

*The Agricultural*

# EDUCATION

M A G A Z I N E

*November/  
December 2012*

*Volume 85  
Issue 3*



**SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS  
AND THEIR TRADITIONS**

# Tradition!

by Harry N. Boone, Jr.

**T**radition! I remember Stephen (my son) singing the song as he played the role of Tevye in his 8<sup>th</sup> grade version of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Just as the Jewish community in the *Fiddler on the Roof* was based on traditions, today's agricultural education has many rich traditions. In this issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*

you will have an opportunity to explore traditions from across the United States. The authors explore many agricultural education traditions starting with the "three circle model." You will also have the opportunity to examine some very special traditions that have evolved in local programs. A special thanks to Dr. Rebecca Lawver, Theme Editor, for her efforts in assembling this edition of the *Magazine*. Enjoy.



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

## THEME ARTICLE

# Developing Traditions Begins by Educating Students

by Scott Smalley

**C**an you recall the last time you received a smile or a thank you from a student, parent, or community member? On a daily basis as agricultural educators we embark on a very important job of educating students of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. The impact made on the students is invaluable. More often than not the impact is not quickly realized by the student, but knowledge will remain with the student for a lifetime.

The impacts made in students' lives are developed from traditions within the agricultural education programs, FFA chapters, and communities. The traditions can range from daily classroom routines and leadership activities/career development events, to community celebrations. The traditions each program has are unique and influential in their own way.

### Agricultural Education Programs

Traditions developed in our agricultural education programs are long lasting and craft student's learning.

I feel traditions range from how Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) are implemented to delivering daily instruction to the activities completed in the FFA. Our chapter has certainly developed rich traditions that run deep in our program.

Developing strong SAE programs for any student is essential for students to gain valuable skills for their future career choice. It is a tradition every student develops an SAE with clear goals and objectives to learn as much as they can from their experience. In our chapter, every quarter, students SAE progress is monitored by reviewing record books and evaluating goals that have been set. The total hours/dollars and experiences are recorded as part of a quarter activities program point system. As a part of this program students are able to earn points for hours worked and dollars earned as part of their SAE projects. This regular monitoring of the SAE program helps in evaluating a student's progress to accomplishing their SAE goals, being lifelong learners and successful in their careers.

Goals set by the students are reg-

ularly reviewed. Upperclassmen and area business owners serve as guest speakers to students to share their agricultural education/FFA experiences and share the importance of how their SAE has helped them become successful today. Developing community partnerships have been very successful for students to see the impact a quality SAE program can have on their professional future.

Instruction in the agricultural education classroom ranges from information about crop production, animal science, soil conservation, food education, and nutrition. Knowledge acquired and skills gained from this training makes a positive difference

*continued on page 6*



*Scott Smalley is an Agricultural Education Instructor at Oelwein High School in Oelwein, IA.*

# CONTENTS

## Theme: Successful Programs and Their Traditions

### Editorial:

Tradition! .....	2
<i>by Harry N. Boone, Jr., Editor</i>	

### Theme Editor Comments:

The Blackshirts, The Columns & Finals Week Howl: Embracing History .....	4
<i>by Rebecca Lawver</i>	

### Theme Articles:

Developing Traditions Begins by Educating Students .....	2
<i>by Scott Smalley</i>	
Building a Tradition.....	7
<i>by Kasee Smith</i>	
Living Life on the CUTTING EDGE.....	9
<i>by Larry Henneke</i>	
The Trouble with Traditions.....	10
<i>by Amy R. Smith</i>	
A Tradition of Leadership, Service, Diversity, and Community Involvement .....	12
<i>by Amber Houck</i>	
Flying Solo .....	14
<i>by Chris Schalk</i>	
Let Katy ISD FFA Pack Your Backpack .....	16
<i>by Amanda Kacal and Nicholas R. Brown</i>	
Continued Success Doesn't Just Happen .....	19
<i>by Jeff Hayes</i>	
Balance and Tradition.....	21
<i>by David C. Frazier</i>	
Back to the Future: Traditional Teacher Education Embracing Cutting Edge Approaches .....	23
<i>by J. Ted Ford, Rudy S. Tarpley, and David C. Frazier</i>	
Decision-Making Paths in the Changing of Production Traditions in São Paulo, Brazil: The Growing Role of Dialogic Communication in Rural Extension .....	25
<i>by Luís Fernando S. Zuin, Poliana Bruno Zuin, and Ana Gabriela Monzon</i>	

**Cover Photo:** Utah State University students developing new traditions of service. Photo courtesy of Rebecca Lawver.

### Subscriptions

Subscription price for *The Agricultural Education Magazine* is \$15.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions are \$25.00 (U.S. currency) per year for surface mail, and \$40 (U.S. currency) foreign airmail (except Canada). Orders must be for one year or longer. We can accept up to a three year subscription. Refunds are not available. Please allow 4 - 6 weeks delivery of first magazine. Claims for missing issues cannot be honored after three months from date of publication, six months for foreign subscriptions. Single copies and back issues less than 10 years old are available at \$5 each (\$10.00 foreign mail). All back issues are available on microfilm from UMI University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. UMI University Microfilms telephone number is (313) 761-4700. In submitting a subscription, designate new or renewal and provide mailing address including ZIP code. Send all subscriptions and requests for hard copy back issues to the Business Manager: Jay Jackman, National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) 300 Garrigus Building, 325 Cooper Drive, The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40546-0215, Phone: (859) 257-2224, FAX: (859) 323-3919. E-mail: NAAE@uky.edu

### Article Submission

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor or Theme Editor. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the publication date of the intended issue. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Theme Editor and/or the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be approximately four double spaced pages in length (1500 words). Information about the author(s) should be included at the end of the article. Photos and/or drawings appropriate for the "theme issue" are welcomed. Photos/drawings should be submitted in an electronic format (jpg or tiff format preferred - minimum 300 dpi). Do not imbed photos/drawings in the Word document. A recent photograph (jpg or tiff format preferred- minimum 300 dpi) of all authors should accompany the article unless photographs are on file with the Editor. Articles in the *Magazine* may be reproduced without permission but should be acknowledged.

### Editor

Dr. Harry N. Boone, Jr., Professor, Agricultural and Extension Education, West Virginia University, PO Box 6108, 2054 Agricultural Sciences Building, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506, Phone (304) 293-5451, FAX: (304) 293-3752.

E-mail: hnboone@wvu.edu

### Publication Information

The *Agricultural Education Magazine* (ISSN 0732-4677), published bi-monthly, is the professional journal of agricultural education. The journal is published by The Agricultural Education Magazine, Inc. at 300 Garrigus Building, The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40546-0215.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Lexington, Kentucky and at additional mailing offices.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Agricultural Education Magazine, attn: Jay Jackman, 300 Garrigus Building, The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40546-0215. Phone: (859) 257-2224, FAX: (859) 323-3919.

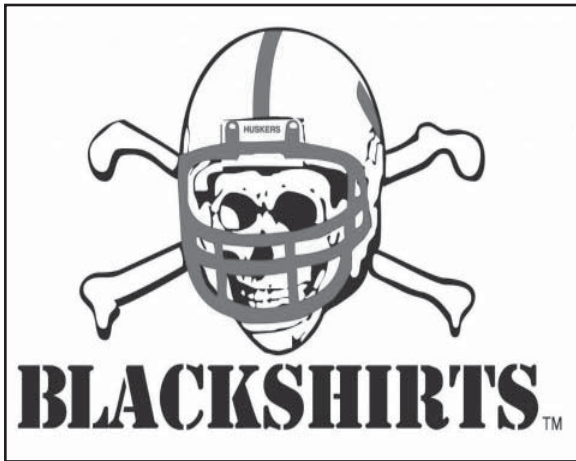
## *The Blackshirts, The Columns & Finals Week Howl: Embracing History*

by Rebecca Lawver

Say “Blackshirt” and the association is immediate...Nebraska football defense. Like Husker football, agricultural education across the country is deeply rooted in tradition. Say “FFA” and you think national blue and corn gold, blue corduroy jackets, greenhand ceremonies, livestock shows, and the list goes on and on.

In agricultural education our beliefs are handed down from one generation to the next. Rituals and customs inundate our meetings and ceremonies and became such for good reasons. They are the practices that have helped us form a cohesive community that believes in the future of American agriculture.

The unique tradition of the three-circle model of agricultural education has served us well. This total agricultural education program makes



*The recognition and spirit of the Blackshirt distinction places a considerable amount of weight on the players who receive this award. This is a tradition that has seen five decades of success. Blackshirts are not given out for the sake of it. "Blackshirts are earned on the field." Coach Pelini.*

us different than other programs in our school and gives students in our programs the opportunity to experience learning in a unique way. This tradition is critical to our survival as agricultural educators. The integral nature of classroom, FFA, and SAE is vital! We can not muddy down what we do. When a tradition becomes

Sometimes change happens when we least expect it.

muddled or watered down, it loses its meaning. Just ask University of Nebraska head football coach Bo Pelini. The tradition of the Blackshirt started in the mid 60s as a way to identify defensive players on the field and turned into a prestigious award for first-string defensive unit players for the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers football team (Babcock, 2012).

Prior to Coach Pelini's tenure at Nebraska, however, just about everyone on the defensive line began to receive a Blackshirt – and their defense suffered. The once elite reward for hard work on the field didn't mean what it used to, because everyone (hard working or not) got one. As agricultural educators, if we muddy down any one of those three components, our programs will suffer.

### **Accepting Change**

Still being stuck in tradition can be the nuisance that keeps us from moving forward to bigger, better and

more effective practices. It's called change. We all resist it.

Sometimes change happens when we least expect it. The Columns at the University of Missouri were created by change. One of the first buildings on campus, Academic Hall burned to the ground in 1892. Campus changed,

the Columns were thought to be unsafe – This drastic change from historical building to six bare columns on the Quad was different and the future of the Columns was unknown – but those who embraced change rallied to their defense. So, the Columns stayed, and new traditions were born (University of Missouri, 2012).

Imagine if that was your agricultural education program. Your best officer team graduates, your winning livestock judging team falls apart, you're asked to teach something you know nothing about, and instead of 20 kids in shop you get 40. It's change. It's scary. I believe, however, that as agricultural educators we should approach the changes in our programs in a different way. Instead of continuing on the set course we expect to take, we should accept that change happens. Inevitably we MUST accept change, because without change we will become an antiquated version of something that once was great. How can we continue to “prepare students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural

resources systems” without change? We must change our mindset and teach every student, every class, every day.

### Creating and Updating

Even with change there are some traditions that just don’t make sense to our students. When students are confronted with a tradition that doesn’t make sense to them, they don’t try to change it or ask why we continue to do it, they just quietly go somewhere else. Why do we dye a student’s hand green? Why do we have a chapter sweetheart? Are you teaching Ag I, II, III, VI? Do SAEs all have to be production based? This is your opportunity to begin new traditions and embrace innovative ideas.

Finals Week Howl at Utah State University is just plain different, a little strange, but oddly a lot of fun. Howling at the top of your lungs at 10 P. M. on Wednesday of finals week – how ‘bout it! It may not make sense to me, but as far as new traditions go it is easy, legal, fun and gaining support from students all over campus (Utah State University, 2012).



An up and coming tradition at Utah State University beginning 2006 is the Finals Week Howl. Students studying in the library drop what they’re doing and howl. The dream of the founders is for everyone who comes through Sardine Canyon to hear the howling of students letting loose their test anxiety at 10 p.m. of finals week and howling at the moon.

The birth of a new tradition takes time; it takes a lot of support and for some, it may take a lot of convincing. While the creation of a new tradition may be promoted for a variety of reasons; giving students the opportunity to develop their own traditions in your agricultural

education program is of utmost importance. While, there is no need to erase every trace of our agricultural education roots. We should embrace the idea that agriculture is an ever changing industry and with change comes new traditions. My challenge to you is to embrace our traditions, accept that they change, and allow yourself and your students to create new traditions.

### References

Babcock, M. (2012) *History of the Blackshirts*. Retrieved from [http://www.huskers.com/View-Article.dbml?DB\\_OEM\\_ID=100&ATCLID=4435](http://www.huskers.com/View-Article.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=100&ATCLID=4435)

National FFA Organization. (2012). *About Us*. Retrieved from <https://www.ffa.org/About/Pages/default.aspx>



One of the most recognizable pieces of architecture at the University of Missouri, the Columns, once supported the portico of Academic Hall, the first building on campus built between 1840 and 1843. The Columns are all that remains of Academic Hall, which burned on January 9, 1892. The Columns were originally deemed to be unsafe, but a rally in their defense kept them on campus to become an enduring symbol of MU. Many activities, including Tiger Walk and Tiger Prowl are symbolic events that take place at the Columns.

University of Missouri. (2012). *History and Traditions*. Retrieved from <http://www.missouri.edu/about/history/>

Utah State University. (2012) *Finals Week Howl*. Retrieved from <http://www.usu.edu/traditions/finalweekhowl/index.cfm>



Dr. Rebecca Lawver, the November - December Theme Editor, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agriculture Systems Technology and Education at Utah State University.

## *Developing Traditions Begins...* (continued from page 2)

in the lives of students. This knowledge along with the SAE program and professional partnerships are deep rooted traditions that provide future networking opportunities for students involved in the agricultural education program.

### **FFA**

Traditions developed in the FFA program can range from fundraisers to the awards banquet. Annually our chapter has a tradition of conducting a fruit, meat, cheese, and poinsettia sale, which serves as an fundraiser for the chapter. People in the community anxiously await the chapter products because of the rich tradition of the high quality merchandise and the availability of excellent holiday gifts. The poinsettias are raised by the students in the greenhouse and the students take pride in the products they are grow. Additionally, in the spring the chapter's greenhouse is full of annual bedding plants, perennials, and vegetables for sale. In the fall the chapter hosts a fall harvest sale with mums, pumpkins, and gourds raised by students as SAE projects. Students are able to develop a connection at any early age of the importance of SAEs and the award opportunities they can have with the FFA.

Any annual awards banquet should serve as a highlight of a successful year as an agricultural education program and FFA chapter. The annual banquet is attended by all agricultural education students, parents, community members, and alumni. The banquet is a great way for the chapter to show support for the alumni group, and members of the community involved in the program. Our chapter banquet highlights all students in the agricultural education program regardless of their level of

involvement in the FFA program. All students with successful SAE projects are spotlighted and awarded recognition. Highlighting the students for quality projects is especially important. Not every student is always going to be the rising star in leadership events or career development events, but being able to focus on successes with students' SAE projects is a great way to recognize other students in the program for their success. Developing unique ways to recognize the students for extra efforts is essential for those students who work hard in accomplishing their project goals. Award plaques, FFA merchandise, and certificates are just a few of the ways students receive recognition for their achievements.

The chapter members and alumni partner on a labor auction during the annual banquet. Students serve as labor participants and are auctioned off for an eight hour work shift. The dollars raised from this event go toward a senior scholarship program endowed by the local alumni affiliate. This program has grown and developed because of the dedication of the alumni affiliate. The alumni has traditionally provided feedback and assistance for students who prepare for leadership and career development event contests. Their knowledge and skills have helped to develop much success and a winning tradition for our chapter.

### **Community**

The traditions developed in the community can run deep and are great opportunities to partner with various organizations. We are very appreciative of having a supportive community for our agricultural education program. Developing support and cooperation takes time to occur

and will not happen overnight. Developing partnerships really do begin by keeping the community informed with what is happening in the agricultural education/FFA program through local new outlets.

Keeping the community informed may include a write up on classroom activities, guest speakers, highlights of student SAE projects, or results from leadership or career development events. Many times the only individuals who know what is happening in your agricultural education program are the families of the students involved but there is a much larger audience you could stay in contact. Writing articles takes time but can certainly pay dividends for the students and it is a great project for chapter officers or students who enjoy writing.

A tradition which has been developed to show support to area businesses, community members, and organizations is an agricultural education/FFA full color calendar produced by our chapter. The calendar highlights many of the students, activities, and events which occur in the agricultural education program each year. For their support and partnership we provide a calendar to the business and individuals as a way to thank them for their continued support. This provides publicity to the program and is a way to show our gratitude.

The traditions developed within agricultural education programs, FFA chapters, and communities will be meaningful to students for a lifetime. No matter how small or large the tradition might be students, parents, and community members will remember and be influenced forever. Be creative and the traditions in any program can have a big impact in their own way.

## Building a Tradition

by Kasee Smith

Ten years ago, I walked into the doors of the agriculture building as a new hire, and I remember thinking “Wow, there’s a lot of stuff in here!” I spent my first few days as an agricultural educator digging through the piles of old tests, discarded notebooks, and outdated instructional materials. It wasn’t until the afternoon on my second day of the “dejunking” that I came upon my first treasure. Beneath a pile of 1950’s textbooks which explained the “new technology” of artificial insemination, was a tarnished trophy. It reads “Livestock Judging Winners, Utah State Fair, 1919.” This discovery opened my eyes and made me realize there was tradition here.

What is tradition? It’s that part of a program that carries on even when everything else changes. It’s the small rituals that allow students to feel like they are part of the past and building the future. As a new teacher I was worried. I knew there had been great traditions for the program and the FFA chapter; I also knew that the program had not been performing up to community expectations in the years immediately preceding my coming onboard. That point was further emphasized to me on my third day on the job when the entire junior livestock show committee walked into my cleaning project and let me know they had strong expectations for the program and if I didn’t deliver . . . well, you can probably guess the implications. Panicked, I called a great agricultural teacher mentor, who simply said, “Ask them what they want, build what they need, and make it strong enough it will last beyond your time there.” It was perhaps the greatest advice I could have

received, and most likely saved my young career.

Often, we think of an agriculture program as “ours.” It’s a great characteristic that proves agriculture educators take ownership of their programs and are passionate about what they do. In reality, even if we live out our entire career as an agriculture teacher with the same chapter, we will someday leave. The truth is our programs don’t belong to us; they belong to the communities and students that will be part of them in the future. Traditions are the best way to ensure that we leave a legacy as an agriculture teacher and that our positive impact is felt even after we are gone.

Over the last ten years, Spanish Fork FFA has started some new traditions. Many of them are not new ideas to the agricultural education world, but we have been able to adapt them to our needs. While teaching freshman the FFA unit, they often inquire about the following activities and ask, “When can I participate?”

- **SUCCESS** is our annual three-day camping trip/officer training. Over the years an extensive leadership training manual has been created that is the workbook for the retreat. The entire FFA POA is planned and more importantly, the officers bond and create memories.
- **Christmas Angels/Holiday Party** is a two fold service project. It provides Christmas to struggling community members and is a real-life opportunity for our FFA members to learn servant leadership. Students run the entire project: from raising funds, selecting the families, discovering their needs, to shopping for the items and delivering.

- **Leadership Nights** are a great tradition, borrowed from a prominent agriculture teacher in Utah. Chapter leaders select a different leadership topic each month and plan a workshop for the members. This is truly a win-win idea; all the members learn more about leadership and the presenters gain presentation, organization and speaking skills.
- **Summer Ag Tours** expose students to a variety of agricultural industries. Twice during the summer we load up the bus and head out. The students are enthusiastic, eager to learn, and willing to ask questions. A few of their favorites are the fish hatchery, commercial greenhouse, BLM wild horse facility, wholesale floral business, and veterinary clinic.
- **Chapter Livestock Projects** allow for the use of our district livestock holding facilities. Many of our students live in areas not zoned for livestock production but still want to raise an animal for their SAE. We came up with a solution. We work with a local producer, who is also an FFA member, to supply us with livestock and allow the student to raise them in our animal lab.

### Change is Inevitable

This past spring I spent my last days as an FFA advisor at Spanish Fork High. I made the incredibly difficult decision to leave the program I had poured so much of myself into and agreed to start a new chapter at our district’s alternative high school. I will be working with students who have been removed from all five of our district’s traditional high schools.

While I was deeply saddened to leave a place I loved, I can only hope that traditions there will prove to last beyond my time.

I knew that my new chapter would need traditions, and with the at-risk clientele, I would need to make sure they were started right. I knew I needed to revisit the question, “How can we build traditions?” The answer is as simple as it is complex; we need to decide what the program wants and needs and build it strong enough to last. I made sure to ask what the administration wanted and met with students in the spring to determine the direction they wanted the new agriculture program to go. Hidi (2000) suggested that in order for students to gain intrinsic motivation to complete a task there should first be something that sparks their interest, they should have positive interactions and feel empowered, and finally should be given ownership for the activity.

### Sparking Interest

I have noticed that most great agriculture teachers I have encountered have one common characteristic; the ability to convince students to try something when inside they believe it may fail. The first step in starting a tradition is to get interest. It is important to note that interest must come from a variety of sources. Administration interest can build school support for an activity, parent interest can build a workforce to make a new tradition happen, and student interest is paramount to the longevity of a tradition. Some ideas to spark interest include:

- Creating activities which are student-driven and initiated;
- Being excited about the activity yourself and letting your enthusiasm be contagious;

- Requiring the activity for points: this may seem counter intuitive but giving an incentive to attend a great activity gets enough students involved that the “buzz” will be there for subsequent years; and
- Getting officer/respected members onboard in the beginning.

Creating interest becomes a method for obtaining buy in. Once people are interested and excited about an activity the real work can begin.

### Positive Interactions and Empowerment

The next step in building a tradition is to make sure there are positive interactions. Planning and empowerment go hand in hand to create positive interactions. Planning is crucial on a new activity and giving some of the responsibility to students can allow them to feel like it belongs to them and they are essential for the success for the activity. In my experience, starting a new activity is one of those “from time to time as the need arises” occasions. Be prepared to give extra guidance as the event planning unfolds.

### New Activity Planning Tips

- Make sure that there is a responsible go-to student to coordinate the work on the event;
- Develop a clear timeline for preparations so that everyone is aware of progress;
- Check, double check, and triple check to ensure that everything is done and prepared before the event;
- Understand that the first time an activity happens there are bound to be glitches no matter how well you planned;

- Use the National FFA POA forms. They are great for planning the first year and a POA Form 4 (final report) is invaluable for strengthening traditional events from year to year;
- Have three things: a backup plan, flexibility, and a sense of humor.

Once the event is underway make sure that those in charge are doing their best to ensure that everyone is participating and having a great time. Students are much more likely to come next year if they had a great time this year.

### Give Them Ownership

After a new event has been started the final stage of creating intrinsic motivation for an activity is to give the students ownership. If they have had a great time and felt some empowerment through the event, they will most likely volunteer to be in charge. A dead giveaway that students don’t want to continue a particular tradition is having no one volunteer to take on the project. As an agriculture teacher it is hard to let go of those events that you like the most, even though we all know that synergy can strengthen events. Trust your students. They might have ideas for improvement that surprise you. Understand that the students are a constant in the chapter; the agriculture teacher is a variable. If they love it and it is theirs, they can

*continued on page 15*



*Kasee Smith is an Agriculture Science Teacher at Landmark High School, Spanish Fork, UT.*



## *Living Life on the CUTTING EDGE*

by Larry Henneke

**W**hat defines a successful Agriculture/FFA program? Having 100 percent FFA membership, having every student complete an SAE record book, having an active FFA chapter, and having a broad course of study. All are important. Winning a state or national career development event and showing agricultural mechanics projects at the State Fair are also reasonable goals, if not expectations at some schools.

Nevertheless, success in a program either large or small must have much deeper roots. As teachers we should remember our job first and foremost is to educate our students so that they can become successful citizens in our community while adhering to the mandates set forth by our school administration and Department of Secondary Education.

In larger schools enrollment tends to be a major contributor to success. With all sorts of competing courses you must be able to change and grow with the times. One of the ways to build enrollment is to take chances on students that are not active in other activities such as sports, as well as, those who are just searching for a school niche. You must also be willing to accept students into your program when the timing is right for them. Many subject areas are competing for students during the freshman year and perhaps even during the sophomore year. So latch on to them when they become available, even if it is their senior year!

Program success is also driven by end of course testing. The days of teaching a “floating” curriculum are over. As educators we much teach a rigorous course of study and prepare

our students for an end result. In our state this can be accomplished through Technical Skill Attainment incorporated in the FFA Career Development Events. This past year 80 percent of students excelled in the end of course testing exams through Career Development Events (CDEs). CDE training was done after school hours our students were motivated enough to go the extra step.

Pursuing dual credit for agriculture courses has also helped us to land success. We currently are offering credit for five of our courses through three state universities. This not only validates the rigor of a program curriculum, but also gives your students a major jump into college.

Placement of former students into higher education and the agriculture career setting is another measure of success. We must motivate our students to want to be involved in agricultural pursuits and be productive members of the community. Encouragement to attend the State and National FFA Conventions, participation in university field days, and having guest speakers are all ways to keep students in touch with post-secondary education options.

Participation in district, state and national activities is our chapter’s ticket to success. With a major portion of our students coming to us midway through their high school careers we have to look beyond State and American Degrees and some of the more leadership oriented programs. I believe that CDEs can be a part of a rigorous course of study for students beyond the classroom. The



*Rock Bridge students at the University of Missouri Field Day.*

past four years we have had 16 to 24 members compete at the national level. This has enabled them to land many college scholarships at major universities.

I believe that to build a successful program, agriculture instructors; now more than ever; need to separate from the status quo. In today’s fast paced society many of us are not willing to spend the extra hours necessary to build a strong program. To keep up with change we must be constantly working to improve our knowledge of the subject matter. Remember our goal is to teach kids so they can help us inform the public about agriculture. We must always be willing to step out in pursuit of unfamiliar territories and look for improvement. Spending time well beyond the school day is required to keep you ON THE CUTTING EDGE!



*Larry Henneke is an Agricultural Education Teacher at Rock Bridge High School, Columbia, MO.*

## The Trouble with Traditions...

by Amy R. Smith

Without question, traditions in our personal lives can be a source of great joy. When I reflect on my childhood and think of the family traditions established long ago, I cannot help but smile. For the Mounce family, such traditions included being able to open one Christmas gift on the night of our school music program (*rather than waiting until Christmas Eve*), drinking hot chocolate and playing card games (*usually UNO or penny poker*) on New Years Eve, competitive mo-

level, secondary agriculture programs and FFA chapters also develop rich traditions, which are meaningful to members, schools, and communities. A number of those traditions are shared and reflected on throughout this edition of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*.

***“There is no creation without tradition; the ‘new’ is an inflection on a preceding form; novelty is always a variation on the past.”*** Carlos Fuentes

Certainly traditions can serve as a wonderful foundation for individu-

When you begin to explore and evaluate your programmatic traditions it is quite possible that you will find some that are simply hard to justify. For whatever reason, over time, the tradition was established. Now as you scramble to tie loose ends for the annual FFA toy show, mutton bustin’ or petting zoo... you wonder to yourself, “Why did we agree to this? Does this event really advance our mission and serve a purpose?” It definitely may, but, if not, it could be time to re-evaluate.

Circumstances like this are very similar to a story I have heard about one family’s celebration of Easter. The story goes something like this... a little girl watches as her mom prepares a ham for their family’s upcoming Easter dinner. She wonders why her mother cuts both ends off of the ham before putting it in the pot. Being a young child, of course she asks “Why?” The little girl’s mom paused and realized that she doesn’t really know why she cut the ends off. That’s just the way her mother prepared the Easter ham. A phone call to the grandmother doesn’t provide any insight either; she admits to not knowing the reason either. That’s simply the way her mother did it. Finally, a call to the great-grandmother yields an answer. With a laugh, she says, “It was the only way I could get the Easter ham to fit in the pot I had!”

Take a moment and think about the content included in your courses. Is it up to date, rigorous, relevant, or is some content included only because it was taught to you when you were in that particular course? Maybe the tradition doesn’t relate to the content itself. Perhaps, you spend more time than needed on a specific topic or unit because you enjoy it so much. Maybe the tradition of excel-

Time spent to modify/develop new traditions is a wise investment.

rel mushroom hunting on Mother’s Day, and a “family vacation” to the Iowa State Fair each year (*this also included the traditional family argument when getting sheep ready to show*). These traditions, and many others, helped to shape me as an individual and serve as a foundation for who I have become. Now, as a parent myself I am excited to share (*some of*) these and other traditions with my own child.

Similar to our personal lives, the agricultural education profession is deeply rooted in tradition. Ask anyone to list the most enduring traditions of agricultural education and FFA and without a doubt, the recognizable blue corduroy jacket, distinguished opening ceremonies, and members’ overall commitment to promoting and advancing the agricultural industry will surely be among the top traditions listed. On a local

als, families, professions, and organizations. They can link the past to the present, and help provide direction for the future. In some cases, they even provide a means “to be known for” something and ensure that specific needs are met. Is too much emphasis placed on maintaining traditions? When was the last time, personally or professionally, you evaluated the traditions you hold dear and asked yourself “Why do we do this?,” “Is this necessary?,” or “Should this tradition be continued?” Chances are it has been a while, or, maybe, you have never done that. The remainder of this article will challenge you to do just that with specific regard to your agricultural education program and FFA chapter activities.

***“The less there is to justify a traditional custom, the harder it is to get rid of it.”*** Mark Twain

ling in a related career development event causes you to spend a great deal of valuable class time preparing for competition. When you pause to consider the “why” behind the traditions related to your curriculum, you may be surprised to realize you’ve been doing some things “just because” with no real rationale.

***“Tradition: one of those words conservative people use as a shortcut to thinking.” Warren Ellis***

Sometimes busy people use traditions as a shortcut to thinking. They are looking for the fastest most efficient way of completing a task. Often being innovative and starting from scratch can take too much time. Agricultural educators naturally are busy people. Planning and teaching lessons, attending meetings, coordinating FFA activities, coaching CDEs, supervising SAE projects, checking record books, and the many other responsibilities add up. As a result, we look for ways to streamline our workload by resorting to “beg, borrowing, and stealing,” “ripping off and duplicating,” and are content to leave well enough alone. In reality, time spent analyzing the needs of your students, schools, and communities in an effort to modify existing traditions or develop new ones is a wise investment.

Consider the typical events conducted during National FFA Week. Most activities throughout that week are justified as ways to celebrate members and their accomplishments, recruit new members, and increase general awareness and appreciation for agriculture, agricultural education and FFA. Are the activities your chapter engages in meeting those goals or have they become such staples that members don't even question them or consider alternatives?

***“Tradition is a guide and not a jailer.” W. Somerset Maugham***

November December 2012

At a chapter officer retreat I coordinated in either my second or third year of teaching, I brought up the idea of revisiting a few sacred program traditions. As you may expect, initially, this idea was met with some apprehension and resistance. Because of the longevity and history behind the traditions discussing potential changes were difficult for some. I wondered at the time if these officers simply did not want to put the effort into changing and improving, but soon realized that they felt obligated to carry on the traditions. Some of the officers had siblings or parents who had been through the program previously; it was as if change was disrespectful to them in some way. These officers seemed restricted, or limited, in their thinking because of this.

Many schools and communities seem to have certain expectations for an agricultural education program and FFA chapter. Sometimes these expectations may be positive for all involved, yet other times they may be unhealthy. While you may have previously agreed to coordinate all the concession stand needs for the district, fix everything in the school that is in need of repair, or be on-call for community-based service projects, these agreements should not be considered life sentences for you or your program.

Some of the traditions you cling to may be setting yourself, or your successor, up for difficulties, or even failure. Time management and work/family balance issues are two common stressors that can relate to these timeless traditions. Often new teachers are particularly vulnerable to these issues after hearing that Mr./Mrs. So-And-So always did such-and-such. While being respectful of tradition and community involvement, do not feel obligated to continue everything (or believe everything that you are told!).

***“Tradition simply means that we need to end what began well and continue what is worth continuing.”***

***Jose Bergamin***

As I visited with current and pre-service teachers about the topic of tradition in preparation for writing this article, I was impressed with the insight many provided. Discussing existing programmatic traditions and the impact they had on students, schools and communities reassured me that our programs are still making a difference on a daily basis. However, if we were to cast out-of-date traditions aside, continue those worth continuing, and develop some innovative, new traditions – consider the even greater difference agricultural education and FFA could make.

I challenge each of you – take a few moments and reflect personally on the traditions, which have shaped your agricultural education program. Seek student, school, and community input as to whether or not they are still relevant and valuable. Involve your chapter officers and members in revisiting the traditions expressed in your chapter’s Program of Activities. Don’t simply continue to do what you have always done.

***“If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten.”***

***Anthony Robbins***



*Dr. Amy R. Smith is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at South Dakota State University.*

# *A Tradition of Leadership, Service, Diversity, and Community Involvement*

by Amber Houck

I have been through eight different agriculture teachers during my time at Nelson County High School and they have all impacted me in various ways. This was a quote from Nolan Miles, 2011-2012 State FFA Treasurer, during the advisor appreciation luncheon at the Kentucky State FFA Convention. My co-workers and I looked at each other. Had it really been *eight* different people? I never realized until that moment how much teacher turnover had transpired over the last four years. Through all of its changes the Nelson County agriculture program has remained successful. What was the constant factor that ensured that success? The answer resides not in people, because people come and go, or events because they too evolve over the years. The secret of success for the agriculture program was traditions that have prevailed through time. Traditions of leadership, service, diversity, and community involvement all culminated together to create a strong program and various events were utilized as vessels to exhibit these core traditions.

## **Tradition of Leadership**

One of the key traditions of the Nelson County program, and other programs all across the nation, is a tradition of leadership. A student lead executive team is an essential part of this tradition. As advisors we are asked to advise from time to time as the need arises not overshadow the students. The committees are responsible for developing the ideas, planning the events, and carrying them out to completion. One event that truly achieves a tradition of leadership is

the Freshmen Leadership Conference (FLC). In 2002 the executive team saw a need for freshmen in leadership roles. How could they get them more involved and instill in them the leadership qualities necessary to run a successful chapter? Through this brainstorming session, FLC was born. An overnight conference that included workshops put on by the executive team, vespers from the chapter officers, and fellowship with other freshmen was created. Over time state officers became involved and attended to serve as role models. Other chapters across the state developed their own FLC programs. This event has become a true means to accomplishing the tradition of leadership. Even before FLC began the Nelson County agriculture program was practicing the tradition of leadership. During the parent member banquet this spring the class of 1949, who founded the Nelson County chapter, was honored. A gentleman from this class shared with the audience what he had gained from his high school agriculture experience. He said that because someone saw potential in him, gave him a task, and trusted him to follow it to completion he was able to use those skills to be successful for the remainder of his life. Letting go and handing the students the reins is a way to ensure you are practicing true leadership and will preserve the program long after the current teachers are gone.

## **Tradition of Service**

Service is one of the most vital parts of any organization. Giving back to the school and community at large is a task that many chapters would consider a fundamental tradition. The National FFA supports this

cause with the million hour challenge that logged chapter's community service hours (National FFA, 2012). The Kentucky State Association recently implemented a day of service at the State Convention to help cultivate the tradition of service. Over time the events to provide service have changed at Nelson County, but the one thing that remains is contributing something valuable to the school or community. This past year a new event for our chapter was instituted called extreme yard make-over. Families across the county are in need of assistance in taking care of their property due to disability or old age. Simple tasks such as stacking fire wood for the winter, trimming trees and bushes, and cleaning up yard debris are invaluable to a family in need. Instilling in students the desire to help others around them is priceless and will make them better citizens. Sometimes the need is right within the school. Custodian Appreciation Week was implemented at Nelson County High School by the agriculture students to recognize these often under appreciated staff for their service to the school. Creating cards, cooking breakfast, assisting with school maintenance, and assembling gift baskets are just a few of the events that take place during this annual celebration. Whether it is a recycling program, nursing home visits, teaching young children about agriculture, or an assortment of clothing and food drives, I believe Nelson County will continue to maintain a tradition of service.

## **Tradition of Diversity**

The response that was reiterated when I asked co-teachers, students, and parents about the origin of suc-

cess for the Nelson County chapter was all a variation of the same answer; the quality of students. What makes our students different than other students in any other program? It is a tradition of diversity in our enrollment. According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, diversity is defined as, "Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area" (NCATE, 2012). One of the biggest factors for our chapter deals directly with the geographical area portion or more specifically agriculture backgrounds. Willingness to look beyond the traditional agriculture student who comes from a farming background, and also recruit those students who have not been exposed to the industry is becoming increasingly important. Even in a predominately rural county, such as Nelson, there are still a variety of students to be found. The percentage of students with a farming background is approximately 20% and our non-farm students are 80%. Female students outnumbered male students 60% to 40% in the 2011-2012 school year. Widening your agriculture audience will breathe new life into your chapter, tap into creativity and innovative ideas, and sustain your program for many years to come. It is not effective to simply wish a variety of students would join the program; you have to make it available to them. The agriculture program at Nelson County is a place where any student can belong regardless of where they come from. To reach our new clientele we have traded trips to the North American for conducting our own agritourism with the Wickland Corn Maze. A small alteration such as switching the music at banquet to include a little rock instead of solely country has had a huge impact on outside student per-

ception of the program. Classes such as agribiology were implemented to reach a wider variety of students because they could enroll in the course for science credit. Don't overlook the student who is afraid to get dirty, the student with the facial piercing, or the student with their head stuck in a book. There is a place in your program for them too. Don't be afraid to start a new tradition of diversity.

### **Tradition of Community Involvement**

Involvement with the surrounding community is an irreplaceable tradition in the Nelson County agriculture program. Maintaining a high-quality relationship with the local 4-H, Farm Bureau, and other agricultural stakeholders produces a well-rounded chapter that is effectively meeting the needs of the community it serves. Holding agricultural issues forums at various civic organizations, both agricultural and non-agricultural, spreads the word about current controversial topics in agriculture. The Nelson County Farm Bureau is one of our chapter's leading supporters and our chapter president presents a report at each board of directors meeting to sustain communication between the two organizations. Our chapter alumni organization is an additional example of a tradition of involvement with the community that is crucial to the operation of our chapter. Parental support assists in the activities we plan and earns scholarship money through events such as the annual alumni chili supper. If your school currently does not have an alumni chapter, recruit at least ten active members to charter an alumni affiliate. Former FFA members, parents, and agriculture community members are all people to contact who may be willing to support. Involvement in the Nelson County Livestock Youth Investment Sale is a new event that began with one stu-

dent requesting that Nelson County hold a livestock sale to boost county participation in the showing industry. This student single handedly recruited a group of supportive community members, assembled a sale committee, and held two successful livestock sales; the first annual grossing over 20,000 dollars. One student's dream became reality with community involvement and the support of the agriculture program. This sale will hopefully remain an annual event in Nelson County, but even if it doesn't the tradition of community involvement will continue to be an important component of success for the Nelson County agriculture program.

Traditions of leadership, service, diversity, and community involvement all combine to contribute to the success of the Nelson County chapter. Various events are avenues to make these core values of our chapter possible. Every summer at camp goals are set for the following school year. During this time events are re-evaluated to see if they are still meeting the purpose of our traditions. Several of our events have been altered or discontinued over the years because we don't prolong an event simply because it has always been done. Allowing the students to assume the leadership role in decision making and being willing to change are all important in keeping traditions alive.

*continued on page 24*



*Amber Houck is a former Agriculture Teacher at Nelson County High School in Bardstown, Kentucky. She is currently a PhD Student at the University of Missouri.*

## Flying Solo

by Chris Schalk

April 29, 2012 will be forever fixed in my memory. On that clear, calm Sunday afternoon my flight instructor climbed out of a Cessna 150, said “have a nice flight,” and slammed the door. It was at that moment that I realized I was going to be flying solo. I taxied to the hold short line where I began to go through my preflight checklist. The checklist is to ensure that everything is in order prior to departure. After completing the checklist, I taxied onto the runway, smoothly added power and began my first solo flight.

Later that evening I was reflecting on my solo and the emotions that I felt. My mind drifted back to August 19, 1993 and a very similar situation; the door slammed and I realized I was about to solo with my first class. The emotions were similar both days. The fear and overflowing joy made my palms sweat and stomach churn. Instructors and supervisors were gone. It was just me and the task ahead. As I reflected, I realized the only difference in my two solo experiences was *the preflight checklist*. At that moment I began to ponder my experiences supervising student teachers. Was I doing them a disservice because I had not helped them develop their own preflight checklist?

Supervising student teachers is one aspect of my career that I truly love. It is the best of both worlds because they are students and teachers. They teach not only students, but if allowed, they can teach even the oldest dog new tricks. Student teachers have the tools but they need to be shown how to take those tools and turn out works of beauty and usefulness.

Checklists will not make one a good pilot nor will they make a person a good teacher. Sound fundamentals, preparation, adaptability, and a positive attitude will take a person where they want to go. However, the checklist forces the learner to say, yes or no. “Am I ready to depart?” “Am I ready to teach this class?”

Checklists will also give the supervising teacher a rubric to evaluate the student teacher on their preparation for the lesson. Sure the lesson plan can be read, assessments looked over, and lab activities can be double checked. Yet, add in the checklist, the student teacher now has specific areas where improvements or refinements can be made. Remember, the answer to the checklist points can be either yes or no. There is no in between. The plane is either ready for takeoff or not. Would you want to fly on an airplane that is *kinda ready*?

### Checklist

- Objectives for both the lesson and the day are prepared in SMART (specific-measurable-attainable-realistic-timed) format
- Modifications are in place so all students can be successful
- Classroom procedures laid out step by step
- Classroom is clean, and comfortable



- Lesson plan is clear, complete, and flexible
- Lesson provides elements of reading and writing
- Assessment is aligned to the objectives
- All materials are out and accessible
- Technology to be used is up and operational
- Enrichment activities are available in case lesson goes faster than anticipated
- Attitude is positive

If planning is complete, how long will this really take? Laminate the checklist on a card, and give it to the student teachers just like the checklist is in my airplane. Flight instructors make student pilots use checklists each and every time. Commercial pilots use checklists before and during flights. Checklists will not prevent all in-flight emergencies but they do target the most common problems associated with aircraft. The lesson checklist will not ensure a terrific lesson but it will target areas that are generally problematic and lead to instruction emergencies.

Pilots are graded by their passengers mainly on one thing

*the landing.* Landings are the most challenging part of learning to fly. You see an airplane wants to fly so in order to land you must make the airplane do something it really does not want to do. The same can be said for student teachers. They want to teach. You just add a little power to them and watch them fly. However, at the end of that flight or lesson there must be assessment. Consistently I have found that assessment is troublesome to student teachers. They want to assess either the way they were assessed in college or the way they prefer to be assessed. It is the supervising teachers responsibility to instill that assessment is not just multiple choice and short answer. Encourage your student teachers to use questioning techniques that are similar to national standardized tests. Help them develop assessments that mimic the way your state assesses students. Demonstrate to your student teacher different methods of exam presentation. Helping your student teacher learn to assess student learning will make you better

at the same time. Just as pilots are judged on their landings, teachers will be judged on their students' performances on standardized tests.

Working with student teachers can be very rewarding. I have always enjoyed the relationships that are built with these budding professionals. If I have learned one thing that is to be cautiously open minded. I have no problem letting them try things I know will not work out. Far better for them to try and figure out something will not work, than to stifle their creativity. Your job is to build confidence and channel enthusiasm. My student teachers have shown me that Play-Doh models of digestive tracts are far superior to drawing pictures. I have learned that paper plate pigs are great for teaching ear notching. Simple personality tests help you guide students into meaningful SAEs. I have been reminded that even high schools students like their good work posted on the wall for their peers to see.

My experiences as student pilot have made me a better teacher.

Training to be a pilot is the hardest thing I have ever attempted. I am on the learning end once again. I have a renewed appreciation for the frustrations that go along with learning new concepts. I am reminded that demonstration is good, but patiently guiding struggling students to completing a task on their own will bring on a real life understanding.

In aviation there is a saying, **“take-off is optional, landing is mandatory.”** Taking on a student teacher is optional, but once you have, turning out high quality young professionals is mandatory.



*Chris Schalk is an Agriculture Teacher at Barren County High School, Glasgow, Kentucky.*

## ***Building a Tradition*** (continued from page 8)

pass it on for many generations to come. As they pass along traditions they can change it to fit new needs. This prevents chapter traditions from becoming stagnant. Giving them full access to the control of an event, not only builds intrinsic motivation to complete the task, it changes something from an annual event to a true tradition.

Perhaps when all is said and done no one will remember your name at your current chapter. Four years after you leave there will be no students in

the program who remember the feeling they had sitting in the chairs of your classroom. What you can leave are traditions. You can find what the community truly wants from your program and work through sparking interest, creating positive interactions and giving students ownership to develop events that will last beyond your time. Your gift to the future generations of agriculture students is the traditions you start today. Giving that gift can truly be your legacy.

### **References**

- Hidi, Suzanne (2000), An interest researcher's perspective: The effects of extrinsic and intrinsic factors on motivation. In Sansone, Carol & Harackiewicz, Judith M. (Eds.), *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: The search for optimal motivation and performance* (pp. 309-339). San Diego, CA: Academic Press. doi: 10.1016/B978-012619070-0/50033-7

## Let Katy ISD FFA Pack Your Backpack

by Amanda Kacal and Nicholas R. Brown

I think we all have that “dream job” and, if given the opportunity, we would be the first to turn in our resume. I am one of the fortunate as a second year teacher, I was given the opportunity to work on the *mother ship*. In my mind the levels of integrity, tradition, and success were unsurpassed in this district. Unbeknownst to me, my experience in the Katy Independent School District (ISD) would shape my professional outlook for years to come. While a teacher in Katy ISD, I collected many tools (gained through experiences) that have enhanced my teaching career and will continue to serve me in the future. In fact, I often picture those tools organized in large backpacks that I carry with me to use as necessary. Many of the tools in one of my backpacks were created through my experience with the Katy ISD Livestock Show and Rodeo.

### Unpacking my Backpack

As agricultural education instructors we are fortunate to teach in a variety of learning environments that are not limited to the traditional classroom. Some of these non-traditional classroom settings can enhance student learning in animal agriculture and animal related skills through exhibition of livestock, supervised agricultural experience programs, and internships (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; Robinson & Haynes, 2011; Slusher, Robinson, & Edwards, 2011). Have you ever considered the learning opportunities present at a livestock show? As I unpack my backpack and share some of the tools I acquired while planning and directing the Katy ISD Livestock Show and Rodeo, I challenge you to think about

how these tools can be applied to non-formal learning opportunities in your local program.

### The Compass

The idea of the Katy ISD Livestock Show and Rodeo originated with whom I consider the compass of Katy ISD FFA, L. D. Robinson. Mr. Robinson has been described as “an impossible dreamer who’s dreams became a reality” (Elder, n.d.). In 1942, he began the traditions of the Katy ISD FFA program; he was the only agriculture instructor in Katy until he retired in 1971. His vision was that of a local livestock show, rodeo, parade, and agricultural farm (Elder, n.d.; G. Young, personal communication, August 24, 2012). There are now 20 agriculture instructors and FFA advisors in Katy ISD carrying on the same traditions that began in the early 1940s. Mr. Robinson was the true north for Katy ISD. I learned that I needed a compass at all times when designing and implementing non-formal learning activities for my students.

### Swiss Army Knife

Most of us are familiar with a Swiss Army Knife. In fact, we have probably all used one of these handy tools in numerous settings for a vari-



Katy ISD Students recognized at the rodeo during the Parade of Champions.

ety of reasons. During my tenure as an FFA advisor in Katy ISD I learned the importance of providing a learning environment for a diverse student population with various interests and capabilities. For the majority, the Gerald D. Young Agricultural Facility serves as the project center for the duration of the market SAE. Gerald Young taught in Katy ISD for 22 years (G. Young, personal communication, August 24, 2012) and is the sole reason I wanted to teach in Katy. The Gerald D. Young Agricultural Facility includes six-barns, one for each corresponding high school. Market animals provide students the opportunity to care for, properly handle, and manage a production type SAE (Rusk, Summerlot-Early, Machtmes, Talbert, & Balschweid, 2003.) Students learn skills specifically related to nutrition, feeding, and health. It is not uncommon to see groups of students from all high schools exercising animals together or practicing showmanship in a walking pen. Until recently buses were provided to each campus in the mornings for the pur-



pose of transporting students to the project center for morning chores. This service allowed non-driving students the opportunity to participate and maintained the safety of the students during early morning hours. This multiuse tool was paramount to the success of the Katy ISD Livestock Show and Rodeo.

### **Binoculars**

*Imagine, you see a bull rider in the bucking chute ready to nod his head for the gate to open. His hat pulled down tight, shiny leather chaps buckled just right, protective vest closely hugging his chest, and one hand tightly gripping the rope, and excitement pumping through his veins! He only has to stay on the bull for 8 seconds. You sit in anticipation - as you see the nod, the gate opens. Stop. You realize this is no ordinary cowboy and this is no ordinary rodeo. This cowboy has down syndrome and the bull he is on just so happens to be a bale of hay.*

Two years ago, the addition of the Special Rodeo rocked the Katy ISD FFA Rodeo. Up until that point, there was nothing tying the regular education students to special services students in terms of livestock show participation. In 2011, my teaching partner and I envisioned a way to change this. Representatives from each school served as committee members to host the inaugural Special Rodeo showcasing special services students in Katy ISD. Research shows that special services students benefit from live animal interaction (Anderson, 2007; Bergin & Bergin, 2012). Scholarly literature also tells us that live animal interaction has helped special services students better manage their own behaviors (Anderson, 2007) and such activities can decrease the amount of emotional crises these students encounter (Anderson & Olson, 2006). Activities such as

roping, stick horse races, face painting, and a market animal petting zoo brought smiles from even the toughest clients. Students were also able to watch a horseshoeing demonstration, visit with rodeo clowns and cowboys, and put on rough stock gear. This event taught our FFA kids how to interact with students with exceptionalities and introduced them to the world of agriculture using a one-on-one hands on approach. My experience taught me the importance of looking into my binoculars in an effort to see the subtle differences among my students and ensure I was reaching all of them.

### **Tent**

There is no reason to pack your backpack and embark on an adventurous camping trip if you leave the tent at home. The tent is the focal point of your campsite. The rodeo serves as the community focal point for the entire event. Along with the Cowboys Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) events, Katy citizens can participate in other activities while FFA members sign up for the famous calf scramble. Students participate in the calf scramble in hopes to earn a certificate sponsored by community members to purchase an animal for exhibition the following year. Any Katy ISD student has the opportunity to participate in junior



*The addition of the Special Rodeo rocked the Katy ISD FFA Rodeo.*

barrels and junior break-away roping during the CPRA rodeo. Want to get kids eight and under involved? The Katy Rodeo has stick horse races and Mutton Bustin' each night to dazzle the crowd with as well. The alumni team roping involves participants who either are graduates of Katy ISD, currently enrolled students in Katy ISD, or rodeo committee members or school district employees and their immediate family members. In 2012, approximately 12,000 patrons came to the rodeo (C. Haas, personal communication, August 12, 2012).

### **Putting it all in the Pack**

Today Katy may be what most of us consider urban agriculture, but the community continues to support agriculture to its core and its impact on the youth of today. This idea speaks volumes about how communities can help our programs sustain themselves. The things we teach students in the classrooms are only part of the real "education" they will receive by participating in FFA. The Katy ISD FFA Livestock Show and Rodeo provides the community with authentic views of animal agriculture; these kids know what they are feeding their

animal and why. They understand what it means to provide a wholesome product for consumers; they are learning first hand. In the arena of competition they know how to support one another and exhibit good

Anderson, K. L. (2007). Who let the dog in? How to incorporate a dog into a self-contained classroom. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 4(1), Retrieved from [http://journals.cec.sped.org/tecp-](http://journals.cec.sped.org/tecp-lus/vol4/iss1/art4)

& Balschweid, M. A. (2003). The impact of raising and exhibiting selected 4-H livestock projects on the development of life and project skills. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 44(3), 1-11. doi: 10.5032/jae.2003.03001

When students learn to recognize emotions and act accordingly, they are less likely to engage in destructive behaviors.

sportsmanship. They learn to be responsible for another life's wellbeing and what it means to show compassion. Studies show these ideas to be true. When students learn to recognize emotions and act accordingly, they are less likely to engage in destructive behaviors and tendencies including drugs, alcohol, and physical altercations later in life (Bergin & Bergin, 2012). Involvement in the Katy ISD FFA Livestock Show supports these ideas in every aspect of the program from the classroom to writing of thank you letters to buyers.

In summary, the Katy ISD FFA Livestock Show and Rodeo taught me the importance of establishing a clear goal (following a compass), designing a versatile learning experience (using the Swiss Army Knife), determining the unique needs of all of my students (using binoculars to look closely), and focusing all learners to achieve the desired educational outcomes (gathering in the tent). I challenge you to reflect on your program traditions and determine which tools you have collected from your experiences.

## References

- Anderson, K. L., & Olson, M. R. (2006). The value of a dog in a classroom of children with severe emotional disorders. *Anthrozoös*, 19(1), 35-49.
- Bailey, T. R., Hughes, K. L., & Moore, D. T. (2004). *Working knowledge: Work-based learning and educational reform*. New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.
- Bergin, C. C., & Bergin, D. A. (2012). *Child and adolescent development in your classroom*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Elder, D. R. History of Katy ISD FFA. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://ldrskaty.org/history.asp>
- Robinson, J. S., & Haynes, J. C. (2011) Value and expectations of supervised agricultural experiences as expressed by agriculture instructors in Oklahoma who were alternatively certified. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 52(2), 47-57. doi: 10.5032/jae.2011.02047
- Rusk, C. P., Summerlot-Early, J. M., Machtmes, K. L., Talbert, B. A.,

- Slusher, W. L., Robinson, J. S., & Edwards, M. C. (2011). Assessing the animal science technical skills needed by secondary agricultural education graduates for employment in the animal industries: A modified delphi study. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 52(2), 95-106. doi: 10.5032/jae.2011.02095



Amanda Kacal is a Graduate Teaching and Research Associate, Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership, Oklahoma State University.



Nicholas R. Brown is an Evaluator and Instructor, Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership, Oklahoma State University.

## Continued Success Doesn't Just Happen

by Jeff Hayes

FFA is grounded in tradition; wearing our blue and gold jacket, reciting of the FFA Creed and closing all meetings with the phrase “let us be diligent in labor, just in our dealings, courteous to everyone and, above all, honest and fair in the game of life.” In addition to these national traditions, there are many local traditions. As a teacher of agriculture and FFA advisor at Rockcastle County High School for the past eighteen years, I have been able to foster success and utilize tradition in Kentucky's State Small Power Equipment Career Development Event (CDE) by winning the state contest seven out of the last eight years. Through that time I have had to field a variety of questions about the reasons my teams have been so successful. I believe it is a combination of philosophy, instruction, tradition, recruitment, and support.



lum around the contest but rather the contest around my curriculum. The year we failed to win the state contest was because we did not have a course in small engines that year, thus we didn't field a team. It is imperative that the event meets the needs of the instruction and not the other way around. I also inform all the students in my small engines class on day one how the team members will be determined. The selection of the team is based completely on the local contest scores where each student has an

say you are just teaching FFA, but if you are teaching the content outlined in state and/or national standards, you will be teaching what is needed to be successful in the CDE. We are fortunate that the individuals who designed our FFA CDEs aligned them with the content that should be taught within our agriculture classes. With eighteen weeks of small engines instruction my students have a huge advantage in knowledge and confidence over most students who have received little to no instruction. There is no secret to instruction; it is simply working hard every day to prepare and present a quality lesson. Anyone can present a great lesson occasionally when the principal is scheduled to observe but the truly committed teachers teach every block, every day. If you take care of instruction on a daily basis then success in CDEs will soon follow.

I don't base my curriculum around the contest, but rather the contest around my curriculum.

As an undergraduate and graduate student at the University of Kentucky, I was blessed to have had Dr. Charles Byers and Dr. Rodney Tulloch as my primary agriculture education instructors. They helped shape my philosophy for contests and agriculture education as a whole. One of the most important items to consider when deciding to participate in a contest is if the contest fits in the curriculum that I am teaching within the given year. I don't base my curricu-

equal chance at making the team. The local contest consists of four different parts which occur over the course of the semester. The local contest also serves as the unit exams in the small engine class. When each student realizes he/she has a fair opportunity to make the team, and not that team members are predetermined, the motivation for the entire class increases.

The second component to success is instruction. Some people will

Success and tradition is much like the chicken and the egg argument. With success comes tradition which in turn leads to more success. A tradition is only as meaningful as it is presented to the students. What may be considered a sacred tradition at one school may be laughed at in another school, depending on how it is handled. At Rockcastle County High School, we have several traditions that relate to the small engines

team. Articles about the results of our CDEs appear in the local paper and on the school's district website. Announcements are read over the school's intercom and awards are presented at our local FFA banquet. Team members winning the state Small Power Equipment CDE receive jackets with "State Champion Small Engine Team" on the back. In addition, we hang banners including team member's names in the agriculture shop for all state winning teams like you see at most athletic arenas. Early in the course all students in the small engine class are made aware of the recognition they will receive for making the local team. A tradition of winning also raises the expectation level for all students involved.

Once success and tradition are established recruitment easily follows. Students want to be a part of a winning team. Showcasing the success of your chapter coupled with the fact that all students have the same opportunity to make a given CDE team, will help recruit new students. During the recruitment visit with middle school students our program successes are always mentioned and highlighted in the literature presented to them. Over the years, I have had several students sign up for small engines as their first agriculture class. Several females have taken the course, although it is not typically a course to which females are drawn, just to have the opportunity to be on the small engines team. Before initial success is achieved other positive aspects of the taking an agriculture class and joining FFA need to be emphasized.

We all know without the support of our school and community building or maintaining a successful program is very difficult. Schools and school administration typically want to support quality programs that bring

positive recognition to the school. I am a firm believer that support is a two-way street. In order to receive that assistance you too

must also be willing to lend a helping hand to your school and community. Last year my father was in a serious farming accident and I had to miss five consecutive days of school. This occurred just before the state Small Power Equipment CDE making it impossible for me to practice with my team. Normally I practice with the small engines team a few times before the state CDE, which is held in August, because my small engines class takes place during the fall semester of the previous year. A teacher in the science department of our high school volunteered to supervise my students so they could practice with one my former students. The support of this particular faculty member as well as one of my former students gave my team a legitimate chance to excel at the state contest. I also utilize industry professionals in the community as guest instructors and/or CDE judges. These individuals are the experts and most are more than willing to help if you will provide them with timely recognition. The recognition could be as simple as a hand written thank you note or as formal as presenting an honorary degree at the chapter banquet. Keep in mind, success is more readily achieved with



the help and support of others.

The continued focus on philosophy, instruction, tradition, recruitment, and support has developed an agriculture program and FFA chapter that our students take great pride. This is evidenced by the number of students who gather in the agriculture hallway every chance they get; before school, in-between classes, at break, and after school. Perhaps the most important benefit of student success is the fact that our students have found a place to belong; a place where everyone can excel and feel welcome.



*Jeff Hayes is an Agriculture Teacher/ FFA Advisor at Rockcastle County High School, Mt. Vernon, KY.*

## Balance and Tradition

by David C. Frazier

As a high school agricultural science teacher in Snyder, Texas, I often sat in my office and pondered the fact that I was living my ultimate dream. I was doing exactly what I had always wanted to do: teach agricultural science and work with FFA members. Along with my teaching partner, we had taken a small agricultural education program and FFA chapter and built it into one that many would say was very successful. The student enrollment in our agricultural

world situation. Many of these SAE programs had won State and National acclaim in the proficiency and star award programs. As for classes, we offered a variety of subjects within the agriculture industry and were constantly offering new and challenging courses that would better meet the demands and needs of our students and community. Yes, one can say I was living the ultimate dream.

Six years ago, I was approached by several of my mentors who asked that I leave this dream job and work on a Ph.D. so that I could join the

program and who expect every student to become involved in some type of SAE. In essence, we need teachers that can see the bigger picture and realize that they are part of a tradition; a tradition that will continue making an impact as long as it remains focused on providing balance.”

To make a long story short, I realized that becoming a teacher educator would provide a platform that I could use to impact more students. This would be my own way of continuing a tradition of excellence. It would also be my way of helping educate new teachers about the tradition and significance of providing a balanced program that is capable of impacting students and communities. By showing these prospective teachers that the key to great programs is a balance of rigorous and relevant classroom/laboratory classroom instruction, participation in the National FFA Organization and an expectation that every student maintain some type of SAE, I would be able to continue the tradition of providing excellent agricultural education. It would also allow me to show these new teachers the damage that can be caused by an unbalance in these three areas.

All too often I have seen programs that have lost the balance between what has become known as the three circle model of agricultural education. Some of these programs are FFA powerhouses; however, they have sacrificed their classroom/laboratory instruction and SAE requirements in an effort to win more trophies. Others develop incredible academic programs that are commendable in their own right; however, they give up FFA activities because they feel that classroom instruction is all that is needed. These same programs fail to extend their lessons into

The greatest experience I was given was the opportunity to participate in a program that included a balance between classroom/laboratory instruction, FFA and SAE.

education classes averaged around 250 students with 100% of them being members of a very active and successful FFA chapter. As a matter of fact, our chapter had won 15 straight “Golden Horizon Awards” which is an honor bestowed upon the most active and successful FFA chapters in the State of Texas. One of our proudest claims was that every student in our program had a Supervised Agricultural Education (SAE) program. Granted, some of these programs were small and lacked the overall dimensions that would be expected by many teachers; however, every student was taking lessons from the classroom and applying them in a real

ranks of teacher educators and begin preparing the next generation of teachers. As I began discussing the matter with these professionals, I remember asking Dr. Paul Vaughn very specifically, “Why should I leave a program and job that I love in order to become a teacher educator?” His reply was something that I will never forget, “David, we need to get balance and tradition back into our programs. We need teachers who recognize the value and importance of developing complete agricultural education programs. We need teachers that are capable of teaching rigorous and relevant classes. We need teachers that recognize the value of a strong FFA

supervised agricultural experience programs; thus losing an opportunity to continue teaching. Then there are those programs that we all know are SAE heavy. These are the programs that put all their efforts on show programs, farming operations or student jobs. Unfortunately, these programs have classroom/laboratory instruction and participation in FFA activities that are all but non-existent. In each of these cases an imbalance between the three different phases of the program causes the entire agricultural education program to suffer. I, for one, would love to see some balance be placed back into these programs. Not because it is something that I feel is important, but because balance in these three areas has been a tradition that has worked in the past and will continue to work in the future.

As a high school student in Melrose, New Mexico, I was exposed to this very balance. Every time I walked into my agriculture class, I knew that I would be learning a lesson that was on the cutting edge of that particular subject. Although tough at the time, these lessons provided me with a base of knowledge that would later be used during my college and teaching career. I also knew that as a member of this class I would be required to have an SAE that would allow me to extend my education outside of the classroom walls. For me, these projects started small with laying hens and a small vegetable garden and eventually grew to include show swine and multiple placement jobs with local farmers and ranchers. With each project, however, the lesson of responsibility, dedication and money management would forever alter my future decisions. Finally, I knew that taking an agriculture class would enable me to be a member of the FFA Organization. Actually, in Melrose, this was not a choice. Students in an agriculture class paid their

dues and became members of the FFA. For me and my fellow members, this was not a bad thing because each member was given multiple opportunities to participate in various activities. This is where I feel I was the most fortunate. My teacher and FFA Advisor, the late Mr. Trent Burton, always told us that there was an opportunity for everyone in the FFA if we just spent the time to find it. For me, it was leadership development and participation in the various career development events. For others, it was participation in the National FFA Chorus, or the old Computers in Agriculture program. For all of us, it was an opportunity to carry out the tradition of community service which was probably the greatest of all traditions. As I look back now, I realize why dozens of agricultural education teachers have come out of the Melrose program (at one count, there were 27 agricultural education teachers currently teaching in multiple states...and this is a small 1A school in a town of 700!). It was because of balance and tradition.

Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest experience I was ever given was the opportunity to participate in a program that included a balance between classroom/laboratory instruction, FFA and SAE. I also realized that because of my exposure to such a great program, I was able to provide the same balance for my students in Snyder. It was this balance that allowed my students to excel in multiple avenues. Our philosophy; if there was a class that students were interested in, we taught it; if there was a SAE that a student felt allowed them to extend their education beyond the classroom, we took it; if there was a program or opportunity in the FFA that a student wanted to participate in, we participated in it. The end results stood for themselves: 15 years of being recognized as a nation-

al 3-star superior chapter and Golden Horizon winner in Texas, over 1,200 proficiency awards won from district to national levels, over \$1 million in scholarship for members, participation in a multi-year international exchange program with Bila Tserkva, Ukraine, over \$5 million dollars in gross income from SAE's, multiple officers on every level of the FFA and over 500 advanced FFA degrees earned. Yes, I can say a balanced program works.

Today, I began a new career as an assistant professor for Agricultural Education at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas where balance between classroom/laboratory instruction, FFA and SAE is once again becoming the major focus when training agriculture teachers. As I stood before prospective teachers on my first day, the question was posed, "Dr. Frazier, what does it take to develop the perfect program?" My response was simple, "Balance and Tradition." Thus the lessons learned from two great legends; my agricultural teacher, Mr. Trent Burton and my mentor, the late, great Dr. Paul Vaughn; began again as I started telling my students about the value of a balanced and complete agricultural science program.



*Dr. David C. Frazier is an Assistant Professor and Lead Agricultural Education Teacher Educator in the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Sciences at Tarleton State University.*

## *Back to the Future: Traditional Teacher Education Embracing Cutting Edge Approaches*

by J. Ted Ford, Rudy S. Tarpley, and David C. Frazier

For those who were around in 1985, one of the top movies of the year was *Back to the Future*. In the story, Michael J. Fox plays a high school student with a nerdy father, lovely mother, strict principal, and larger-than-life bully. The story's hero (Marty Mc-

keeping system. Decades ago, our entire teacher education faculty kept their SAE records in hardcopy books. We recall our vocational agriculture teachers advising us to record all expenses and income using a pencil so we could correct any mistakes. None of our students can relate to paper-based record books and the completing of award and degree applications with a typewriter! However, we still

representatives. (The AET, 2012, "Agricultural Education Online Recordkeeping System")

Tarleton students are being supplied passwords enabling them to develop electronic records of their collegiate agricultural experiences. This will provide students with official documentation of their extra-curricular collegiate agricultural activities and experiences. The experiences will be more accurately documented due to the accessibility of the electronic format; thus providing more timely entries before details related to dates, times, and activities are forgotten. This will be valuable when it is time to produce a resume. Advantages of an electronic collegiate record service include:

If we need to be reminded of what a quality program looks like, we need only to look back to the future.

Fly) meets up with a mad scientist who builds a time machine out of a DeLorean (for those who weren't around in 1985; an automobile) and travels back to the 1950s where modern technology clashes with a period of Americana that many appreciate for traditional values and simpler lifestyles. The movie's theme has been duplicated many times in many theaters. At the heart of the story: how does a modern character survive in a different time, situation and culture?

As with other teacher educators around the nation, Agricultural Education faculty members at Tarleton State University continue to face the same question. How do we deliver the time-tested teacher education model to a modern agricultural education student? One recent issue that highlighted this question of delivering the traditional model to a modern student is that of the Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) record

seek to instill the importance of record-keeping, project management, budgeting, and other important time-tested goals of the SAE program.

Tarleton's Agricultural Education "traditional" teacher preparation program is embracing the technology used by our students. After enrolling in our Agricultural Education program students become familiar with the Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET) programs. As found on the AET website:

*The Agricultural Experience Tracker is the premiere personalized online system for tracking experiences in agricultural education. Like other systems, the AET summarizes those experiences into standard FFA award applications. The AET can also aggregate those experiences across programs to produce local reports for school administrators and overall economic impact reports for interested stakeholders and legislative*

- The academic department may use this record for active students when selecting honors, scholarships, team leaders, and other individual awards. Students are further motivated to accurately record activities in a timely fashion.
- The student will be provided with a participation record after the completion of their entire collegiate career. Reflection of this record will enhance the students' intrinsic value placed on the university experience and inspire confidence in their ability to transition into the teaching profession.
- While utilizing the AET record system, Agricultural Education students are becoming familiar with a nation-wide record book system, one that is the predominately utilized record keeping system in Texas. This system

will be used by their future students for scholarships, awards, and other FFA/SAE recognitions. Therefore, Tarleton Agricultural Education is providing our graduates with a significant advantage in the area of SAE and FFA participation, applications, degree advancement, and project management.

- Of special importance, the AET record becomes a resume. Students can access this resume for any interview indicating the quality and scope of their collegiate activities. This information is valuable to employers since it not only shows areas of interest and experience, but also provides insight into time management skills, work ethic, and attitude toward community service; all of which are important aspects of becoming a successful Agricultural Education instructor.

Marty McFly travelled from 1985 to 1955. In sequels, he continued his time travel from 1885 to way in future ... 2015. While the clothing, technology and culture were different, Marty found that many of the values were shared. Perhaps Marty discovered that there is no easy money, family ties are important regardless of family income, and the bully always ends up at the wrong end of the argument. After 95 years of Vocational Agriculture/Agricultural Education (Smith-Hughes, 1917) in this nation, perhaps we can further appre-

ciate the goals written by those agricultural educators that came before us. While our record keeping pencils have been replaced by keyboards, some Agricultural Education / FFA / SAE values are constant. Quality records equate to quality Supervised Agricultural Experiences. Budgeting using a logbook and budgeting using an Excel spreadsheet result in the same outcome; a budget. Moreover, perhaps electronic recordkeeping such as the AET system will help us improve agricultural education by easing the transition from secondary agricultural education student to university agricultural education major to a teacher of agricultural education. Eventually, every teacher in America will have a career portfolio from a record of the first time they recited the FFA Creed to their most recent administrative evaluation in the high school. As we keep up with the technology, we can continue to stress the goals of our program. Those goals were outlined in 1917 and continue to resonate today. If we ever need to be reminded of what a quality program looks like, we need only to look back to the future.

### References

The Agricultural Education Tracker. (2012). *Agricultural Education Online Recordkeeping System*. Retrieved August 31, 2012 from <http://www.theaet.com/>



*Dr. J. Ted Ford is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Sciences at Tarleton State University.*



*Dr. Rudy S. Tarpley is the Department Head and Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Sciences at Tarleton State University.*



*Dr. David C. Frazier is an Assistant Professor and Lead Agricultural Education Teacher Educator in the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Sciences at Tarleton State University.*

## *A Tradition of Leadership, Service... (continued from page 13)*

Sometimes the avenue may undergo a transformation, but the core traditions of leadership, service, diversity, and community involvement will remain to ensure to the future success of the Nelson County agricultural program.

### References

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2012). *Glossary of professional standards*. Retrieved June 24, 2012, from <http://www.ncate.org>.

National FFA Organization. (2012). *Programs and Outreach*. Retrieved June 22, 2012, from <http://www.ffa.org>.



# *Decision-Making Paths in the Changing of Production Traditions in São Paulo, Brazil: The Growing Role of Dialogic Communication in Rural Extension*

by *Luís Fernando S. Zuin, Poliana Bruno Zuin and Ana Gabriela Monzon*

**W**hen the guy comes and puts pressure on me I already don't trust him." This natural suspiciousness towards outsiders, considered at times a cultural trait, is a common stand with Brazilian farmers who do not easily trust sellers of new technologies. Acquiring new technologies and consequently changing their productive traditions is an exercise that involves a long dialogical and pedagogical path that permeates a close relationship of partnership and trust. Historically, when Brazilian farmers acquired new technologies from research centers and public and private companies they did not have success. This has led the farmers to distrust the adoption of new technologies presently offered by rural extension bodies of Sao Paulo.

A complex network of activities that have the objective of making a correct decision takes place when the farmer is faced with an offer of something new. These activities have a preponderant dialogic component found in the theoretical references of authors like Bakhtin (2003), Vigotsky (2001), and Freire (2006). That complex process of decision-making is more dramatic when we examine the reality of small-scale Brazilian agriculture that surrounds the big cities; such is the case of Sao Paulo, the focus of this investigation.

We analyzed the paths taken in the decision-making processes of two

small scale agriculture farmers from the Metropolitan Region of Campinas, Sao Paulo. The younger farmer is 22 years old, while the older one is 54. The younger one completed high school and the older farmer completed the third grade. They both have rural properties of four hectares located nine miles from the central region. They produce persimmons, peaches, grapes, and guava. They also produce vegetables and raise chicken.

The accounts told by these two producers are part of a bigger research project on the dialogical learning-teaching processes between state extension workers and small-scale farmers. It was funded by the Sao Paulo Research Foundation, FAPESP. When visiting these farmers in their homes they talk about how they have observed various failures related to the changes in the ways of production. This has left them reluctant to adopt new technologies when the offers come. According to their accounts the sales and offers of new products were way too frequent. At least once per month both of them were visited by sellers in their properties. These persistent sellers were

mainly from agricultural input companies who tried to sell fertilizers and pesticides. One of the farmers affirmed that sellers were not prepared and just want to sell the products to gain a profit. The other farmer suffered a loss of about 25% of harvest last year due to the adoption of a pes-



ticide. Although the vendor, directly or indirectly, caused the farmer a loss of production, he kept providing assistance to further his sale. As a result, this year the farmer says he will test the product again, however this time in only 100 persimmon trees instead of the 400 trees. He said he was unsure if the loss in production was fully attributed to the use of the product or if the frost common in the region at that time of year had something to do with it. Both farmers concurred in the amount of small tests they perform before changing completely their productive traditions that have been historically constructed.

We observed a high dialogic component in their decision-making processes as they engaged in much dialogue with other individuals before making a decision to change their productive traditions and adopt new ways to produce. In search of knowing the dialogic paths taken from the time the farmers receive the visit of the vendor until they buy the product, and hence, change their ways of production, we observed similarities in the sources of information they trust including:

- Extension workers from rural extension state agencies, usually Agronomists;
- Extension workers from a Rural Farm Owners Association, usually Agronomists with whom they hold a relationship of trust for about 8 years;
- Neighbors who also have farms in the region, these are rather informal, as when they meet to play soccer on Sundays;
- Vendors of a commercial business who commercializes agricultural inputs and whom the farmers know from a long time ago in this service; and
- Family members with whom they discuss about the knowledge and techniques historically constructed and the benefits new technologies can present in their productive processes.

The younger farmer also mentioned he looks for information of new products using search engine websites like Google. In general, these are the methodological paths the farmers take in order to decrease mistakes and possible risks. As they put it, “*these are the sources we really trust.*” As we observed, dialogism is at the center of any relationship and as extension workers and researchers

in this field this helps us to understand the pedagogical process that pervades the relationships of teaching and learning in the present context.

In the dialogical context a rural extension worker is no longer a source and the farmer the receptor, as the diffusion stance takes them to be. In dialogism the extension worker and the farmer work together to

## Rural extension workers conduct the path between the new and old.

develop new knowledge creating a two-way communication that can be described as a participatory action between two speakers. Dialogism is a relationship of sense and meaning that is established between enunciations of the speakers involved. When these speakers look for comprehension of the enunciations it is necessarily implied that an action of *responsiveness* permeates exhibiting an active responsive attitude as well as formation of value judgment. The dialogic subjects will agree or disagree, completely or partially, with the enunciations but they will never have a passive attitude, as would be the case in the diffusion model. Dialogism can also be present in various types of text formats.

Comprehension in dialogism necessarily goes through the subjects’ participation and identification and through their knowledge of content of the enunciations. When we comprehend everything from an enunciation is because we have experienced a real action of questions and answers. When we understand only disconnected parts of an enunciation we experienced a passive educative context as well as an incomplete one.

Understanding in the dialogic context is an action that goes from a social sphere to an individual one because in a responsive dialogue when one speaker tries to put himself in the other speaker’s place the comprehension of the enunciation will not only be generated in his subjectivity but also in their relationship and enunciations thereby created. Furthermore,

this type of dialogue is not a passive act because when the farmer participates in the enunciations he brings with him his individuality generating a singular response to that of what he was provoked because actions in the concrete world will arise in opposition to the values contained in each subjectivity present in the dialogue. The enunciations have a bifocal character where there is no clear-cut separation between the enunciations of one speaker from the other (Fiorin, 2008; Bakhtin, 2003).

At the moment the modern farmer places a seed in the soil he is in a dialogue with the sources he trusts and also with the first farmer of human history who did the same action. In the dialogical perspective words contain timeless senses and meanings as they are inserted in a historical and social context in the concrete world at the time the enunciations occur. Therefore, not only the farmers’ subjectivities will determine the action of how and where he can plant something, but also all the subjectivities that were accumulated historically.

Moreover, a good narrator has the ability to give advice, that is, to introduce a suggestion rather than to give an answer (Benjamin, 1987).

The suggestion will only be of significance if the individual giving it knows how to narrate an event well, as the advice would have come from wisdom and quantity and quality of an event that was lived in depth. In the gradual loss of the ability of subjects to narrate the concrete world rural extension can't lose the ability to give the best suggestions. Lima (2001) highlights the need and relevance of extension workers to theorize about their practice today by writing and talking about it.

To think of the decision-making processes in rural territories is to determine what the dialogic relationships are that compose each productive path. Certainly, when the farmer consults the enunciations that are generated from the sources he consults, the act he will employ in his productive routines is determined. In many situations the success and failure of the agricultural activities depend on the understanding of the enunciations that originate in the dialogic relationships. The space that constitutes these relationships is permeated by various productive contexts linked to innovations and also to the traditions of the farmers. The role of rural extension and the extension workers is to help conduct the path taken between the

new and the old in the best way possible, contributing to the survival of the farmers and their families. Research in rural extension about the pedagogical processes that involve these relationships is pressing and relevant.

### References

- Bakhtin, M. (2003). *Aesthetics of verbal creation (in Portuguese)*. Translated from Russian. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Benjamin, W. (1987). *Selected works I: magic and technique, art and politics (in Portuguese)*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- Fiorin, L.F. (2008). *Introduction to the thought of Bakhtin (in Portuguese)*. São Paulo: ática.
- Freire, P. (2006). *Extension or Communication? (in Portuguese)*. Petrópolis: Paz e Terra.
- Lima, I. A. (2001). *Scientific studies of the municipal plans of rural development of Pronaf in Sao Paulo (in Portuguese)*. Dissertation for Master's in Agricultural Engineering. CAMPINAS - SP Janeiro/2001
- Vigotsky, L.S. (2001). *A construction of thought and language (in Portuguese)*. Translated from Russian. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.



Dr. Luís Fernando S. Zuin is a Professor in the Faculty of Animal Science and Food Engineering, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil.



Dr. Poliana Bruno Zuin is a Professor in the Faculty of Technology, Science and Education, Brazil.



Ana Gabriela Monzon is a U.S. Student Fulbright Researcher at the University of Sao Paulo.

## Upcoming Themes

**January February**  
**Urban Agricultural Education**

**Theme Editor:**

**Nicholas R. Brown**  
Instructor and Evaluator  
Department of Agricultural Education  
Communications and Leadership  
Oklahoma State University  
460 Agricultural Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74078  
**Email:** nick.brown@okstate.edu  
**Phone:** 405-744-0999

**March April**  
**Using Agriculture to Teach STEM**

**Theme Editor:**

**Rebekah Epps**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Community and Leadership Development  
College of Agriculture  
University of Kentucky  
708 Garrigus Building  
Lexington, KY 40546  
**Email:** rebekah.epps@uky.edu  
**Phone:** 859-257-3275  
**Fax:** 859-257-1164

