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June 2007

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LifeKnowledge AT WORK is 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

Establishing and Advancing LK in Your Local Classroom

Alan Held of Nebraska talks about establishing and advancing LK in your local classroom. [Click here to read article](#)

Providing Leadership Training for Every Student

Missouri ag teacher Tammy Vogler shares tips on incorporating leadership on a daily basis to reach all students. [Click here to read article](#)

The Role of a Teacher in Being a Leader within the Ag Ed Profession

Brad Schloesser - agriculture teacher, Delta participant and past president of the National Council for Agricultural Education - shares his advice on the importance of teachers assuming a leadership role within agricultural education. [Click here to read article](#)

The Importance of Mentors for New Teachers

Former California agriculture teacher and graduate student Ann Delay provides detailed information on her mentoring experiences, how to be a good mentor and why mentoring is so important in agricultural education. Ann also served as a mentor for the Delta Program in 2005 and 2006. [Click here to read article](#)

LK in Action

Sustaining Leadership Development into the Summer

Sixth-year agriculture teacher Kelly Hoelting answers questions on the importance of continuing leadership development during the summer. [Click here to read article](#)

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Featured Lesson

Featured Lesson Plan – Evaluating Equine Conformation

Agriculture teacher and FFA advisor Heather Anderson from Manheim, Pa., shares a lesson this month entitled Evaluating Equine Conformation. Heather integrates the



This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2002-45201-05130 as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

LifeKnowledge precept of Vision into her lesson.
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Establishing and Advancing LK in Your Local Classroom

By Alan Held, Agriculture Teacher, Kimball Jr./Sr. High School, Kimball, Neb.



I began using LK in 2004 after the curriculum was presented at our Nebraska Agricultural Educators Association (NAEA) summer conference. I found LK to be a useful tool and integrated much of the information in my classes. However, I didn't fully utilize LK in my classroom until after I attended the Delta conference last summer. This is where I realized the full benefits of LK, including innovative delivery methods and new ways to engage students. Today, I can honestly say that LK has been established in my classroom. The key to this for me and for many teachers is taking the time to learn about LK strategies and taking advantage of all that it offers.

One of the best ways I've advanced LK in my classroom is by using it to manipulate lessons in a manner that relates to my students. I have found that the concepts and objectives of LK are valuable to almost all students regardless of the class in which they are enrolled. LK allows the teacher to use many modalities, which accomplishes greater comprehension among a higher percentage of students enrolled. It has also helped me to generate interest among students regarding a specific topic before I begin a lesson or unit. And for obvious reasons, the leadership aspects built into LK are always beneficial.

One of the ways I use LK on a daily basis is by infusing it into my agriculture leadership class. LK has been a significant addition as it has allowed me to expand this class's objectives. It has also enabled me to use more modalities to reach a higher percentage of students. Students get more involved in the class and participate kinesthetically during the lessons presented. This has strengthened academic content because information is applicable in the students' lives. Specifically, it helps them relate information to the past, present, and especially the future. I have also noticed a change in my students because they are able to influence their class by offering examples during discussions and by providing feedback and input. I have become a more effective teacher because I am actively incorporating my students into each and every lesson compared to pre-LK when I was only getting a few of them involved in hands-on activities. Teachers need to realize that even if you do not use the lessons that LK has to offer, the E-Moments allow teachers to introduce lessons in any class. They also help to assess the students' knowledge at the beginning, middle or end of a lesson.

"One of the best ways I've advanced LK in my classroom is by using it to manipulate lessons in a manner that relates to my students. I have found that the concepts and objectives of LK are valuable to almost all students regardless of the class in which they are enrolled."

To further advance LK, I am currently incorporating many of the precepts into my existing curriculum. We are also completing a district-wide restructuring and writing of our agriscience curriculum. Having the precepts on hand has allowed me to rethink what needed to be taught in the program as well as how it is delivered. I am also on a committee that is writing a statewide curriculum for an introduction to agriculture class. The lessons being created will have a supplemental LK portion included in the plan to give Nebraska teachers an option. This idea began with the Nebraska director of agricultural education and then I, along with other teachers, started the process. We are in the early stages of the program, but several of the teachers on the team will be presenting it to the state during our summer conference this year. Hopefully, many of the teachers will begin incorporating LK into their classes by using the lessons.

My challenge to teachers who are not fully implementing LK in their classroom is to give it a try. And do not hesitate to work with other teachers in your state to use LK to make sweeping improvements to ag curriculum that will positively influence students for years to come. Teachers don't have to change their class structure and/or curriculum to use LK. It is designed to be implemented into any class. Take a look and see that your teaching methods can be improved and you should receive positive results from your students. Whether you use all of the curriculum or bits and pieces, LK is here to support teachers and students.

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Providing Leadership Training for Every Student

By Tammy Vogler, Agriculture Teacher, Holden High School, Holden, Mo.

As agriculture teachers, we understand the need and importance for **all** students to have a solid set of leadership skills. A lot of students think they are great leaders because they attend conferences, camps, etc. But the reality is every student in every class needs to have leadership principles incorporated into their daily lives so they will be honest, hardworking, productive citizens. This is where true leadership shines. What they do every day is the most important, not just whose picture



is in the paper for attending a conference. The more students we can influence to demonstrate leadership characteristics, the better.

So what approach do I take to reach all of my students, even those with special needs? First, I try to accommodate students based on their needs and keep the topics relevant to real-world situations. In other words, I try to relate to what's going on with them. In order to do this, I make it a point to know a little about my students and what is going on in their life. If they are upset because they have just had an argument with someone, I try to work in a leadership lesson on conflict resolution. By taking this approach, I am teaching relevant leadership without my students knowing that it is an outright leadership lesson, which many of them may resist.

Secondly, I make it a habit to incorporate leadership principles with my content on a regular basis.

Sometimes it is challenging because of the varying leadership styles and levels in the room, but LK has a great lesson on leadership styles that you can use from the get-go so that mutual respect is established from the beginning. I also find that kinesthetic activities and E-Moments go over really well with all students. LK has some great activities that cross the boundaries of student ability to help reach all students on some level or another.

Third, I focus on getting students involved and excited about leadership. To this end, I am not intimidated to come out of my comfort zone to make something happen. I love E-Moments because I think they let true colors shine. Together with our students, we can learn and teach something while at the same time acting a little silly. From my experience, these are the moments that students remember. For example, when using the "Motion Moment," I see kids sitting in their seats going through the motions when they take a quiz. It's important to relax and have a little fun in class. It just works!

Finally, if you are not using LK yet, use it! LK is the missing piece to the puzzle I have been trying to solve the past six years. It helps tie everything together. Before LK, I would do stand-alone leadership units in my classes. And I won't lie, sometimes I find myself resorting back to that. But when I see boredom showing up on my students' faces and realize the insignificant effect of what I am teaching, I am reminded of why I use LK. When I do an LK lesson, they love it!

In the end, we all have the same goal for our students...we want them to be successful. We need to teach them "how to be" successful. Building their character will help build their future. As Mark Reardon said, "It's not about you (the teacher); it's all about them (the students)." I now know that "if it is to be...it is up to me!"

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The Role of a Teacher in Being a Leader within the Ag Ed Profession

Q & A with Brad J. Schloesser, Agriculture Teacher, South Central College, North Mankato, Minn., and Past President of the National Council for Agricultural Education



1. Why is it important for ag teachers to serve as leaders within the education profession and ag ed community?

It is important for us to be leaders within our profession and the ag ed community because we are the best prepared and most adequately equipped people to prepare future generations for life. We are also in a unique position within our local community. I have observed and experienced being in the right place at the right time and having community members and fellow leaders looking to me and other agriculture educators for answers and guidance. Most importantly, graduates from ag ed programs have shared with me that ag education was the most instrumental program in helping prepare them for life.

2. What roles do ag teachers play as leaders within their school, community, state or on the national level?

Our roles are many and it's important to note that the roles we perform are not just "B.S."

- Be a mentor to current and future teachers, including agriculture educators and other content area teachers as well as your students.
- Be a community resource for all kinds of questions, including those that we have an answer for as well as those that require our network of expertise to find a solution.
- Be a motivator of youth to "love the learning," explore career paths and discover a passion.
- Be professional and strive to improve oneself as a teacher by adapting with the times and technology. However, also be grounded and hold on to the core values that make us successful educators and role models.
- Serve as a role model for students and community members by sharing knowledge and displaying a passion for our profession as agriculture educators. People watch our actions and it does influence our community. When successful agriculture teachers do the right things, their students do the "right things."
- Set goals and model the kind of behavior that successful people exhibit in leadership roles.

"I have made it a point throughout my career to network, share and actively participate in the betterment of our profession and of ag education. I take the approach of 'lifelong learner,' which has steered me toward professional meetings, conferences and personal discussions that have inspired me and others to do more."

- Stimulate others to become involved in valuable and purposeful activities.
- Work at providing good learning experiences for students.

3. How can a teacher influence or help promote ag ed reform and other initiatives from a low-profile and high-profile perspective?

Low-profile: Smile every day. Don't hesitate to show others how much you enjoy being an ag teacher. Your positive attitude will lead them to wanting to help and support your work if they observe that it makes others better. Encourage your students to display the positives about the ag ed curriculum by showcasing their career development and successes, personal growth opportunities and leadership learned. Be the best version of yourself that you can be and encourage others to do the same.

High-profile: Be an **active** member of the agricultural education profession by taking part in NAAE and state ag ed organizations. Promote yourself as a successful professional by projecting a positive image and applying for NAAE awards and other recognition opportunities available to educators. Also engage in other professional organizations. By collaborating and creating allies in the effort to promote and propel ag ed reform, you will not be a lone voice. Utilize a team approach and create a nation that values agricultural education.

4. What are some ways you have served in a leadership capacity for the benefit of agricultural education? What has been your greatest achievement?

I have made it a point throughout my career to network, share and actively participate in the betterment of our profession and of ag education. I take the approach of "lifelong learner," which has steered me toward professional meetings, conferences and personal discussions that have inspired me and others to do more. In that regard, I have also been an active member of organizations that support the development and improvement of agricultural education on the local, state and national levels. This includes my membership and involvement in our regional agriculture educators association, in the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators and in The National Council for Agricultural Education.

Within the scope of my involvement, I served on the board of directors for the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators and as president of the organization in 2003-04. This led to my recent service as president of The National Council for Agricultural Education. In all cases, I have been an outspoken advocate for the value of agricultural education, learning and a higher level of literacy with regard to food, fiber and fuel in our world. I found that it's very important to meet regularly with others in the profession and ag industry to share information about the issues, challenges and successes that need to be communicated to the larger community. It's also important to capture images, photos or anecdotal evidence and share those bits and pieces that will motivate people to recognize where we need to be in the future.

My greatest achievement professionally is being able to effectively promote ag education as a valuable career choice. It's the best career move I could have made for myself, and graduates have returned to share their appreciation; that is powerful. Overall, my greatest achievement has been raising two beautiful daughters with my lovely wife. They are now young women contributing to society as a kindergarten teacher and future veterinarian in food animal production.

5. What tips can you offer others interested in stepping up or having the desire to lead?

My advice to others wishing to step into a leadership position is:

- Network and build a solid "circle of influence."
- Be a well-grounded person.
- Ask for advice from those who are informed and can provide solid advice.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Read; listen to CDs and podcasts; use your library card; watch DVDs on leadership. Leadership is a great lesson for life.
- Recognize your limits and work to expand your ability to push those limits.
- Become an effective advocate, learn advocacy skills and practice advocacy.
- Participate in leadership development opportunities.

6. Why will it be important for all teachers to serve as leaders to help sustain the future of ag ed?

The motto of "all for one and one for all" in regard to leadership is the type of commitment and confidence we need from all agriculture educators to influence the future. For those who are outside the direct circle of influence and make decisions on funding and resources that are necessary to sustain agricultural education's future, they will have more knowledge of the importance of our ag ed sustenance. However, the disconnect between those who value a future of agricultural education and those who take it for granted or simply do not know, continues to increase. We need all teachers to serve as leaders and help connect others with the value of ag education and its future.

7. What are some of the steps teachers can take to build influence in the profession?

First of all, teachers need to understand the definition of influence. According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, influence is the power exerted over the minds and behavior of others. Recognize that as an agriculture educator, you have the capacity to use power in a very positive and influential manner.

- Share the positives about our profession with your students.
- Recruit young people and those with experience in the industry who may consider agricultural education as a vocation.
- Promote the agricultural education profession; speak positively; write in an informed manner; display the importance of what agricultural education can provide in a community.
- Attend school board meetings to stay informed and to help inform.

- Attend organizational meetings to stay informed and to help inform.
- Be an advocate for agricultural education with your local, state and national representatives. Participate in grassroots advocacy.
- Learn from observations; ask questions of those who can inform; share what you learn.
- Recognize why each of us entered this profession and use that as a driving force and a reminder of why building influence is important.

8. What other advice do you have for ag teachers?

Leaders arrive in the classroom daily. The leaders I am referring to are the **teachers and students**, especially in the agricultural education classroom. We have the ability to impact our future by developing leaders with an appreciation and understanding of agriculture. Leaders with proficiency or at least literacy in agriculture, food and natural resources make sound decisions in our world. That's good news for all of us.

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The Importance of Mentors for New Teachers

By Ann Delay, Former Agriculture Teacher and Graduate Student, the University of Florida



My Background with Mentoring

I learned about the importance of mentors during my first teaching experience at Central High School in Fresno, Calif. While I was nervous about starting my career with such a large program, I was fortunate to have the support of six other agriculture teachers. My department chair was phenomenal about checking in on me regularly to ensure I was doing okay. I remember her asking me if there was anything I needed...all the time. I had friends at other schools airing their frustrations about lack of resources and needing help. This had me thinking, "Wow! I am really lucky to be part of this group!!" I also had the support of the California Agricultural Teachers' Association. Their professional development series was instrumental in my growth during those early years. Their New Professionals Institute made it possible for me to interact with other teachers from all parts of the state. The ideas shared and the connections made helped me see that agricultural education was much more than what was happening within the four walls of my classroom. It made me realize there was more for me and my students.

After four years, I left teaching at the high school to serve as a lecturer in agricultural education at California State University, Fresno. This time with pre-service teachers was an exciting experience. I loved the idyllic way in which they viewed the teaching and learning process. I found their willingness to try new things to be rather refreshing and discovered I enjoyed working with this population. One thing I found rather alarming was how tightly they held to the model their high school agriculture teachers had presented to them. Each one wanted to be just like the individual they learned from as a high school student. In some instances, the model was positive; in others, it was rather toxic. This realization and strong prodding from mentors led me to pursue graduate school at the University of Florida.

My time at UF has been absolutely amazing. I have been fortunate to work with some of agricultural education's finest teacher educators and some of the finest educational researchers within UF's College of Education. As an undergrad, I rarely saw the importance of my experience within my own College of Education. I found the lessons learned from my agricultural education major to be highly relevant, then filed the rest away into my "nice to know but not really practical or important" mental file cabinet. Now, with the experiences I have had, I appreciate each new educational discovery and see its relevance and application to the agriculture educator. My research interests are still forming, but I am most interested in those things that will help to advance the professional growth and retention of quality agriscience teachers.

Strategies for Mentoring

There is a quote by Louis Armstrong that reads, "If they don't know, how are you gonna tell them?" I can remember instances throughout my life when, while forging ahead, I came to a point when there was a better/easier/faster/more accurate way to get the results I wanted. However, because I had no knowledge of that new or different way, I had no choice but to continue as I had been. It is important to mentor new teachers because they don't always know how to effectively maneuver the various nuances of the profession. Teacher education programs do all they can to help prepare pre-service teachers, but more must happen once teachers arrive in their classrooms.

"Entering into a mentoring situation requires that each party be willing to take risks, to be honest and to trust one another as professionals. The easiest way to make this happen is by first asking new teachers for their permission to offer them assistance. It is a relationship of choice."

The first thing I do when approaching a mentoring situation with a new teacher is build trust. Hal Portner outlines the importance of such a foundation in his book *Mentoring New Teachers*. Entering into a mentoring situation requires that each party be willing to take risks, to be honest and to trust one another as professionals. The easiest way to make this happen is by first asking new teachers for their permission to offer them assistance. It is a relationship of choice. From that point forward, everything I do is either a help or a hindrance to the relationship's progress. I also try to speak honestly and with encouragement. This lets the new teacher know I value their professional judgments and am there to help them find solutions that best suit them...not me. I've listed five steps below that have helped me be a more effective mentor.

1. Hold a pre-observation conference. Mentoring is a messy endeavor. To mentor effectively, one must be actively engaged with all facets of the novice's professional world. In order to gain access, mentors must open communication with the new teacher through a pre-observation conference and ask them to share what they struggle with or would like to improve. Beginning the relationship from such a position can circumvent any resistance they may harbor. If opposition is

still met, it may be helpful to have them envision the type of teacher they would like to be and then share what might be preventing them from achieving it.

2. Use open-ended questions with inclusive language. For example, after discussing data, ask a question like, "Based on this data, what might we do differently to get the type of result we are after?" As the mentor, listen deeply to the new teachers' ideas and help them decide which might be the most effective solution to their need. Should the new teacher fail to offer an appropriate answer, the mentor can then present possible solutions from which the new teacher can choose. This strategy is also good for helping the new teacher build autonomy as it focuses on them and not about what I would like to hear. The richness of such dialogue helps me to develop a better understanding of the new teacher and helps me understand how to support them in a way that best suits them.

3. Observe the new teacher in action. Observations should be made in the classroom and during teacher interactions with administrators, parents, peers and others they encounter. It is also helpful to view the teachers while they are facilitating and supervising in FFA and SAE contexts. During the observation sessions, the mentor must collect data for use in subsequent dialogue. This means she/he must gather objective information, paying particular attention to those key areas the new teacher mentioned earlier. It is also helpful to include data the mentor found interesting or relevant to overall improvement.

4. Hold a post-observation conference. Once data has been collected or observations made, hold a post-conference meeting to review it. It can be quite helpful to have the new teacher walk through the observed event while viewing the data and describing the links between his thinking and his recorded actions. Such insight into the teacher's cognition can provide the mentor with more information about potential support options.

5. Do not overpower the novice. Many veteran teachers have been fortunate to arrive at the place in their profession where they are viewed as experts. Because of this standing, it can be difficult to fill the role of a mentor simply because she/he has been successful with many of the very things the new teacher struggles. By keeping the goal of the mentoring relationship in mind, veteran teachers can overcome the urge to overpower or overprotect. Paying close attention to verbal and nonverbal communication will help with this. It may also be helpful to take a few notes to stay engaged and to remember key information. Also, take things slow. Begin working with the new teacher on one or two key need areas before moving on to the other areas. This approach increases the new teacher's successful improvement as she/he is able to spend more time and energy focusing on the specific area without being distracted.

The Importance of Mentoring in Ag Education

Ag teachers are very unique in their professional responsibilities. Few other teachers are required to simultaneously facilitate student learning in the classroom using solid methods and curriculum, successfully advise a student leadership organization and provide knowledgeable supervision for students in their work-based experiences. This varied set of responsibilities can be quite a shock to new professionals as they enter their first year of teaching. Some schools have mentoring programs that pair experienced teachers with novice teachers, yet rarely do agriculture teachers get placed with other agriculture teachers. This mismatch often results in a challenging situation for the new teacher and mentor alike. New teachers are not able to ask questions regarding program areas beyond their classroom, and mentor teachers cannot effectively address all the different areas of need the new teacher may have. Ag ed must step up and take on this important work to help fill new teachers' needs and ease some of the stress they feel as early career professionals. This arrangement can also provide veteran teachers with a new challenge at a point in their careers when they think they have everything all figured out.

That being said, areas of focus are typically determined on a case-by-case basis. It is common for new teachers to struggle with what they need to teach, even when they may have received packaged curriculum resources. They are also challenged with pairing the most appropriate teaching method with the particular content to be shared. Through my experiences supervising student teachers and new teachers, I have found many early career professionals lack clear vision in their lesson planning. Often they contain the major components—objectives, content, activities and assessment—but fail to include contextual sets or appropriate transitions. It is through these holes their students are lost.

Dealing with the school environment can also present problems. For agriculture teachers, this environment is much wider than for other teachers. It often includes laboratory settings, both indoors and out; additional equipment and resources; and loads of extra paperwork. These pressures can seem insurmountable while trying to keep up in the classroom as well.

Help for Mentors

According to the Delta program, the most important objective the mentor must keep in mind is helping a new teacher develop competence and confidence so she/he might be better at achieving quality student learning. This objective keeps the focus on the new teacher's growth and ultimately on student success.

Before agreeing to serve as a mentor, the veteran must ask himself if he is a good agriculture teacher. This is an important question because mentoring is about more than extra pay or a line on a résumé. Mentoring is tough work and requires the veteran teacher be fully committed to the new teacher and to the process. It requires the veteran to take more risks than might otherwise be expected and model strategies for the new teacher.

Those serving as mentors must perform regular self-assessments to determine their effectiveness. In her book *Mentoring in Action: A month-by-month curriculum for mentors and their new teachers*, Carol Pelletier shares five principles of effective mentoring. They include:

1. Embrace who you are and what you bring to the relationship.
2. Develop meaningful relationships.
3. Take the lead with forging rich conversation.
4. Be reflective consistently.
5. Integrate new teachers into a community of learners, both at the school site and in the larger context of the profession.

I also recommend the following resources for veteran teachers considering mentoring:

1. Portner, H. (2003). *Mentoring new teachers*, (updated ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

2. Pelletier, C. (2006). *Mentoring in action: A month-by-month curriculum for mentors and their new teachers.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

The good news! Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found teacher mentoring to be one of the most prominent factors in keeping teachers in the profession and at the same school after their first year of teaching. What exciting news! Perhaps through mentoring and other support mechanisms, our profession can help develop and retain the qualified agriscience teachers our students deserve.

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Featured Lesson Plan – Evaluating Equine Conformation

By Heather Anderson, Agriculture Teacher, Manheim, Pa.



Heather Anderson is an agriculture educator who teaches at Manheim Central High School in Manheim, Pa. Heather's philosophy on teaching leadership is very hands-on. She believes learning is not about needing to "know this someday because..." It's about doing things now and taking pride in your accomplishments. As a result, she helps students of all ability levels be successful. That is why this month's featured lesson allows students to be actively engaged in learning about Evaluating Equine Conformation while developing visioning skills. Heather is proud that she can reach students at all ability levels with her lesson and is able to help them find success.

[To view a complete version of Heather's lesson, click here.](#)

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Sustaining Leadership Development into the Summer

By Kelly Hoelting, Agriculture Teacher, Mission Valley High School, Eskridge, Kan.



1. Why is it important to continue to work during the summer to help students develop leadership skills?

It is a well-researched fact that student retention of knowledge drops over the summer months. Not only is this true for book work, but also for many of the social and leadership skills that students develop over the school year. Therefore, it is essential that those of us in agricultural education maintain the continuity we have in our classrooms throughout the summer months. This may include SAE project visits, participation in fairs and summer leadership camps. If we can teach students to keep their minds open to learning and use leadership skills throughout the summer, those skills can be built upon at the start of the next school year rather than relearned.

2. How can teachers sustain leadership development for students over the summer?

The summertime provides an excellent opportunity for hands-on leadership development for both students and teachers. A great way to sustain leadership is to provide opportunities for students to use their skills. Activities planned over the summer are the easiest way to keep students involved and active in the organization. You might encourage students to work with younger brothers and sisters in the community. SAE mentoring programs and local fairs are another way to keep students involved and interacting with a variety of people. Many students need incentives to keep them motivated throughout the summer. By providing these, a teacher can make the most of summer activities.

3. What are some ways to integrate LK into summer FFA activities?

There are several ways to integrate LK into summer activities, but here are five things that have worked well for me.

1. **SAE Mentoring Programs**—Older FFA members help younger members with similar SAE's to keep up records, answer questions and provide advice throughout the summer.
2. **Officer Retreat**—Utilizing the goal-setting activities and team-building sections of the LifeKnowledge curriculum is an excellent way to plan an officer retreat and to continue the leadership development of the new officers. This will help with a smooth transition into the school year.
3. **Chapter Meeting**—Holding a chapter meeting in the summer is a great way to have fun while infusing LifeKnowledge and leadership development. Team-building activities can be an exciting way to spend a summer evening. Utilize state and chapter officers to run activities and provide the LK training behind each activity.
4. **County Fairs, Town Fairs, Carnivals**—Becoming an advocate for agriculture is an excellent way to use leadership skills while promoting the ag classroom and FFA. Students can develop a presentation board or a booth to display at a local event. These events provide many opportunities to use LK and foster responsibility among your FFA membership.

"Incentive programs are an easy way to keep students motivated over the summer months. In our FFA chapter, we keep track of summer participation in activities. Students are rewarded when school resumes and this gives them something to transition back into the school year."

5. **FFA Newsletter**—A summer newsletter with short articles about leadership is an easy way to infuse LifeKnowledge into the community and the students. Time the newsletter close to the start of school and it can also serve as a recruitment tool and upcoming events calendar.

4. How do you keep students from “taking the summer off” from their own personal growth development?

Incentive programs are an easy way to keep students motivated over the summer months. In our FFA chapter, we keep track of summer participation in activities. Students are rewarded when school resumes and this gives them something to transition back into the school year. Planning an activity at the beginning, middle and end of the summer can help “bookend” leadership development and keep students thinking throughout the summertime.

An easy way to help an already busy student is to have them work with the activities they already have planned for the summer. Involvement in 4-H, youth groups and sport activities are all excellent ways that students can continue using their leadership skills without adding to their busy schedule. As an advisor, we can help teach students to use their leadership skills in these other organizations so they get more hands-on experience in developing their own personal leadership.

5. How can you build leadership development into SAE visits?

For this one, I come back to SAE mentoring programs as an excellent way to achieve leadership development during SAE visits. Older FFA members can mentor younger members, 4-Hers, brothers and sisters with similar projects or SAEs. By promoting this interaction during visits, an advisor can see the progress in FFA members over the summertime. This information can be tracked in record book or SAE packets.

Meeting with the student and their parents or a boss regarding specific LK precepts also provides opportunities for leadership development. For example, responsibility is one precept that is very important. Student progress can be tracked over the summer while being tied into your curriculum and use of LK.

6. How do you encourage students to participate in summer officer retreats, SAE visits, fairs, camps, etc.? What percentage of your students participate in some sort of summer ag-related leadership activity?

Our chapter has a point incentive program. The more activities a student participates in during the summer, the larger the reward at the end of the year. As an example, SAE visits are related to the student's grade for the upcoming year, and next year's grade begins the day after school lets out. This helps keep them motivated and accountable throughout the summer. In addition, our officers are required to sign a contract for their participation. If an officer misses an important activity, it can be grounds for removal from office.

As far as percentages for student participation, 100 percent of our officers participate in the officer retreat, 75 to 80 percent of our students participate in SAE visits and/or fairs and 90 percent of our students participate in a summer recruitment event.

7. How does keeping leadership development a priority through the summer help when the students come back to school in the fall?

Keeping leadership development a priority makes the transition into fall activities easier. This also helps the excitement level of students when they come back to school. They have high expectations for themselves and their chapters. By setting high expectations, the school year will have an established starting point and things will move forward at a quicker pace. That being said, it's important for us as advisors to provide students with the tools and support to succeed in all of their events and activities throughout the summer.

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Wind Up Learning as the Year Winds Down: Activities for the Last Days of School

The last few days of the school year are upon you, and you're at a loss for what to do. Do you emphasize fun or attempt to squeeze in some last-minute learning? Check out some suggestions offered by Education World for keeping kids focused during the last hours of the school year. To view the suggestions visit:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson184.shtml

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What's New with LK

Summer LifeKnowledge Newsletter Schedule

The LifeKnowledge newsletter will not be published in July or August. We will return to publishing the newsletter in September. The newsletter will include more tips, lessons and ways to help advance your usage of LifeKnowledge at the local level. If you have suggestions for an item that you would like to see in the newsletter, please send your suggestions and story ideas to Christine White at cwhite@ffa.org.

New, Improved Version of LifeKnowledge Available

LifeKnowledge just got better. LifeKnowledge Online has many new features, including online access for teachers and students from any computer along with automatic program updates. Additionally, a precept indicator will measure students' levels of achievement and provide immediate feedback to assess strengths and potential growth areas. The online coaching guide includes more than 275 activities to help integrate LK into existing classroom, FFA and SAE activities. To subscribe to LK Online, call the FFA call center at 1-888-332-2668 or fax the call center at 1-800-366-6556. It is also available at www.ffaunlimited.org and in the 2007-2008 Core catalog. When ordering LK Online, reference item number LK-07 and be prepared to provide the following information: Chapter Name, Chapter ID, State, Advisor's Name and Advisor's E-mails.

Access to the program begins within two business days of purchase. LifeKnowledge Online contact: Christine White,
cwhite@ffa.org or 317-802-4212.

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Evaluating Equine Conformation
Heather Anderson, Agriculture Teacher
Manheim, Pennsylvania
2006

Student Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

Objective 1:

Observe the differences between two objects.

Objective 2:

Define the six common terms used in horse evaluation.

Objective 3:

Develop a vision of the ideal Quarter Horse.

Background

Unit:

Horse Evaluation and Selection

LifeKnowledge Precept:

Vision

Key Terms:

Balance, Structure, Muscling, Quality, Breed Character, Travel, Vision

Logistical Information

Time:

One 88-min. block

Resources:

1. Spot the Differences, 1 & 2 Handouts (www.astropuzzles.com)
2. Vocabulary Worksheet
3. *How to Judge Halter Horses* [CEV Video] Note: This video on halter horses covers all factors used to evaluate equine conformation including balance, structure, muscling, quality, breed character and travel. John Pipkin explains each factor in graphics to give the most clear, visual pictures possible. A practice class and critique follow his discussion. Run time is 48 minutes.

Heather Anderson



2006

Supplies:

Pens, Note Cards, Videotape, VCR and Television

Interest Approach:

Good morning! Welcome to Horse Judging 101!

We are going to begin class with a visualization exercise. Please close your eyes and clear your mind. Without talking, picture the perfect pen. What shape is it? What color? How does it feel in your hand? How does it write? Good. Now open your eyes, but keep that picture in your mind.

When I say “John Hancock,” turn to the person sitting next to you and take turns describing your perfect pen to one another. You will have 60 seconds to share your images. What questions do you have? “John Hancock.”

Did you and your partner share the same image of the perfect pen? Probably not. You each had your own vision. Vision, in this context, has nothing to do with actual sight. It is a mental image.

Refer to the vision you just had of the perfect pen. When I hold up these two pens, point to the one that most closely matches your vision of the perfect pen.

How did you decide? You chose the pen that was most similar to your vision. We visualize things every day. You can use that ability to make decisions, set goals and predict results. It is one of the skills that makes our species unique on the planet and helps us survive. We’re going to sharpen that skill by using it to judge horses.

Contextual Set

At the beginning of this course, we studied different breeds of horses. We learned that different breeds were developed for different purposes. Draft horse breeds were for work while light horse breeds were for riding. Each breed association has developed a vision for its breed and continues to ask the members of its association to refine that image year after year.

In our next unit, you will develop the skills needed to choose the best breeding and riding horses in the country. By choosing the right horses, you will enjoy riding more, have greater success in showing and could potentially build a better horse business.

Today we’re going to answer the question, “How do I evaluate the physical conformation of the horse?” The first skill we have to develop along the way, however, is our ability to notice differences in details. Prepare to sharpen your focus, observe the smallest details and compare horses to your vision of the perfect horse.

Heather Anderson



Hand out “Spot the Differences” puzzle, and begin to give the following directions:

We will begin by learning to observe differences in the details. When I say “go,” turn to another person at your table and help each other circle the eight differences in the “Spot the Differences” puzzle. You will have one minute to work on the puzzle. What questions can I answer? Okay, now go!

Monitor students’ progress. When time is up, list the eight differences on the board:

One nostril on horse, mane is longer, no pig tail, pig’s belly spot, horseshoe leaning on box, interior of box, hair above left front hoof, pig’s left ear.

Summary of Content, Instructional Sequence, Activities and Strategies:

Objective 1: Observe small differences between two objects.

Nice work class. You have just demonstrated the first skill needed to judge horses. You probably didn’t even realize you had it. You were able to compare similar objects and observe small differences between the two.

Next we will hone that skill by practicing it on pictures of horses. I am handing out our next worksheet, called Spot the Differences 2. At the top of the page, you will see a picture of the perfect horse according to the American Quarter Horse Association. At the bottom is a picture of a real American Quarter Horse. They are the same gender and breed, but there are subtle differences.

When I say “trot,” take one minute to circle as many differences as you can find between the two images. No detail is too small. What questions can I answer? Okay, now trot!

What differences did you find? *Possible answers could include longer face, smaller jowl, steeper shoulder, shorter hip, less muscle, etc. List answers on the board.*

Objective 2: Define six common terms used in horse evaluation.

Interesting? You were able to note several differences between these two images. You focused on the smallest details to determine the differences between the two horses. Next, we’re going to take those differences and place a value on them. This will help us choose which horse is better when we compare them to our vision. To do that, however, we must first define six common terms used in judging horses. Pretend you are shopping for a new car. Each of these terms describes features of the car, and you must rank their importance before you buy.

Heather Anderson



Use the “Go Get It” E-Moment to take notes on the following definitions:

Balance –Visually, from a side view, a horse’s body can be broken down into four equal parts: The neck should be proportional to the shoulder, back and hip.

Structure – A horse’s skeletal frame is in the proper shape and alignment.

Muscling – A stock-type horse should have well-developed muscle mass and tone.

Quality – A horse’s appearance should be gender appropriate, with mares having more refined features than stallions.

Breed Character – A horse’s physical appearance should match that which is determined by its breed organization.

Travel – How a horse tracks as it moves.

Hand out Vocabulary Worksheet. Have students form groups of three or four.

Around the room, I have posted six index cards that contain the definitions you will need. They could be hidden anywhere within this room. When I say “go,” you will have six minutes to search with your group to find and copy all six definitions. You must stay together as a group and may not move from one definition to the next until all the members of your group have finished writing their definition. What questions do you have? Okay, Go!

When I get to “one,” everyone is in their seats. 3-2-1.

Have students read the definitions of each term. Make sure everyone agrees.

Quietly look over those six terms again. Using your pencil, lightly draw in the left margin what you think is their order of importance. You’ll be able to check and see if you were right in a moment.

Objective 3: Develop a vision of the ideal Quarter Horse.

These six terms represent six categories of structural faults. A fault is any problem with the horse’s physical structure that makes it less than ideal. That’s what we were picking out in our second Spot the Differences worksheet. Every difference you found in the second horse was considered a fault. Consider this...by understanding how faults affect function, we can refine our vision of the ideal Quarter Horse. How? Be ready to explain when I call on you.

Heather Anderson



Next, you will show the first 30 minutes of the video, How to Judge Halter Horses, with John Pipkin. Stop the video before judging the video class at the end. Have students use the third column of their vocabulary sheet to expand on their definitions as the video plays. When finished, have them share any new insights, and give them the official order of importance of the six categories.

Review

We began class today by using our vision two ways. We developed a mental vision of a horse and then used our eyes to look for discrepancies in the real thing. We defined the terms used to categorize those differences and placed a value on each category. Finally, we saw examples of the perfect Quarter Horse so we could perfect our mental vision. Tomorrow, we will use that vision to compare multiple horses to the ideal. We will begin judging a group of four halter horses at the same time.

Take out your agenda books and find today's date. Write down your homework assignment for tomorrow. Please sketch your mental image of the ideal horse. It doesn't need to be pretty, but try to be accurate when drawing angles and keep the parts in proportion. We will use your drawings at the start of class tomorrow.

Thank you for your attention. Enjoy the rest of your day.

(Evaluation Answer Key)

1. Details
2. Balance, Structure, Muscling, Quality, Breed Character, Travel
3. Balance
4. Breed Associations
5. We can picture the goals of our organization.

Heather Anderson



Name: _____

Date:

Evaluating Equine Conformation Quiz

1. The key to judging horses is to observe differences in the smallest _____.
 2. What are the six qualities we look for when judging halter horses?
 3. Which judging quality is considered the most important in predicting the ability of a horse to perform?
 4. Who develops the ideal vision we have of each breed of horse?
 5. How can our ability to visualize make us a better leader?

Heather Anderson



2006

Horse Evaluation Vocabulary

Term	Definition	Additional Information

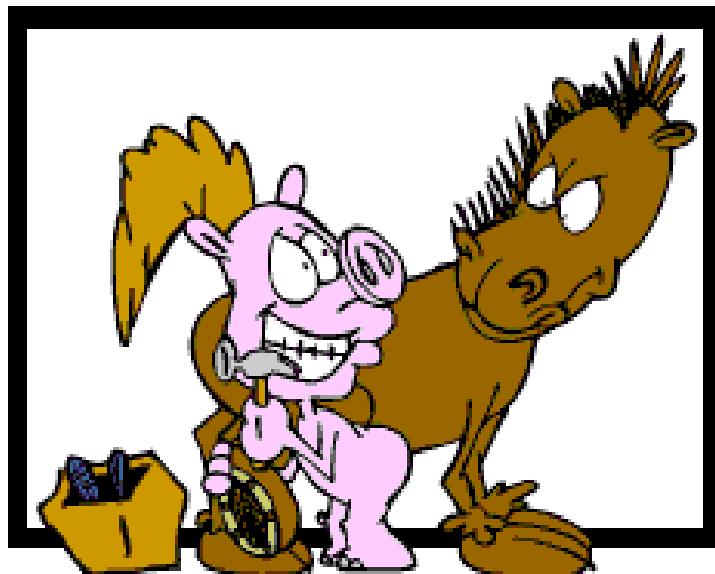
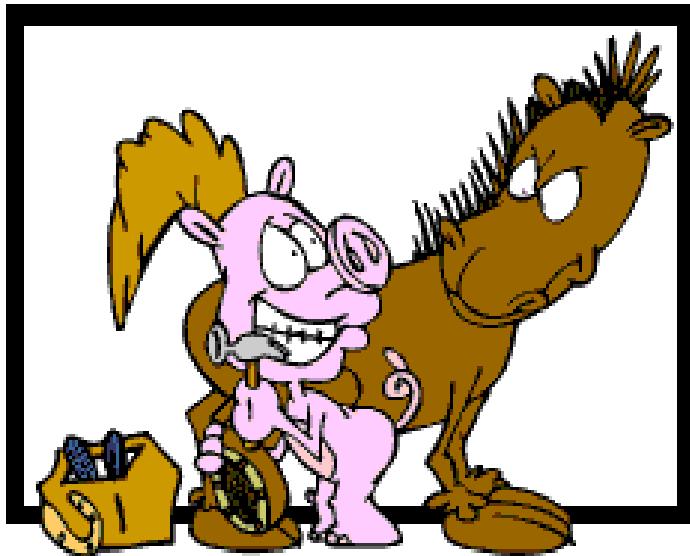
Heather Anderson



Spot the Differences

(From AstroPuzzles)

There are eight differences between these two pictures. Can you find them all?



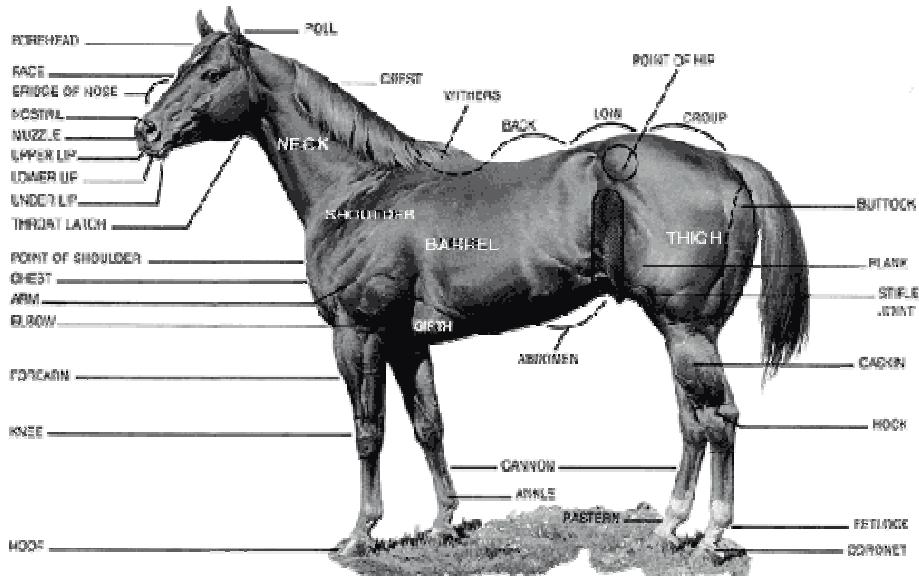
Heather Anderson



Spot the Differences: Round Two

Shown below is a picture of the ideal Quarter Horse. Shown below that is a second Quarter Horse. Circle all the differences you see between the two horses.

External Features



Boomstone Cody (QH)



Heather Anderson

