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FEEDBACK

Teaching Comes First!

Technology in the Classroom: Sometimes it's OK to Give up the Driver's Seat
But This Isn't English Class! | A CASE for Change

Teaching Comes First!

As an agriculture teacher, you are responsible for many things: making SAE visits, helping students with their CDEs, caring for the greenhouse or barn, helping your officers run the FFA chapter, heading up fundraisers, and the list goes on. All this comes second to the reason you were hired in the first place – to teach!

How interesting that, on any given day, the art and science of teaching takes a back seat to these other duties! This issue of *Making a Difference* will help you regain your focus as a teacher by sharing best practices from veterans in the classroom. Our goal is to help you remember why you became a teacher, and perhaps inspire you to begin really engaging your students in their own learning, rather than opting for the old lecture, review, worksheet and quiz routine. This month we're tackling the first, and most complex, of the National Quality Program Standards – Program Design and Instruction. Read on to learn how your peers have incorporated new methods to achieve classroom success.

Chances are your students were texting on their cell phones and listening to their iPods before they walked into your classroom today. And at some point during the day, they will log on to their Facebook page, Google something or watch the latest viral video on YouTube. Students today are tech savvy, to say the least. Capitalize on their technical ability and ask them for help! Your students spend a lot more time in front of a computer than you do—let them do the driving. Learn how one teacher makes it work by reading [Technology in the Classroom: Sometimes it's OK to Give up the Driver's Seat](#).

Though your students aren't actively aware of it, by implementing disciplinary reading in agriculture courses, you are equipping them with the requisite skills to succeed in school, careers and daily life. Students who read well are able to use oral and written language skills more effectively, solve problems and analyze solutions, and develop a lifelong interest in learning and achieving. Check out [But](#)

[This Isn't English Class!](#) to discover how you can implement these methods in your classroom.

It would be wonderful to see a world where more students have the opportunity to enroll in an agricultural education program... A world where teachers are able to spend more time teaching and focusing on students and less time concerned about what they should be preparing for the next week or even the next period... A world where teachers love to teach and students love to learn... Find out if this world can truly exist by reading [A CASE for Change](#).

Colleen Griswold, agriculture instructor at Tusculumbia High School in Missouri, changed not only her curriculum but her method of teaching after she attended the National Agriscience Teacher Ambassador Academy. Learn how the inquiry-based method works for her in this month's Perspectives: [Learning to Question and Questioning to Learn](#).

In this month's LifeKnowledge Spotlight, we sat down for a [Q&A session](#) with Rebecca Carter, an agriculture instructor at Essex High School in Tappahannock, Va. She told us about her methods of facilitating balanced classroom instruction, which includes the LifeKnowledge program and e-Moments.

And finally, don't forget to check out this month's [Question for the Profession](#), where National FFA LPS Specialist Nina Crutchfield asks you to reveal your tips and challenges when it comes to sharing your instructional workload with your students. What works for you? Are you too exhausted to think? Talk to your peers on the NAAE Communities of Practice message board.

Take care, and take time to enjoy the lovely spring weather. See you in April!

Sincerely,

Amber Striegel

Editor

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Technology in the Classroom: Sometimes it's OK to Give up the Driver's Seat

By Robin C. McLean, Middle School
Agriscience Teacher/FFA Advisor, Northern
Burlington County Regional School District,
Columbus, N.J.

Technology has been the vehicle of agricultural progress since the crude wood and stone tools of Neolithic agrarians were replaced with copper, tin, bronze, and eventually steel implements. The precision agriculture practices and biotechnology of today are certainly only the precursors of marvels yet to come. And as the farmer who has embraced technological opportunities has been the driver setting the direction and leading the change, we as educators have also done so, steering agricultural education in newer directions using emerging technology.

And, odd as it may seem, today it is often the student who introduces the teacher to new tools.

Chances are your students were texting on their cell phones and listening to their iPods before they walked into your classroom today. And at some point during the day, they will log on to their MySpace or Facebook page, Google something or watch the latest viral video on YouTube. Students today are tech savvy, to say the least, and you can capitalize on their ability and willingness to send and receive information via the newer mediums. Ask them for help!

First, you need to have the right tools in the classroom: Internet connection, LCD projector (for YouTube, podcasts, etc.) and computer speakers. You may need to reserve a school computer lab or sign up for a laptop cart in advance of a Web activity, but once you've got these materials, you are ready to go. Following are just a few of the educational avenues you can explore.

- Interactive Web Activities – Numerous interactive Web activities are available and, often, they will get students

- talking about what is going on in class with their peers and even their parents. Sites you might want to explore to see how these work range from "[The Dirt on Soil](#)" to "[Dog Breed Selection](#)" to "[Virtual Farm Tours](#)" to Merriam Webster's visual dictionary games like "[Structure of a Flower](#)".
- YouTube – YouTube features short videos that can be used to introduce a topic, summarize an idea, or challenge students to see what might be wrong with the information presented. Examples to check out include [Chicken Hatcheries](#), [Agriculture Careers](#) and [Soil Texture](#). Since some school districts do not allow YouTube directly on school computers, you might visit http://naae.ca.uky.edu:8080/clearspace_community/message/1359#1359 where there are resources you can explore to download files on a non-filtered computer then bring them to class on an external drive.
 - Pictures – Teachers love using digital cameras to create bulletin boards, enhance PowerPoint presentations and enrich worksheets. And students just love to see themselves in pictures! [Animoto](#) marries your digital pictures to a program which can easily create a short video montage of class activities, supervised agricultural experiences and more. You can also download Windows Photo Story 3 to create similar projects. These are great resources to share with your FFA chapter reporters to create an end-of-year review. Students can also document various out-of-school projects with cell phone photos, too.
 - Wikis – These simple-to-create mini websites allow a teacher to give students a cyber place to explore a topic or to work on an assignment. Students are used to participating in conversations online. So creating a class wiki on a [free site](#) and adding a discussion forum to engage students about class content is the perfect way to connect with them outside of the classroom. Additionally, you can grant students permission to edit pages, and it can become a class project. "Wiki," the Hawaiian word for "fast," offers a quick way to engage students at a home or library computer with a class-related project. FFA and other school activities can have their own Wiki pages.
 - Puzzlemaker – Create crosswords, cryptograms or other puzzles to use in class, or have students create them as a topic summary by using the free resources at <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/index.asp>.
 - Audio Podcasts – Did you know that plugging earphones into the microphone jack can allow a computer to record voices? I didn't, and I'll admit I am just learning about how to use podcasts as a teaching tool. However, Heidi Martin from Massaponax High School in Virginia recorded the [FFA Creed](#) with her students, and I use it in my class.
 - Video Podcasts – You can download podcasts to a school computer (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/overview/>) – no iPods necessary. For example, subscribe to [FFA Today](#) for weekly news on agricultural careers and FFA happenings. On a personal note, subscribing to podcasts such as "60 Second Science," "Discovery Channel," "CNN Student News" and "MTV Headline News" helps keep me current, so I can relate to topics my students are hearing about.

Some of the greatest teachers in my quest to integrate technology in my classroom have been my students. They taught me how to make YouTube playlists to organize the videos I use in class, demonstrated for me how to use

Windows Photo Story 3, and often come in telling me about a website they visited that might be good to use for a lesson. It's important to be willing to remain teachable and sometimes turn over the driver's seat.

Just as our students are networking with their peers for the "latest," it is important for us as educators to network with each other as well. If you have not taken advantage of the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) [Communities of Practice](#), I encourage you to get active today. This community allows us to share our successes and resources. Additionally, several areas or websites I mentioned have lessons posted for them on the Communities of Practice site, and there are even more websites, Web quests and technology tools to use for engaging your students. By directing you here, I may be sharing the best advice of all.

How will you respond to the options newer technology provides? Tell your peers about your experiences engaging your students through technology—and ways your students have engaged you—then share your results on NAAE's Communities of Practice.

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FEEDBACK

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But This Isn't English Class!

By Travis Park, Liz van der Mandele & Barrett Keene

"But, Mr. Park, this isn't English class." Oh, how many times I heard that comment in my years of teaching high school agriculture. My reply to students was always the same: "Look around you. Do you see those magazines? Do you see those computers? Do you see those engines books? Agriculture is language." Of course, we use experiential learning, skills acquisition models, problem-solving, etc., to teach but, at its basis, all human learning, including that in agriculture, is mediated by language.

Reading is a gateway thinking-learning skill that opens the opportunity to learn throughout the course of a person's life. Really, reading and writing are two sides of the literacy coin. Reading is primarily an information input process, while writing, among other forms of communication and application, is mainly an output process. Improving comprehension skills is vital to building cognitive skills. Reading and literacy skills enable youth to gather information from various sources, and then critically and creatively consider solutions to problems in and about their lives. By implementing disciplinary reading in agriculture courses, teachers enable all youth with the requisite skills to succeed in school, careers and daily life. Students who read well are able to use oral and written language skills more effectively, solve problems and analyze solutions, and develop a lifelong interest in learning and achieving.

Sadly, the U.S. produces a nation of relatively poor readers. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (USDE 2008) 26 percent of 12th grade students read below the basic level, defined as the ability to "identify and relate aspects of the text to its overall meaning, extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences, recognize interpretations, make connections among and relate ideas in the text to their personal experiences, and draw conclusions" (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). If our national drop-out rate from ninth grade to graduation is approximately 25 percent, then the total

magnitude of struggling readers approaches 50 percent of our students. Further, only 51 percent of the students completing the ACT are ready for college-level reading (ACT, 2006).

Compounding the problem for us as secondary agriculture teachers is the fact that the reading required of entry-level professionals in our agriculture and natural resources disciplines is the most challenging of all career clusters (Daggett, 2003). The vocabulary is often new to students. The concepts and problems are challenging, complex and lack easy solutions. As with all sciences, our reading and writing is often value-laden and may contain biases, which students must be able to tease out and understand.

So, what is the good news? The good news is actually amazingly good: Students want to complete our courses and learn about agriculture and natural resources. Motivation, purpose and interest are primary factors that contribute to improved reading ability and learning through reading texts of all kinds (Fink, 2006; Guthrie, Wigfield and Perencevich, 2004). Students can make up a lot of lost ground in reading comprehension if they have motivation through relevant applications in a discipline such as agriculture and natural resources.

How do we help students? Literally hundreds of reading strategies exist which may be employed during instruction in high school agriculture courses. While this mountain of strategies can be overwhelming, they all help students model relatively few mental operations: previewing text, activating background knowledge, setting purposes, asking questions, organizing information and summarizing. Thus, if we as teachers can find strategies, or tools that help students accomplish those reading goals, then we help students learn while reading.

The challenges for teachers seem to be (1) training students in the use of any particular strategy, (2) releasing responsibility for learning to students, and (3) attempting a strategy a couple of times until the teacher adapts the strategy to his/her instruction. We are all economists in learning; we'll use the simplest, least effortful method to learn. Strategies inherently cause students to apply effort for their learning, and they resist doing this at first. Teachers must stick to their approach until students become comfortable with the use of strategies, and then our students will appreciate our efforts.

Using any strategy generally transfers responsibility for learning to students and frees teachers to individualize instruction. At first, teachers find difficulty stepping out of the limelight at the front of the classroom. But, as with learning any new approach, the first couple of times we use a strategy, it will be cumbersome and difficult. In my observations, strategies fail because the teacher forgets one small step in a process. When the teacher reflects on

his or her teaching with the strategy, then s/he realizes the minor mistake, corrects it and reapplies the approach during the next time when students use texts to learn. By the second or third use of most any strategy, teachers have adapted their instruction and the strategy, and it works effectively.

Within agricultural coursework, we have the opportunity to enhance students' abilities to learn with text. If we model strategies and literacy, then our students pick up on this and learn how to read and write in and about agriculture. We create a classroom culture that supports the kinds of literacy, reading and writing that are necessary for lifelong success in the industry of agriculture. We can answer our students' comments with, "Yes, but I want you to learn to be a proficient agriculturalist with the 'ability to work efficiently and think clearly, with such knowledge and skill as [you] can secure,' and I won't always be around to help you. To think and learn on your own, reading helps."

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FEEDBACK

Teaching Comes First!

Technology in the Classroom: Sometimes it's OK to Give up the Driver's Seat

But This Isn't English Class! | A CASE for Change

A CASE for Change

By Brad J. Schloesser, CASE Project Manager
South Central College, North Mankato, Minn.

How should high school agriculture courses be designed for today's students and schools?

It would be wonderful to see a world where more students have the opportunity to enroll in an agricultural education program... A world where teachers are able to spend more time teaching and focusing on students and less time concerned about what they should be preparing for the next week or even the next period... A world where teachers love to teach and students love to learn... This world is possible with the Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE™) initiative that will begin field testing this fall.

CASE is curriculum written *by* agriculture educators *for* agriculture educators. Teachers and industry representatives from a dozen states collectively contributed to the concepts

that framed the content for the two foundation courses. The changes CASE offers the world of education in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) include a complete curriculum package that is aligned with content standards for AFNR and science, mathematics and English language arts. With this new and enhanced program delivery model for secondary agricultural education, you have the opportunity to:



Teacher Leadership Training Session
Jessamine Career & Technology Center,
Nicholasville, Ky.

- Reach more students, including more diverse student populations, while encouraging the expansion of agricultural education in larger suburban and urban schools.
- Provide an instructional program that is aligned with core academic standards and enhances student achievement in science, mathematics and English language arts.
- Attract high-achieving students into a science-based agricultural education program with the goal of channeling these talented students into science-oriented majors in colleges of agriculture.
- Respond to the shortfall of scientists for the industry of agriculture by stimulating greater interest in agricultural science.
- Combine the power of current student leadership development, experiential learning, and problem-based learning opportunities in agriculture with an enhanced delivery model that has greater potential for 1) increasing the number of agricultural education programs and 2) advancing student achievement.
- Enhance leadership, teamwork, and the problem solving skills of future scientists in the industry of agriculture.
- Provide an alternative model for Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs for students living in larger suburban and urban settings with SAE connections in lessons.
- Provide the opportunity to assess student learning in AFNR programs and be able to report objective data to internal and external partners.
- Increase the retention of agriculture educators with a program model that reduces workload and allows the teacher to concentrate more on the students and less on curriculum development and organization.

CASE elevates student learning by immersing them in rigorous curricula that fosters success throughout all student populations, including challenging the brightest students. The biggest pedagogical change CASE promotes is in the mode of teaching by utilizing an activity-, project- and problem-based approach to learning. This modality minimizes “teacher-centered” instruction and allows students to explore learning through the use of activities, projects and problems.

The two foundation courses, Principles of Agricultural Science – Animal™ and the Principles of Agricultural Science - Plant™, will be available nationwide in 2010. Each course is designed for a 175-day academic year and provides integrated connections with FFA, SAE and LifeKnowledge. The sequence of instruction beyond the foundation courses includes:

- Animal and Plant Biotechnology
- Agriculture Systems and Technology
- Food Science and Safety
- Natural Resources Environmental Sciences
- Agricultural Sciences Research and Development (Capstone)

For more information on the CASE model, visit www.case4learning.org or contact your Agricultural Education State Supervisor.

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FEEDBACK

Perspectives

Learning to Question and Questioning to Learn

By Colleen Griswold, Agriculture Instructor, Tuscumbia High School, Mo.

“Making and burning moonshine!” was what I overheard my conservation class telling the principal when he asked what they were working on. His interest was definitely piqued—the same as the students’ had been all week as we conducted experiments and read articles about ethanol and other types of alternative energy sources.

Challenging students to think through problems, question what they are learning, and being a source of knowledge are the keys to inquiry-based learning, a method of teaching that will unlock the potential of your students and revolutionize your classroom.

Inquiry-based learning is the teaching method and philosophy I learned as a part of the National Agriscience Teacher Ambassador Academy (NATAA). This method changed not only the content of my curriculum, but also how I was teaching. By questioning my students and challenging them to think instead of standing in front of the classroom doing all of the talking, I have had fewer discipline problems and more students who are engaged throughout the class period.

The method begins before the bell rings with a writing prompt. This is a great way to introduce new subjects and determine the prior knowledge of students. The ethanol lesson began with an “empty your brain” prompt, where students brainstormed as many topics associated with the word “energy” as they could. Using a broad term allows students who may have no prior knowledge of ethanol to contribute because everyone knows something about energy. The exercise also establishes the inquiry portion because I challenge some the students to provide evidence as to why certain words fit, like “plants” or “electricity.” It can take some practice, but if you stick with it, the questions become easier.

I started these prompts with my conservation class, where I felt the most comfortable with this method, but I soon found this was the way to get every class started in order to keep the students engaged throughout the lesson. Another advantage to using prompts is that they help build writing skills. The answers don’t have to be graded for grammar or

punctuation, but it is a way to help students see that the ability to write is important, no matter what their intended career path may be.

The remainder of my inquiry-based learning was very hard to learn, both as a “student” at NATAA and then as a teacher in my classroom. The key is to assist your students in a way that encourages them to discover the answer. For example, when my ethanol/biofuel unit begins, the students construct various molecules in the combustion process: oxygen, water, ethanol, kerosene and carbon dioxide. For many of them, they have not had chemistry, so I do a short lesson on which elements bond and the number of bonds they can have. Teaching these science principals in the agriculture classroom is important to show students that science – just like writing and math – is important in many disciplines, including agriculture. When students go to make an oxygen molecule (O₂), they are often confused as to how to double bond the atoms. Instead of just showing them, I keep asking them questions. This answering-a-question-with-a-question method goes back and forth, eventually leading the students to the correct solution.

This method takes practice and requires continuous effort, but it does get easier for both the teacher and the student. There are times when the students get really frustrated and just want the answer, but this is when they are closest to learning the information! As the teacher, you have to figure out how far you can push your students—when to give them an answer and when to keep questioning.

Many times, I have heard students comment that science makes more sense when they perform the agriculture exercises instead of just an abstract experiment in the science lab. They understand corn syrup versus table sugar, two of the sources for making ethanol. When they witnessed the table sugar making much more ethanol, they wanted to know why and why we produce ethanol out of corn instead of most of it coming from sugar cane. Now we have moved from a classroom activity to real world issues that they have evidence to debate and a curiosity to explore to find the answers to their questions.

Even though I started using this inquiry-based learning method with biofuels, I have found that teaching poultry reasons, beef reproduction, greenhouse fertilizer calculations, or even agricultural mechanics with this method works best in my classroom. This method has gone from being a method I learned at a conference to my way of teaching and viewing my students. Agricultural education must prepare students to think. Many of the lessons we teach may not be what our students go on to do in their careers, but the thinking skills we can help them develop will assist them throughout their lives.

Whether you are making “moonshine” or just need a way to get your students to think more about the subject, try inquiry

-based learning and make your classroom a place where true learning occurs.

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FEEDBACK

LifeKnowledge Spotlight



Facilitating Balanced Classroom Instruction:

Q & A with [Rebecca Carter](#)

Essex High School, Tappahannock, Va.

Quality classroom instruction goes beyond the popular e-Moments of the LifeKnowledge program. Read on to find out how Rebecca Carter of Virginia explains what balanced classroom instruction means to her.

LK: What are your tactics in keeping classroom instruction balanced with all the other pressures of an agriculture teacher, such as CDEs, SAEs and FFA?

RC: To keep the balance, I feel the key is to delegate responsibility through officers, students, parents and the community. This allows me to use the available resources in my class, school and community.

LK: What is quality classroom instruction and how does quality classroom instruction affect the three-circle model?

RC: Quality classroom instruction is when all students are actively participating or engaged in learning. Class instruction the key to the three-circle model because it is the first opportunity for students to be interested in agriculture and gain the basic knowledge needed to accomplish other tasks.

LK: How do you decide which areas take precedence in your classroom?

RC: In referring to the three-circle model, it depends on what is happening at that time. I try to link the instruction being given to a hands-on application or activity. For example, I teach forestry lessons around the time we will be able to participate in the forestry CDE.

LK: How does LifeKnowledge fit in? How does the use of LK affect your quality classroom instruction and balance?

RC: LifeKnowledge is incorporated in all that I do. To me, it is more than pointing out teachable moments; it's living them by example. So I try to be the best example for my students to see the appropriate behavior, responses, etc. LK is incorporated by itself to push students to develop their own best self. Using the education methods built into LK is also the way in which I facilitate learning. It is how I teach and present information and make it meaningful to the students. LK continuously helps as I am trying to draw the connection to real life and agriculture.

LK: In what ways does LifeKnowledge help you keep that balance?

RC: Well, when teaching specific concepts and trying to be the model for them, LK forces me to focus on what is important. It helps keep me grounded to what my purpose/goal is.

LK: Let's look at classroom instruction beyond e-Moments. I think many of our LK users have really picked up on this strategy, but what else is there? Other than e-Moments, what do you think creates effective instruction?

RC: Effective instruction is engaging the students in a fun but thoughtful manner – taking what they know and linking it to a concept that they don't know, so they will remember it. This is done through inclusive language, specific and effective directions, meaningful tasks/assignments and effective feedback.

LK: What tips or traps have you discovered in your teaching career concerning classroom instruction?

RC: A trap for me is going back to my old way of teaching – just giving the information and not allowing the students to experience it and work through it. A tip is, if you hear yourself as a teacher talking too much, then you are not allowing the students to work through the information. If I find myself tired or working too hard, then I have not done my job correctly.

LK: Is there anything else on this topic or LK usage that you would like to share?

RC: LK is a frame of mind in some ways. It's realizing that learning does not have to go through a teacher. The teacher is just the guide or facilitator. LK is more than lessons, activities, language, directions, questioning – it's you being yourself and allowing yourself to bring out the best in every

student in your classroom. It's all of the concepts of LK together that make them work.

[Click here to learn more about Rebecca Carter](#)

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Author Information:

Name:

Rebecca J. Carter

Occupation/location:

Agriculture Educator, Virginia

How long have you been in agricultural education?

10 years: middle school and high for four years; just high school since then

Why did you want to become an agriculture educator?

I have been around agriculture all my life. I became a teacher because of my agriculture teacher and my FFA experiences.

College:

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Family:

Husband, Mike (who I met as a Va. state FFA officer)

Aaron - 4 yrs. old

Annabelle - 1 yr. old

Since you started teaching, what is one way you have improved yourself?

I now try to facilitate learning, not just throw the information at the students. I am truly trying to teach to the whole student.

Favorite e-Moment? Why?

The funniest to watch the students do is the karaoke moment. They can just really get into the acting. The one I use the most is the crayon or icon moment. Allowing the student to think of his/her own image and link it to the information is huge for productive learning.



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FEEDBACK

Question for the Profession



Who's Doing the Work in Your Classroom?

By Nina Crutchfield, Local Program Success Specialist

Just how tired are you at the end of the day? Rate it on a scale of 1-5. A one means that you've still got juice when you get home and look forward to cooking dinner, playing with your children, working livestock or another evening activity. Three means that you've got just enough energy left to eat dinner and check to make sure your children have completed their homework. And five means that you don't even have the energy to kiss your spouse when you arrive home because all you can think about is hitting the couch.

Teaching is one of the most physically, mentally and emotionally draining professions. It's easy to see why we're so exhausted at the end of the day. Between delivering instruction, managing the greenhouse, worrying about livestock, trying to help students finish mechanics projects and, of course, faculty meetings and school committees, there aren't enough hours in the day or caffeine in intravenous solutions to get it all done.

I have had the privilege of visiting some outstanding agriculture programs during the past few months, and I've noticed one factor in common: The teachers seem to be doing all the work. These are outstanding teachers who are delivering great classroom instruction, and I know they are exhausted at the end of the day. As I watched them work, I wondered to myself, "What would it be like if the students did more of the work?" Would the teachers be less tired at the end of the day? Would the students learn as much if they took on the responsibility of helping with instruction? Perhaps this is a new concept for us. It is a bit of a paradigm shift going from being the expert in the room to becoming a facilitator of learning—a position that, while it can get uncomfortable at times, can have numerous rewards.

For the month of March, take a few minutes and think about what you are doing in your own classroom to share your instructional workload with the students. Please share your ideas and practices and your successes and failures by posting to the Communities of Practice board for this

month's Question for the Profession: [Who's doing the work in your classroom?](#)

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Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators



March 2009

Teacher Resources

Print this Article



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FEEDBACK

YouTube Videos from Arkansas Farm Bureau

Arkansas Farm Bureau has posted eight YouTube videos with topics ranging from the growing interest in farmer's markets to the housing slowdown's impact on Arkansas sawmills. The Arkansas Farm Bureau "channel" can be accessed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/arkansasfarmbureau>.

Soil Quality Lessons

Kris Nichols, a soil microbiologist with the USDA-ARS, has created lessons to be used for delivering instruction in soil quality. [Download the PDF](#) for instructions on demonstrations concerning water-holding capacity and leaching, soil erosion, soil structure and aggregates.

National Geographic in the Classroom

Bring the outside world into the agriculture classroom with National Geographic online. With articles like [this one](#), which discusses the value of soil around the world including farming practices and environmental efforts, you will never run out of topics to present to your classroom. National Geographic also features a series of related photos and an interactive quiz for teachers to use with the article.

Why Should Your Students Become Agriculture Teachers?

As you know, the demand for qualified agriculture teachers has never been greater. It is imperative that we recruit the brightest and best students available to become career agriculture teachers. No one can do a better job of telling our story and attracting new teachers than those of us committed to the profession. Georgia has created a [ready-made lesson](#) and graciously shared it with teachers across the country. Please take a few moments to consider educating your students about our profession. After all, we are agriculture teachers by choice not by chance.

Free Market Research from Allendale, Inc.

Allendale, Inc. offers FREE market research for all FFA educators. You can have the Allendale On-the-Go

newsletter delivered to your inbox twice a week at no cost. On-the-Go is the closing commentary for the grain and livestock markets and includes fundamental and technical analysis, as well as options strategies. It is imperative that producers, educators and students stay current on the commodity markets. The knowledge of what is happening and why, along with a protection plan, is vital to sustaining a successful business. To view recent issues, [click here](#). Contact gmcbride@allendale-inc.com for information. Significant discounts are offered for full access to Allendale website.

Websites to Help You Grow Professionally

Investigate a variety of instructional strategies and research-based best practices, including performance-based instruction, Dimensions of Learning and cooperative learning. [Click here](#) to explore these strategies. Also, find examples and instructions for utilizing 30 different instructional strategies that address cognitive and affective domains at <http://its.guilford.k12.nc.us/act/strategies>.

Delta Conference 2009

CEV Multimedia, Tarleton State University and the National FFA Organization are proud to announce dates for the 2009 Delta Conference. This national five-day professional development conference focuses on the three major areas: (1) the agriculture educator's ability to engage all students in the learning process, (2) the integration of leadership on a daily basis through the LifeKnowledge program and (3) developing teacher influence in the classroom, school and community. This high-energy professional development event will be held June 21-26, 2009, at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. In its third year at Tarleton, and second year of generous support from CEV Multimedia, this Delta Conference is poised to be one of the best ever!

Applications are due April 15, and space is limited, so visit www.tarleton.edu/~deltaconference for more information and an application. If states are interested in sending delegations of teachers, state staff/state department representatives may contact Dr. Kyle McGregor concerning the Delta Conference's States Program, which offers benefits to states wishing to simultaneously impact groups of teachers. Kyle may be reached at mcmgregor@tarleton.edu or 254-968-9601.

Since 2005, agriculture educators from across the nation have experienced Delta. Will 2009 be your year?

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**Course: ALL Supplemental Lesson Plan Appropriate For All
Courses In Agricultural Education**

Unit 1: Careers in Agricultural Education

Lesson 1: Why be an Agriculture Teacher

*This lesson is to be utilized during Georgia FFA Week or
National FFA Week in all Agricultural Education classrooms*

Georgia Performance Standards: AG-BAS-23 (d) (e),
AG-ASB-19 (d) (e), AG-PSB-19 (d) (e), AG-GH/PS-1 (d) (e), AG-NL-1
(d) (e), AG-APM-14 (d) (e), AG-NR-1 (d) (e), AG-WL-1 (d) (e), AG-FS-1
(d) (e), AG-AMI-1 (d) (e)

Academic Standards: ELA10C1, ELA9RL5,
SCSh9, ELA10LSV1 (d) (e), ELA10LSV1 (i), ELA10LSV1 (e) (f) (g)

Objectives:

1. Determine how a career choice impacts lifestyles
2. Identify factors important in selecting a career
3. Identify the advantages of choosing a career as an
Agriculture Teacher

Teaching Time: 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours minimum - 5 hours maximum based on
supplemental activities selected and student
presentations if desired

Grades: 9-12

**Essential Question: Why should I consider teaching
agriculture for my career?**

Unit Understandings, Themes, and Concepts:

Students will learn how agricultural education affects their daily lives. They will know how the three basic needs humans need to survive which include food, fiber, and shelter are produced by people who are educated about agriculture. They will get an understanding of the importance of educating every student about agriculture and how they can become a part of this vital service.

Primary Learning Goals:

Students will be able to explain the need for qualified agriculture education teachers. The students will be able to describe the educational requirements of the profession and the expected benefits of the selected career.

Students with disabilities: For students with disabilities, the instructor should refer to the individual student's IEP to insure that the accommodations specified in the IEP are being provided within the classroom setting. Instructors should familiarize themselves with the provisions of Behavior Intervention Plans that may be part of a student's IEP. Frequent consultation with a student's special education instructor will be beneficial in providing appropriate differentiation within any given instructional activity or requirement.

Assessment Method/Type:

Constructed Response

Combined Methods

Informal Checks

Peer Assessment

Selected Response

Self Assessment

References:

Teach Georgia Website

Pay Scale on Ag Ed Website

Kimbrell, Grady and Vineyard, Ben S. *Succeeding in the World of Work*

www.youtube.com/GAAgTube, Why be an Ag Teacher

Materials and Equipment:

Dry Erase Board

Computer

LCD Projector

Internet Connection or Agricultural Education Curriculum DVD

Copy of attached worksheets for each student

POWERPOINTS:

[Agricultural Education Teacher July 2005.ppt](#)

WEB Resources:

www.naae.org/teachag/index.html

www.ffa.org/collegiate/media/careerbuilder/col_aep_teach.pdf

http://www.gaaged.org/Careers_in_Agriculture/definitions/_Agricultural_Education_Teacher.htm

www.ffa.org/jobs/agedjobs.cfm

www.teachgeorgia.org

<http://www.calaged.org/teachers/strategiesmanual/Appendix%20U%20-%20Ag%20Ed%20Teacher%20Description.pdf>

<http://www.naae.org/links/agedmagazine/index.html> The 2007 magazines are free to download. There are many great articles about teaching agriculture in these issues.

Georgia Performance Standards: *AG-ASB-19, AG-PSB-19, AG-GH/PS-1, AG-NL-1, AG-APM-14, AG-NR-1, AG-WL-1, AG-FS-1, AG-AMI-1, AG-BAS-23: The student becomes oriented to the comprehensive program of agricultural education, learns to work safely in the agriculture lab and work sites, demonstrates selected competencies in leadership through the FFA and agricultural industry organizations, and develops plans for a supervised agricultural experience program (SAEP).*

(d) Explores career opportunities in agriscience through the FFA and Agriculture Education Program.

(e) Explores the professional agricultural organizations associated with the course content.

Academic Standards:

ELA10C1 The student demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language, realizing that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats.

ELA9RL5 The student researches the life of a particular person as it is represented in a variety of texts.

SCSh9 The student enhances reading in all curriculum areas.

ELA10LSV1 (d) The student actively solicits another person's comments or opinion. (e) The student offers own opinion forcefully without domineering.

ELA10LSV1 (i) The student employs group decision-making techniques such as brainstorming or a problem-solving sequence (e.g., recognizes problem, defines problem, identifies possible solutions, selects optimal solution, implements solution, evaluates solution).

ELA10LSV1 (e) The student offers own opinion forcefully without domineering. (f) The student contributes voluntarily and responds directly when solicited by teacher or discussion leader. (g) The student gives reasons in support of opinions expressed.

TEACHING PROCEDURE

Class Starter Activity

Have students prepare a $\frac{1}{2}$ page written response to the question, "How will your career selection affect your lifestyle?"

*****(see worksheets and rubrics at the end of this lesson)*****

***** Essential question and vocabulary are located at the end of this document in an easy print format for you to print and post on the classroom wall*****

Introduction and Mental Set

Have students share their ideas on how their career selection will impact their lifestyle. Most responses are likely to focus on the amount of money one will have to spend on their homes, autos, clothing, etc. List their responses on the board.

If they have not already done so, lead students to identify the following as important ways your career will affect your lifestyle:

- Standard of living (based on potential salary/income)
- Family impact
- Circle of friends
- Leisure activities
- Spiritual well-being
- Others

Discuss briefly each of the items on list. Examples of key points to bring out are:

Standard of living will determine the type of house you live in, what you drive, the amount of money available for recreational/leisure/other activities.

Family values are impacted by the time you have to spend with family.

Your circle of friends is impacted by your job. We often include as friends those with whom we work.
The time (and money) available for leisure activities (hobbies) are impacted by our jobs.
Our jobs can impact the opportunities we have to attend church.

Ask, "why is choosing a career so important". Students should respond in way that indicates they understand how their career choice will impact their lifestyle.

Encourage students to think about the FFA and SAE activities that they currently enjoy and relate that to the opportunity that they may have in doing these things as part of their career teaching AG-ED. For example, a student who enjoys livestock judging as a student may really enjoy teaching livestock judging as part of their career.

Teaching Procedure

1. Building on the Class Starter activity, ask students to identify important factors to consider in choosing a career. Have students list items on board and have class members record factors in their Agriculture Notebooks. Factors may include:
 - Income (salary/wages)
 - Duties/Responsibilities of Job
 - Job Security
 - Career Outlook (how many jobs are available)
 - Work Hours (day/night/weekends etc)
 - Educational Requirements
 - Working conditions (office/inside/outside)
 - Safety/Potential Health Hazards

- Travel Required (time away from home)
- Relocation (Are jobs available near where I want to live)
- Transfer potential (Can my employer transfer me to a distant location)
- Benefits (paid vacation, sick leave, health and other insurance)
- Retirement Benefits
- Others

2. Ask students "who knows someone who is unhappy with their career? Why do you think they are unhappy?" Briefly discuss how many people fall into the trap of just "getting a job" instead of planning for a career.

3. Stress the importance of using the factors identified in class in evaluating a career. Each individual student will not place the same importance on each of the factors listed. Each person must evaluate a career in light of what is important to them. For example, some might like to travel each week while some may wish to be home each night.

Ask students to consider whether a career as an agriculture teacher might be a "good fit" for them? Review each of the factors in list as it relates to a career in agricultural education.

- Income (salary/wages)

The average beginning salary for an agriculture teacher is \$45,000 or roughly \$900/week. Students can relate to the weekly figure easier than a yearly salary. Explain that the salary can increase greatly through experience and education. The very highest paid agriculture teachers receive more than \$100,000/year or nearly \$2000/week.

- Duties/Responsibilities of Job

An agriculture teacher has the responsibility of teaching in-school and adult classes, helping students plan and conduct

SAEs, and serving as FFA Advisor. Explain to students the nature of your work and explain that the type of program can vary somewhat according to the location. For example, a suburban horticulture program can be somewhat different from a traditional program in a rural setting.

- Job Security

Explain that job security for agriculture educators is very good. Tactfully relate to students how important job security is. Many students are likely to have been touched by job losses/cutbacks due to the economy. They should be able to easily understand the importance of job security, and this can be one of our major "selling points" of the benefits of teaching agriculture.

- Career Outlook (how many jobs are available)

Discuss how difficult it is to find a job in today's economy. Explain that there were more openings for agriculture teachers this year than there were teachers to fill the positions. This is a frequent occurrence. There were openings for more than 45 new agriculture teachers this year (2008-09).

- Work Hours (day/night/weekends etc)

Explain that agriculture teachers are paid to work longer days and longer years than other teachers. Do not mislead students into thinking that yours is a job that ends at 3:30 every day and that you have summers off. Undoubtedly the students who have been involved in your program will understand and appreciate the hours you work.

- Educational Requirements

Share the educational requirements with students. A four year degree (baccalaureate) is required. Three institutions in Georgia have agricultural education programs: UGA Tifton, UGA

Athens, and Ft. Valley State University. Explain that salaries increase with each additional degree obtained.

- **Working conditions (office/inside/outside)**
Some students like working inside while others prefer to be outside. One of the great advantages of being an agriculture teacher is that one has the opportunity to work both inside and outside and, for the most part, to make their own determination when to be in or out.
- **Safety/Potential Health Hazards**
While there are some potential hazards (chemicals, working with livestock and machinery), for the most part there are few potential hazards as to a teacher.
- **Travel Required (time away from home)**
Agriculture teachers can be home most nights. Overnight travel is usually limited to events such as State FFA Convention, FFA Camp, livestock shows, and teacher conferences. One big advantage is that often the teacher's spouse and family can accompany him/her.
- **Relocation (Are jobs available near where I want to live)**
Teaching vacancies occur across the state each year.
- **Transfer potential (Can my employer transfer me to a distant location)**
In the world of work an employee is sometimes transferred by their employer to a distant location. Transfer potential is limited to another school within the school district, although a teacher may choose to relocate at the end of any contract year.
- **Benefits (paid vacation, sick leave, health and other insurance)**
A major advantage of becoming an agriculture teacher is the many benefits. Ag teachers have 10 days (2 weeks) paid vacation as well as several holidays such as Christmas,

Thanksgiving, MLK Day, and others. Teacher also earn sick leave so that they do not lose pay if they are absent due to sickness. Teachers have excellent health insurance as well as the opportunity to obtain other types of insurance through the county providers.

- Retirement Benefits

In the mind of a high school student, retirement is light years away. Still though, this is an important consideration and a major advantage of becoming an agriculture teacher. Many workers must save in anticipation of retirement. Sometimes those saving programs (like a 401(k)) do not weather a financial crisis as well as the retirement benefits administered by the Georgia Teacher Retirement System. Also, many workers must work until they are 59 $\frac{1}{2}$, 62, or older to retire. An agriculture teacher may retire after 30 years of service.

- Others. Many other factors are likely to be brought out such as: sense of accomplishment, working with young people, working in agricultural industry, etc.

4. Show video entitled "Why be an Ag Teacher". Video can be accessed at www.youtube.com/GAAGTube or by clicking the link of the Georgia Agricultural Education Home Page.
5. Use personal experience to relate to students why you chose a career as an agriculture teacher.
6. Encourage students to consider a career as an agriculture teacher.
7. Share with students the opportunity for students to learn more about a career in Agricultural Education at one of the upcoming events at UGA Tifton and UGA Athens. Use the announcement in the Georgia insert in "New Horizons" and encourage students to contact the Georgia FFA Office at gaffa@uga.edu or Dr. Sheppard at

djsheppard@gaaged.edu to reserve a place for themselves and their parents at one of the recruitment activities.

8. A sample copy of the FFA Foundation's Young Owl Award is located at the end of this lesson. Please review it to identify students who may qualify for this award. Details on this years due date any changes to the application will be sent to you via e-mail in March.

SUMMARY

Summarize the lesson by explaining to students the importance of making career goals and working toward them. Do not risk a lifetime of unhappiness by resorting to "just getting a job". Explain that now is the time to begin making decisions that will impact the rest of their life.

Lesson Introduction Activity

Lesson: **Why be an Agriculture Teacher**

Assignment: On a piece of paper prepare a $\frac{1}{2}$ page written response to the question:

"How will your career selection affect your lifestyle?"

Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

Points/Grade Available:

Lesson Introduction Activity Rubric

Content - information is written on the topic and covers each aspect of the question.	50 %
Class Discussion - participates in the class discussion on the topic.	50 %

Individual Learning Activity

Lesson: People Have Needs

Assignment: Choose one of the topics below and research it. Write a report on your findings that answers the question or explains the concept and shows why it is relevant to your life.

1. How does a career choice impact lifestyles
2. What factors are important in selecting a career
3. What are the advantages of choosing a career as an Agriculture Teacher

Minimum Requirements:

1. Paper must be typed in 12 point font and at least one page in length. The paper may be double-spaced.
2. At least two credible references must be properly cited.
3. All work must be original. No plagiarism! Any use of another's ideas without giving credit will result in a zero.
4. Papers will be graded on content (amount of good information, accuracy, etc.) and mechanics (grammar, spelling, and punctuation.)

Due Date:

Points/Grade Available:

Individual Learning Activity Rubric

<p>Content - offers current information on the topic chosen, thoroughly covers each aspect of the question, and demonstrates understanding and mastery of the lesson. The paper should include information and issues of state and local importance.</p>	<p>35 pts.</p>
<p>Critical Analysis - logical process of analyzing and reporting information that examines and explains the topic selected. The paper should go beyond simply listing facts and must include why the concept is relevant to the student's life.</p>	<p>25 pts.</p>
<p>Organization- The paper should have an orderly structure that demonstrates a logical flow of ideas.</p>	<p>15 pts.</p>
<p>Mechanics- spelling, grammar, punctuation, font size, double spacing, citation, etc. Essentially, the paper should meet all specifications and be executed following rules of proper written English.</p>	<p>15 pts.</p>

Group Learning Activity

Lesson: People Have Needs

Assignment: Choose one of the topics below and research it. With your group, prepare a presentation to teach the class your concept.

1. How does a career choice impact lifestyles
2. What factors are important in selecting a career
3. What are the advantages of choosing a career as an Agriculture Teacher

Your presentation should include the following:

1. A lesson plan outlining exactly what your group will teach and how the information will be taught
2. A Power Point of at least twelve slides
3. Notes containing the information the class will be responsible for (these can be printed and given to the class, written on the board, or part of the Power Point). A copy of the notes will be turned in to the instructor.
4. Some type of interactive activity for the class (game, problem solving activity, interactive model, etc.)
5. Your group must also prepare an assessment for the class. This assessment can be written or oral, but should show the instructor that the class understands and has retained the material being taught.

Due Date:

Points/Grade Available:

All work must be original. No plagiarism! Any use of another's ideas without giving credit will result in a zero.

Group Learning Activity Rubric

Lesson Plan - The group submits a thorough, detailed lesson plan highlighting the content and organization of their lesson.	10 pts.
PowerPoint - The group presents a Power Point of at least twelve slides that contains information and pictures vital to the lesson with additional information or examples for enhancement.	20 pts.
Interactive Activity - Some type of interactive activity is used to help teach the lesson. The activity should contribute to the mastery of content and involve the entire class in some way.	15 pts.
Assessment - A fair, thorough assessment is prepared and administered based on the information presented to the class. Poor grades on the assessment by a few members of the class are excusable, but if the entire class has difficulty, the points awarded in this category may be lowered at the discretion of the instructor.	15 pts.
Content - The group should cover the concept (within reason) in entirety. The group may study actual lesson plans to help decide what should be emphasized.	25 pts.
Overall Effect - The group is prepared, enthusiastic, and interesting, and the lesson flows smoothly.	15 pts.

Presentation Learning Activity

Lesson: People Have Needs

Assignment: Choose one of the topics below, research it, and prepare a presentation that answers the question or explains the concept and shows why it is relevant to your life.

1. How does a career choice impact lifestyles
2. What factors are important in selecting a career
3. What are the advantages of choosing a career as an Agriculture Teacher

Minimum Requirements:

Oral Report Option

1. Write a paper on one of the topics and orally present your work to the class.
2. Paper may be double-spaced and should be at least one page in length, resulting in a two to five minute presentation.
3. At least two references must be properly cited.
4. The presentation of the report will be graded secondary to the content of the paper.

PowerPoint Option

1. Presentation should be at least ten slides in length
2. Presentation should include at least four photos.
3. Presentation should be two to five minutes in length.
4. Grammar and spelling will be graded by the same standards as any other written assignment.
5. At least two references must be properly cited.

Poster Option:

1. Prepare a poster that answers/explains one of the topics. You will present your poster to the class.
2. Your poster should include both text and graphics that help communicate your research.
3. At least two sources of information should be properly cited on the back of the poster.
4. Neatness and appearance of the poster will be graded.
5. Poster presentation should last two to five minutes.

Due Date:

Points/Grade Available:

**For all presentations: All work must be original. No plagiarism!
Any use of another's work or ideas without giving proper credit will result in a zero.**

Presentation Learning Activity

Rubric

<p>Content- offers current information on the topic chosen, thoroughly covers each aspect of the question, and demonstrates understanding and mastery of the lesson. The presentation should include information and issues of state and local importance.</p>	<p>40 pts.</p>
<p>Critical Analysis/Organization - The presentation shows a logical process of analyzing and reporting information that examines and explains the topic selected. The presentation should go beyond simply listing facts and must include why the concept is relevant to the student's life.</p>	<p>20 pts.</p>
<p>Presentation - The student makes a genuine effort to present, not just read the material. The student should present with confidence using techniques like eye contact and voice inflexion to make his or her point. Although content takes precedence over presentation, the experience of successfully presenting in front of a class is part of the basis of this assignment.</p>	<p>25 pts.</p>
<p>Mechanics- spelling, grammar, punctuation, font size, double spacing, citation, etc. Essentially, the presentation should meet all guidelines set forth and should be executed in proper written English. For the poster, this includes neatness and appearance.</p>	<p>15 pts.</p>

Teacher Notes

Essential Question:

Why should I consider teaching agriculture for my career?

Vocabulary

Income

Duties/Responsibilities

of a Job

Job Security

Career Outlook

Vocabulary

Educational Requirements

Working conditions

Relocation

Transfer potential

Vocabulary

Benefits

Work Hours

Retirement

“The Young Owl Award”
A Project of the Georgia FFA Foundation

Purpose: To encourage FFA members to pursue a career in teaching agriculture education.

1. Teachers will identify and encourage students to pursue a career in teaching agriculture.
2. Teachers will identify and encourage a diverse group of students to pursue a career in teaching agriculture.
3. The Georgia FFA Foundation will make available two awards for each FFA Chapter to present at their Annual FFA Banquet or year-end chapter activity. The awards may be given to a high school junior or senior.
4. One award will be presented to a student at the discretion of the FFA Advisors. The other award will be presented to a student based on one of the following diversity criteria: ethnicity, special disability, or low economic status.
5. The advisor will complete an application and submit it to the Georgia FFA Foundation.
6. Upon receipt of the application, the Georgia FFA Foundation will have “The Young Owl Award” available for the local FFA Chapter at no cost.
7. The Georgia FFA Foundation will submit student applications to teacher training institutions for follow-up and enrollment.
8. The Georgia FFA Foundation will comprise an annual report of results for the fall board of directors meeting.

Application for Young Owl Award

Award Recipient Information

Students Name _____

Name of FFA Chapter _____

Student's Address _____

Student's Phone Number _____

Student's Email Address _____

Student's Cell Phone Number (if any) _____

Parent's Name _____

College or School of Choice _____

Number of Years FFA Member _____

SAE: _____

Category of Selection:

- ___ Advisor's Discretion
- ___ Ethnicity (List Ethnic Background _____)
- ___ Special Disability (List Disability _____)
- ___ Economic Disability

Nominator Information

Teacher's Name _____

Teacher's School Address _____

Teacher's Phone Number _____

Teacher's Email Address _____



Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators

March 2009

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FEEDBACK

FFA Buzz

FFA Volunteer Judges Sought

The National FFA Organization is accepting volunteer judge nominations for the agricultural proficiency awards; agriscience, 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 awards judging takes place on Wed., Oct. 21 and 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 ffa.org and click on 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.

FFA New Horizons Classroom Resource Now Available

Looking for a way to incorporate each issue of FFA New Horizons into your classroom instruction? Well, look no further...the new FFA New Horizons Teaching Guide is now available on the Ag Educators Workroom Web page at ffa.org and on www.ffa.newhorizons.org. This 4-page online guide provides activities, discussion questions, teaching tips, additional links and more related to each issue of the printed magazine. For April, we take a look at careers in veterinary medicine, give you the scoop on what's new with the Partners in Active Learning Support program (PALS) and show you how to make a Living to Serve plan a reality. The April issue of FFA New Horizons began mailing last week. Be on the lookout for your free chapter copy, compliments of the National FFA Organization. You can also access a virtual copy of the magazine on www.ffa.newhorizons.org. Contact [Julie Woodard](mailto:Julie.Woodard@ffa.org) at 317-802-4310 if you have questions.

National Chapter Awards Update

Beginning this year, information packets for the national chapter program will be sent out digitally. Star placing, as well as national convention information, will be provided via a link that will be e-mailed directly to advisors. Please be sure to include your e-mail address on your application to ensure delivery. Schools that do not have e-mail addresses on file by the judging period (the last week of July) will need to contact state staff in order to receive their link. Contact [Tyler Easton](#) at 317-802-4335.

Celebrate Ag Day, March 20

The next generation of agricultural leaders will join the Agriculture Council of America in celebrating the industry during National Ag Day on March 20, 2009. Student representatives from FFA, 4-H, and AFA from across the country will meet with their congressional representatives and carry the Ag Day message to Capitol Hill. For more information about how your chapter can celebrate Ag Day, visit www.agday.org.

New Agri-Entrepreneur Mentoring Program

Do you have students whose Agri-Enterprise would benefit from a mentor? Someone to give them a helping hand to achieve their business goals and better compete in the Agri-Entrepreneurship award program? If so, please send their names to dsellers@ffa.org. The Agri-Entrepreneurship award program is teaming up with the FFA Alumni to match alumni members with FFA members who have their own business. The mentors will give guidance in general business as well as (when possible) industry-specific information.

From the National Days of Service Office

Global Youth Service Day is the largest annual service event in the world. GYSD highlights and celebrates the difference youth make in their communities year-round through community service and service-learning. On April 24-26, 2009, millions of young people will participate in and lead service projects in all 50 states and in more than 100 countries around the world. These young people, working with their families, schools, community organizations, faith-based communities and businesses, will improve their communities by addressing critical issues such as global climate change, education and illiteracy, poverty, health, hunger and homelessness. Learn more about GYSD, download planning resources, and register your project at www.YSA.org/GYSD. Remember to log your service hours into the Million Hour Challenge database at www.ffa.org/mhc.

Million Hour Challenge Update

The Million Hour Challenge encourages members across the country to improve their communities through civic engagement. Project hours contributed by members and advisors are captured to provide recognition within FFA as well as in the communities themselves. Awards will be given during the 2009 National FFA Convention to the chapters having the greatest number of community service hours in the following categories: Environment, Government, Social/Human Service, Healthy Lifestyles, and Education. Eligible project hours are those earned during the Oct. 2, 2008 to Oct. 1, 2009 period. Hours from all programs above are eligible for the Million Hour Challenge. Please remember, hours must be entered by advisors into the Million Hour Challenge database to earn credit. Million Hour Challenge is sponsored by Toyota as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. For more program information, contact the Million Hour Challenge office at mhc@ffa.org or 317-802-4413.

The Latest from the LifeKnowledge® Center for Agricultural Education - LK Webinar

You have heard about LifeKnowledge® Online and you know it is a great resource; however, you haven't had the time to learn about all the amazing tools located inside. Join us on March 24, 2009, at 6 p.m. EST for a free, live webinar to discover all the tools, guides and plans inside LifeKnowledge Online. Be on the lookout for additional LifeKnowledge University webinars, designed to provide you with professional development and training opportunities on LifeKnowledge educational materials and resources at your convenience. Email lkonline@ffa.org to register for this webinar by March 24, 2009, or for more information about LifeKnowledge, visit lifeknowledge.ffa.org.

LK Podcasts

The LifeKnowledge Center for Agricultural Education launched its first [podcast](#) on Tues., Feb. 24, 2009. Designed with the active teacher in mind, LifeKnowledge in Action podcasts bring the latest from LifeKnowledge directly to you.

Each episode of LifeKnowledge in Action will focus on facilitating premier leadership, personal growth and career success as we work together in advancing the integration of LifeKnowledge in local agricultural education classrooms. Subscribe to the podcast and get audio downloads sent directly to your iTunes account or to your preferred feed reader. Visit lifeknowledge.ffa.org for more information.

2009 National FFA Convention News

2009 National FFA Convention housing for chapters is now open. Advisors need to log in to their MyFFA account to get the hotel listing. Contact [Ellen Williams](#) at 317-802-4269 for more information.

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