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Classroom, FFA and SAE: a Recipe for Success

INTEGRAL *adj* `in-ti-grel essential to completeness; formed as a unit with another part or parts

agriculture educators often speak of the integral nature of their program, but seldom spend much time discussing what that really means. Of course, most remember a diagram of three interlocking circles from their university coursework that showed how classroom and laboratory instruction worked together with FFA and Supervised Agricultural Experiences to form a comprehensive program.

According to Webster's Dictionary, "integral" means, "essential to completeness; formed as a unit with another part or parts." That being the case, why do some teachers treat FFA and SAE as optional elements?

The comprehensive agricultural education program wasn't developed by accident. Conversely, it addresses developing the whole student. Unlike many middle and secondary programs, such as mathematics or language arts, comprehensive agricultural education programs seek to develop students' personal, leadership and career skills.

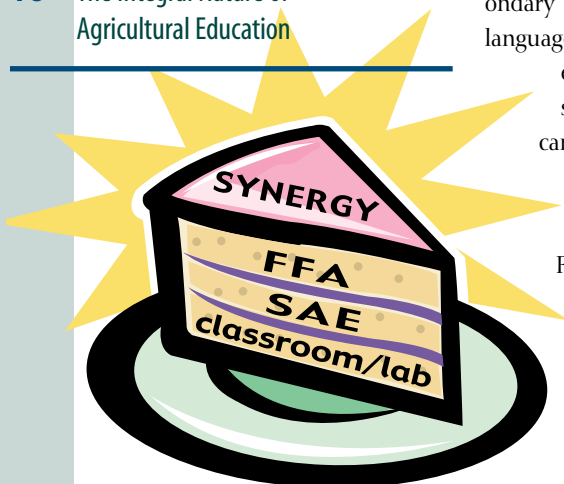
Consider how agricultural education is similar to baking a cake. For example, let the classroom/laboratory represent the flour in the recipe, let FFA represent the sugar and let SAE represent the baking powder. What will happen if any

one of those key ingredients is left out? Leave anything out and the cake will not be very pleasing to the palate. The same is true for agricultural education. Omit any one of the three, and the student ends up with a less-than-fulfilling experience. Conversely, when the three components are implemented together, a synergistic effect is created, e.g., the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Synergy is the proverbial icing on the cake.

Over the past decade, statistics indicate a decline in the percentage of students enrolled in agriculture courses who become FFA members. That same data shows a decline in the percentage of FFA members who have SAE programs. Unfortunately, the data also indicates that incomplete programs are the ones most vulnerable to budget cuts.

If you are only teaching a class, how long can your program survive? Agricultural education programs cost more to operate than most other classes. Our facilities tend to be more expensive. Extended contracts make agriculture teachers more costly than nine-month teachers. In many cases, agriculture credit isn't required for graduation. Competing on just the "class" level has proven itself to be a losing battle.

This issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* focuses on the integral nature of the agricultural education program and how teachers in different parts of the country balance the three elements. Read on for ideas on how to build your program!



Back To Our Roots: Quality Teachers Are The Key

As children across the U.S. began filling classrooms for another school year, one thing is certain; very few walked, biked or rode to school from their family farm. In fact today, less than two percent of our country's population lives on a farm. Yet, when those same students begin entering the workforce, they'll find that one in every six jobs in the United States is associated with agriculture.

With so few people connected to agriculture during their formative years, the need for comprehensive education programs in agricultural sciences increases to ensure these jobs continue to be filled with dedicated, qualified people. Today, there are more than 11,000 teachers involved in agriculture education in the U.S., providing integrated instruction in agricultural sciences, farm mechanics, horticulture, animal science, environmental science and other curricula. The students who benefit from these teachers hail from a cross-section of society. More than 75 percent of the members of the National FFA Organization, the youth organization that develops leadership, personal growth and career success through agriculture education, live in non-farm rural, suburban and urban areas.

Yet, according to Dr. Colien Hefferan, administrator for the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension service, the biggest challenge facing agricultural education today is a shortage of qualified teachers. In recent years a number of promising programs have closed for lack of an available teacher.

We cannot accept this growing shortage of experienced teachers. In nearly two-thirds of the 50 states, the food and fiber system accounts for 15 percent to 20 percent of the state's total employment. More importantly, the agriculture industry is quite literally our life-support system.

The author Richard Critchfield wrote, "A civilization declines when it loses touch with its agrarian roots." As more people move further away from farming, it's imperative our education system provides experienced professionals who keep us in touch with our food and fiber "roots." We must remember that the world population is 6.3 billion people and growing – feeding and clothing them is an important job.

The success of agriculture in feeding our world depends on the education of crop producers and the millions of people who support them in getting food from the farm gate to the dinner plate. It is critical that public, private and governmental organizations join to support recruitment, retention and recognition programs for teachers of agricultural sciences.

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Making a Difference

FFA Advisors Making a Difference is published eight times a year to assist FFA advisors in making a positive difference in the lives of students.

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The FFA Mission

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

The Agricultural Education Mission

Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems.

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Published by Larry D. Case, Coordinator, Agricultural and Rural Education, U.S. Department of Education

This publication is available online at
[\[www.ffa.org/news/html/ffapubsindex.html\]](http://www.ffa.org/news/html/ffapubsindex.html).

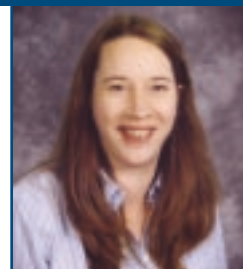
Watch for the LPS Logo



The logo shows how this issue of FFA Advisors Making a Difference relates to Local Program Success, a national initiative to strengthen agricultural education programs. You'll see this icon on all FFA materials. The shaded apples show which areas the materials address.

Perspectives

Balancing the Load



By Tracy Huhn,
Agriculture Teacher
Litchfield High School
Litchfield, Minnesota

As any agriculture teacher can attest, agricultural education is an extremely challenging field. I am constantly juggling my time and energies between the classroom/labs and the FFA program. When I first started, I wanted to focus all of my energies on the classroom. I had no curriculum or regular textbooks. However, I was blessed with a great group of FFA members who pushed me out of my comfort zone.

Engage Community Resources

I quickly rounded up community members to help coach career development event (CDE) teams. My adult farm educator, Chuck Stranberg, was of great assistance. He taught me and my students parliamentary procedure and assisted with proficiency applications. After three years, our parliamentary procedure team placed first at state and competed at nationals.

Now, our chapter has the state FFA president, numerous regional officers, state degree recipients, proficiency winners, an American degree recipient, a national proficiency winner, and a national agri-entrepreneurship finalist. I know that I could not have accomplished this on my own.

I have found enormous support for our program in the Litchfield community. These people work very hard to ensure that our agriculture

students reach their potential and gain new experiences. We recognize our CDE coaches with plaques and pictures each year at the chapter banquet. The students enjoy working with the coaches and the coaches enjoy sharing their area of expertise with the students. It has been a win/win situation for our chapter and community.

We also have a very unique event in Litchfield called the Peanut Butter and Milk Festival. A local businessman and lifetime FFA alumni member started an exchange program between our town and Hartford, Alabama, as a way to promote milk and peanuts.

Leverage Existing Activities

Through the community involvement in these activities, many doors are opened for student SAEs. Businesses are eager to find new talent and our students obtain valuable work experience. Plus, the success of a few students really boosts the SAE program. Once a student receives recognition beyond the local level, others want to know how they can become more involved.

All of these elements—classroom/lab, FFA and SAE—work together to create student success. And that's the bottom line.



Keeping Agricultural Education Integrated

make no mistake about it, when students set foot in the Hobbton FFA Chapter in Newton Grove, N.C., they will be part of a complete agricultural education program.

Tim Warren, who has been teaching agriculture here for 23 years says, "You can't have a strong agricultural education program without FFA and SAE components that are tied back to the classroom and laboratory experiences." That's likely why SAEs are not optional here and why the chapter has 100% FFA membership.

"You can't have a strong agricultural education program without FFA and SAE components that are tied back to the classroom and laboratory experiences."

the chapter has established a series of rewards for students who pay their FFA dues. First, the chapter pays half of each members' dues using fruit sale proceeds. Next, when a class achieves 100% membership, those students receive a special activity, such as breakfast prepared by the teachers.

"We use a variety of techniques to help students understand the importance of FFA and the opportunities the organization provides for growth, travel and just plain fun," Davis says. "Our members have really bought into that message and they share it with the first-year students."

His former student and current teaching partner, Jason Davis, puts it even more strongly. "The way I see it, classroom, FFA and SAE are the holy trinity of agricultural education. You cannot separate one from the other."

So how does this pair implement their shared philosophy? They focus on student interests and make a concerted effort to make learning fun.

"We start by teaching our first-year students about FFA and the opportunities it offers," Warren explains. "We discuss what they'll learn in the classroom, and how that leads to participation in career development events (CDEs) and to building their individual SAEs. We try to expose the students to as many different areas as possible. You never know what interests might trigger."

Encourage Membership

Achieving 100% FFA membership doesn't happen by accident. In Hobbton,

Build Student Interest

Warren and Davis use CDEs as an extension of the classroom and as a way to build student interest. Last year, they had students competing in 20 different CDEs. It isn't uncommon for Hobbton to have 60 or 70 members on different teams competing in everything from the leadership events to floriculture to farm business management.

Warren and Davis often encourage students to start an SAE that is directly tied to the courses they have selected to take. "I have my horticulture class conduct an experiment, then I let the students know they can conduct their own experiments in the greenhouse as their SAE," says Davis. "I work with them individually to set their goals and we work from there."

Start Small

Another key to the pair's success is that they do not attempt to create large, com-



Jason Davis works with Hobbton FFA members.

plex projects in one fell swoop. Warren says, "We start students out with a simplified record book and a fairly small project. Some do research, some have agricultural mechanics projects and some create entrepreneurial programs. Then, we grow from there."

The same philosophy applies to other areas. "When I started teaching five years ago, if someone would have tried to tell me our chapter would compete in 22 CDEs, I would have told them they were nuts," Davis says. "I didn't think we would ever do that, let alone have teams compete at the national level, but the chapter has done it – twice! It was a great learning experience."

Rewards of Teaching

Warren reflects on his teaching career and encourages teachers to remember that many of the rewards of teaching are not immediate. "Most students don't realize the value of what they are learning when they are learning it," he says. "They realize the value later on. Don't expect to reap your rewards today. They'll come years down the road."

Davis adds, "I believe that each of us has a divine destiny. I have come to believe that mine is helping young people develop themselves and build a base from which they can succeed."



Seamless Program Offers Sweet Deal

just as people's lives are not segmented into separate compartments, neither is the Vernon-Verona-Sherril (VVS) agricultural education program in upstate New York. Keith Schiebel, the veteran teacher who manages the program, believes strongly in integrating the three program components of classroom, FFA and SAE and helping his students mesh them together in their lives.

The communities served by this program have changed dramatically since Schiebel began teaching here. "When I first started 19 years ago, we had a significant dairy industry locally," Schiebel says. "The dairies have departed and been replaced with tourism. We used to teach a lot of dairy and forage production skills. Those skill sets aren't needed here anymore."

Meeting Community Needs

To meet the changing student and community needs, Schiebel has altered his course offerings and integrated a key state industry—maple syrup production. "We offer a course in managing a sugar bush," Schiebel explains. "The course includes some agriculture design and mechanics components so that students can build collection systems along with lessons in food science, processing the maple sap into syrup and packaging and marketing the end product, much of which is purchased by tourists."

Schiebel continues, "We have tremendous opportunities for school-based SAEs here. We have access to three wood lots, one of which is on the school campus. We have built a state-of-the-art aerial tubing collection system here on campus. In addition, we have developed a processing facility on campus using a reverse osmosis machine to concentrate the sap and

then an evaporator to boil it into syrup. We give many tours during maple season to everyone from the Boy Scouts to members of the general public."

Learning by Doing

Schiebel's students are immersed in all phases of the operation. Once the syrup has been processed, the students bottle it in their own private-label packaging and sell it both wholesale and retail. The students manage and staff a retail store on campus. They are researching other marketing opportunities, including online sales and partnering with a citrus company to offer syrup to other FFA chapters for fundraisers.

Students in the agriculture business management class are tasked with the operation's decision-making and management. Each student who works in the operation records his or her hours worked and tasks performed.

"I try to make sure the information taught in every classroom lesson is applied in some way by my students," Schiebel says. "The agriculture mechanics students designed our sap house, then priced and sourced the materials. My advanced agriculture business students complete a pretty intense economic unit on the syrup enterprise. They assign real values to all elements, including those for which the chapter doesn't pay like labor and electricity. Through that activity, they get a real sense of the total investment needed for an enterprise and whether or not such an operation would make a good business outside of the school structure."

The FFA Connection

The funds raised through the maple syrup enterprise are deposited in the VVS FFA Chapter treasury and are used for a variety of chapter activities, as well as reinvested back in the maple syrup enterprise.

"When students first come into my classroom, they learn that the agricultural



VVS FFA members maintain a state-of-the-art aerial tubing syrup collection system.

education program is much more than a 40-minute class encased in four walls," Schiebel says. "I highlight the opportunities available outside of class and my expectations for participation."

Schiebel has developed a series of incentives for his students to become FFA members. At their summer retreat, the officers design a t-shirt listing the names of all students who have enrolled in an agriculture course. When the students pay their FFA dues, they get a shirt. In addition, the chapter uses a double fee structure for activities. For example, FFA members pay \$55 to attend a winter retreat while non-members pay \$60.

"It doesn't take the students long to make the connection and see paying their FFA dues as a great investment," Schiebel says.

Schiebel's advice to other teachers? Start small and build on your local resources. "We started making syrup in 1991 with a Coleman stove in a welding booth. This operation wasn't built overnight. You have to look for ways to build on what is available and challenge your students to leave a legacy. As an example, I had a group of seniors who set aside money for a tractor, knowing that they would never get to use it as students, but that future students would benefit. Those lessons represent the true value of what you are teaching."



Engaging Suburban Students

Munford High School is not what might typically spring to mind when one says “highly successful agricultural education program.” Munford is essentially a bedroom community near Memphis, Tenn. Most of the 1,400 students who attend this school live in suburban homes and have parents who commute to Memphis to work.

The five agriculture teachers here have, over time, developed a strong program by adapting to student and community needs. The agriculture program now boasts an enrollment of almost 800 students.

Teaching Differently

“Because we teach suburban students, we teach agriculture a bit differently,” says Ann Johnson, who has been at this school for nine years. “We have developed SAE opportunities for our students on campus and developed courses that appeal to our student body.”

Beyond the introductory course required of first-year students, the program offers courses in everything from equine science to forestry to wildlife management to horticulture. “The diversity in our course offering allows us as teachers to avoid getting in ruts,” Johnson says.



FFA members work with children attending their lamb camp.

Since most of their students do not have space to house livestock at home, the teachers have worked to offer on-campus facilities. The program has a barn to house livestock (space is free for market livestock, rented for breeding stock), a 30"x60" greenhouse for horticulture projects and a shop facility.

“One of the keys to engaging students is to make learning fun,” Johnson continues. “We do that by keeping it hands-on. We include many different lab activities and take a lot of short field trips.”

Creative Solutions

Several years ago, the chapter created a lamb camp as a fundraiser to help students fund their SAEs. For three weeks each summer, chapter members host the camp for kindergarten through third grade students. They accept up to two elementary students per FFA member with a camp fee of \$60 for the week. Each elementary student is taught how to feed, wash and walk a lamb. On Friday, the youngsters participate in a mini show to exhibit their new skills. The funds raised beyond expenses are split between the FFA members.

The camp has created demand for another camp experience for those children who have outgrown the lamb camp. The chapter officers created an “ag camp,” to fill the demand. The ag camp is for fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students and covers basic agricultural topics. The funds raised are used to purchase officer shirts, garment bags and to cover other officer expenses.

The team has also devised unique ways to manage the large FFA chapter. Meetings are required to be held during the school's 30-minute activity period, which doesn't allow for much business to be conducted. Thus, they have devised a “congressional” type of system. Each class elects a representative for every 20

members and two senators. These elected representatives meet to debate and decide chapter business. To be eligible to serve in one of these positions, members must take an FFA knowledge test and receive a 70 or better.



An FFA member prepares plants for sale.

Encouraging Excellence

Several years ago the chapter established a policy, supported by the vocational director, to pay convention travel and registration expenses for each student who was on a winning team and thus competing at the state level. In the beginning, the chapter only footed the bill for one or two students.

However, last year 38 students qualified for all-expense-paid trips. The teachers challenged the students to come up with a plan that wouldn't bankrupt the treasury. The students responded with “Green for Green,” a program that was based on selling plants grown in the greenhouse. Records were kept on input costs, hours worked and plants sold. More than half the members “earned” more money than the trip cost, so received the additional funds as spending cash.

“It was great to watch the students take responsibility for earning the funds, then surpass their fund-raising goal,” Johnson says. “It goes back to setting high standards and expecting the best. We expect our students to excel, and they surprise us by surpassing our expectations.”



Ohio Teacher Sets High Expectations

When students enroll in the Fairfield Union agricultural education program, they know that they will be required to do far more than show up for class. FFA membership is mandatory as are Supervised Agricultural Experience programs. That understanding does not happen by accident.

Setting the Bar

"We list FFA and SAE on the course outlines provided to all students during the enrollment process," says Loren Young, who has taught agriculture here for 35 years. "Just as in any other educational endeavor, the expectation set by the teacher determines, to a large degree, student achievement. If you expect students to become FFA members, they will. If you require SAE as part of their grade, they'll develop SAEs. They may not all be award-winning efforts, but they will create opportunities for applied learning outside the classroom."



Fairfield Union FFA members working on their SAE record books.

Fairfield Union High School serves about 520 students from three small communities about 50 miles from Columbus, Ohio.

Although the area is very rural, it has become a bedroom community to the larger metropolis. Most of Young's students live on small acreages, but not working farms. This year, there are 171 students in the two-teacher agricultural education program. Keller Moore is in his third year of teaching at Fairfield Union.

Young is adamant about the need for all three program components, which is why FFA and SAE are not optional in the Fairfield Union program. "I think agriculture programs that don't require FFA membership or SAE for every student are missing the boat. That would be like the football coach allowing the players to skip practice and play in the game. You'd have a game, but it wouldn't be a very good one, and it's the students who are short-changed."

Implementation Techniques

Over the years, Young has developed several techniques to encourage participation in FFA and SAE. For example, the chapter has at least two night meetings each quarter. All members are expected to attend and listen to the speaker. It is each student's option whether or not they stay for refreshments and the planned recreational activities. The students receive two bonus points on their grade for attending each meeting. They can each have one excused absence a year. If they miss more than one meeting, they lose two percentage points per missed meeting.

When it comes to SAE, Young includes a record book grade each quarter. Any student who doesn't turn in a record book receives an incomplete. To help facilitate compliance with this requirement, Young has developed his own, less complicated record book.



FFA members assist with the Bremen Food Pantry by loading and delivering food boxes at Christmas.

Keep it Simple Students

"Some record books are extremely complicated, and most students don't need all that in the beginning," Young explains. "I start my students with a simple record book, then build from there. As an example, the livestock record book has just three pages. It covers income, expenses, birth and death records and a summary. That's all the beginning students need."

Young encourages his students to keep their record books by their bed and record data on a daily basis. "What we really want the students to do is develop a habit of writing things down the day they occur, so that the record is accurate. If you record your activities at the end of the day, you know exactly what you did and how you did it. If you wait a week, the information will be less accurate."

The bottom line for Young is providing opportunities for students to achieve. "As a teacher, it is my job to set a high expectation, then support each student so that he or she can achieve." With 12 students pursuing their state degrees and five pursuing the American FFA Degree this spring, the program philosophy is obviously working.

Integrating Agriculture Beyond the Classroom

doug Falk teaches agriculture in the small town of Cuba, Ill. Not unlike many small rural schools, the community is changing from one where most students lived on farms to one where fewer than 25 percent do. There are about 200 students in grades 9–12; 70 of them are enrolled in the agriculture program.

Falk sees the agricultural education program's objective as more than integrating classroom and laboratory learning with FFA and SAE. While that is certainly the heart of the Cuba program, he works diligently to engage other teachers and community members as well.

For students, it all starts with a mandatory, quarter-long introduction to agriculture course in the eighth grade. They learn basic agriculture information and how it ties to science. They also learn that if they plan to continue taking agriculture in grades nine through 12, much more will be expected of them.

"Everyone who is in one of my agriculture courses must join FFA," Falk says. "And, every agriculture student must have an SAE of some sort. Everyone has a record book and keeps data on some sort of a project."

Falk grades each student's record book on the 15th and 30th of each month. "I conduct SAE visits when I take students home after practice, during livestock shows and other events. I think making contact with each student's parents is an important part of those visits."

One piece of advice he offers to other teachers is to make key elements of the program mandatory, not optional. For example, Falk makes attending the FFA chapter banquet mandatory. "It is important for each student's personal learning process to attend the banquet and celebrate the chapter's and their peers accomplishments," Falk explains.

Developing Relationships

Falk also works to establish and maintain relationships with other teachers within the school. "I'm a big proponent of working with other teachers. When we're doing a unit on reproduction, I work with the biology teacher. When we're working on job inter-



Members of Falk's conservation class display 156 pounds of aluminum cans they collected as part of a community clean-up project.

view skills, I involve the English teacher. Once they see that we're both trying to accomplish the same goal, they become advocates for the agriculture program. That transfers over to other activities, like getting the FFA members excused from class or practice to attend a camp or competition."

Out of School, Into the World

Some of the keys to keeping students engaged, according to Falk, are hands-on activities and outside resource people. "I try to have something hands-on in every unit," Falk explains. "That could be a field trip, something in the greenhouse, or something on the school farm. I also try to have one outside resource for every unit. That could be an insurance agent as part of a lesson on risk management. I see my job as one of facilitation. I try to get students out of the classroom and into the world."

That does not mean sacrificing content. "I teach to the upper-middle part of the class," Falk says. "You have to keep the students challenged to keep them motivated."

Along that line, Falk advocates having all potential chapter officer candidates attend a day at the state capitol observing the legislature in action. "That is a great FFA week activity," he says. "The students learn how their government functions, FFA receives great visibility, and it is a reward for those students who have been working hard all year."

Using Technology

How does he keep on top of all that activity? Falk chuckles and says, "Use technology! I keep my course outlines online and all my finals are paperless. Students have to take them online. I think that integrating technology is just as important as the content. Today's students need to be comfortable with technology and be able to use it efficiently."

Learn more about the Cuba agricultural education program at <http://cuba.fulton.k12.il.us/chs/Agric/HomeAgri/HomeAgri.html>.



Success by the Numbers

those of you who are sports fans can tell much about a team by looking at the statistics. Football fans converse about yards gained, number of sacks, interceptions and yards passing. Basketball enthusiasts speak of rebounds, points scored and free throw percentages.

Looking at the stats can also tell you a thing or two about an agricultural education program. Take the program at Manila, Utah, for example. There are 58 students in the school, grades 7-12. Of those, 42 are in the agriculture program. In 2003, the chapter won nine of 36 state proficiency areas. Three of Utah's 10 national proficiency finalists came from Manila. In the same year, the chapter had seven state degree and three American FFA Degree candidates. Manila had five finalists in the Star State Awards with one star winner and three first runner-ups. They also won two state CDE's. In hockey, one might just call that a hat trick!

Bill Schell has been teaching in this Utah program on the banks of Flaming Gorge Reservoir for 20 years. Over that

time, this "coach" has honed his skills and helped countless students succeed.

"We may be small in numbers," Schell says, "but we have tremendous opportunities to do interesting things. In the classroom, we focus on fairly traditional topics. The program is individualized to student interests through FFA and their SAE programs."

Travel Incentive

"In Manila, students are drawn to the agriculture program because of FFA," Schell says. "We're about an hour away from a town of any size, and FFA offers about the only chance some kids have to travel. That's a powerful incentive, so I take as many as I can as often as I can."

"I let my students know that I don't care if they win, but I do care that they give it their best effort. If they've given there best, it doesn't matter what the final score, because they will be winners in life. That's what really counts."

Schell says a school rule helps encourage his students to achieve. "At our school, in order to travel out of state, you have to win the opportunity. You can't just go, you have to win something. So, my students work hard to win trips to the national land judging contest, to the national FFA convention and other events."

Many of today's students are motivated by the success of those who have gone before them. "Once a student from a chapter has accomplished something, that motivates others to follow. They want to know what they have to do to win a proficiency area or a CDE."

It wasn't always that way in Manila. When Schell started 20 years ago, there were 11 students in the program, and there was no FFA chapter. "It took a while for us to



Schell provides a student with computer assistance.

get that first win, but once we had accomplished something, the achievement level just exploded. We had to find one thing we were good at and concentrate on it, then build it from there."

Teacher Expectations

Schell believes that teacher expectation plays a significant role in student accomplishment. "I let my students know that I don't care if they win, but I do care that they give it their best effort. If they've given there best, it doesn't matter what the final score, because they will be winners in life. That's what really counts."

Schell also encourages teachers to monitor their work level and keep things in perspective. "You can't do everything, and you shouldn't try to or you'll just get burned out. You have to choose carefully based on student interests. Sometimes that means letting something go that you've done before."

Schell also advises his peers to find interests outside their program. "I have a little ranch that serves that purpose," he says. "It's a good place to cool down and disengage from the classroom. It provides a different set of challenges on which to focus. I think having that is very important for personal and professional rejuvenation."



Schell helps students with their record books.

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Local Program Success

Reinforcing FFA and SAE



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Program Success Specialist
National FFA Organization

Since the passing of the Smith-Hughes act in 1917, agricultural education has been challenged with preparing young people for successful careers in the agriculture, food, fiber and natural resource industry. To accomplish this challenge, the local agriculture instructor has access to many tools they can utilize to engage students. Two of the most powerful tools a teacher can utilize are leadership development through engagement in FFA and supervised agricultural experiences.

Many times over my career as an agriculture teacher I had students who excelled in the agriculture program and struggled in academic classes. I would venture to guess that you could name five such students in your program without too much trouble. Why do these students do well in our programs and struggle in academic classes? These students are intelligent,

bright and motivated. They come from all different socioeconomic backgrounds, some with learning disabilities, some with emotional disabilities and some that are just plain lazy. However they excel in the agriculture program. Why?

The "why" is simple. Agricultural education is built around an integral model. We use FFA involvement and SAE programs to engage students in learning agricultural skills they can apply to their individual goals, dreams and desires.


Incorporating SAE and FFA as part of the day-to-day activities in your program can only help enhance the quality of the program and the quality of the students with whom you are working. If leadership development and SAE are important to the teacher, then they will be important to the students.

Here are several ways to reinforce the importance of these vital aspects of the agriculture program:

- Build into every unit of instruction one or two lessons that allow the students to explore the related opportunities found in FFA and SAE. Even a simple lesson where the students use the FFA website or FFA manual to determine what leadership-based activities or awards are available helps students see the bigger picture. To focus importance on their SAE programs, at the end of the unit teach a lesson that will allow the students the opportunity to review the skills and knowledge taught and to see where they can apply this information in their SAE programs.
- If you believe that FFA and SAE are an integral part of your program, are

you reinforcing this by having students earn a portion of their grade by participation in these activities? Here is an example: 70% of the grade earned in the classroom from daily grades, tests and assignments, 20% from the students' record books and SAE activities and 10% from participation in organized leadership activities. I was working with Kevin Keith when he asked a group of teachers the following: "What impact does not turning in an English paper have on a student's grade?" You know the answer. If we believe that FFA and SAE are integral to our agriculture programs and we include it as part of our curriculum, then should they not impact our agriculture students' grades?

- Reward and recognize students for their accomplishments. A simple certificate that recognizes a student for his or her SAE or FFA achievement goes a long way to reinforce the importance of these activities. In some cases, this will be the only positive recognition a student may receive in school.

I am a firm believer that our students will rise to the level of expectations set before them. If you expect that all students will plan and implement an SAE program as part of the agriculture class, then a majority of the students in your program will rise to this expectation. If you expect students to develop leadership skills and participate in leadership activities, then a majority of the students will. Not every student will be a state or national proficiency award winner or run for a state office, but all students who have been involved with your program will benefit from being exposed to the opportunities offered through the FFA and SAE aspects of a total program of agricultural education. 

Local Program Success is a national initiative designed to enhance the quality and success of local agricultural education programs. LPS uses the total program concept of Instruction, SAE and FFA and four strategies (Program Planning, Marketing, Partnerships and Professional Growth) to assist local teachers in facilitating successful local programs that meet the needs of students and the communities they serve.

What is “Integral” Anyway?

integral means ‘essential part of,’ ‘not separable,’ ‘unable to sustain without.’ Given these definitions, how can we have FFA without the classroom and laboratory portions of agricultural education? How can we have the classroom and laboratory portion without Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE)? How can we have the FFA activities without the classroom and SAE strategies as a part of the total development of our agricultural education students?

Nearly every agriculture teacher and state officer and even the vast majority of agriculture students know of the three educational strategies of agricultural education (classroom/laboratory, FFA and SAE), yet in the most recent survey of agricultural education programs completed in 1999, local agriculture instructors reported that less than half of all agriculture students had SAEs and only slightly more than half of all agriculture students were FFA members.

Seamless Delivery

This failure in implementation has caused loss of agricultural education programs and will continue to do so in the future. In fact, in times when financial resources are tight, the lack of a total program will accelerate the decline of agricultural education programming in schools throughout the country. The truth is that when all three educational strategies are implemented, we have a seamless educational delivery system providing for the overall development of students, which provides for different learning styles, reinforces math,

research—and experimentation—based SAEs and both home and community improvement/development SAEs along with our entrepreneurial and placement SAEs, this argument carries little weight.

Today, given the opportunities offered through involvement in the National FFA Organization, one could make a case that those who are not members are being discriminated against since they would be eliminated from participating in valuable workshops, competitions and betterment programs, such as the scholarship program.

Investing Time Wisely

Certainly limitations on our time resource may mean that we have to look carefully at where we invest our time and at developing and calling on additional resources such as the FFA Alumni, parents, school administration and business and industry supporters, but this only further enhances the overall understanding and sense of community we all strive for in our agricultural education programs.

We are a profession of developers, touching the future of agriculture, and we need to also remember that the best way to develop technical skills and leadership is through actual experience. Make certain



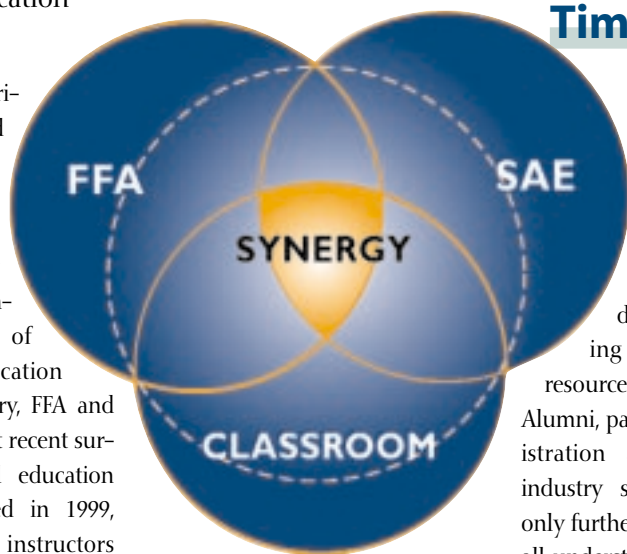
By Kevin Keith
Local Program Success Specialist
National FFA Organization

large blocks of time are not being spent doing things for students that would better serve their long-term needs and value if those tasks were done by the students.



Team Ag Ed

Let us all uphold and strengthen the unique and integral nature of agricultural education by encouraging the development and complete implementation of all three essential learning strategies in all of our programs of agricultural education. Remember that you are not in this alone. Your fellow teachers, state leadership and national Team Ag Ed all have resources and information that can help facilitate your efforts.



science and communication skills, and prepares students to accept responsibility as successful contributors to society.

At one time it could be argued that for certain groups of students enrolled in agricultural education, SAEs were difficult to provide. However in an age where we have

Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) Intern

The National FFA Organization is seeking applications from qualified individuals interested in a four- to eight-week summer internship at the National FFA Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. One position will start close to June 7, 2004, and end in mid-August, while the second is basically for the month of July.

Job Description

The National FFA SAE-Based Programs interns will work with the National FFA SAE-Based activities specialist to assist with the summer processing of awards and degrees, develop promotional materials for SAE, assist in the development of instructional materials and various other responsibilities.

Position Requirements:

- **Education:** Bachelor's degree in agricultural education required.
- **Experience:** Minimum of two years of teaching experience and experiences working with students on the SAE-based activities of the National FFA Organization.
- **Relevant Experience:** Knowledge of agricultural education and the National FFA Organization are important. State and national FFA convention experience is preferred.
- **Skills:** Excellent writing and interpersonal communications skills. Project management skills essential, including scheduling, implementing and evaluating. Organizational and time management skills are critical to the success of this position. Computer proficiency is necessary using Windows 95/NT, Outlook 2000 and Access 97.
- **Location:** The position will be located at the National FFA Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. Salary/living allowance will be a gross of \$600.00 per week. Travel to and from Indianapolis for the position will be paid.

To Apply

To be considered, e-mail your cover letter and résumé, including formal education, work experience and references, as a Word document to hr@ffa.org, confidentially fax it to (317) 802-5257 or mail it to Human Resources at:

The National FFA Organization
6060 FFA Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960
No phone calls, please. EOE

**** Applications Due April 1, 2004! ** Applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2004!**

Testing may be required. The FFA is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer and does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, religion, sex, disability or national origin, including limited English proficiency, in any employment opportunity.

Using the Whole Program to Develop the Whole Student

Ieon Crowe is not new to the classroom. Over the past 39 years, he's honed his teaching skills to a fine edge at North Decatur High School in Greensburg, Ind. He counts 120 students in the agricultural education program, about half of whom are from farms.

Crowe and his teaching partner, Michael Mauer, offer courses ranging from agricultural mechanics to agriculture business management, from plant and soil science to horticulture and landscaping. Seventh- and eighth-grade students are offered an exploratory course.

Creating Expectations

"I want my students to lead a quality life, to know right from wrong, to accept challenges and pursue them," Crowe explains. "These are things that don't show up in a course syllabus, but are at the heart of what we teach. They can be influenced by the way you teach and how you treat each student."

Crowe continues, "I want each student to be able to look back and see a positive experience. We can help them create that through the individualized activities provided by SAEs and participation in FFA. That's the beauty of being an agriculture teacher. We have tools at our disposal that other teachers don't. We can steer students in so many directions and support them in their endeavors."

Identifying Interests

Crowe focuses on helping each student identify his or her interests and creating a path for individual growth. "Some students will be interested in the proficiency or degree programs. For others, it's the leadership activities that turn their crank. It really doesn't matter, as long as you use all the tools at your disposal to match student

“

I want each student to be able to look back and see a positive experience. We can help them create that through the individualized activities provided by SAEs and participation in FFA.

”

interests to programs and activities to create individual growth. As long as we teach young people and not a subject, we will be successful."

He cautions his peers to treat each student with respect. "Some of our students come from broken homes.

Many of them need role models who aren't athletes. They need someone to show them their value so they can learn to take pride in themselves. Some things that seem insignificant to us can be huge to our students."

Making a Difference

As an example, Crowe points to a young man who recently graduated from his program. When the student first showed up in Crowe's classroom, he was shy and had trouble walking. He was labeled physically disabled. The student experienced a few small successes in his agriculture course and became involved in a demonstration contest. He won district and got to compete at the state level. He blossomed with that experience and gained confidence. The young man earned a scholarship in agri-



Crowe takes a moment to celebrate success with one of his students.

cultural mechanics. Crowe recently received an invitation to the young man's graduation, along with a note about how much his support had meant.

Crowe doesn't remember doing anything special for this student. "I just treated him with respect and helped him explore his interests."

Similarly, Crowe tells of another young man. "When this student was a freshman, he had an interest in turf, so we found him a job at a local golf course mowing grass. He worked his way up the ladder and by the time he was a senior, he won the state proficiency award and became a national finalist. It all started by identifying the interest and matching it to a summer job."

Standard of Excellence

"I remember when I was in the seventh grade," Crowe reminisces. "I wrote a paper on what I wanted to do with my life. I wrote about becoming an agriculture teacher because, other than my Dad, my teacher had the greatest influence on my life. That's the kind of teacher I strive to be."



TeacherResources

ACTE Needs Your Help

The Association of Career and Technical Education recently mailed a letter to all its members requesting a voluntary \$30 assessment to help the organization survive a critical cash flow issue resulting from low convention attendance. The National Association of Agricultural Educators has contributed \$1,500 to ACTE and the NAAE board of directors has issued a statement encouraging its members to pay the assessment so that ACTE can continue its work in supporting Perkins legislation and funding. The National Council for Agricultural Education has decided to support ACTE by not requesting its annual assessment of \$3,500. For more information, click on [www.acteonline.org/about/assessment.cfm].

National Pesticide Information Center

In need of information on bug sprays, weed killers, rat baits or other pesticides? Try calling 800-858-PEST for the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC). NPIC is a service sponsored cooperatively by Oregon State University and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency providing objective, science-based information on a variety of pesticide-related subjects. NPIC is staffed by pesticide specialists with the scientific training needed to help educators and FFA members understand complex information about pesticides. Call NPIC seven days a week from 6:30 to 4:30 PST at 800-858-PEST (7378), e-mail questions to [npic@ace.orst.edu], or visit the NPIC web site at [<http://npic.orst.edu>].

Hazardous Tasks Training

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was amended in 1968 to include the Hazardous Occupations Order for Agriculture. Hazardous farm tasks identified include operating a corn picker, combine, hay baler, feed grinder, fork-lift or power post-driver. Exempt from this

law are (1) minors who are employed on a farm owned and operated by their parents or guardians and (2) minors of ages 14-15 who have received training and certification from a tractor and farm machinery certification program. Each state is responsible for providing the required training that allows minors aged 14-15 to legally be hired to operate a tractor or other specified machinery. Youth can receive a certificate of completion for tractor driving, if they complete four hours of orientation to farm hazards, and a general safety course and have participated in a 10-hour tractor safety course. With an additional 10-hour machinery safety course, youth receive a certificate for machinery operation.

A USDA grant to Pennsylvania State University covers preparing 100 master trainers at no cost to the trainees. If you are interested in the program details, please contact Dr. James W. Hilton, Penn State University, 232 Ag Engineering Building, University Park, PA 16802; phone 814-863-1817; e-mail [jwh2@psu.edu].

Agricultural Education Needs Assessment

A needs assessment on agricultural education has been completed. See the report at [www.teamaged.org/AgEd_Needs_Assessment.pdf]. If you have questions or comments, contact Dr. Penny Hasse Whittler, [haasewit@Oswego.EDU].

Agricultural Education Research Update

The second product of the Ag Ed Research Workgroup, a monograph entitled *Improving Student Achievement in Mathematics: An Important Role for Secondary Agricultural Education in the 21st Century*, has been completed. It may be accessed online at [www.teamaged.org/councilindex.cfm].

No Child Left Behind Resource Guide

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has unveiled an important new resource for use in implementing the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. *Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide* was released in December at a conference of top state and local education officials from across the country.

The No Child Left Behind Act and many federal K-12 grant programs require state and local education officials to use "scientifically-based research" to guide their decisions about which programs and strategies to implement. The guide is designed to be a user-friendly resource for identifying and implementing evidence-based practices that may improve educational and life outcomes for the children that state and local officials serve.

"Perhaps the most effective resource we have for improving American schools is scientifically-valid knowledge about which strategies work and which don't work," said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige. "The User-Friendly Guide offers education officials and educators concrete, easily-accessible assistance in finding and using strategies that have been validated in rigorous studies. It represents a critical step forward in the implementation of No Child Left Behind and in the Department's goal of transforming education into an evidence-based field."

The guide was developed for IES by the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. A copy of the guide is posted on the Department's web site at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/news.html#guide].

National FFA President Injured in Auto Accident

National FFA President Javier Moreno of Puerto Rico was hospitalized January 19 for injuries sustained in an automobile accident that occurred as he was driving to his host family's home in Pennsylvania. Javier suffered serious injuries to his ankles and knees. Following surgery, he is expected to require intensive physical therapy. Javier was forced to miss the National FFA Board of Directors meeting as well as the National FFA Officer International Experience Program trip to Japan. He looks forward to resuming his travel schedule as soon as he has physically recovered.

Cards or letters of support for Javier may be sent to his attention at the National FFA Center. They are being forwarded to him based on his current location. Updates on his progress will be made available as appropriate. Cards may be sent to: Javier Moreno, National FFA Center, P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960.

Staller to Retire Fall 2004

Bernie Staller announced he will retire in the fall of 2004 after serving 13 years as chief operating officer of the National FFA Organization and National FFA Foundation. Staller has devoted 37 years to agricultural education, 13 of them with the FFA organization and 27 with the FFA foundation.

Larry Case, national FFA advisor and chief executive officer, cited Staller for his years of service. "Bernie Staller has provided visionary leadership and skilled management at a time when FFA needed it most," said Case. "He has assembled a world-class staff of professionals who are as passionate as he is about FFA's mission of providing students with opportunities for developing leadership, personal growth and career success."

Case said the National FFA Board of Directors would work with Staller and the national

staff to develop a selection process for filling the chief operating officer position. That effort could take from six to nine months, according to Case. For additional information please visit [www.ffa.org/about_ffa/documents/ffa_jobs_coo.pdf].

Following his retirement this fall, Staller and his wife, Martha, will relocate to southern Wisconsin to be closer to family and friends. His plans include devoting more time to his passions of gardening, fishing, gourmet French cooking and building fine Shaker furniture in his workshop.

Summer Teacher Internship at National FFA Center

The National FFA Organization will be offering an internship opportunity for an experienced teacher to work with SAE-based awards and activities this summer. This position will be based at the National FFA Center. Interested teachers are encouraged to check the job posting on the FFA website. Applications for the position are due postmarked by April 1, 2004. Please contact Rosalie Hunsinger at rhunsinger@ffa.org or call 317-802-4255 with any questions.

T-Shirt Design Contest

The third annual FFA t-shirt design contest entries are due March 15, 2004. FFA is looking for some creative students to submit their designs. Winning designs will be featured on t-shirts sold in the 2004-2005 *National FFA Blue Catalog* and online store. Encourage your FFA members to submit all those fabulous designs that have been produced at the local level. If their design is selected, your chapter will earn 50 percent of the gross profits on the catalog sales for one year. As of the end of August, the five winning chapters from the '02-'03 contest had earned a total of \$11,491, with the top chapter earning nearly \$1,400. And this year's winners are on a record-setting pace. The number one selling

T-shirt, 03-WOAG, has already earned \$8,657. See the 2003-2004 winners in this year's blue catalog (p. 16-17). For more information, please contact Dawn Sharp, [dsharp@ffa.org].

Correction

An error on page 12 of the November/December 2003 issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* has been brought to the editor's attention. In the convention article, a paragraph on Erik Blaser, 2003 American Star in Agricultural Placement, indicated Blaser had logged more than 22,000 hours of career placement. The sentence should have read, "logged more than 10,000 hours of career placement." The editors apologize for this mistake.

Washington Leadership Conference

Start planning your trip to Washington, D.C.! The dates for this year's conference are: June 1-6, June 8-13, June 15-20, June 22-27, July 6-11 and July 13-18. Prices for the conference have increased and are as follows: student package \$550, advisor double \$585, advisor single \$780, advisor guest \$975, room-only package \$475. This year's conference will consist of high levels of service learning, mentoring and volunteerism strategies, problem-solving skills, relationship-building skills and character development. The FFA premier leadership conference is shaping up to be the best yet! There will be a chapter mailing in late February complete with a registration form. For more information, e-mail [wlc@ffa.org] or call 317-802-4312.

The Integral Nature of Agricultural Education

in the current climate of increased student and teacher accountability, what role does agricultural education play? I submit that it can play a large and meaningful role in raising student achievement, not only in the agriculture, but also in core academic areas.

When you think of the many areas of agriculture we cover in our programs, what are we doing but teaching our students how to apply the sciences, mathematics, language arts and social studies? Think of the mathematics needed in developing landscaping plans, determining bench space requirements in a greenhouse, feed efficiencies in animal science or fertilizer applications on a field.

What about the sciences required in understanding plant and animal systems? Agricultural education programs have a perfect opportunity for integration in all academic areas. But are we taking advantage of this opportunity?

The 1990 Perkins Act put a greater emphasis on increasing the academic as well as the vocational achievement of all students. As quoted in the November 2003 issue of *Vocational Training News*, Hans Meeder, deputy assistant secretary for vocational education policy said, "Traditional vocational education has had no discernable impact on student achievement or graduation rates. Career and technical education programs that have integrated rigorous courses of study have shown positive effects on achievement and postsecondary transitions, and should be viewed as the model



*By Karen C. Hutchison, President,
National Council for Agricultural Education*

for reforming the federal vocational education law."

Where does your agricultural education program fit? Have you taken steps to integrate core academics and promote college readiness? These are important questions for teachers and students. Take time to look at your program and decide if you can do more to help students meet the academic and technical demands being placed on them. Will your program be viewed as one with no discernable impact or a model for reform? Let's continue working to make sure all our programs are models of reform.



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for your next issue of *FFA
Advisors Making a Difference* in
late February. It will feature stories
about technology in the classroom,
as well as provide teaching
resources and FFA news.