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**DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS
IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Community Relationships: The Key to a Successful Teaching Career

It is an honor and a privilege to serve the profession as the Editor of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*. Dr. Billye Foster's editorial in the September/October 2009 issue put many of my personal feelings into words as she reflected on her role in the history of this great publication. I am humbled to have my name listed with many of the greats in this profession. Thank you for this great opportunity. I will do everything in my power to live up to those expectations.

On behalf of the agricultural education profession, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Billye Foster for her three years of service as the Editor of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*. Under her direction the *Magazine* has remained the voice of the agricultural education profession. In her first editorial in the January/February issue she summarized her task in the following manner: "I needed to come up with themes that would simultaneously intrigue the readers, serve the profession and inspire others to share their views and experiences. Tall order." Dr. Foster accomplished the task in an outstanding manner. Again thank you Billye for your service to the profession.

My first issue has not been without incident. If you are an avid reader of the *Magazine*, you have figured out that "Developing Professional Relationships in the Local Community" was originally scheduled for the March/April issue. The January/February issue was scheduled to be an "International View of Agricultural Education." A few problems developed with the "international" issue and as a result I switched the order of publication for the two themes.

Watch for the "international" issue in a few weeks.

I would like to thank Dr. Antoine Alston for his outstanding work as Theme Editor for the "Developing Professional Relationships in the Local Community" issue. He has assembled a tremendous group of authors/articles. I hope that you will find the articles both informative and

the teacher is one of many professionals in the local community that is responsible for educating the public about agriculture. As a result many young teachers get caught up in the procedures and problems of teaching agricultural and fail to assume their role in the local agricultural community. This failure will, in turn, make their jobs more difficult.

Developing sound community relationships is vital to the local program's success.

enjoyable. Dr. Alston and his authors examined ways agricultural educators form networks with other agricultural entities and stakeholders to promote agriculture and agricultural education.

The idea for this theme began with a conversation I had with a former Program Specialist with the West Virginia Department of Education. Our conversation centered on how many teachers get caught up in the day-to-day duties of their teaching assignments and forget that they are a part of a large network of agricultural professionals. A network of professionals that has the mission to promote and serve the agriculture industry.

As teacher educators we cover the basic aspects of developing community relationships. We cover areas such as the role of advisory committees and looking to the community for advice and resources. Many times we fall short in explaining that

The authors in this issue offer a number of good suggestions for developing professional community relationships. If I had to summarize the issue in a sentence it would be: Developing sound community relationships through collaboration between agricultural education teachers and the local community is vital to the local program's success.



Harry N. Boone, Jr., is an Associate Professor at West Virginia University and Editor of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*.

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Article Submission

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the editor or theme editors. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of the issue intended for the article or photograph. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be typed double-spaced, and include information about the author(s). One hard copy and one electronic copy of the article should be submitted. A recent, hardcopy photograph should accompany the article unless one is on file with the editor. Articles in the magazine may be reproduced without permission but should be acknowledged.

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The Community That Combines Agricultural Education Together

by Antoine Alston

Today's growing global population places greater pressure upon the world's existing food, fiber, and natural resources more than any other time in history. With this factor in mind it is imperative that individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions are placed in positions of leadership to foster the global agricultural industry through both prosperous and turbulent times. According to the National FFA Organization agriculture is America's largest industry with over 21 million individuals employed in various sectors of the industry. With an industry so extensive and vitally important to mankind's very survival it would undoubtedly require many individuals and a diverse array of organizations working in collaboration to ensure the continued flow of food and fiber and the conservative utilization of increasingly scarce natural resources. The African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" most certainly holds true for the global agricultural industry because it in fact takes a plethora of individuals to promote a sense of agricultural literacy among mankind as a whole.

When I was approached about organizing this theme edition regarding developing professional relationships within the greater agricultural education community, I reflected back upon my career in agricultural education and the importance of the relationships that I have developed over the years. I additionally thought about the relationships that my father and his fellow secondary agricultural educators developed throughout their careers and the impact that each had

upon their respective programs. Effective educators, regardless of their discipline, learn early on in their careers that providing students with a dynamic educational experience involves more than traditional classroom methodologies, but is truly a community endeavor involving an assortment of stakeholders (i.e. parents, administrators, entrepreneurs, community colleges, etc.) which bring a multitude of resources and experiences to the educational environment. As a teacher educator I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact that developing a network of professional relationships can have

upon their respective programs. Effective educators, regardless of their discipline, learn early on in their careers that providing students with a dynamic educational experience involves more than traditional classroom methodologies, but is truly a community endeavor involving an assortment of stakeholders (i.e. parents, administrators, entrepreneurs, community colleges, etc.) which bring a multitude of resources and experiences to the educational environment. As a teacher educator I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact that developing a network of professional relationships can have

malaria, and tuberculosis collectively (World Food Program, 2009). Given this factor it is imperative that all humans develop a sense of agricultural literacy, which in large part is the responsibility of professionals from all sectors of the global agricultural industry both in the private and public domains. When looking at the enormity of this task one individual or secondary agricultural education program cannot effectively accomplish it. Instead networks must be formed with both traditional and nontraditional agricultural entities in order to promote agricultural literacy.

The task of promoting agricultural literacy must begin at birth and continue through adulthood.

upon one's students outlook—i.e. providing them with a cadre of contacts, resources, and experiences I realistically could not provide solely as an instructor. The old saying that "two heads are better than one" is truly a profound statement, particularly when it comes to developing quality educational programming in agriculture.

The World Food Program (2009) estimates that about one billion people are undernourished globally, a factor which can be attributed to several key factors including a poor agricultural infrastructure and the unwise use of environmental resources. Malnutrition and hunger are the number one risk to global health, accounting for more health issues than AIDS,

With many students never being exposed to secondary agricultural education programs, the task of promoting agricultural literacy must begin at birth and continue through adulthood. It must utilize various settings, multiple media forms, and people with selected expertise. One major factor that has greatly impacted the agricultural industry is the increasing diversity of the world's global population. This diversity affects agriculture in several ways such as dietary preferences and attitudes toward environmental conservation. This can vary across ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial lines. When developing agricultural education networks that can effectively promote agricultural literacy, factors such as these must be

taken into account.

Given the enormous task of promoting agricultural literacy among the public, what are agricultural educators doing in their local communities to accomplish this task? More specifically how are agricultural educators forming networks with other agricultural entities and stakeholders to accomplish the aforementioned task? This theme edition will attempt to answer these questions; I hope that you enjoy!

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May/June 2010

The First Seven Years – Efforts to Reduce Teacher Attrition

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Innovative Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs for 21st Century Students

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Connecting the Agricultural Education Community Puzzle

by Chastity Warren English,
Jennifer Fuller, Patricia Monge, and
Kedena Thompson

As an agricultural education teacher, one is expected to operate and manage a complete program. As we know a total agricultural education program is comprised of classroom and laboratory, SAE, and FFA. The task of having a complete program may be overwhelming to novice teachers as well as teachers

for everyone including the students. In order to establish partnerships one must first identify the stakeholders of the local community. Possible stakeholders agriculture teachers can contact include the county Extension office, local businesses, local churches, and the local community college. The local county Extension office will be a bountiful resource with local agricultural professionals that are experts in their respective fields. Local businesses will have various resources.

After possible local stakeholders have been identified the next step is to build a relationship with these individuals. If the agricultural education teacher takes the time to build the relationship, it will be beneficial for all. Not only do you have someone to help and support your program, but you are also able to provide the same help and support to the various stakeholders and their needs when the time arises.

The key to building a working relationship and quality partnership is by investing quality time into the endeavor. First introduce yourself to the community. You can accomplish this by attending various community meetings, attend the local churches' Sunday services, see if you can speak to the county Extension agents at one of their monthly meetings, and call the various businesses to ask for a brief meeting to introduce yourself and tell them more about your agricultural education program. After initial contact has been made and you have introduced yourself to the stakeholders, follow-up with a brief report of the activities of your program and include the activities and events that your students are involved in. Show them how their help and expertise could be used to help improve your program. Offer them your services as well and let them know that you and your students are available to assist them. If you have an awards banquet at the end of the year, be sure to invite the local stakeholders so they can see first-hand what your program is about. These are just a few of the many ways you can get the community involved and integrated into your program.

(Continued on page 8)

When the local community becomes vested in the local program, it becomes an ideal setting for the young people involved.

with years of experience. One solution to help alleviate the burden of being totally responsible for educating the agricultural community is to develop partnerships with the various stakeholders in one's local community. According to Abromitis (2009), when schools work with community organizations, businesses, and agencies they become powerful agents of change for students, families, and the neighborhoods around them. The same is true for agricultural teachers who work with various community stakeholders to improve the quality of output for their programs.

When agricultural teachers are able to partner with the local stakeholders of their communities, everyone involved with the endeavor benefits; it becomes a win-win situation

They may be willing to donate various items to help with the activities of the local agricultural education program. Local churches are an excellent resource, especially in rural communities because the teacher will have access to many parents who are active in the community and their children's education. Last, but not least, the local community college is also an excellent resource because of the professionals that the local agricultural education teacher will find when establishing this partnership. The faculty is versed in many subjects, agriculture included, and the partnership will possibly provide the community college with an opportunity to meet and help local high school students who may one day become future students at the community college.

Preparing Students for the 21st Century with Community Impact

by Carrie Ann Stephens and Sarah Kleihauer

Upon receiving your first job as an agricultural education teacher, there are many factors to consider like teaching classes, assisting students with SAE projects, advising the FFA, but most importantly how to collaborate with community members to ensure students receive a valued education. There are also many pressures to meet all the expectations outlined in school reform.

Recently, I sat through a workshop on preparing high school teachers for the field of agricultural education and where challenges were outlined for preparing teachers to teach students of the 21st century. As I reflected on the workshop, one document that was thoroughly discussed, *Framework for 21st Learning* (Partnership of 21st Century Skills, 2009), grabbed my attention. After reading the document, I soon realized teachers need to work more efficiently to prepare students for the 21st century. Due to the rigorous demands outlined in school reform, challenges are presented to teachers in incorporating all of the skills into their curriculum. There were four specific areas discussed which requires educators to engage the community in order to meet the expectations outlined in the school reform document. Those skills are mastery of core subjects and 21st century themes; learning and innovation skills; information, media and technology skills; and life and career skills. While all educators strive to meet the expectations of school reform, agricultural education teachers have the capacity to conduct unique activities to engage the community in this effort.

Mastery of Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes

Students of the 21st century are expected to master subjects in English, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history and government and civics. In addition, they will need to have a basic understanding of global awareness, financial and economic literacy, civic literacy, and health literacy. It is imperative for all educators to engage students with the local community to assist in development of these core subjects and 21st century themes.

One way to incorporate subject areas into a community activity would be to have students design an international business plan for an agricultural commodity. High school students would involve local bank members to assist with the financial operations, the local automotive dealerships (or other international industry) to assist with international business and trade ideas, local politicians to assist with the political issues that arise, and local farmers and health professionals to accommodate the agricultural and health aspects of the business plan.

Learning and Innovation Skills

The three areas which need attention in this category are creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration. While these skills appear to be easily established, employers have expressed students need to develop better critical thinking and problem solving abilities. Agricultural educators do an excellent job facilitating the enhancement of these skills in the classroom through Career Development Events and SAEs,

but the involvement of community members is essential in establishing skills for real world applications. One idea would be “green thinking” where students would collaborate with community members to establish a more efficient and environmentally safe community. Students would critically problem solve their communities’ non-efficiencies and work to make those efficient. Working with the local electric companies, farmers, bio-fuel professionals, etc., would be a great start for any local agricultural education program. This process would assist students in developing their problem solving and critical thinking skills.

Information, Media and Technology Skills

Most students in our classrooms tend to be extremely computer literate and engaging those students in innovative information skills is critical to the students’ development. Students will need access to an abundance of information and be able to display or communicate that information effectively. I think students and educators need to be active in communicating and incorporating technology into the curriculum. One idea for students and educators would be to develop a blog site. Students would identify a local community problem or issue. The problem would then be analyzed so feedback could be obtained by community members via on-line communication (twitter, facebook, blogger, flicker, etc.). After several responses had been received, students would pick the best solution and try to incorporate the change into the community. Students would continue to blog about their experiences

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Community Puzzle *(continued)*

Abromitis (2009) stated that by building communication, sharing resources, and developing unique solutions, partnerships can become vital and organic entities that are agents of lasting change in the community. When the local agricultural education teacher becomes vested in the local community and the local community becomes vested in the agricultural teacher's local program, it becomes an ideal setting for the young people involved.

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Preparing Students *(Continued)*

so others could follow the progress of the activity.

Life and Career Skills

Life skills were once obtained by students from parents in the home. Over the last decade, however, more parents are forced to work and be absent from the home. Therefore children are not obtaining some of those life skills. These life and career skills are becoming more pertinent in the school system so students will be successful in the workplace. There are five areas which need attention: flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability and leadership and responsibility. Planning a cultural night is an excellent way for students to gain leadership and cross-cultural skills. This activity would

allow students the opportunity to select a country of their choice and research that country. The focus of the students' research would be related to world food and fiber production and students would take a leadership role in designing and implementing activities and/or food for a cultural event.

Incorporating the items listed in the 21st Century document could be difficult if teachers decide to teach in isolation. Community members can provide a wealth of knowledge that we all learn from; therefore, we need to be creative in how we engage students for the 21st century demands.

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The Experiential Learning Model for Delivering Agricultural Education, With a New Perspective on the Role of Communities

by Barry Croom

Those of us who work in teacher education occasionally amuse ourselves by coming up with new ways to explain what agriculture teachers do naturally in their classes each day without much forethought. One of our favorite models in agricultural education, and the one we use to explain and justify almost everything we do in agricultural education, is the integrated three-circle model portrayed in figure 1. This model has explained for almost 35 years the interrelationships between three major concepts: classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience, and the FFA agricultural youth organization participation. Classroom and laboratory instruction are those activities that provide learning experiences within the confines of a school facility. These classroom activities are characterized by learning activities designed by an agriculture teacher and presented to students using formal instruction methods such as lecture, demonstration, guided and independent practice, review and assessment.

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) is an independent learning program for students enrolled in agricultural education courses, and is designed to provide learning experiences for students in the agricultural career pathway of their choice. Supervised agricultural experience requires an educational plan cooperatively developed by the student, the agriculture teacher, the student's parents, and an employer if necessary.

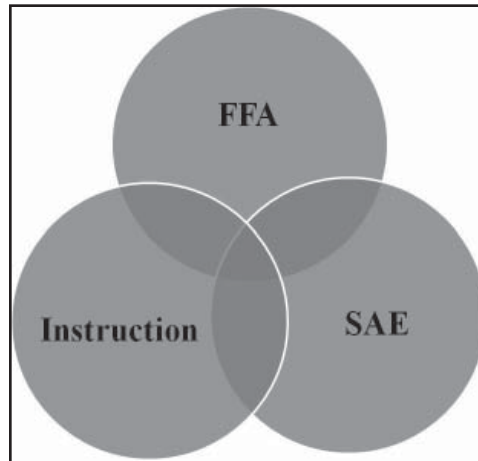


Figure 1. The traditional integrated three-circle model.

The FFA is an instructional tool that compliments both instruction and supervised agricultural experience. FFA activities include career development events, individual member awards programs, scholarships and leadership programs.

Until recently, I have been completely in agreement with the three-circle model. Now I realize that it has a few problems. First, the visual representation of the model always has a minimal overlap between the three components. That means a large portion of the FFA is not instruction, a large portion of SAE is not instruction, and two thirds of what we do in agricultural education is not instruction.

The integrated agricultural education model is supposed to combine instruction, supervised agricultural experience and FFA (Talbert, Vaughn & Croom, 2006). However, a number of studies have indicated a decline in the number of students involved in supervised experience. Dyer and Os-

borne (1996) and Cheek, Arrington, Carter and Randell (1994) conclude that SAE programs lack overall direction and goals by which program quality can be measured. A number of studies (Dyer & Osborne, 1995; Dyer & Williams, 1997; Steele, 1997) conclude that many teachers fail to fully implement SAE in the agricultural education program, even though SAE has a proven economic impact (Retallick & Martin, 2005).

With regard to the FFA element of the model, there is a gap between the number of agricultural education students and the number of students who are official members of the FFA even though FFA membership has continued to increase in recent years (National FFA Organization, 2006). Even though students who join the FFA were more connected to the industry of agriculture and were more engaged in agricultural education coursework (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004; Croom & Flowers, 2001), the National FFA Organization (2006) reported a gap of almost 200,000 students between FFA membership and student enrollment in agricultural education programs.

Of the components in the three-component model of agricultural education, instruction occurs with the greatest frequency. If this model is composed in such a way that classroom instruction, FFA and SAE are integrally linked and equally weighted components, then why do the FFA and SAE components generally subordinate themselves to instruction?

Finally, the three-circle model ignores a major component of every

agricultural education program – the community it which it resides. The community provides the support and direction for schools, and each school is a distinct mirror image of the community in which it resides. The people in our school communities buy products from our greenhouses, purchase our fundraiser items, and make financial donations to the FFA chapter. Local community members help our students by providing SAE experiences and helping train career development teams. Local citizens come into our classrooms to help us teach and help us find the resources we need in order to teach our content more effectively.

The three-circle model, by not mentioning the role of the school community, effectively removes the role of the community from our consciousness. When we see the three interconnected circles, we think of the model in terms of what we do as agricultural educators instead of the broader view of agricultural education’s role in the school and community. Since agricultural education programs cannot survive without community support, the three-circle model is incomplete. Obviously, this will not do. We need a stronger model.

To find that model, we have to

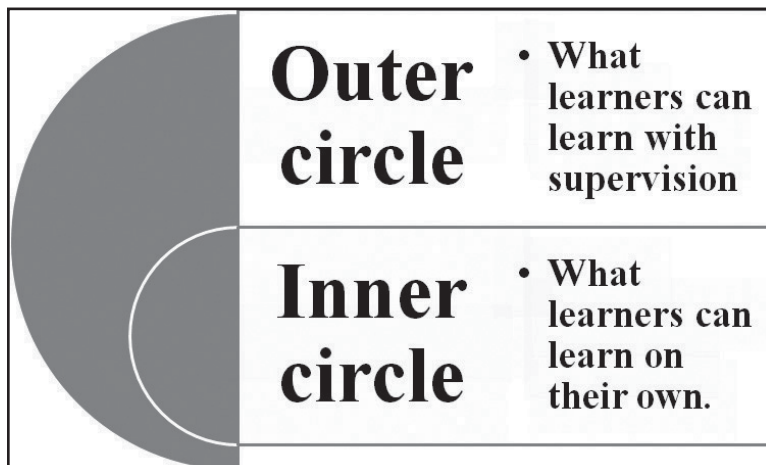


Figure 2. Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development

draw on the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978), a psychologist who in the early 1900s specialized in the connections between thinking patterns and language development. He proposed that language was a tool for social interaction and that the process of thinking was developed socially. He further proposed that learners had the ability to learn the less difficult concepts on their own, but needed the guidance of more-skilled learners in order to master the more complex and difficult concepts. The difference between what the learner can learn on his or her own and what the learner could learn under the guidance of an adult is called the Zone of Proximal Development. Figure 2 represents Vygotsky’s theory.

Vygotsky’s model provides us with the idea that learners have to get help from the larger learning community in order to learn the more complex tasks and concepts of agricultural education. They cannot independently arrive at all of the knowledge they need in order to be successful in an agricultural occupation without moving outside their own preconceptions. They need help from others who can

provide it in the manner necessary for the learner to develop deep understandings. How does this happen in agricultural education?

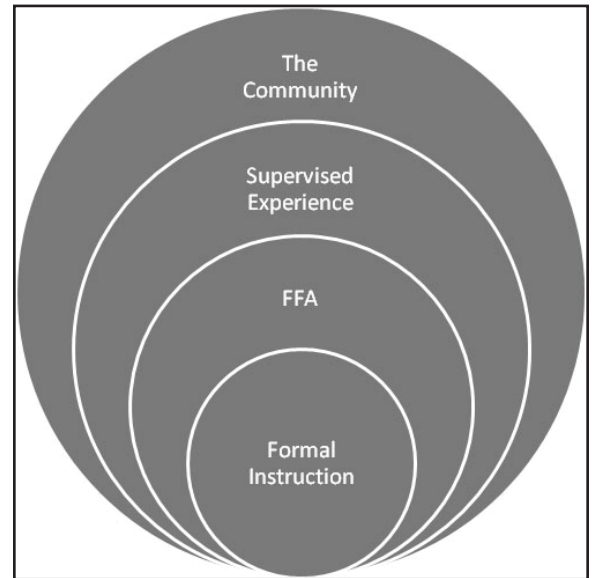


Figure 3. The Experiential Learning Model for delivering agricultural education.

Carl Rogers (1969) developed a theory of experiential learning that may help us determine how the learner is best served by agricultural education. Rogers determined that deep learning occurs when the subject matter is relevant to the interests of the student. He also proposed that learning that is initiated by the student is more lasting and pervasive than learning that is initiated by the teacher. The most effective learning activities are those in which the learner is in control. The learner has to drive the learning process, yet according to Vygotsky, the learner also needs guidance and direction from more experienced learners. This, I think, leads us to a new model which I call the Experiential Learning Model for Delivering Agricultural Education. Figure 3 portrays this model.

How the Model Works

The visual representation of the model in Figure 3 is a “nested Venn” model. The innermost circle is classroom and laboratory instruction because it is the most limiting factor. Curriculum in our agricultural education programs is rigid and usually in-

flexible, so it is possible that a student may not receive all of the information and experiences they need from classroom instruction. For instance, a student who has an interest in horticulture enters the local high school agricultural education program only to find that the program specializes in animal science. They must go beyond classroom instruction to the next larger circle which involves participation in FFA activities. The FFA allows members to participate in dozens of career development events and awards programs. It is likely that a student could find something of interest in the FFA that also furthers their education. For example, our student who entered the agriculture program hoping to get experience in horticulture and only found animal science, can now get involved in the floriculture career development event.

Let's assume however that our student isn't satisfied with participating in the floriculture career development event and needs to be more involved in horticulture. He can develop a supervised experience program around his horticultural interest and perhaps create a small greenhouse operation that sells bedding plants and seasonal floral crops. As his interest grows in horticulture, it becomes obvious to his agriculture teacher that the student needs more technical assistance. So he refers the student to local greenhouse operators, the local extension service, and to various other community resources.

As the student moves outward from the smallest circle of the model,

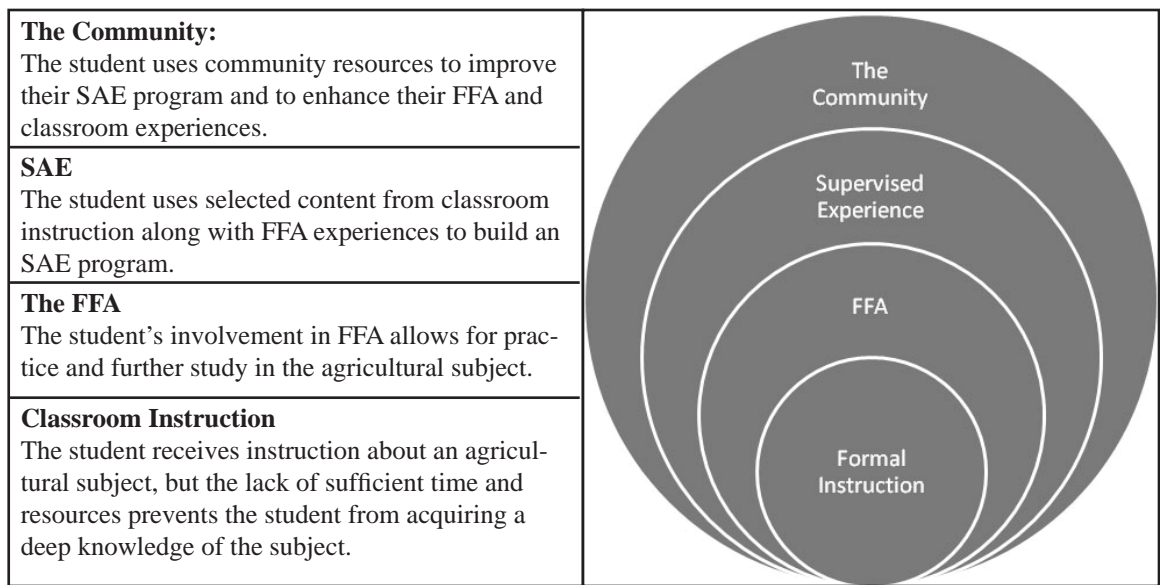


Figure 4. How the model works.

his knowledge and experience base expands. Each component of the model is fully integrated with the other components, and each component becomes vital to the success of the student. If we were to operate our programs based upon this model, then we would see an increase in supervised experience and FFA program participation.

The agriculture teacher provides the leadership and guidance for the student in engaging the components beyond classroom instruction. The agriculture teacher is the first and best resource for helping students find FFA activities that compliment their agricultural career interests and should provide the direction necessary for students to pursue relevant SAE experiences. The agriculture teacher also helps students find relevant and high quality community resources to help them pursue their career interests. Figure 4 shows how the model might be used.

Before I conclude, let me explain how each component ended up where it did in the model. It was really a question of relevance. How relevant are each of the four components to the learner's acquisition of

the knowledge he or she needs in order to pursue an agricultural career? Classroom instruction is very important to the viability of the model. However, it gets the smallest circle because most students in agricultural education do not get to determine the curriculum or the lessons they will be taught. Students simply do not provide much leadership in curriculum development, and as such their individual learning needs may not fully be realized. The FFA is the next larger circle because students have significant freedom in choosing the FFA activities in which they will participate. The FFA, however, cannot conceive of every learning opportunity. Students begin to have nearly 100% freedom to choose and develop their own learning experiences through supervised experience programs. To the individual, SAE is the more relevant than classroom instruction and FFA. The community is represented by the largest circle because it provides the most opportunity to control SAE, FFA and classroom instruction. The community has the responsibility for delivering agricultural education and so it has the potential to help students the most in the long run. After all, the

(Continued on page 15)

Creating Symbiotic Relationships Between Agriculture and the Community

by Dexter B. Wakefield and Ashlee Lambrich

Growing up in a small South Georgia town, my only hopes and desires were to grow up, go to college, graduate, become a teacher and buy me a couple of acres of land to live on. I wanted the white, picket fence, a wife, two-kids and a dog named Spot. I only knew of a few job opportunities growing up; teacher, police or doctor. I thought everyone in the world knew everything there was about the importance of agriculture. I tried to understand completely why my dad (a retired agriculture teacher) would always be involved in community activities. He worked at the community canning plant in the summers, held night classes for adult farmers, supervised the local “hog” shows, visited all his students and their parents daily, sung in the choir and still hummed to himself each night at 7:00 while he asked me to bring him a glass of water and his slippers.

Then as I got older, it all made sense..... Until, I was in California visiting my fiancé’s family and I was talking to one of her relatives (a lawyer) who said to me, “Why did you major in agriculture? Why would you go to school to become an agriculture teacher? Do we really need majors like that?” My first thought was to say something out of character, but then it became a teachable moment. Not everyone understands the importance of agriculture in our lives and this would be a prime time to develop a professional relationship with an individual, unaware of its importance.

To model this teachable moment, the purpose of this article is to provide

a framework in utilizing symbiotic relationships to reference the linkage of a total agricultural education programs three equal components, FFA, Classroom/Lab, SAE (Talbert, Vaughn, Croom & Lee, 2007), to include and enhance community relationships. In developing relations with other professionals in the local community, agricultural educators must continue to model the ideal total program while incorporating additional symbiotic relationships in agriculture (see Figure 1).

Symbiotic Relationships in Agriculture

Relationships vary greatly depending on the demographics of the community to which the agriculture program is nestled. Agriculture teachers are able to reach out to community members and leaders to establish their educational program by forming the following:

1. Advisory Committees
2. Summer Institutes/Workshops
3. Community Service
4. Curriculum Development

Agriculture teachers must be

equipped with the tools and resources that will allow them to show students and people in the community the endless possibilities available within and throughout the agricultural industry.

Advisory Committees

One way in which agriculture educators can develop relationships with community professionals is through advisory committees. The purpose of advisory committees is to

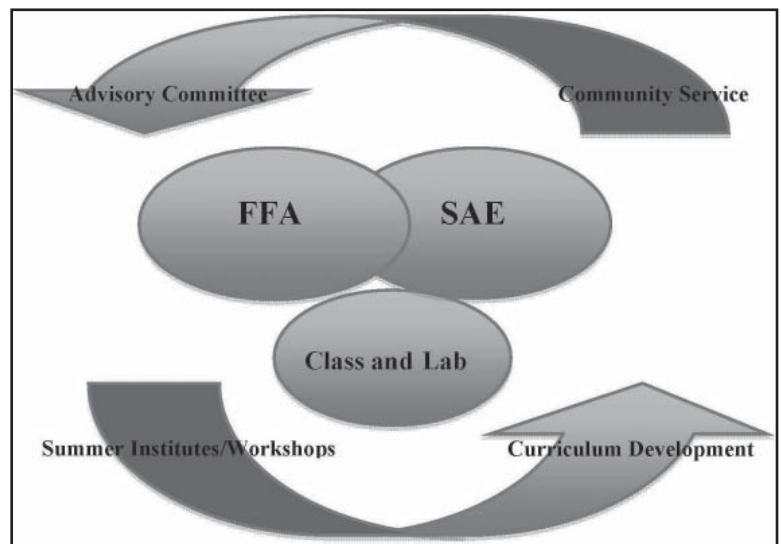


Figure 1. Traditional model of agricultural education including four symbiotic relationships that are important to agricultural education and community partnership.

help improve the agricultural education concerns of people in the district (Phipps & Osborne, 1988), and to ascertain job opportunities for students. These committees are made up of various community members that should represent all areas of vocational concerns to students in the classroom and assist in disseminating information out to the public.

Curriculum Development

The greatest benefit the agricultural education program can reap

through building professional relationships (i.e. with individuals in the community) is to receive assistance in curriculum development. Agricultural educators have used the ideas, modeled programs and social events as a creative means of building relationships for projecting curriculum design (Wiles & Bondi, 2002). Educators can turn to individuals within the community for assistance with instructional units they may lack. For instance, a new teacher, or even a sea-

soned teacher, can look to a florist to demonstrate flower arranging, a forester to explain the best ways to distinguish between different trees, or an investment broker from a local firm to explain the futures market. Additionally, they can reveal to students the diversity of agriculture, showing them the many agriculture careers available. Teachers can receive instructional resources, such as curriculum materials, promotional materials, or field trip opportunities.

The professional relationships that agriculture teachers form will provide an endless supply of community service opportunities.

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Community Activities/Services

The professional relationships that agriculture teachers form will provide an endless supply of community service opportunities of which the agriculture students can take part. These students will learn that agricultural education is not just about sitting in a classroom, or participating in laboratory exercises and FFA, but about the difference that can be made within the community. Those

Summer Institutes/workshops

Since 1991, more than 5,354 Illinois educators have attended our summer agricultural institute (www.agintheclassroom.org). One of the

most successful programs we have at our university is the summer workshop/institute for elementary teachers. This is a five-day program designed to teach elementary educators about the many career options available to students, and to help them incorporate that knowledge in the classroom. These teachers are given the opportunity to take numerous field trips to agricultural facilities, speak to agricultural professionals and conduct hands on learning activities that relate directly to math, science and reading.

It is gratifying to know that agriculture educators typically work together with business and industries in the community to develop lifelong learning opportunities. Each agent must collaborate for educational purposes as well as career opportunities. These educational opportunities are created through professional symbiotic relationships that should be standard with every agricultural program;

advisory committees, community service, summer institutes and workshops, and curriculum development. Building these relationships is the answer to the questions “why would you major in agriculture?”

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Are We Preparing Agricultural Education Teachers to Collaborate?

by John Rayfield

The value of collaboration has been well documented in agricultural education programs. Agricultural education teachers have many opportunities to successfully collaborate with other professionals in their school and community. As teacher educators, are we preparing our students to foster the collaborative spirit when they enter the workforce?

As a young and inexperienced county extension agent in Turner County, Georgia, I remember one of the first relationships I formed was with the local young farmer/agricultural education teacher, Chuck Majeski. There were many instances during the next three years where the two of us shared resources, served as a resource person, held joint meetings for clientele and worked collaboratively for the youth of our county. Was this just a chance happening? Does collaboration simply happen with little or no effort? These questions must be posed to our pre-service, apprentice and beginning teachers to facilitate collaborative efforts in their communities.

When I reflect on those experiences, it is clear that there were many underlying factors that influenced this collaborative relationship. We had a common goal. Our main concern was for all youth from our county to be successful, regardless if they were a member of 4-H or FFA. There was a history of collaboration in this program. The agricultural education program and the extension service had worked together for years in this county and that tradition was still strong in the community. Communication between the two organizations

was great! Chuck and I visited informally weekly and formally met to collaborate monthly. This along with many other factors led to a healthy collaborative relationship.

Mattessich and Monsey (1992) identified 19 factors that can influence collaboration and grouped the factors into six categories: environment, membership characteristics, process/structure, communication, purpose, and resources. Although these factors

are documented in the literature, do teacher educators share these with student teachers or first year teachers? I would say that my positive collaborative experience just fell into my lap. One major void in our teacher preparation programs is placing a strong emphasis on collaboration and the positive impact it can have on a program and career.

In a recent study conducted at Texas A&M University by Murphrey, Harlin and Rayfield (2010) agricultural education teachers reported they collaborated most during: 1) livestock shows and fairs, 2) serving as a volunteer, 3) being a guest or expert speaker and 4) sharing equipment and facilities. With these areas of collaboration in mind, how can we clearly communicate the value of collaboration to our young professionals?

Be willing to share resources. For years we (Chuck and I) shared a set of scales that we both used to weigh swine and sheep projects. We would

typically travel together to visit the youth who had these projects and work together rather than steering our programs in different directions. This sharing of resources was embraced by the local board of education and the county commission who provided funding for both programs.

Establishing cooperative relationships early could be a key to solving teacher retention issues.

Volunteer when needed and even when not needed! As beginning teachers, it is important to connect with stakeholders in your community. Volunteer to work at any function that will increase your visibility in the community. Being a dedicated volunteer will pay dividends to your program through increased enrollments, increased sponsorship of events and broader community involvement.

Serve as a resource person in your community. We all have different areas of expertise where we can offer our advice and opinions to others. Be willing to serve as a guest speaker for other classes, speak to civic organizations or host collaborative meetings with similar agencies (Extension, Farm Bureau, FSA) to show your willingness to be involved in all aspects of the agricultural community.

As a young professional in agricultural education, I had many more questions than answers. Fortunately,

I was surrounded by individuals who had mastered the art of collaboration even though I did not fully grasp the concept at the time. Teacher educators should stress to our pre-service and beginning teachers the importance of establishing collaborative relationships early in their careers. This could be key in solving teacher retention issues that plague our profession.

We must encourage young teachers to seek out relationships that will be beneficial to them in their local communities. Science teachers, extension agents, agricultural sales representatives and local policy makers are all potential collaborators for agricultural education teachers. Initiating, building and maintaining these relationships should be discussed at the undergraduate and graduate levels in teacher education programs.

Are we preparing agricultural education teachers to collaborate? Yes, informally. Sure we mention collaboration and its importance to our students, but do we equip them with the tools to go out and build successful collaborative relationships? My hope is that many of you were able to establish quality collaborative relationships as I did early in my career. My goal is that we as a profession work harder to increase collaboration at all levels in agricultural education.

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The Experiential Learning Model (Continued)

community is where our students will eventually live and work.

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Who Owns Your Program?

by Jim Scott and Wendy Nichols

I still recall during my first year of teaching in 1976 when I attended a faculty meeting and my supervisor reminded the faculty to assemble an advisory committee to meet at least twice a year. New to the school district and recently graduated from college and now the resident content expert, I was charged with educating the students in the horticulture program. Barely able to keep my lesson plans one week ahead of schedule and now petrified at the idea of having green industry experts meeting daily with me to discuss the program, I realized I did not have the wealth of knowledge that these folks were bringing to the table. All I thought I knew and learned in college classes and internships was no match for the local industry experts. I came to grips with the fact that if my students were going to gain many skills and competencies in their career and technical area, then I must expand the classroom. Three important attributes that made my advisory committee's effectiveness increase included the instructor having a positive attitude, openness, and a spirit of teamwork!

It's all about ownership! Teachers are often told that the classroom is their domain and they have a responsibility to develop the career and technical program. Sometimes teachers literally interpret this statement and develop the program they feel will benefit the students. When a teacher internalizes and understands the concept of expanding the ownership of the program to a larger community of stakeholders, then teamwork and openness begin to occur.

In 2004 I was hired at Tolles Career & Technical Center (Plain City, Ohio) to lead the instruction in the Turf, Landscape, and Greenhouse

Management program, and I was asked during the interview to share my vision for the program. Without hesitation, I quickly directed the question back to the interview committee and asked them to share with me their vision for the program. I knew then, as I know now, my vision alone would not be enough to take the program and students to their potential.

Building Collaborative Teams

A successful educator creates opportunities for students and communities to collaborate. The building blocks necessary to build collaborative teams include gathering key stakeholders from the business and industry field along with school-based supporters. These individuals must come together with a common goal and shared vision – developing leaders for the respective career and technical program area. My advisory committee consists of the garden center and landscape build/design owners, golf course superintendents, major green industry leaders within my school district, academic instructors, parents, past students, and current students. The twenty-five member collaborative team works with me in providing students with the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes the students require to gain successful employment in the field and/or preparation for post secondary instruction.

Listen – Action - Results

My responsibility is to listen to the wants and needs of the collaborative team and then develop a series of strategies that will result in the students' skill development. One such initiative involved the development of a one-hole golf course on the school property. Our school district rests within an area that has many pri-

vate and public golf courses that host a number of LPGA and PGA tournaments – most notably The Memorial Golf Tournament held at Muirfield Village Golf Course. The industry leaders met and expressed a need for the program to prepare students for entry into the golf course industry. In cooperation with industry leaders over \$60,000 of supplies, equipment, and services were provided to our program to offset the cost of the installation of the 364-yard golf hole. Students are now able to add specific skills in golf course operation and management through our high school program. A secondary benefit of this initiative was the opportunity to chaperone students to gain skills at in other venues such as Augusta National Golf Course and numerous courses in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Collaborative teams can be short-termed or long-termed based upon the need of the various parties. A responsibility I have as an instructor is to model service-learning. In 2008, in cooperation with the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), a group of students and I had the honor of participating in an event called "A Day of Renewal & Remembrance." We joined green industry leaders from around the country to landscape Arlington National Cemetery and visited our Congressional leaders discussing issues facing the green industry. Through extended classroom activities, my students learned to contribute as responsible members of our local, state, and national communities. Our students also toured the Washington Nationals baseball team's stadium learning the keys to maintaining a professional sports turf from the grounds superintendent. This past year we also visited one of the largest Midwest's landscape companies in Chicago to learn about the



Discussing golf course operation and management skills with staff at the Augusta National Golf Course, Myrtle Beach, SC

landscape construction business and tour Wrigley Field.

Shared Vision

An effective collaborative team is one that has a shared vision. My advisory committee's sole purpose prepares students for entry into the green industry upon graduation and/or to prepare them for post-secondary education that will lead to successful careers. Earlier I mentioned the term ownership. As an instructor one must answer the question, "Who owns your program?" When I made the conscious decision that ownership of the program belonged to anyone who was a stakeholder – my focus changed. Anyone who can say no is a stakeholder in my program – the superintendent and other administrators ultimately determine if the program is to continue; other teachers and staff, both in the school and in associate schools, encourage or discourage students from enrolling or may choose not to purchase plants grown by the students; business and industry leaders will determine if the students' skills meet their companies' needs; parents and students are faced with the decision regarding if the program has the rigor and relevance they want

to have imparted and if the program will prepare their child for a successful career. When the instructor considers this list of stakeholders in deciding what the curriculum should consist of, it changes from what the instructor may wish to teach to what the industry needs to be offered.

Benefits of Collaborative Teams

Collaborative teams benefit the students, employers, community, school and the career and technical program. One strategy my advisory committee uses is to meet formally twice a year with one meeting occurring during the school day with all of my students in attendance. This is a wonderful strategy that allows my students to come in face-to-face contact with their future employers and for the students to witness a collaborative team in action.

With my curriculum based on state and national green industry standards, my advisory committee avails themselves to our program providing instruction on specific industry skills such as paver installation; irrigation installation; and equipment operation. The students learn from their potential employer. Needless to say, the students are responsive and begin to develop a rapport with these leaders that then opens the door for students partnering with an industry mentor.

A collaborative team can help the instructor enhance the classroom instruction by providing resources such as materials, equipment, job placement, and on-the-job field trips. The

industry also provides opportunities for the instructor to gain new skills that will aid in improving the quality of education for our students. For the past three years I have worked as a volunteer at the Memorial Golf Tournament on the horticulture crew alongside some of my current students, who are employees of the golf course, and are responsible for training me on the specific task being completed. The teacher becomes the student.

Impact of Collaborative Teams

Ultimately each person determines the impact of the collaborative process in the CTE program. The success of career and technical education programs is significantly impacted by the willingness of the CTE instructors and schools to invite stakeholders to the table with an open and positive attitude for the purpose of developing a shared vision of strengthening career and technical education in a collaborative effort.



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Navigating the Sea of Partnership Building

by Christopher M. Estep,
Christopher T. Stripling, and T.
Grady Roberts

We have all heard the saying “no man is an island.” This saying is certainly true for the local agricultural education teacher. In order for an agricultural education program to be effective it needs to be built upon collaborative efforts within the local community. Anyone who has been in agricultural education for any amount of time recognizes the importance of developing partners in the local community. These partnerships are the lifeblood of a program ensuring current support, as well as a vibrant future. Without community partnership, the agricultural education program will never reach its full potential.

Establishing partnerships is not always easy, but being an agricultural education teacher lends itself very well to building relationships in the community. For example, many agricultural education teachers are the defacto town veterinarian, horticulturist, unofficial school spokesperson, and basic jack of all trades. However, building professional relationships within the community goes beyond the teacher providing services. To build professional relationships means your program is partnering with someone or some entity for the enhancement of both. According to National FFA’s Local Program Success Guide (National Council for Agricultural Education, 2002) there are five basic steps to building successful partnerships in the community.

1. Identify potential partners
2. Determine benefits of involvement for potential partners

3. Present benefits of involvement to potential partners
4. Establish a plan for involving core partners
5. Reward partners by recognizing them for their contributions and support

Identifying potential partners is probably the most difficult task for teachers. Remember, building partnerships should lead to reciprocal benefits. This is where agricul-

entrepreneurship projects like livestock. This resource can be helpful if you need another opinion about a student’s project. Agents can also be very helpful to assist your students if you are not around. Students participating in both programs know you and the agent, and if for some reason you are not available they can go to the agent with questions. Sharing students can also have its benefits when it comes time for Career Development Events. Students participating in both 4-H and FFA events

**Without community partnerships
the agricultural education program
will never reach its full potential.**

tural education teachers may get into trouble; they often want to help everyone without taking time to think how these people may be able to help their program. There are people and businesses in your community who are more than willing to support your program; you just need to identify them. For many agricultural education programs, potential partners include extension; businesses; civic and professional organizations; and producers.

Extension

Collaboration with a local 4-H agent can be beneficial to students in both programs and students should be encouraged to be part of both organizations. This can be a tremendous help to you as a teacher. First, it can give you another set of eyes when it comes to evaluating SAE projects. Most agents are very knowledgeable at evaluating projects, especially

will be better prepared and have the opportunity to attend more competitions than students who are only members of one organization. This could also allow the teacher to devote more time to other activities. It can also be helpful to collaborate with extension agents on community service, program development, or other educational activities. Additionally, agents make great guest speakers on a variety of subjects and usually have a variety of resources at their disposal. County agents can bring a lot to the table to help advance your program.

Businesses

Community businesses are a great place for agricultural education teachers to seek out collaborative relationships. This experience can be rewarding for both the teacher and the business. Local businesses can provide many benefits to an agricultural education program. They can

be a great source for guest speakers, field trip locations, advisory committee members, and CDE judges. They can also provide financial support, help promote a program, and students benefit from opportunities such as job shadowing and employment. Probably the most valuable benefit of fostering relationships with businesses is the real world context to the agricultural curriculum they can provide, which may also be very helpful when preparing career development teams. In return, the local agricultural program can also benefit businesses. Agricultural education programs can provide skilled employees through SAEs, word of mouth advertising, and the opportunity to help shape the next generation of productive citizens.

Civic and Professional Organizations

The local agricultural education teacher can also seek partnerships with a variety of professional associations in the local community that can help create the best program possible (Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, and Ball, 2008). For example, numerous civic organizations, such as Kiwanis, Lion's Club, Junior League, etc., have a mission to conduct community service projects. Partnering with these organizations can help the teacher expand the impact of the efforts of students. Another valuable partner would be the county Farm Bureau office. Building a partnership with Farm Bureau can give the teacher an instant network in the local agricultural community. Beyond Farm Bureau, the teacher may consider partnering with the stronger commodity groups in the local community. Working with these organizations can help the teacher provide additional educational opportunities for students. The above-mentioned organizations would provide a suitable starting

point in building partnerships, but the teacher is encouraged to examine the local community to identify the most suitable civic and professional organizations.

Producers

Agricultural education programs have long been built around the local agricultural industries (Phipps et al., 2008). Establishing partners with local producers can help agricultural education teachers provide a quality educational program that reflects local conditions. Producers can serve as guest speakers and as resource people for materials and advice. In today's economic climate, schools are dealing with decreasing budgets, making it difficult to provide some educational opportunities. Partnering with local producers can give the teacher a cost-effective way to provide specialized instruction through field trips or demonstrations. Producers can also provide teachers with up-to-date information about industry practices, thus ensuring that the teacher is teaching the latest information. Partnering with producers does not just benefit the agricultural education program. Producers will benefit through ready access to a skilled source of labor, particularly through SAE programs.

In summary, the opportunities for collaboration in the local community are numerous for an agricultural education teacher. Many people and organizations are willing to help the agricultural program; it is up to the teacher to seek out these relationships. Concentrating on relationship building in the community helps an agricultural education teacher unlock a myriad of available benefits. Extension agents; businesses; civic and professional organizations; and agricultural producers are a good place to start seeking partnerships. The continued growth of the local agricultural education program depends on

creating these collaborative relationships. Truly no man is an island, and bridges must be built to prevent the local agricultural education teacher from being marooned in the sea of relationship building.

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Developing Professional Relationships in the Local Community

by *Brantley Murphy and Teresa Murphy*

High school agricultural education programs face all sorts of challenges in their efforts to provide educational opportunities for their students. The results of these efforts have a tremendous impact on the social and economic health of the community. It is advantageous for all of the agencies in a community to work together to offer educational, training, employment, and even enrichment opportunities for its citizens. Agriculture teachers and their student “customers” can gain many benefits from developing relationships with other professionals in the local and even global community.

The first relationships that most agriculture teachers begin to build in a community are with the students themselves. Often the initial introductions occur on the first day of classes, however the wise teachers will get to know their students long before classes begin by getting to know the feeder school teachers before the previous school year is over. High school teachers can collaborate with middle school teachers to identify and recruit potential agriculture students by offering field trips or other visits to the high school agriculture department. This builds excitement for the program and cultivates understanding of the courses offered. Each spring, before the middle school students register for their freshman year courses, all of the eighth graders take a tour of our high school campus. We, the advisors, along with our FFA members and officers, lead the groups through our agriculture department explaining the activities that go on

in our classrooms, shop, greenhouse, and aquaculture laboratory. The FFA members answer student questions and provide a peer perspective that adults cannot.

Meanwhile, we offer CDs to the middle school teachers that provide photos of our students in the classrooms and labs and engaged in FFA activities. We also send flyers and brochures back with the teachers so they can have more resources to help future students make informed choices about their educational plans. Other possible middle school partnership activities include using current high school students/FFA members in mentor programs or as agricultural ambassadors to help the middle school teachers teach special science labs or other agricultural activities. These types of efforts pay big dividends to both the teachers and the students by building familiarity and confidence making a smoother transition into the new school year.

In our program, families are a huge part of our success. We have even called membership in our chapter a “Family Tradition.” As a husband and wife teaching partner team, it seems to go with the territory. On open house nights our department gets more traffic than most areas of the school and more of the visits are social than academic. Parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends of our students flock to our rooms to visit, and to share stories about what it was like when they were in class. What may seem like casual conversations are really important networking sessions that help us make connections throughout the school year.

The family members of our students are involved in all areas of our

local community and have interests, hobbies, and skills that provide great resources for our students. When students have questions about their SAE programs that we may not have first-hand experience with, we often know who to call to ask for advice. Family members are great resources when students need SAE opportunities, help training Career Development Event teams or chaperoning field trips. Parent and family contacts are also helpful when our program needs business support in the form of donations or reduced rates for supplies and services. Of course, friends and family members are the foundation of a strong FFA Alumni Chapter or FFA Support Group. These relationships with student friends and family members provide a “tag team” effort in motivating students to perform at their best level and to make the most of the opportunities available.

After spending all day with students during the regular school day and many afternoons working with career development event teams, or other FFA meetings; many teachers are just ready to go home and relax. While that leisure time may be tempting, agriculture teachers should not miss the chance to get involved with other agricultural organizations. Agricultural support agencies; such as Cooperative Extension, Cattleman’s Association, Community College Advisory Boards, and Farm Bureau; often have meetings and special workshops that offer wonderful opportunities for agriculture teachers to make connections.

Getting to know people in these organizations, and sharing the story of what’s going on in the local agriculture program, can open doors for

the teacher and program. We were invited to attend the local Farm Bureau meeting talk to their members about what our students were doing in our classes. After the brief presentation, we were asked what resources we needed to improve our student success. Within a few months, our program received a new welder courtesy of our local Farm Bureau. Plans are being made to offer some welding training to its members as well. At a Cattleman's Association meeting, we were asked to make a presentation about our experience with nitrate poisoning in our cattle. We were resources for their members because we had experienced losses and could help their members avoid the same issues with their herds. Those contacts help us to stay informed about due dates for the Cattleman's Association Scholarships which are valuable for our students.

Cooperative Extension has also been a great partner for our program. We have had our Horticulture agent come to our classes and teach seminars on specialty crops and we have served as volunteers for the 4-H livestock club. Currently, several of our FFA members serve as officers of the local 4-H club. Many of their 4-H activities parallel our FFA activities, so we are often reinforcing each other's lessons with each event. Each community meeting an agriculture teacher attends helps that teacher to stay informed about local agriculture issues and keeps the local agriculture department in the minds of the community.

The definition of community has changed somewhat as the use of technology has advanced over the years. Just as our economy is global, our idea of community should expand beyond our local towns and school districts. Agriculture teachers need to be aware of what is going on outside of

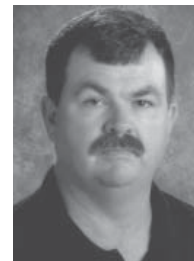
their county, region, state, and nation. Just as we encourage our students to get involved with FFA and to take advantage of the opportunities available to them, we should practice what we preach. There are endless opportunities to share information and experiences while serving in agricultural professional associations and agencies.

Beyond serving as the advisor of your local FFA chapter, consider serving as an officer in your state's agriculture teacher association. The networking and sharing of ideas with your fellow professionals is invaluable. Service at the state level could lead to positions on committees or officer teams at the national level such as NAAE. Participation in these types of leadership positions can place agriculture teachers in contact with people in positions of influence and provide opportunities for travel and resource acquisition. The annual policy seminar in Washington, D.C. hosted by ACTE and NAAE is another chance to build relationships with professionals from across the country, as well as communicate with political leaders at the national level.

The use of social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook are possible methods of connecting with agriculturists from across the world. Internet blogs dedicated to agricultural topics are other great ways to gather some of the most current information available and to connect with members of the agricultural community who may be thousands of miles away. These sometimes long distance relationships can help us as agriculture teachers educate our students about how people in other places get things done. We also need to face the fact that our students may not come back to their hometowns to live and work, but we still owe it to them to offer the greatest insight pos-

sible no matter where they call home. Information about what is going on outside of our local bubble may be valuable in helping carry out our day-to-day work here at home.

The demands on a high school agriculture teacher seem to grow every day. Just when we think we may be able to slow down, another challenge comes our way. We need to understand that all of today's professionals are being asked to do more with less these days. Agriculture teachers cannot be totally autonomous. We need to keep in touch with the teachers at our feeder schools, the friends and families of our students, our former students, and community agencies. We must also keep in mind that "it's a small world after all" now that technology can bring us together so quickly and so efficiently. We owe it to all of our students to cultivate and maintain community relationships and partnerships at the local, state, and national level, so that our efforts to increase student learning produce the best results.



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It's Not All Sappy: Teachers Can be Leaders in Agricultural Industry Networks

by Keith Schiebel and Travis Park

Sometimes what we do in working with agricultural youth may seem to be less relevant to the total agriculture industry than other pressing agricultural issues like biofuel development, milk pricing, or biotechnology. Yet, as agricultural educators we help ensure the future workforce and leadership for the agriculture industry. In numerous venues the shortages of agriculture professionals with relevant agricultural experiences have been duly noted. As teachers and agriculture educators develop professional relationships in our communities, we have a real opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the food and fiber sector. Some secondary agricultural educators take this responsibility seriously and even lead in agriculture industries. That is certainly true of Keith Schiebel, the agricultural science teacher at Vernon-Verona-Sherrill (VVS) High School in New York, who has developed professional networks that benefit both his students, reaching far beyond his classroom walls, and the \$5 million maple industry in New York State.

While Keith has developed professional networks with other agricultural educators, his niche is the connections made with maple producers across the state and nation, and even across the hemisphere. The VVS agriculture program currently owns and operates a 2000-tap maple operation including a school-based woodlot and maple sap house. VVS started tapping trees in 1989 and began boiling on campus in 1992. The program purchases and processes additional sap from local land-owners. They also support a school-based

commercial sales outlet, wholesale to several outlets in the surrounding community, and attend major craft shows to market maple syrup and associated products. Keith's students are currently inventorying the maple tree resources within a 10-mile radius of the school (including parks and cemeteries with significant maple resources—Keith doesn't even think it a little weird to harvest sap from a cemetery and says, "Nobody'd complain.") and plans to build a community-based maple cooperative around the maple industry.

VVS also educates the local public about maple by sponsoring two Maple Weekends at the end of March each year which draw over 2,000 attendees. The weekend includes a pancake breakfast, wagon rides to the sugarbush, sap house tours, maple market open house, maple coloring contests for kids, and tree-tapping ceremony featuring state and local dignitaries. For the past 10 years, the NYS Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets has tapped a maple tree on the school's front lawn as part of the Maple Weekend celebration.

Another method of providing agriculture literacy about the maple industry has been the development of a VVS FFA Mobile Maple Exhibit. Pulled by the agriculture program's pickup, stickered like a NASCAR® racecar, the 28-foot, handicapped accessible trailer depicts the maple industry through interactive displays and activities and is staffed by students who conduct presentations for various school groups and events. The depictions cover the history of maple, plant physiology of sap, tapping and gathering methods, and even processing techniques through a

mini-evaporator display. The Mobile Maple Exhibit and VVS FFA members have made four different trips to New York City to educate youth and adults about the maple industry. In recent years the exhibit has been hosted by several state senators and assembly members. Senator Andrew Lanza (R-South Shore), stated, "Your student volunteers were very knowledgeable and courteous and you should be honored as their teacher. You clearly have a passion and dedication for the education of maple syrup production that cannot be matched."

Where there is understanding, so also is there potential for action. United States Senator Schumer and Representative John McHugh have introduced the Maple Tapping Access Program Act (Maple TAP Act). The Act, if passed, would provide grants for landowners to develop their maple tree resources. The introduction of this act is an outgrowth of the increased visibility of the maple industry supported by Keith and the efforts of the VVS FFA.

What makes these opportunities possible, even successful? In visiting with Keith about the program's involvement with the maple industry, the arrangements started with Keith and local maple producers looking to solve a problem and fill a void in generating opportunities for maple producers to share best practices and generate research about the industry. Since pulling the maple producers together, the NYMPA has generated legislative support, garnered an executive director, and extended its influence beyond the state borders.

As Keith states, "Maple is just the example of a niche in agriculture.

There are some who are looking to take the VVS maple model and replicate it into other areas of agriculture; Why not an apple mobile lab? Why not a dairy mobile lab?" One of the key components of developing a network in your community is the county Farm Bureau. Simply by interacting and working with agricultural leaders in the community, opportunities for student connections and program support are created. It is vital that the agriculture teacher be visible in the community, especially with other professional agriculture organizations.

This past year, Keith was selected by New York Governor David Paterson, as the only high school agriculture educator to serve on a Governor's Task Force for Maple. His involvement in the maple association and industry has led to many benefits for his students and agriculture program. Students interact with maple producers from across the state, hear from professional speakers, and raise funds for their FFA chapter. Further, the maple association is now a champion of the VVS FFA chapter and even the NYS FFA Association. Additionally, the focus on the maple industry has opened doors for VVS FFA and agriculture students to interact with the industry, policy-makers, and agricultural professionals. Clearly the NY maple producers recognize and understand the positive influence and impact of the VVS agriculture program on their industry.

While these professional networks started with the maple industry, as Keith shares his story about the NYMPA conference and the Mobile Maple Exhibit, he begins to weave a tangled web of professional associations that extend beyond the maple industry. Contacts with Farm Bureau members and state legislators have led to additional partnerships with

downstate officials from New York City, quite a distance, both physically and philosophically from rural Upstate NY. These associations also branched out to include the NYS FFA Association and the New York Agriculture in the Classroom program. Because these various entities are joined together through Keith and his program's activities, they all benefit from the interrelations among the various constituents. The maple association realizes the importance of youth in agriculture; NYC legislators realize the importance of agricultural industries like maple to the State's economy; and perhaps most importantly, school administrators and Board of Education members realize the importance of agricultural education and FFA to the students at VVS.

It is these connections that prompted staff at the NYS Farm Bureau to say, "You're opening doors for agriculture that Farm Bureau has never been able to open," meaning interactions with audiences in New York City. Keith understands both the educational and networking aspects of his work with the maple industry. This work is not simply selling his program, but also doing real work that contributes to an agricultural industry that is vital for Upstate New York.

The keys to success in developing these professional networks are (a) analyze the agricultural resources in your local community, (b) recognize and leverage the interactions among entities with interests in agriculture starting with the local Farm Bureau, (c) collaborate and contribute in a meaningful way to local, regional and even state agriculture industries where possible, and (d) develop logical connections with agriculture in your community where the teacher can be a conduit of networking to bring together interested par-

ties around some aspect of agriculture. We have many opportunities in today's food and fiber industry with local foods, farmers' markets, and community-supported agriculture enterprises. Keith suggests that teachers can think about leveraging their greenhouse, land laboratory, small or large animal lab or other agriculture program resource to open opportunities to educate about agriculture.

While the focus on maple is going strong, the VVS agriculture program has not always focused in these forest products. In the 1980s, the emphasis was on dairy and the agriculture program owned and raised several head of registered dairy heifers. Today, Keith and his program are not resting on the maple industry. Keith has used his professional networks to initiate a willow and switchgrass test plot in collaboration with Cornell University and the county extension educator. Thus, in the future, the next mobile exhibit might be along the lines of renewable energy biomass production. Clearly, professional agriculture educators demonstrate competence in agriculture and networking with many entities interested in agriculture.



Keith Schiebel is an agriculture education teacher at Vernon-Verona-Sherrill High School, Verona, NY



Travis Park is an Assistant Professor at Cornell University

Two Examples Where Developing Professional Relationships in the Local “Community” Made a Positive Difference for Agricultural Education

by Benjie Forest

The basic core for the success of agricultural education programs over the years has been its reliance on the three intra-curricula components model. We have known these components traditionally as: 1) classroom/laboratory instruction 2) experiential learning through supervised agricultural experiences (SAE) and 3) leadership activities and training centered around the FFA. When these three components are combined with a well defined, integrated and organized plan for community engagement and support, existing agricultural programs become even stronger and more effective. Local school systems and various other educational agencies not currently providing an agricultural education experience for students are more likely to consider the importance and relevance of doing so. Two examples of this in the “community” of Eastern North Carolina, a rural region of North Carolina consisting of thirty-one counties located in the Coastal Plains area are: 1) a Bachelor of Science offering in Agriscience Education at Mount Olive College and 2) the establishment of the Bertie County Early College/Agriscience High School.

The idea for Mount Olive College to provide a Bachelor of Science in Agriscience Education began with a series of negotiations and meetings between Dr. Don Scott, who, at that time was the Director of the Mount Olive College Agribusiness Center, Dr. Barbara Kornegay, Vice President of Enrollment at Mount Olive College and other Mount Olive College

officials. Their intent was to initiate a strategy for the Mount Olive College “community” and the Agricultural Education program to work together in a partnership that would benefit both programs and institutions. During these discussions it was noted that neither of the four year institutions in the state currently offering agricultural education programs were

tion program at Mount Olive College will receive their first three years of instruction at Mount Olive. They will then receive their final year of training, which includes their student teaching, with the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at NC State. The students will receive a Mount Olive College diploma and recommendation for licensure from

When agricultural educators allow our community to become involved with our various programs, a stronger and more united program will most assuredly develop.

producing enough students to fill the demand for agriculture teachers in North Carolina. It was Dr. Scott’s belief that a four year Agri-science program at Mount Olive College might be a good compliment to the already existing agribusiness program that was housed there. Later meetings also included Dr. Phil Hamilton and Dr. Sandy Maddox from Mount Olive College and various representatives from the Department of Agricultural & Extension Education at NC State. These meetings resulted in a proposal for a 3 plus 1 partnership agreement between Mount Olive College and North Carolina State University to establish the four year Agriscience Education program. Under the partnership agreement, students who enter the Agriscience Educa-

NC State. The partnership agreement has been finalized and the first students were accepted into the program during the 2007-08 academic year. Discussions are now underway to see if a similar partnership can be developed between Mount Olive College and North Carolina A & T State University.

The establishment of the Bertie County Early College/Agriscience High School began while meeting with Bertie County School Superintendent Chip Zullinger. This meeting was held in order to discuss ways that agricultural education could build school and community relationships with the people living in Bertie County. At that time, Bertie County Schools had no agricultural

program. Statistics presented at this meeting and produced by Dr. Michael Walden, an Economics Professor at North Carolina State University indicated that the agricultural industry provided over 74 percent of the total Bertie County income and employed 49 percent of Bertie County's workforce. It soon became apparent to Dr. Zullinger that agricultural education could play a vital role in equipping the young people enrolled in Bertie County Schools with the skills necessary to become prepared for the many agricultural career opportunities in Bertie County and Northeastern North Carolina. Continued meetings with Dr. Zullinger, various other members of his staff, representatives from North Carolina State University, Shaw University and North Carolina A & T State University and over 100 members of the Bertie County community eventually led to the concept of providing an early college "academy" with its educational theme centered on agriculture. The school would be comprehensive in that its staff would include the math, science, English and other various

subject area teachers needed to provide the students enrolled with all of the courses necessary for graduation both from high school and a four year institution.

Working in close association with Dr. Marshall Stewart who serves as Department Head of 4-H Youth Development at North Carolina State University, an agreement was reached for NCSU to provide college credit courses toward a degree in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at NCSU for the students enrolled in the Bertie County Agriscience High School. Mr. Jim Guard has been hired as the agriculture teacher and Ms. Cindy Evans has been hired as a liaison between CALS and the high school. There are currently over 50 students enrolled and plans are for the school to grow an additional 50 students next year.

In closing, I am reminded of a story Dr. Zullinger shared about a bird who went alone to slay a dragon. On his journey to certain doom, the bird met other animals with whom he shared his story and admitted his

probable inability to beat the dragon alone. He told each animal how much stronger they would be if collectively they went forth together. He asked each animal for help. When he arrived at the cave of the dragon, the bird had a zoo full of different animals that were too powerful for the dragon and the dragon was slain. This is the spirit of community. When we as agricultural educators allow our community to become involved with our various programs, a stronger and more united program will most assuredly develop, providing greater opportunities for young people seeking careers in agricultural education.



Benjie Forest is the North Carolina Eastern Region Agricultural Education Coordinator.



The Vernon-Verona-Sherrill High School FFA developed a Mobile Maple Exhibit to provide information about the maple industry. (See the complete article on page 22.)

Do you have a suggestion that could be developed into a theme topic for the 2011 edition of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*? If so, please send your idea(s) to the editor at the address below. I am also interested in hearing your comments, both good and bad, on the content of current issue.

Send your comments to:

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Alumni Value in a Community-based Agricultural Education Program

by John Ricketts

Most everyone reading this publication has committed to memory the mission of the National FFA Organization. If not, here is the mission one more time, “The National FFA Organization is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.” I am and will always be proud of my association with FFA and agricultural education because of the program’s specific focus on STUDENTS – students who are current and future leaders of agriculture and America.

A support organization for the National FFA Organization, the National FFA Alumni Association also has STUDENTS in mind as they seek to ease teachers’ outside commitments of teaching, bring support to agricultural education programs and give teachers more freedom to do what they do best – teach students. Specifically, the mission of the National FFA Alumni Association is to secure the promise of FFA and Agricultural Education by creating an environment where PEOPLE and COMMUNITIES can develop their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success.

It doesn’t take a genius to see the similarities and differences between the FFA and Alumni mission statements. The primary difference is the focus on community, which of course includes our students. Individuals (students) are and become part of the community. Communities that have

been developed through the help of organizations such as the National FFA and the National FFA Alumni Association have greater potential to develop “social capital.” This leads to greater “productivity” for individuals and for the community itself. A community with greater productivity is one that is thriving and it is one that can sustain itself.

As an agriculture teacher seeking to develop your community and create social capital that makes your program, students, and community more productive, you have an excellent resource in the National FFA Alumni Association. Research conducted in Georgia and Tennessee indicated that future teachers felt least prepared to utilize their alumni – if one even existed. Perhaps articulating the values of the National FFA Alumni Association will help you identify specific ways and means that the alumni may be able to support your program, students, and community. The values of the National FFA Alumni Association are as follows.

The National FFA Alumni Association values the integral nature of FFA and agricultural education.

An alumni is there to help with more than just FFA activities. If you need help with resources, instruction, facilities, or administrators the FFA understands the connectedness of all phases of the program and they won’t hesitate to assist. Don’t be afraid to ask alumni for help in any and all areas of the curriculum. Fundraising is important and many folks assume that is all alumni is there for, but the truth is their understanding of all phases of our program provides something far

more important than monetary capital – it provides social capital.

The National FFA Alumni Association values agriculture as an essential part of society.

Whether you teach in rural, urban, or suburban America, agricultural education seems more relevant today than ever before for those in the know. Most people, however, seem further removed from “agriculture” than ever before. The alumni is an excellent resource if you are looking to provide curricular and community examples of agriculture and/or agriculture’s role in the local and national economy. They can serve as guest speakers. They can help with setting up field trips. They can even help in identifying SAE opportunities for students struggling to find their niche in agriculture.

The National FFA Alumni Association values diversity in serving all populations.

Do all of your students look the same? Are they all from the same part of town? This type of similarity among our students limits the development of our students, programs, and communities. Alumni members can be helpful in recruiting students. The alumni understands and values diversity so if you need help making sure your program is helping all types of students and not just a certain group, ask them for assistance. They can assist with identifying excellent students who could benefit from your program, talking to parents who are unsure about their students’ participation in the program, or providing resources which are attractive for diverse students.

The National FFA Alumni Association values the impact of a teacher on a student's life.

Over the years I have heard teachers state that they do not want an alumni because they don't want anyone to tell them how to run their program. Now, being an agriculture

culture teacher keep up the pace that is required to offer maximum and optimum opportunities for their students by themselves? I propose that they can't and still have a balanced life. Again, they need to ask for help, and help from parents/guardians is an easy place to start. Alumni not only recognize the impact, but they value

Individual support like that provided by Mr. Johnny Jones is one way a program can be assisted, but the alumni also values the community's collective support of teachers and their programs. There is strength in numbers, and if one person can raise \$2000 dollars by selling lunch plates, imagine what an active group of several alumni supporters could do when they pool their resources, time, and energy. This collective energy and support can turn a great agriculture program into an untouchable one.

Communities developed through the help of organizations like the National FFA Alumni Association have a greater potential to develop "social capital."

I hope the use of the values of the National FFA Alumni allow you to think of ways they can help you and your program. I hope you see the alumni as more than a monetary capital resource but also as a social capital resource. These values help accomplish the alumni's mission to develop communities and the National FFA Alumni's mission to develop the students who will become productive community members in productive communities.

teacher myself, I can understand this thought process. We work hard to fine tune our programs to run just the way we like it and it can be frustrating when someone is too forthcoming with "advice." Advice is not the role of alumni. The alumni values the teacher, and more specifically what that teacher does for the student (future community leaders). Through support activities like the ones already mentioned in this article, it is the hope of FFA Alumni members to ease the burden of dedicated agriculture teachers – teachers who impact the lives of students like no other educators.

The National FFA Alumni Association values the impact and involvement of parents/guardians and communities on a student's life.

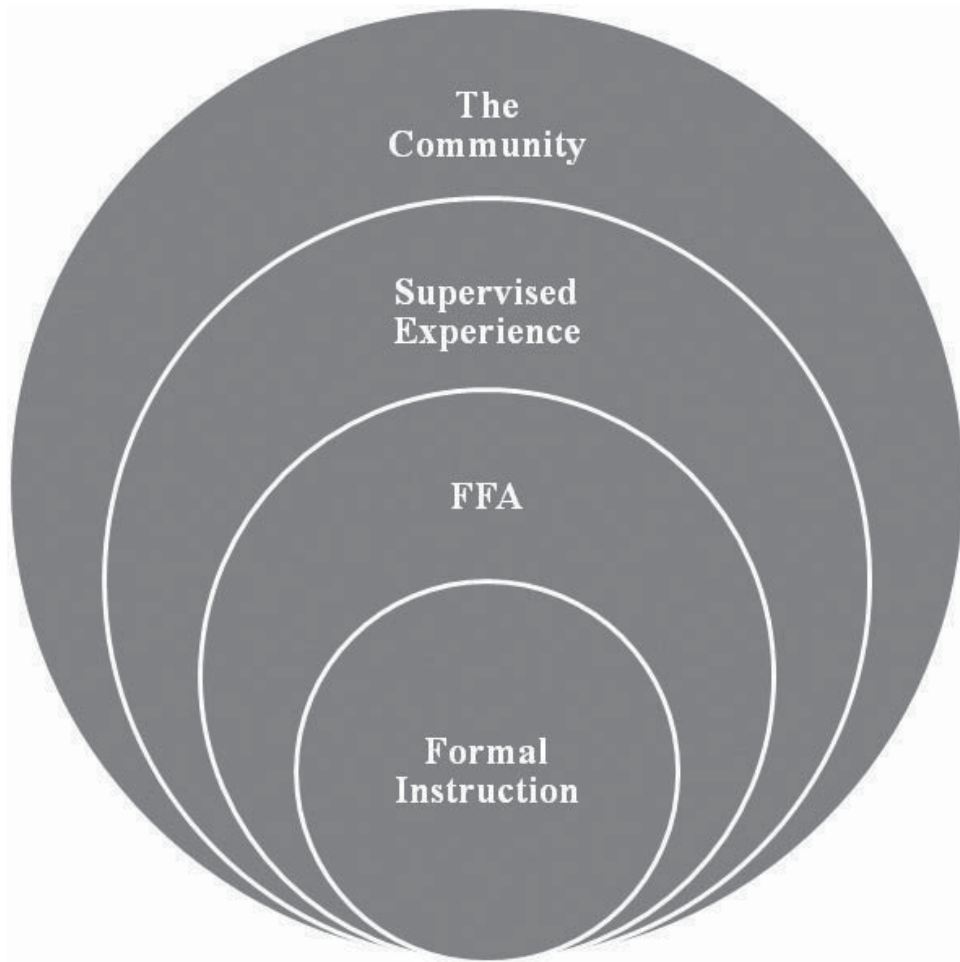
As an agriculture teacher in Tennessee I was overwhelmed with all of the many CDEs and activities I had to prepare my students for and attend. How can a motivated agri-

the influence that parents/guardians can have on students and ultimately the community. Including parents in the agricultural education program is not just as an extra body, a taxi cab driver, or an additional disciplinarian. Alumni parents/guardians can also assist in teaching and personal development for students. A friend of mine and an alumni member has served students through alumni at the local, state, and national levels, Mr. Johnny Jones has supported his local agriculture program in a variety of ways from helping raise money with his world famous barbecue to teaching small engines to high school students at Toombs County High School (GA). Mr. Jones has made an impact – an impact that will stand the test of time for the many students with whom he has come in contact.

The National FFA Alumni Association values the community's support of agricultural education teachers and programs.



John Ricketts is an Assistant Professor at the University of Georgia.



A New Model for Agricultural Education?