



# Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators



June 2009

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## Feature Stories

Make the Most out of your Summer Professional Development Experience  
Professional Development through NAAE | Advanced Degrees Can Advance Course Offerings, Salary  
Wake up! Summer Conferences Rev Up Teachers for the Coming Year

### Make the Most out of Your Summer Professional Development Experience

This summer, you are likely to do many things – catch up on projects around the house, take inventory in your shop, order supplies for the next school year, and—if you're lucky—you might get to throw a vacation into the mix. But there's one thing you definitely don't want to leave off the list: professional development.

Whether it's taking the leap to advance your education with a master's degree or attending summer courses or conferences to help improve your classroom offerings, professional development is not only a good way to keep up with the industry, having a professional growth plan is a requirement of the National Quality Program Standards.

In this issue, we explore some of the professional growth opportunities offered in agricultural education, whether it's joining an organization like NAAE and taking advantage of its Webinars or Communities of Practice message board, or obtaining an advanced degree through online courses. We hope that you will learn some new ideas and opportunities for plotting your professional growth plan this summer.

With all of the day-to-day demands of teaching, repairing, coaching, building, growing, creating, etc., professional development might be the last thing on your mind; however, it should be one of the first. Read [Professional Development through NAAE](#) to discover how you can take advantage of the many opportunities this organization offers to its members in the agricultural education community.

Advancing your education at a college or university will no doubt cost both time and money, but it's a worthy investment for the successful agriculture teacher. It can provide a measure of job security and, more importantly, a chance to continue to further develop your expertise and classroom offerings. Read [Advanced Degrees Can Advance Course Offerings, Salary](#) to see if now is a good time to look into going back to school.

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Before you start going through your inventory, shutting down the greenhouse for the summer, making SAE visits and stocking up on shop supplies for next year, take some time to plan what could be the highlight of your summer: professional development conferences. Learn how to get the most out of these summer conferences by reading [Wake up! Summer Conferences Rev Up Teachers for the Coming Year.](#)

In this month's Perspectives article, we show you an example of how one state has put a professional development plan into place. You can use it as a benchmark for your state's professional development plan, or simply get some new ideas on how you can further your own plan. Read [Professional Development in Agricultural Education – The Nebraska Model](#) to learn more.

Don't miss the [LifeKnowledge Spotlight](#) this month, where Dr. Kyle McGregor talks about the upcoming Delta Conference and why it's so beneficial to teachers. And be sure to get next year's conference on your radar.

Got something to say about summer conferences, advanced degrees or professional agricultural education organizations? Then check out the Question for the Profession this month: [What's the Difference between Good Professional Development and Great Professional Development?](#)

Making a Difference is taking a little break this summer while our LPS specialists make their summer visits. But we'll be back in September with fresh content and new ideas for the 2009-2010 school year. Have a great summer, and we'll see you next fall!

Best,

Amber Striegel  
Editor

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### Professional Development through NAAE

By Michael Rubino

You're an agriculture teacher—you have a challenging job that, at times, probably feels like two when you add in your responsibilities as an FFA advisor. Staying current in multiple areas of the field isn't merely a suggestion, it's a requirement.

With all of the day-to-day demands of teaching, repairing, coaching, building, growing, creating, etc., professional development might be the last thing on your mind; however, it should be one of the first.

"If you want to be the best possible teacher, you need to make an investment in your professional development because it benefits not only you, but your students," said Robin McLean, agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Northern Burlington County Regional Middle School in Columbus, N.J.

McLean, who has taught for seven years and worked for the state FFA for four, earns about 100 to 115 professional development credits per year. New Jersey requires teachers to earn 100 every five years. "I guess I do it because I'm a life-longer learner, and, as a teacher, I want my students to be life-long learners, too."

Ellen Thompson, an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor for eight years at Sauk Centre High School in Sauk Centre, Minn., quickly learned that putting in extra hours for professional development is actually a time-saver during the school-year.

"In my classroom, I teach a variety of things," she said. "I have to be everyone from a vet to a master gardener to an expert in forestry. All in one day. Professional development is really the only way to make that possible. It's that bump you need sometimes. It will remind you of why you became a teacher."

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According to the National Quality Program Standards, agriculture teachers should have a professional growth plan, enhance their skills by taking college credit courses or through professional development opportunities, and join a related state and national education association. Both Thompson and McLean belong to one such organization, the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

Founded as the National Vocational Agricultural Teachers' Association, the 8,000-member NAAE is 61 years old. In recent years, however, the organization has given itself a make-over, putting professional development atop its list of priorities and developing a significant presence on the Web. Though its regional and national workshops still provide members an opportunity to learn new skills and swap old tricks with peers, some teachers are finding the NAAE's online offerings an equally valuable professional development tool. Given advances in social networking and a growing library of Webinars, the best part is that the resources—like agriculture teachers and advisors often have to be—are available on-demand.

Communities of Practice, the NAAE's online teachers' lounge, offers agriculture educators links to classroom resources, a place to collaborate on projects, RSS feeds, e-mail notifications and a discussion board.

Thompson and McLean are two of the site's most prolific participants.

"It's pretty easy to type up a question and post it," said Thompson. "[Communities of Practice] is probably the biggest, coolest thing we've got going on right now. It's priceless. I bet I check the site at least five times a day."

It's not traditional professional development, admits Julie Fritsch of the NAAE, but it serves the same purpose. "We're letting our members be the experts," she said. "Often, these folks are the only agriculture teacher in their school; it's not like there are three or four others for them to call on with a questions. So, we see this as a great opportunity for our members to network and help each other when things come up. Agriculture teachers have always been known as a helping bunch—we've just tried to facilitate that."

Last year, the NAAE began offering Webinars—online seminars that can be participated in live or downloaded later—where teachers can earn professional development credit. Fritsch said most of the courses are taught by technical experts from the organization's corporate partners. Five Webinars are archived, but more are planned.

"We had a very good response for the first go-around," said Fritsch, noting that several drew 150 to 200 participants. "It's just going to be a matter of time that people learn this is something that we offer and get comfortable with the technology."

McLean, the life-long learner from New Jersey, is sold. “I just downloaded the whole [Webinar] series but haven’t actually worked through them yet,” she said. “I can’t wait.”

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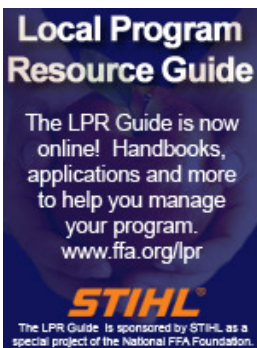


### Advanced Degrees Can Advance Course Offerings, Salary

Agriculture educators are experiencing the added pressures of increased requirements for professional development across the country. Many states are even doubling the number of total hours when compared to what teachers were required to obtain just 10 years ago. These requirements typically generate no added income, just a stamp of approval that the teacher is fulfilling the state's mandate.



As the old saying goes, "It takes money to make money." So why not get your professional development in the form of an advanced degree? The investment can pay off by moving you along your school district's salary schedule, increase your aptitude as an educator and improve the success of the students in your classroom.



We know – you've probably been kicking around the idea of getting your advanced degree for a couple of years. So what is keeping you from taking the next step? Time? Money?

Advancing your education at a college or university will no doubt cost both, but it's a worthy investment for the successful agriculture teacher. It can provide a measure of job security and, more importantly, a chance to continue to further develop your expertise and classroom offerings.

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The National Program Quality Standards mandate that all agricultural education teachers have a professional growth plan; continue that growth through college credit courses, participation in professional development or other sources of training; and add to the technical and pedagogical knowledge base of the profession. Pursuing an advanced degree can help educators meet all three of those requirements.

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Donna Moore, an associate professor and teacher education coordinator for the Department of Agriculture and Extension Education at Virginia Tech, says, “Don’t wait.”

“An advanced degree is going to give you a much deeper understanding of what’s going on in your classroom or, better yet, what **could** be going on in your classroom,” she said. “You’re going to work on all those higher-order thinking skills: how to best design and plan your day-to-day lessons; how to plan for your students’ needs; and how to plan for the industry’s needs. Both you and your students are going to have a richer experience if you develop those skills.”

There are many opportunities available for busy teachers to pursue advanced degrees that don’t require taking time off the job. Major universities are offering summer short courses, night classes and distance delivered courses. No one should assume that they’ll never be able to pursue that advanced degree just because they can’t quit their teaching job and reenroll in university life. Contact your local agricultural education department to inquire about advanced degree opportunities that are available within your state or even search universities around the country. You’ll be amazed at the variety of courses and programs that exist—from completely online master’s programs to synchronous courses that meet weekly via Webcam.

Whatever the format, find something, do something, said Moore. You owe it to yourself—and your students.

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### Wake up! Summer Conferences Rev Up Teachers for the Coming Year

By Beth DeHoff

The school year is winding down, the students are getting a little “squirrely,” and, let’s face it, by now you are silently jamming to the tune of Alice Cooper’s “School’s Out for Summer.”

Before you start going through your inventory, shutting down the greenhouse for the summer, making SAE visits and stocking up on shop supplies for next year, take some time to plan what could be the highlight of your summer: professional development conferences.

State and regional conferences are planned all over the nation this summer, and the big, national conferences are just around the corner for fall. (See below for more info.) Take a look around to pick the best conferences for you, and then develop a plan of attack to make sure you get the most (educational and fun!) you can out of them.

Once you’ve selected your conference choices, take a good look at the agenda. What are you most interested in? What do you know the least about? Find the sessions that satisfy your passions and your curiosity, and then go in with an open notebook. Leasa Guderra suggests you try to open something else, as well: your mind.

“A positive attitude helps, and don’t act like a teacher,” she points out. Guderra is the assistant director for secondary agricultural education for the Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation, and she is a former agriculture educator. “Have an open mind, a positive attitude, and be ready and willing to learn, not teach.” In Maryland, the state conference is this summer, as well as the regional “6 by 6” conference in Massachusetts.

University of Missouri’s John Tummons is on the other side of the professional development conferences—he plans them. Hundreds of teachers will congregate July 20-23 for the Missouri Agricultural Teacher’s Conference in



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conjunction with the Missouri Career and Technical Educators Conference. The state also plans summer technical institutes on agronomy, forestry, horse production, small engines, agricultural mechanics, turf grass management, Lincoln Arc welding, food science labs, Missouri Young Farmers Tour, topics in agricultural education, and greenhouse management. Each institute runs two to five days and provides attendees with information and training to help improve their subject knowledge.

Tummons recommends that teachers use the conference days to get busy. "Get involved! Summer conferences are an opportunity to network with other teachers, to learn new strategies for classroom instruction and to work together as a profession to plan for the future," he says. "The more workshops, meetings and activities a teacher can attend, the more benefit they will receive." Tummons also recommends that teachers volunteer to serve as an officer or committee member for their teacher organization.

While a summer conference can offer new information to even the most seasoned teacher, Tummons points out that beginning teachers can benefit enormously from such an event. "Missouri offers special workshops for beginning teachers at our summer conference. We see it as a chance to be welcomed into the profession and meet informally with their mentor, state staff and other new teachers. We also use it as a chance to reveal critical information that beginning teachers need to know. The connections they make with other agriculture educators will serve as a support group for them as they enter the profession."

### **Hosting a conference**

What if you're already involved up to your neck, and are helping to plan a summer conference? Guderra and Tummons have tips for you, too. Guderra makes sure to allow at least one evening for teachers to mingle and have dinner on their own. They also have a night for retired teachers, and they start the whole event with a team-building exercise and picnic.

Once the conference is underway, Guderra and her team plan it just like the three circle model of agricultural education. One circle provides solid classroom ideas through "make and take" workshops on plants, animals, mechanics and other agriculture subjects. Another provides real-world instruction on CDEs. "The older teachers try to educate younger teachers on what they can do. The teachers actually work on CDE projects in hour-long workshops and rotate among them. We've even been out in the field doing soil techniques," Guderra says. "For our spring judging competition, participation went up by 100 students, and we think it's because teachers feel prepared after the conference." Teachers also work through SAE

record books and fill out an application as part of the third circle.

### **Looking toward fall**

Your sweaters may be in storage, but summer is also a great time to plan conferences for the coming school year, before the rush of the fall grading period descends. The national FFA convention will have a number of new features, most notably a new “Teacher’s World” area. Other programs to think about include the Agriscience Teacher Ambassador Program and the Agriscience Integration Institute.

### **Teacher’s World**

The national FFA convention, held October 21-24 in Indianapolis, is always buzzing with opportunities for students. But the 2009 convention will also have a number of new features – just for teachers. “We now have three classrooms for teachers at the convention on agriscience, animal science and teacher development workshops,” says Larry Gossen, National FFA Local Program Success team leader. “This year, those classrooms will be in a special location, surrounded by Career Show exhibitors specifically focused on the teacher. The teachers can now come to one place to see textbook vendors, multimedia companies and other business that want to talk to teachers, not students.”

Teacher’s World will give teachers a place of their own at the convention to receive professional development, talk to sponsors about educational materials for their classroom and browse teacher resources. “We’re also going to have an Internet café, so they can check e-mail, grab some coffee or water and sit and network together,” Gossen says. This new area will be at the west end of the Career Show.

“The Advisors’ Planning Guide II will come out in August, and it will have everything teachers need to know to prepare for the convention. The schedules and classrooms will be listed, and I’d suggest that teachers plan ahead for time that their students can do things on their own while the teacher goes to Teacher’s World for professional development and classroom resources,” Gossen says.

### **Agriscience Teacher Ambassadors and Integration Institute**

Teachers with a desire to further develop agriscience options at their school may wish to apply for FFA’s Agriscience Teacher Ambassador program. The week-long summer conference in Maryland is sponsored by DuPont. “We spend a week grilling teachers on science principles, how to integrate science and how to teach using a true inquiry-based approach,” Gossen says.

The July ambassador program is by invitation only, and applications for the 2010 program will be available by

October at the convention and online. “The application process has gotten very competitive with only 18 slots available nationwide,” Gossen says. “It’s hard to select the teachers that attend, so we encourage teachers who aren’t selected one year to continue to apply each year. We look for teachers with a strong knowledge of or background in science who have made that a part of their classroom and are looking for help to make their classrooms more science-based. If teachers like that apply for this program several times, they probably have a good chance of making it sooner or later.”

Once teachers have graduated from the ambassador program, they are expected to be ambassadors for agriscience in their state. Many teach topics at their state conferences, and some get involved in the Agriscience Integration Institute. This program is sponsored by DuPont and Pioneer, and it involves a week-long August training in Iowa. “We bring together teacher educators at universities with states’ departments of education staff members and our teacher ambassadors,” Gossen says. “The focus is on how to develop a state-wide plan for implementing agriscience into the curriculum.”

So go ahead—find someone to mow your lawn, set the water system on auto pilot, have parents supervise livestock projects, and take off for a few days of professional development at a summer conference in your area. Then, when you get home, start making your plans to attend Teacher’s World at the national convention this fall.

With all of the opportunities available through FFA and agricultural education, there’s no shortage of professional development events. Make some friends and learn new ideas from your peers at a conference—even in the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.

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FEEDBACK

## Perspectives

### Professional Development in Agricultural Education – The Nebraska Model

By Dann Husmann, Professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Craig Frederick, National FFA Local Program Success Specialist

**Editor's note:** This article was originally published in [The Agricultural Education Magazine](#) and is an example of how one state has put a professional development plan into place. You can use it as a benchmark for your state's professional development plan, or simply get some new ideas on how you can further your own plan.

An interesting reality about teaching is that everyone—regardless of who, when, where, why or how—has a first year of teaching. Whether your first year takes place in a high school, community college, technical institute or four-year university, we all begin from a common starting point. This shared experience reminds me of a quote by G. Spencer Brown, who so eloquently stated, “We cannot fully understand the beginning of anything until we understand the end (Fields, 1984).” Many of us spend our whole lives repeating beginnings without realizing what our end goal is, should be or could be in relationship with our students and our responsibilities as a teacher.

Do you remember what it was like when you first entered the agricultural education profession as a secondary teacher? I remember graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and accepting my first agricultural education position in Arkansas City, Kan., in the summer of 1982. I recall attending my first annual agriculture teachers' conference in early August and having someone from the Kansas teachers' association tell me they could answer any question I had about teaching or the agricultural education profession in general. The problem was that I had no idea what the questions were—let alone trying to seek any answers.

It was not until the first day of school in front of the first class of the day that all my questions came forward and took center stage. Suddenly, I was thinking, “Now where are all those experienced teachers I met back in August?” I didn't have time to make a phone call to the neighboring agricultural education teacher. Why hadn't e-mail been invented yet? Or the Internet? Why couldn't I just Google all the answers to my questions? So many questions...not enough time in the day...and it is only Monday...when is Labor Day this year???

The Nebraska Model of Professional Development in Agricultural Education is a comprehensive program designed to guide, direct and encourage involvement in the Nebraska Agricultural Educators Association (NAEA). The model provides a holistic picture for new teachers entering agricultural education (0–5 years in the profession), pre-veteran teachers (6–10 years in the profession) and veteran teachers (more than 10 years in the profession). Nebraska agricultural education teachers representing the 12 NAEA districts participated in a strategic planning process over an 18-month period and developed a comprehensive plan for its teachers. As a result, the committee developed four key strategic priorities for Nebraska agricultural education. One priority identified was professional development, which is outlined in the chart below.

## Professional Development Plan (PDP) for Nebraska Agriculture Educators

<b>New Teachers</b> (0–5 years in the profession)	<b>Pre-Veteran Teachers</b> (6–10 years in the profession)	<b>Veteran Teachers</b> (more than 10 years in the profession)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend NCE conference                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Participate in the New Teachers' Workshop at NCE conference on Sunday before conference</li> <li>◦ Work with district mentor for information about NCE conference</li> </ul> </li> <li>• NAEA membership and involvement                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ District mentor provided by NAEA for in and out of school support</li> <li>◦ Continued NCE conference involvement</li> <li>◦ NAEA awards application completed and submitted by the fifth year of teaching</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NAEA membership and involvement                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ NCE conference involvement</li> <li>◦ NAEA awards application completed and submitted</li> </ul> </li> <li>• District and state officer/leadership involvement                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ District leadership and participation</li> <li>◦ State leadership and participation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NAEA membership and involvement                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ NCE conference involvement</li> <li>◦ NAEA awards application completed and submitted</li> </ul> </li> <li>• District and state officer/leadership involvement                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ District leadership and participation</li> <li>◦ State leadership and participation                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ May include regional and/or national involvement</li> </ul> </li> <li>◦ Potential responsibility in leading and delivering in-service workshops for NAEA and NCE conference</li> <li>◦ Potential service as a mentor for new NAEA members</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALEC 804 involvement                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Required involvement and participation</li> <li>◦ Must be a current NAEA member</li> <li>◦ Start a graduate program</li> <li>◦ Tuition rebate for the successful completion of ALEC 804 (pending approval)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin the Leadership Academy                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Application completed and submitted for the Leadership Academy</li> <li>◦ Graduate program continued                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Started if not in a program</li> </ul> </li> <li>◦ Consideration for a UNL student teaching center</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the Leadership Academy                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ If not started, then application submitted for the Leadership Academy</li> <li>◦ Complete graduate program</li> <li>◦ Consideration for a UNL student teaching center</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight (8) hours of technical workshop experience each year                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ NAAE summer workshops</li> <li>◦ UNL inservice activities</li> <li>◦ Industry training</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight (8) hours of technical workshop experience each year                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ NAAE summer workshops</li> <li>◦ UNL inservice activities</li> <li>◦ Industry training</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight (8) hours of technical workshop experience each year                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ NAAE summer workshops</li> <li>◦ UNL inservice activities</li> <li>◦ Industry training</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Refresher workshops and in-service</li> </ul>



NCE – Nebraska Career Education	The Leadership Academy is a two-year program designed to accelerate the professional growth of selected agriculture educators through a variety of applied leadership experiences related to school, civic and governmental situations.	participation in professional education such as methods, program planning, evaluation and assessment, cooperating student teaching centers, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ITP (Individual Teacher Plan) created and implemented</li> </ul>
NAEA – Nebraska Agricultural Educators Association		
ALEC 804 – Problems of Beginning Agriscience Teachers - graduate course through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)		
NAAE – National Association of Agricultural Educators		

The agricultural education profession is like no other career and technical education discipline. We are a close-knit, well organized and highly-professional group of teachers who go to great lengths to nurture not only beginning teachers, but also veteran teachers in our organization. Boreen, Johnson, Niday and Potts (2000) said it best when they stated, “The finest, most rewarding professional development generally occurs by working and learning alongside trusted colleagues (pg. 99).

The Nebraska Model provides a professional development plan that details the expectations required for all teachers in agricultural education and offers numerous opportunities for teachers to grow professionally and assume additional roles and responsibilities within the profession. Having this vision laid out in a professional development model provides a holistic picture of what is possible, probable and preferable for an individual’s participation in our profession. There is an engraving on a church in Sussex, England, dating back to 1730, which states, “A vision without a task is but a dream, a task without a vision is drudgery, a vision and a task is the hope of the world (Fields, 1984).” The Nebraska Model provides both a “vision” and a “task” of professional development for our teachers—our best hope for the future of agricultural education.

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## LifeKnowledge Spotlight

*Delta Conference 2009 will be hosted by Tarleton State University in cooperation with the National FFA Organization and LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education and is sponsored by CEV Multimedia. Below, Dr. Kyle McGregor talks about the upcoming conference and why it's so beneficial to teachers.*

### Delta Conference: An Opportunity for Teaching Success

*By Dr. Kyle McGregor, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Services & Development, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas*

Through the classes I teach, it is important to encourage my students to be learners throughout life. Their progression and development as teachers has just begun, and they must continually hone their craft. We offer skill and knowledge in order that our students are successful in their infancy of teaching; but, they must be willing to continually nurture themselves if they are to develop as educators.

**2009 Tarleton State University Delta Conference:**

- **When:** June 21-26, 2009
- **Who:** Any agriculture educator with a minimum of one year of experience may complete an application
- **Cost:** The 2009 conference registration fee is \$400 per participant, which includes room and board.
- [Visit the Delta Conference website to learn more.](#)

Professional development is the constant renewal of self and viable skill in any profession. If we fail to continually develop ourselves as educators, we are making the choice to place our students at a disadvantage.

**Opportunity.** The Delta Conference is a professional development event aimed at enhancing agriculture educators' teaching and leadership abilities. Teacher participants can expect to re-enter their classrooms able to engage every student every day through proven and practiced technique. Delta participants can also expect to enhance aptitudes in leadership and advocacy, which can be applied directly to their students, local school districts, communities and their discipline.

The Delta Conference is a unique, five-day professional development event for secondary and middle school

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agriculture educators that prepares teachers to use the latest brain-based student-centered engagement strategies, enhances participating teachers'

understanding of their own leadership, and provides a continuum of growth for both leadership and teaching performance.

This year's conference will be held June 21-26, 2009. The program has strong philosophical and theoretical roots in pedagogy and cognitive coaching. Participants learn the research-based theories behind educational and leadership concepts, see a seasoned educational professional model of how to perform the concepts in a classroom, then have the opportunity to practice the concepts themselves and, finally, they receive feedback on their efforts from an individualized mentor/coach. Any agriculture educator with a minimum of one year of experience may apply.

**Success.** Entering its third year at Tarleton State University, the Delta Conference has a track record of proven success. A recent study (Coonrod, McGregor & Bellah, 2009) has connected increased student learning to agriculture educator participation in the Delta Conference. Also, so many teachers have found the experience to be career- and life-changing!

*"The best professional development I have attended. It was life-changing."*

*"This professional development opportunity is unlike any other you will have the chance to participate in. Being able to practice what you just learned about is invaluable. So many conferences give you the information, but when you go home and want to utilize it, no one is there to answer your questions and give you feedback, which often causes that information to be discarded. Delta is real. Delta is experience."*

*"Delta is like buying a defibrillator for teaching. It jumps starts, or maybe 'restarts,' the hearts and lives of teachers."*

*"(Delta is) without a doubt the top teacher-training program I have ever experienced. It provided me with tools to engage students and be more effective immediately."*

Visit the [Delta Conference](#) website and see what past participants have to say about their experiences and the impact Delta has made on their career and lives.

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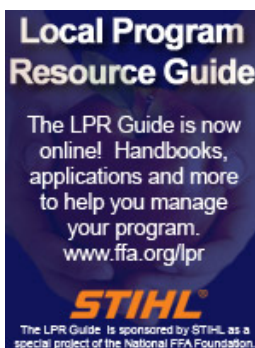


# Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators

June 2009

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## Question for the Profession



### What's the Difference between Good Professional Development and Great Professional Development?

By Nina Crutchfield, Local Program Success Specialist

There are only a few more days of the school year left, and soon we'll all be turning our attention toward the tasks of summer. Among all the hours you're going to spend repairing equipment, making SAE visits, attempting to organize materials for next year, and attending conventions and camps, I'm sure you'll have the opportunity to spend several hours mesmerized by professional presenters addressing everything from safety to learning styles and technical integration to parental involvement. These presenters will range from poor to outstanding, from cheap to horribly expensive. So as you think about what lies ahead, consider those events you've attended in the past.

You've attended workshops that inspired and motivated and ones that depressed and irritated. What determines your reaction? **What is the difference between good professional development and great professional development?** What are the characteristics that presenters across the country need to include so that you get the most out of what they are saying? Do you prefer events that are interactive, require participation, or let you practice techniques? Do you prefer presenters who challenge you to think differently?

The LPS team will be attending your summer conferences, and we really want to know how we can create professional development events that are great. We want to share those characteristics you identify with other presenters so that the next time you leave a presentation, your first thought is NOT "There's an hour I'll never get back."

For additional ideas on creating great professional development in your state, be sure to check out the Summer issue of [Making a Difference magazine](#).

And please share your thoughts and ideas concerning this month's question for the profession: What's the difference between good professional development and great professional development? by logging into the [NAAE communities of practice](#)..



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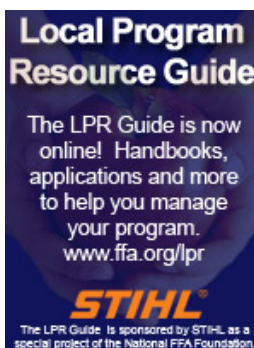
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## Teacher Resources

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### Working with Advisory Councils – Ag Ed 430/630

This course focuses on both content and procedure for agricultural education (Ag Ed) teachers and cooperative extension educators to use when organizing and working with advisory councils. Topics include effective use of advisory councils in agricultural education classroom settings and extension informal educational programs. The course examines a conceptual framework to explain how advisory councils relate to agriculture and extension education's use of planned change both in and out of the classroom. Systems, systemic linkage and change are a basis for understanding advisory councils in the overall organization. Information on facilitating group discussions, planning and conducting effective meetings, conflict management, and identifying the local community or organization's power structure is also covered. To register for this course, go to the [UDOnline website](#), or contact Dr. Patricia S. Barber, Associate Professor of Agriculture Education, University of Delaware Newark, at [pbarber@udel.edu](mailto:pbarber@udel.edu).

### Cotton Lessons and Activities

[CottonCampus.org](#) is a fun-filled educational site for students, parents and teachers. It provides educational resources and information about the U.S. cotton industry through interactive games and activities that are fun and informative. There are downloadable lesson plans and video slides shows. Check out [www.cottoncampus.org](http://www.cottoncampus.org) to spice up your next lesson on natural fiber production.

### Risk Management Lessons

The USDA Risk Management Agency has recently made available a set of Risk Management lesson plans for high school agriculture classes. Lesson topics include better marketing planning, how to use the USDA-RMA website, new enterprise planning and risk management planning. Linked with national standards, each lesson plan includes student learning objectives, a list of needed supplies and key terms. Lesson plans also have a complete teaching script with an interest approach, summary of content, teaching strategies, activities and a test. To access the lessons, go to <http://aged.learn.com> and click on the "Risk

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Management Education Lesson Plans” icon at the bottom of the page. You must create a free account to access the lesson plans. For more information, contact National FFA at [khenry@ffa.org](mailto:khenry@ffa.org) or 317-802-4362.

### **Hooked on Hydroponics**

Looking for a resource to start a hydroponics system? Apply to win a free system at <http://www.kidsgardening.org/grants/hoh.asp>.

### **Stormx**

No need to imagine the weather channel crossed with the farm report anymore. Stormx now has improved agriculture content that allows you to show students weather and contextual maps, USDA crop progress and condition graphs, and state/county yield forecasts for corn and soybeans. See how weather is affecting production in Brazil or just the next county at [www.stormx.com/agriculture](http://www.stormx.com/agriculture).

### **Hummert Horticulture Short Courses**

Hummert International wants you to attend their annual Agricultural Education Short Courses. They’ve even reduced the registration fees to \$250! This year they are offering two courses: Greenhouse Operations and Management, and Community Gardens (NEW), Landscape Design and Turfgrass Management.

The **Greenhouse Operations and Management** Short Course will be held June 23–25. This short course includes 1½ days of classes and a one-day tour of St. Louis’ city greenhouses! Highlights include the St. Louis “Flower Row,” the Midwest hub of the cut flower industry, and the Clyde C. Miller Academy which was recently spotlighted in People magazine for its outstanding FFA chapter and plant biotechnology program.

The **Community Gardens, Landscape Design and Turfgrass Management** Short Course will be held July 7–10. This short course includes 1½ days of classes and a one-day tour day of St. Louis’ community gardens. Tour stops include St. Louis City Seeds & Urban Farm, the Missouri Botanical Garden and Forest Park.

To register, contact [Shannon Dieckman](#) at 1-800-325-3055, extension 1124. Registration is limited so don’t delay!

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## FFA Buzz

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### Changing the World through Mentoring

Partners in Active Learning Support (PALS), the National FFA Organization's mentoring program, is back in the publications business! You don't want to miss the spring issue of PAL to PAL, their new electronic newsletter. Get news on all of the latest happenings, including information about how PALS, Campbell Soup Company and the LifeKnowledge® Center for Agricultural Education have combined visions to produce a new PALS resource, the Grow Your PALS Program Guide. You'll also find out how FFA chapters around the country are matching their high school members with elementary school students, what peer program resources are available, and who else is partnering with PALS. Want to know more? It's easy – just check out [PAL to PAL!](#)

### FFA Convention Judges Sought

The National FFA Organization is accepting volunteer judge nominations for the agricultural proficiency awards; agriscience fair, agriscience student and agriscience teacher awards; and national chapter awards at the 2009 National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Ind., this fall.

- Agricultural proficiency and Star awards judging takes place on Thurs., Oct. 22, 2009. Proficiency and Star judges will be invited to an awards luncheon on that day.
- Agriscience Fair and Student awards judging takes place on Thurs., Oct. 22, 2009.
- Agriscience Teacher Awards judging takes place on Fri., Oct. 23, 2009.
- National Chapter Awards judging takes place on Wed., Oct. 21, 2009.

Convention judging is voluntary. FFA is unable to cover expenses for the judges.

Log on to the [Convention Judges Nomination Form](#) to submit nominations.

Mail completed forms to National FFA Organization, Attn. Teri Buchholtz, P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960 or fax to 317-802-5419.



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### **2009 Collegiate Scholarship Program**

The 2009 selection process is now complete. More than 7,800 students submitted applications to the 2009 program and 1,459 scholarships have been awarded. A list of 2009 scholarship recipients is available on the [FFA website](#).

A notification packet will be mailed to recipients at the end of May. The packet will contain detailed instructions for claiming the scholarships. Recipients who have not received acceptance packets by July 1, 2009, should contact [scholarships@ffa.org](mailto:scholarships@ffa.org).

Information and applications for the 2010 scholarship program will be available November, 15, 2009. All scholarship questions should be directed to [scholarships@ffa.org](mailto:scholarships@ffa.org).

### **V.I.P. and Distinguished Service Citation**

FFA is now accepting applications for both the National FFA V.I.P. and DSC awards. The deadline for both programs is June 15. If you would like to nominate either a person or organization for one of these awards, please contact [Tyler Easton](#) at 317-802-4335.

### **National Chapter Going Digital**

Starting this year, convention information for Star and Models of Innovation chapters will only be sent digitally. We are requesting that chapters be sure to include active e-mail addresses on their applications for the sake of these communications. Communications for chapters without e-mail addresses will be sent to state staff for distribution. The National Chapter Award deadline is July 15. Also, we would like to remind state staff to file your NC forms A and B 30 days in advance of your state convention in order to receive your plaques and spurs by the convention date.

### **Agriscience Student and Teacher Still Accepting Applications**

Both programs are currently open and accepting applications for the 2009 convention. The deadline to apply for either program is July 15. Applications can be found on the [Agriscience Fair and Awards page](#) of ffa.org. If you have any questions regarding either program, contact [Tyler Easton](#) at 317-802-4335.

### **Agriscience Fair Applications for 2009 Convention Available**

The 2009 Agriscience Fair application period is now open. Applications can be found on the [Agriscience Fair and Awards page](#) of ffa.org and carry a deadline of August 15. If your state hosts its convention after this date, exceptions can be made through your state staff. If you have any

questions regarding the Agriscience Fair, contact [Tyler Easton](#) at 317-802-4335.

### **National FFA Convention Housing**

2009 National FFA Convention housing for chapters is open. Advisors need to login to their MyFFA account to get the hotel listing. Contact [Ellen Williams](#) for more information.

### **Reserving Rooms for Other Chapters at Convention?**

If you are reserving rooms for other chapters, and each chapter will pre-register for convention independently, please make sure you indicate on the chapter housing form the chapters and the number of rooms allotted to each chapter. We want to make sure each chapter gets the preconvention registration discount for utilizing the National FFA housing block. If you have already submitted your chapter form and need to update this information, please contact [housing@ffa.org](mailto:housing@ffa.org).

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