



SEPTEMBER 2006

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At Work

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LifeKnowledge Newsletter Designed for Local Teachers

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

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LifeKnowledge Featured Articles

Dispelling the Myths about the LifeKnowledge Program

Andy Armbruster, education specialist with the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education, takes a moment to provide clarity on the goal of the LifeKnowledge program. [Click here to read article](#)

A Look at Integrating LifeKnowledge

Randy Vlasin, education specialist and retired agriculture teacher, offers ideas on integrating LK into the TOTAL agriculture program. [Click here to read article](#)

Tradition of Leadership Development Continues

Leadership development is a tradition shared with passion by the National FFA Organization and National Pork Board, a founding partner of the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education. [Click here to read article](#)

Featured Precept

Awareness – A Quest for Purposeful Understanding

Doug Kueker, education specialist for the National FFA Organization, highlights what the precept of "Awareness" looks like in the development of students. [Click here to read article](#)

Best Practices – Integrating LK Precepts into Technical Content

Fifth-year agriculture teacher and Delta I and II participant Ryan Foor of Glenwood, Iowa, explains how he integrates LK precepts into technical content. [Click here to read article](#)

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Why LK for Pre-Service Teachers?

Dr. Jack Elliot, agricultural education veteran, college professor and head of the Department of Agricultural Education at the University of Arizona, responds to questions about why LifeKnowledge is beneficial to pre-service teachers. [Click here to read article](#)

Hot Tips

Be Inclusive

Take a look at how just a small change in your language patterns can improve the environment of your classroom. [Click here to read article](#)

LifeKnowledge News

What's New with LK

- Omega Conference Scheduled for September
- LifeKnowledge Version 3.0 to Debut at 79th National FFA Convention
- Program of Activities (POA) Tool to be Featured at National FFA Convention

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Sponsor Recognition

LifeKnowledge – Values and Solutions

Jerry Rose, corporate vice president of Cargill, Incorporated and former FFA member from North Dakota, compares Cargill's top priorities with those found in LifeKnowledge. Cargill is one of the founding partners for the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education. [Click here to read article](#)

Dispelling the Myths about the LifeKnowledge Program

By Andy Armbruster, LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education

With the launch of LifeKnowledge 3.0 on the horizon, it's clear that many customers and key stakeholders have multiple thoughts and definitions about the actual goal and purposes of LifeKnowledge. The most common indicator of these "misunderstandings" is when people think LifeKnowledge 3.0 will consist of more lesson plans. The purpose of this article is to dispel a few myths and provide clarification regarding LifeKnowledge.

True or False? The purpose of LifeKnowledge is to teach leadership.

The answer is true. The purpose of LifeKnowledge is to teach leadership. More specifically, the purpose of LifeKnowledge is to provide leadership experiences for all students studying agricultural education. On an estimated average, about 15,000 students attend the National FFA Organization's leadership programs such as WLC, MFE, ALD and state officer conferences. (This excludes the national FFA convention and leadership conferences held by state associations, districts and regions within the states, and even some chapters.) So the reality is that only 15,000 students of the 500,000 FFA members receive formalized leadership training at the national level. This leaves a huge gap to fill. Furthermore, if agricultural education is to be a totally integrated model of classroom instruction, SAE and leadership, why not provide leadership experiences for all students in agricultural education, dues-paying members or not?

Consider this: You have probably had a student or two in your teaching experience who you know can demonstrate strong leadership skills but has no desire to do public speaking or become an officer. What type of leadership training has been available for this student? Maybe they are not interested in a conference, but you can clearly see the student has the respect of his peers and the ability to influence. This is where LifeKnowledge comes in. Because LifeKnowledge is designed to provide leadership experiences at the local level, every student in your classroom can experience leadership.

True or False? LifeKnowledge is curriculum and lesson plans.

The answer, for the most part, is false. LifeKnowledge is a program that provides leadership training for all students. The LifeKnowledge program uses multiple approaches to provide this training. Clearly the most visible approach has been 257 ready-made lesson plans to integrate into technical lesson plans. While the lesson plans are an excellent form to provide leadership experiences for all students, they are only one avenue used to provide leadership training. Technically speaking, LifeKnowledge consists of three items:

1. A Comprehensive Definition of Leadership – Agribusiness leaders, education experts and leadership gurus helped the organization define 16 precepts (or competencies) to define leadership, growth and career success. Each LifeKnowledge initiative has been cross-walked with these 16 precepts, also known as the essential learnings.
2. Instructional Materials for Students – This includes the 257 lesson plans. It also includes the LifeKnowledge poster series, which outlines the 16 precepts; What Would a Leader Do? leadership scenario cards; and other items you can find in the Core catalog.
3. Professional Development – Modeling is one of the most powerful methods in which young people can learn; therefore, LifeKnowledge provides professional development experiences for instructors. Most visible are the embedded engagement strategies such as E-Moments that can be found in the instructional materials. Also included would be the face-to-face trainings LK provided in its first two years of existence. More recent examples are the LifeKnowledge Center's Delta and Omega conferences.

To say that LifeKnowledge is simply lesson plans sells the program short. As LifeKnowledge was rolled out to teachers, lesson plans served as a point of reference because they were the easiest way to comprehend and define LifeKnowledge. The depth and breadth of LifeKnowledge will be demonstrated in LK 3.0, comprised of multiple tools and products to teach leadership. However, none of the materials will include lesson plans. To top it off, LK 3.0 will be the most innovative product of LifeKnowledge to date.

True or False? The student is the customer of the LifeKnowledge program.

The answer is false. Actually, the customer of the LifeKnowledge program is the teacher. The student can be considered the beneficiary of a teacher using LifeKnowledge. Again, the goal of the LifeKnowledge program is to provide leadership experiences for all students studying agricultural education. If not all students attend leadership conferences and are not all dues-paying FFA members, then targeting local teachers is the strongest approach to get leadership experiences to every student. A phrase you may hear regarding LifeKnowledge is

*"True or False?
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*"The purpose of
LifeKnowledge is to teach
leadership to all students
studying agricultural
education. Period.
LifeKnowledge is more than
lesson plans."*

"Every student. Every day. Every class. Experiences leadership. Through every teacher." Said differently, the only way to provide a leadership experience for all students studying agricultural education is to equip all agricultural education teachers to provide leadership experiences. LifeKnowledge equips teachers to provide those experiences.

True or False? I've used an E-Moment so I am using LifeKnowledge and teaching leadership.

It depends. An E-Moment is a strategy used to increase learning. E-Moments are embedded in the LifeKnowledge lesson plans and can be used to teach a component of leadership. However, an E-Moment can easily be used to teach technical content. Using E-Moments in all classes, LifeKnowledge or not (and for that matter, agricultural education or not), is strongly encouraged. The confusion is thinking that an E-Moment is LifeKnowledge. An E-Moment is a strategy in LifeKnowledge. If you're using an E-Moment in a LifeKnowledge lesson, then, yes, you are teaching leadership. If you're using an E-Moment when teaching technical content without LK embedded in it, then no, you are not teaching leadership.

Here's the scoop. When LifeKnowledge was designed, it was decided that there needed to be an innovative approach to teaching leadership. Instead of a basic curriculum outline for the lesson plans, the creators added innovative approaches to teaching within the program. The result was not only leadership content, but sound teaching practices in the content. Throughout LifeKnowledge lessons, you'll find E-Moments as well as strong interest approaches, review techniques, sound directions and solid areas for application. Sound strategies for engagement can also be found in the What Would a Leader Do? leadership cards and in the LifeKnowledge Quote Series. Embedding strong teaching strategies in LifeKnowledge materials has not only improved content comprehension from a student perspective, but it has empowered teachers to be more successful. The myth is – LifeKnowledge is about using engaging strategies. The fact is – LifeKnowledge is teaching leadership. The engaging strategies are embedded methods to teach leadership.

The Bottom Line

The purpose of LifeKnowledge is to teach leadership to all students studying agricultural education. Period. LifeKnowledge is more than lesson plans. The lesson plans are simply one avenue used to teach leadership. The goal of LifeKnowledge is not to make better teachers; the goal is to use strategies and methods that promote better teaching. Targeting teachers, not students, is LifeKnowledge's strategy. This approach better aligns with LifeKnowledge's mission of providing leadership experiences for all students at the local level.

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A Look at Integrating LifeKnowledge

By Randy Vlasin, Education Specialist, LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education

Are your students engaged? Does the methodology used in your classroom create an appealing atmosphere that propels learning and provides leadership development for every student, in every class, every day? The integration of LifeKnowledge can help you accomplish this. So, what does this integration process look like? Does this mean we throw out our technical curriculum and teach lessons only found in LifeKnowledge? Of course not! Allow me to share a story from my own teaching experience. I call it "*The LifeKnowledge Lesson that Never Was*."

I taught welding for a number of years and used the following grading scale: A, B, C and F; no D. The criterion to receive an A was challenging, and any weld that didn't meet guidelines for a C was rejected. When I first implemented this scale, something interesting began to happen. My students did not want to accept a C, even though they could. They started coming in before and after school to try for the A. Not only was it about the grade, but it was about *pride* in their work. I witnessed perseverance, caring, diligence, *real* goal setting, students helping one another, etc. Sound like leadership to you? This happened repeatedly with each class.

Unfortunately, I missed capitalizing on the most important lesson. Not once did I take time to help my students make a connection between the leadership I was seeing and their improvement in welding class. It was an ideal opportunity for me to help students understand the correlation between self-leadership and creating success – an opportunity to integrate LifeKnowledge.

To help you avoid missing out on valuable teaching moments like the one just described, I've provided a few examples of what integrating leadership into your TOTAL program via LifeKnowledge might look like.

Classroom – When teaching technical content, ask yourself if there are any opportunities to deal with issues such as ethics, integrity, ability to evaluate actions, perseverance, goal setting, etc. Consider:

1. Teaching ethics and integrity as they relate to financial management, futures marketing and advertising. There are over 10 LifeKnowledge lessons related to ethics and integrity.
2. Teaching evaluation of actions and perseverance as they relate to quality in welding, landscape design or floral arrangement. Several LifeKnowledge lessons address the evaluation of actions and perseverance.

SAE – When you teach about SAE, is there a place for instruction regarding honesty in dealing with customers, responsibility in completing and taking ownership of work, or communication with co-workers or parents? We are responsible for helping students create a quality SAE experience, and there are numerous LifeKnowledge lessons dealing with these leadership principles.

FFA – Have you ever wished your chapter members could effectively plan and carry out a project without you shouldering a big portion of the load? Do you ever deal with conflict resolution as an FFA advisor? Do you teach students to handle these situations? If you don't, who will? Again, LifeKnowledge provides lessons to help you help students navigate these issues.

Be mindful that LifeKnowledge concerns the purposeful intent of creating an engaging atmosphere with the objectives of improved learning and leadership development for every student, in every class, every day. Are you purposeful in this intent?

Tradition of Leadership Development Continues

National Pork Board is Founding Partner

The National Pork Board, which provides the producer leadership for the Pork Checkoff, is the descendant of a long line of pork associations in the United States. The associations were formed through grassroots leadership by hog producers who faced many challenges to profitability in the swine production sector. They knew that those challenges could best be met by producers working together and finding sources of funding through which to address the common issues.

Today, leadership is essential to the future of the pork industry at the local, state and national levels, just as it was in the mid-50s when the organization began its evolution. For this reason, leadership development has been identified as a critical issue and area of emphasis for the Pork Board. To address this issue, the board actively develops young people within the pork industry through its Producer Leadership Academy, which involves extensive training for approximately 26 young producers. The program is now in its third year and is already paying dividends.

In 2004, the organization launched the Youth Pork Quality Assurance certification program, which allows youth ages 8–18 to participate in a nationwide program that emphasizes producing safe, wholesome and nutritious pork for consumers.

Finally, the board is a long-time sponsor of programs of the National FFA Organization, including the FFA National Agricultural Career Show®, collegiate scholarships, Swine Management Distance Learning and NAAE Lifetime Achievement Awards. Most recently, the National Pork Board pledged its support as a Founding Partner of the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education, contributing \$500,000.

The National Pork Board and the National FFA Organization have a common challenge – leadership development. Working together makes sense for both organizations.

"As the pork industry changes, it is increasingly important that America's pork producers partner with other agriculture organizations to develop future leadership," says Hugh Dorminy, Pork Board past president. "Since FFA has been a developer of leaders in the agriculture industry for more than 75 years, it is a great fit for the National Pork Board to sponsor the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education.

"In addition, as a principal sponsor of a major new FFA leadership program, we think this will help identify and develop young leaders for the swine industry," Dorminy explains.

Leadership-driven history

The Pork Board traces its roots to the mid-1950s when a group of producers, concerned about the future growth and profitability of the pork industry, organized the National Swine Growers Council (NSGC). In 1965, NSGC evolved into the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) as it took the first steps toward creating the meat-type pig needed to produce the pork products that consumers desired.

In May 1966, about 90 pork producers from 11 states met in Moline, Ill. This group, which came to be known as the "Moline 90," gathered to establish a voluntary checkoff.

With some funds and staff, NPPC began moving toward development of the meat-type hog consumers were beginning to demand. Realizing that promotion would create more pork sales, producer leaders sought congressional action that would permit a market deduction to fund product promotion. They succeeded in getting amendments to the Packers and Stockyards Act that opened the way for a voluntary checkoff system. This was the first voluntary checkoff program to exist.

The need for additional funds to keep pork competitive with other protein-based commodities helped producers make the decision to move from a voluntary to a legislative checkoff. A "100 Percent Producer Task Force" organized an effort that led to the successful passage of federal legislation, The Pork Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act of 1985, more commonly referred to as the Pork Act, as part of the 1985 Farm Bill.

Under the terms of the Pork Act, all pork producers and importers of pigs and pork products contribute a portion of all sales. The current checkoff rate is 0.4 percent of value (i.e., 40 cents for every \$100 market value).

The Pork Act created the National Pork Board, which is responsible for collecting the Checkoff and administering Checkoff-funded programs that benefit producers with all sizes of operations. The Pork Act stipulates that Checkoff funds must be used for promotion, research and consumer information programs. These programs are designed to strengthen the position of the pork industry in the marketplace, and to maintain, develop and expand markets for pork and pork products. Checkoff funds cannot be used for influencing government or for lobbying.

The National Pork Board is made up of 15 members who are nominated by the Pork Act Delegate Body, whose members are appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary also appoints the Pork Board members. The board is headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa.

For more information visit: www.pork.org.

Awareness – A Quest for Purposeful Understanding

By Doug Kueker, Education Specialist, National FFA Organization

What it is...

Effective leaders have a keen understanding of their strengths, abilities, goals and aspirations. Knowing one's self is oftentimes the first step in reaching one's potential. It is one of the essential building blocks to personal growth. Awareness is a quest for understanding. It is characterized by an individual's commitment to actualize a personal vision, mission and goals.

A body of research suggests that the most enduring source of an individual's competitive advantage is knowledge. An individual analyzes information about one's self and its relationship to the environment. This is converted into knowledge – the essential ingredient of success.

How does awareness fit into the big picture of agricultural education? It can be explained in this way: Cognitive knowledge, the knowledge of "what works," is learned by immersion in agricultural subjects. Experiential learning provides the know-how to apply knowledge in a real-world setting. Awareness fits into the scheme by examining cause-and-effect relationships. The awareness of the intricate relationships between self and others, and the relationships between the complex systems within agriculture, allow students to solve complex problems. This, of course, allows the students to become more useful in their work and community roles. It all begins with the quest for purposeful understanding.

The National FFA Organization associates three skills with awareness:

- Address issues important to the community.
- Perform leadership tasks associated with citizenship.
- Participate in activities that promote acceptance and appreciation of diversity.

Noticing skill in awareness...

A student leader who demonstrates this skill is aware of self, community, diversity, environment, global issues and knowledge.

Let's take a look at a sampling of the different behaviors you may notice with students as they work on developing mastery of the skills associated with awareness.

Students mindful of the skills associated with awareness should be able to...

- Discuss and explain trends and issues important to their local, state, national and global community.
- Define community in terms of its multifaceted nature (e.g. economic, social, professional and cultural).
- Define citizenship.
- Identify activities that promote diversity.

Students who currently interact with the skills associated with awareness should be able to...

- Analyze the impact of trends and issues on themselves and others.
- Participate in an activity that responds to a local, state, national and/or global issue.
- Demonstrate ability in advocating for the agricultural and natural resources industry.
- Practice sensitivity to people unlike themselves.

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

- Teach others about local, state, national and global issues important to the community.
- Initiate or lead activities that relate to local, state, national and global issues
- Engage in the public sector as a student leader.
- Model sensitive behaviors for others.

Incorporating Awareness into Your Program

FFA – Have each class review the newspapers and/or interview community leaders with the following question in mind: "What issues are facing our community in the next three to five years?" As they review the news articles or the interview data, have them identify one or two issues or trends that they could be passionate about changing in the local community. As a class, design a solution and make a plan. During a chapter meeting, review the plans proposed by each class and determine one or more plans to submit to the city council for review. Appoint a group to take the plan to the city council for funding and approval. Next, engage the entire program in implementing the plan.

SAE – Have students write a reflection paper about how their SAE program impacts the community. Some questions to prompt their reflection may include:

- What impact does my SAE make on a community to which I belong?
- What evidence do I have to know that my SAE makes an impact?
- How could I change or grow my SAE to make more of an impact on a community?

If students struggle with the exercise, suggest that they interview someone who is involved in a similar enterprise, using the same questions.

Classroom – Students utilize materials available for the H.O. Sargent program to identify a plan of action for their class to impact a diverse audience in the school. As a class, create a plan and work in groups to identify potential ways to support activities that promote diversity in agriculture. Have each of your classes create a poster describing their plan and let other classes provide input and/or ask questions during their periods. The goal is to create a cross-class period discussion on the topic and plans created. Implement one or more of the plans. Materials for the H.O. Sargent program are available at <http://www.ffa.org/programs/hosargent/index.html>

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Best Practices – Integrating LK Precepts into Technical Content

By Ryan Foor, Agriculture Teacher, Glenwood Community High School, Glenwood, Iowa

Last year was the first year I used LifeKnowledge and what a difference. My lessons are more fluid and sequential, and the connections between real-life application and content are visible. My students are retaining the technical content at a much higher rate and their engagement in the classroom has significantly improved. I also noticed that some of my student class scores have been higher on average than in previous years.

An important part of my implementation of LifeKnowledge has been the integration of LK precepts into content. To make the use of the precepts obvious, I use the precept at the beginning and end of my lessons. The delivery is the first way I let students know that what they are learning includes a specific precept. I start the lesson with a statement or question related to the precept, continue with the LifeKnowledge content and then segue into the technical content. When concluding the lesson, I revisit the connection made between the precept and the technical objective. I find this practice helps students make emotional connections with technical content, which has led to improved performance on assignments. It has also reduced classroom management issues because of students' high engagement level.

Integrating specific precepts is easier than you might think. I've listed three specific examples to give you an idea of how simple integration can be and how well the precepts tie into the technical content.

"I start the lesson with a statement or question related to the precept, continue with the LifeKnowledge content and then segue into the technical content. When concluding the lesson, I revisit the connection made between the precept and the technical objective."

Example #1

Technical area:

Plant Science

Precept:

M. Communications – M2. Demonstrate professional job-seeking skills.

Technical area objectives:

– Describe the factors that affect plant growth and development

Sample scripted statement of integration (after teaching LK Lesson HS.38 – Interviewing Techniques):

"Overall, this wasn't a great interview, was it? One part of successfully finding a job is having good interview skills, isn't it? What are some other parts to successfully finding and keeping a job? (List these on the board.) There are a number of integral components to finding a job and keeping it. Today we are going to continue learning about plant science, specifically looking at plant growth factors. Just as the list of things on the board is important to job finding and keeping, there are a number of important environmental requirements that a plant needs to have a productive and successful life cycle."

Example #2

Technical area:

Environmental Science

Precept:

E. Awareness – E1. Address issues important to the community

Technical area objectives:

– Define biome.
– Compare and contrast the world's forest biomes.

Sample scripted statement of integration:

"We discussed the organization of living things in the last chapter and realized the importance of each organism or individual within the community, population, etc. Each organism plays a different yet important role within its ecosystem."

Solicit answers to the following questions:

- "How do we as individuals help to make up the ecosystem or biosphere of our community?"
- "Why is it important that we serve others to make our community stronger?"
- "In what ways can we serve others to make our community better?"
- "As we begin to look at the different kinds of ecosystems, think about your role within our ecosystem."

Example #3

Technical area:

Animal Science

Precept:

J. Mental Growth – J2. Think creatively

Technical area objectives:

- Identify the parts of the male reproductive system.
- Describe the functions of the parts of the male reproductive system.

Sample scripted statement of integration:

"One of the things that might happen as we improve our creativity skills is that our beliefs and perceptions about things in life may change. What happens to an animal's body as it matures? Right, it changes. In order for us to continue our vet tech training, we must understand that, but first we need a solid foundation in knowing the different parts, and that is our adventure today. So remember as we move through today's activities that as you improve your skills – whether they are creative skills, leadership skills or skills necessary to be a vet tech – your beliefs and perceptions about things may change as you improve."

Advice on successful integration:

1. Print a copy of the precepts and post them somewhere where you will see them regularly (especially near where you do lesson planning).
2. Load LK onto all computers you use so that it is always accessible.
3. In all instances, make the connection between the precept that should be taught and the lesson/objective. Use the "Integration Ideas" tool in the LK program to get ideas that will work. Use the "Show Connection" tool to help create statements that bridge the lesson from the interest approach (where LifeKnowledge content can be introduced) to the first objective (where technical content is first introduced).

Good luck!

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LifeKnowledge –Values and Solutions

By Jerry Rose, Corporate Vice President, Cargill, Incorporated

If you look at Cargill's mission statement, "To be the global leader in nourishing people," you will understand our connection to FFA. I believe that at the heart of what we do as a company and what we believe in respect to our employees and customers is applicable to the principles embodied by LifeKnowledge. To date, LifeKnowledge is one of the most unique vehicles we've seen to deliver the training and tools needed to equip our youth with leadership skills for the future. Critical thinking, creativity and a strong sense of ethics are just a few things that come to mind. The ability to reach out and offer leadership training to every individual in a program is a very powerful concept. It is also in line with our priorities as a company. I'll give you a few examples.



Jerry Rose
Corporate Vice President
Cargill, Incorporated

First and foremost, we believe every Cargill employee has value. From our corporate leadership team to the frontline workers in our feed mills, each employee is relevant and contributes to the overall success of our company. For example, of the many responsibilities employees have at a Cargill feedlot, one task is keeping water tanks clean for the livestock. One may not think about the significance of this job, yet it is critical to the overall performance and success of the operation. Clean water impacts the rate of gain for cattle, which in turn impacts profitability. To show this, we actually calculated how an individual's performance at this task contributes to the goals of the feedlot and Cargill as an entire entity. Excessive? Not when it's about helping every person understand their contribution to the greater goal. It's critical to show that all 149,000 employees of Cargill not only matter but can make a difference.

In a similar way, LK promotes the value of every student. Not only does it provide opportunities for continuous self-improvement and teamwork, but it enables students to actively contribute to the overall success of

agricultural education, FFA and eventually the agriculture industry. It also prepares students to contribute to the success of their communities, which parallels Cargill's belief that we should be strong corporate citizens in the communities in which we reside. Every student has the potential to be a leader. Every student is empowered to play an active role in the agriculture classroom. One of the main reasons we subscribe to LK is that it has such a broad reach, and it gets down to the good stuff – the values that build the foundation for personal and professional success.

"One of the main reasons we subscribe to LK is that it has such a broad reach, and it gets down to the good stuff – the values that build the foundation for personal and professional success."

The strategic approach of LifeKnowledge offering solutions to teachers gives the initiative a clear focus. We like the fact that the primary customers of LifeKnowledge are agriculture teachers. There is no doubt about it; students are reaping the rewards, but you, the teachers, are the reason LifeKnowledge works. In a similar way, we are highly focused on customer solutions at Cargill. We strive – with our customers – to find innovative solutions to meet their business demands. This can

be in the form of developing new ways to produce food products, streamline supply chain or develop new ways to manage financial risk. This has been a key factor in our ability to remain competitive and have a strong presence on a global scale.

This solution-focused approach is especially important from our perspective because by supporting the LifeKnowledge Center, we're investing in our future employees as well as our future customers. Agriculture, as many of us know, is a tight-knit circle. All of us in the circle need to do all we can to keep the industry progressive across the board. In agricultural education, you need to do all you can to keep technical content relevant and applicable to address academic standards as well as employer expectations and demands.

We are proud to support LifeKnowledge and teachers like you who make it possible. The return on our investment at all levels is seen in the quality of members and their contributions to Cargill as well as other agriculture and food-based organizations. Through agricultural education and FFA, young people develop an early commitment to agriculture and gain the leadership, organizational, collaborative, problem-solving and interpersonal communication skills needed by the industry. We know you understand this, and we thank you for your excellent work.

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Ask the Expert – Why LK for Pre-Service Teachers?

Q&A with Dr. Jack Elliot, Professor and Head, Department of Agricultural Education, University of Arizona



Dr. Jack Elliot
Professor and Head,
Department of Agricultural
Education, University of
Arizona

1. What is your background in agricultural education?

I have been associated professionally with agricultural education for over 30 years. This includes time as a college student and graduate teaching assistant at Washington State University; as an advisory committee member in Belt, Mont., while I was a farmer; as a high school agriculture teacher in Montesano,

Wash.; as a Ph.D. student at The Ohio State University; and as an assistant professor at Michigan State University for four years. I have been a professor and department head at the University of Arizona since 1992.

2. When were you first exposed to LK and how long have you been using it in your program at the University of Arizona?

I was fortunate to be part of the initial LK development team. I brought home early versions of LK and we blended those concepts

into our program. We have now been using LK as part of our curriculum for about four years. It has been instrumental in helping our student teachers become more cognizant of learning styles, multiple intelligences and active teaching strategies that engage students. We have also received a lot of support from the educational community in Arizona. Because of that, our state supervisor of agricultural education, Mr. Dennis Fiscus, has been able to purchase many of the LK supplemental materials the past three summers.

"In my opinion, LK is easily the most powerful product the National FFA Organization has ever produced. It has the potential to change the way we teach and to make agriculture educators the premier teachers in their school systems."

3. How have your students responded to LK's systematic and purposeful approach to teaching leadership to every student enrolled in agricultural education? How has this influenced your veteran teachers?

Our student teachers have been so excited about LK that they recently convinced the veteran teachers to adopt the LK lesson plan format for the state's core agricultural education curriculum. This summer, about 30 veteran teachers converted old lesson plans to the new style by cross-walking LK lessons with our first nine knowledge and skills standards. In addition, our teachers requested that the LK professional development sessions during our summer conference be held earlier in the week so they have more time with it. It seems that once our veterans (after two years of exposure) realize what a great product LK is and how beneficial it is in the classroom, they can't seem to get enough of it.

4. Why is it important to have LK as part of a pre-service program? How has it influenced the teaching skills and methodologies of your students?

The teaching strategies are built into the LK lessons, so the student teachers (and the veteran teachers) have improved their craft as educators. LK is especially beneficial because it provides an actual method of integrating leadership into the technical classroom, SAE and FFA. Our teachers know that if they practice teaching with the proven strategies found in LK, they will become the best teachers in their schools.

5. Do you have any specific examples of how LK inspired your pre-service teachers? Has it increased their excitement/anticipation of using these techniques in the classroom?

In addition to the aforementioned core curriculum effort, we required our student teachers to develop at least five LK lessons to be taught during micro-teaching sessions. We had them teach their lessons to middle school students. Due to the engaging nature of the lessons, these sessions went extremely well and all the pre-service teachers felt more confident going into their 13-week student teaching experience. They kept saying that their cooperating teachers were impressed with their confidence.

6. What differences do you notice among your pre-service teachers who have been trained in LK vs. those who have not (or those who came through your program pre-LK)?

The pre-service teachers with LK experience and preparation utilize engaging strategies at a much higher rate than those who weren't exposed to LK. Since it is part of our program and training, it is something our pre-service teachers are comfortable using from the start and it becomes part of their teaching style. Whereas, for those teachers that are exposed to LK after they've already been in the field for a few years, it takes a lot more time and effort on their part to use it. The more pre-service teachers we can train in LK, the more LK concepts and strategies will become an integral part of agricultural education down the road.

7. How do you think LK is changing or is going to change agricultural education?

In my opinion, LK is easily the most powerful product the National FFA Organization has ever produced. It has the potential to change the way we teach and to make agriculture educators the premier teachers in their school systems. It also has the potential to make agricultural education more relevant in our school systems than ever before by applying educational standards and life skills training that both educators and employers value.

8. What would you say to other program heads who have not yet adopted LK in their programs?

Show me any product that embraces all of the foundational educational theories better than LK and I will use it. There simply isn't anything like it on the market.

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Be Inclusive

From *Quantum Teaching*, by DePorter, Reardon and Singer–Nourie

Ever notice statements like these spoken in a classroom? "What I want you to do next is take out your books." "What you're going to do next is take out the homework from last night." "I need you to gather your materials." Teachers make statements like these hundreds of

"Being conscious and deliberate about the words you choose can strengthen the sense of togetherness and elicit positive associations."

times a day. They clearly communicate the expected behavior, but what else do they communicate? If language elicits associations, what associations are being invited? Notice the words "I want you to," "You're going to," and "I need you to" perpetuate a me-versus-you dynamic. The message behind them is, "I'm in control and you'll do what I say." Now, how might someone who has negative associations wrapped around teachers respond to that? Perhaps in a rebellious or less-than-cooperative manner? This negative association, even at the non-conscious level, has a dramatic effect on learning and behavior.

Now notice how the following statements create a more positive, propelling dynamic. "Let's take out our books." "Go ahead and take out your homework

from last night." "It's time to gather our materials." A simple change in words fosters an inclusive, everyone-is-invited, collaborative relationship.

Being conscious and deliberate about the words you choose can strengthen the sense of togetherness and elicit positive associations. To support your intention to create a collaborative learning environment, use language that invites inclusion. "Let's," "us" and "we" create a sense of cohesion and unity. In effect, the words say, "We're in this together." Remember, everything speaks, always!

Common Statements Rephrased

- Don't forget to do your homework
 - *Remember to do your homework.*
- I need you to take out your books.
 - *Let's take out our books.*
- I'm going to be teaching you the steps.
 - *We'll be learning the steps.*
- Now we are at the difficult part of this unit.
 - *This is easily the most challenging part we've mastered so far.*
- Don't talk.
 - *Focus your attention to this spot.*
- For some of you, this next section will be a breeze.
 - *This section is a challenge in various degrees.*
- Look up here.
 - *Catch this everyone.*

Quantum Teaching co-author Mark Reardon has been a part of the LifeKnowledge program since its inception. Mr. Reardon has worked with the LifeKnowledge trainers and the Delta program. Mark has other books that can be found on the Internet and national book stores.

What's New with LK

Omega Conference Scheduled for September

Thirty university teacher educators have been selected to attend the LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education's Omega Conference. Omega, which focuses on powerful professional growth for university educators, will take place in Indianapolis, Sept. 13–16, 2006. The Omega objectives are: to be a leader in the profession of agricultural education; to collaborate effectively; and to be scholars in education, outreach and research. The 30 participants represent nearly 25 institutions across the country. LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education Contact: Randy Vlasin, 317–450–6156, rvlasin@ffa.org. Omega Lead Facilitator Contact: Dr. Jack Elliot, 520–621–7173, elliott@ag.arizona.edu.

LifeKnowledge Version 3.0 to Debut at 79th National FFA Convention

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

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

LK 3.0 Schedules for the Interactive Classrooms at National FFA Convention

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

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

Program of Activities (POA) Tool to be Featured at National FFA Convention

Is it a chore every year to help your chapter leadership team create the Program of Activities (POA)? Do you wish your students would focus more on the big picture of chapter activities during the planning process rather than getting tied down in details from the start? Stop by the Convention Interactive Classrooms and get a hands-on look at the brand new Program of Activities Tool. The POA Tool provides an automated process to help your students plan, organize and complete your annual Program of Activities. Once initial information is entered, the tool provides reminders, prints reports and completed POA forms, and maintains a comprehensive calendar and budget of all committee and chapter activities. Come see how it can work for your chapter! You'll also have a chance to test-drive other materials featured in the Core catalog and to take part in hands-on demonstrations.

National FFA Contact: Tiffany Sanderson, 402–742–3561, tsanderson@ffa.org.

Core Interactive Classroom Schedule at National FFA Convention

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

- Wednesday, Oct. 25
 - 1:00pm – 2:00pm
 - 2:15pm – 3:15pm
- Thursday, Oct. 26

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

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