a youth leadership organization dedicated to the belief that young people have an obligation to address the challenges facing their communities. HOBY conducts youth leadership seminars for high school sophomores in all 50 states, and more than 9,000 students will attend one of 72 seminars this year. For information on sending one of your sophomore members, visit www.hoby.org.

FFA Chapters: Feeling Creative?

The 7th Annual Chapter T-shirt Contest ends March 31, and FFA needs your chapter's t-shirt design! Winning designs will be featured on t-shirts and sold in the 2008-2009 National FFA Blue Catalog with the winning chapters receiving 50 percent of the profits from the first year's sales. Visit <http://www.ffaunlimited.org/chtcoru.html> for a complete set of rules. Make sure to include original art and/or t-shirt; chapter name, number and address; advisor name, phone and e-mail; and designer's name, phone and e-mail. All t-shirt designs and artwork must be the chapter's original artwork. Chapters submitting artwork created by Excel Sportswear will be disqualified. Submit original FFA chapter design to Dawn Sharp, National FFA Organization, 6060 FFA Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46268.

Washington Leadership Conference is Coming

It's time to start planning for the 2008 Washington Leadership Conference (WLC). The 2008 conference dates are: June 3-8, June 10-15, June 17-22, June 24-29, July 8-13, July 15-20 and July 22-27. New registration prices are

Student \$600, Advisor Double \$635, Advisor Single \$830, Advisor Guest \$1025 and Room Only \$525. Also new in 2008: The WLC registration process will be online. Visit FFA.org starting March 3 to register. Contact Crystal Hart, 317-802-4321 or chart@ffa.org, for registration questions.

Check Out the Videos on FFA.org!

FFA.org now has great videos and stories posted online! These quick clips are great for the classroom or chapter activities. Encourage your students to watch...or forward the links to supporters and administrators. The [video](#) page has a variety of stories from the monthly *FFA Today!* television show, a keynote speech from convention and the convention theme song video! The [FFA Today!](#) page features the latest show episode and segments from past episodes. Plus, keep an eye on the Ag Educators Workroom and other FFA.org pages because soon we'll be posting presentations from National AG Ed Inservice and much more.

National FFA Convention News

Chapter Housing is Now Open

Advisors need to login to MyFFA for Hotel Listings and the Chapter Housing Request Form. For details or if you have questions, contact Ellen Williams, ewilliams@ffa.org.

Convention Registration Alert

The National FFA Board of Directors has set the 2008 National FFA Convention registration fee at \$40 for those who have pre-registered using the housing block. The registration fee will be \$50 for all others, including those who register on site or drive in daily.

During the past five years, FFA has seen a steady increase in the convention's operational costs as the convention has continued to evolve into a larger, more dynamic event. At the same time, sponsorship and other revenue have helped offset convention costs—up to a point. It's important to point out that convention registration fees still cover just 22 percent of the overall cost of the convention.

As in the past, National FFA staff will continue to trim expenses and maximize the convention opportunity to ensure that FFA members are provided a tremendous convention experience at the most affordable price possible.

First Edition Advisors Planning Guide Online in April

Each April, FFA advisors know to expect the ***Advisors Planning Guide – First Edition*** in advance of the annual national FFA convention. This guide contains important housing and preliminary event information. This year, the publication will be made available online only; no print copies will be produced.

During the next few weeks, you will see ListServ e-mails and other reminders guiding FFA advisors to the convention

website on FFA.org, where all the APG information will be available beginning in mid-April. Please pass this information along to your advisors.

This August, advisors will receive a hard copy of the *Advisors Planning Guide—Second Edition*. In 2009 **both** publications will only be available online. Questions? Contact Julie Woodard, jwoodard@ffa.org.

Indianapolis, Louisville Finalists for National FFA Conventions

FFA has selected the cities of Indianapolis, Ind., and Louisville, Ky., as the two finalists vying to host the 2013 through 2019 National FFA Conventions. During the past several months, a delegation from the National FFA Organization visited each of four semi-finalist cities, touring proposed convention venues and clarifying information submitted in the detailed proposal bids from each city. In May and June, FFA board members and staff representatives will make return visits to Louisville and Indianapolis and will begin initial negotiations with both cities. FFA will announce the next convention host city in early November, following the completion of the 2008 convention.

Convention Photos: Ordering Period Extended

Back by popular demand! Orders for 2007 national convention photos have been pouring in and have surpassed the original 90-day window. But good news! We have extended the ordering period an additional 90 days! You can continue ordering 4 x 6, 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 prints until April 23. [Click here](#) to go directly to the ordering site, or visit <http://convention.ffa.org> and click on the "Order Photos" box on the right. This is your last chance to commemorate your convention experience. Questions? Contact Amber Striegel at astriegel@ffa.org.

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