

New Jersey Association for Agricultural Educators New and Beginning Teacher Mentoring Program



MENTORING PROGRAM HANDBOOK

I. Introduction

The New Jersey Agricultural Educators Association, as part of the New and Beginning Teacher Program, is an effort to help new and beginning agricultural educators transition into successful teaching careers by utilizing the knowledge, experience, and leadership of veteran teachers.

A *Mentor* will be selected for each beginning teacher to serve as a trusted counselor during the first two years of the *mentee's* teaching career in agriculture education. Mentors will provide guidance and support to a novice professional in an effort to retain high quality teachers in the state of New Jersey.

The mentoring program will be offered to all beginning agriculture teachers in the state of New Jersey. Each beginning teacher will be assigned a mentor that will provide information and direction related to three components of an agricultural education program; Classroom and Laboratory Instruction, FFA Activities, and Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Activities.

This program is designed to be non-evaluative in nature and solely focused on providing beginning teachers with a foundation of support and guidance during their first two years of teaching.

II. Objectives

1. Increased Retention Rates of Beginning Teachers in New Jersey.

A mentoring program will replace the “sink or swim” approach to teaching. Developing professional relationships between new and veteran teachers will help keep beginning teachers in the profession.

2. Increased Professional Activity of Mentor Teachers.

Placing veteran teachers in mentorship roles will encourage them to lead by example and engage in professional activities at the local, state, and national level.

3. Improved Quality of Student Instruction and Classroom Management by Beginning Teachers.

By utilizing the expertise of veteran teachers, beginning teachers can confidently structure their programs with effective planning and management skills thus providing their students with quality learning experiences.

III. Expected Activities, Requirements, & Time Commitments

- The mentoring program encourages the beginning teacher *and* mentor teachers to attend the NJAAE Fall Ag Teachers Conference.
- The mentor would contact beginning teacher at least twice during the first month and once a month after. Mentors can use the recommended topics to guide conversations. Some methods of communication may be phone calls, texting, email, social media etc.

Requirements

1. Agree to serve as a mentor by communicating this with the NJAAE Mentor Program Coordinator.
2. Is highly encouraged to attend professional development workshops and conferences.
3. Initiate contact with beginning teacher; do not wait for them to reach out to you.
4. Must dedicate the time to become familiar with beginning teachers program in order to effectively provide personalized feedback and guidance.
5. Be prepared to share past experiences, best practices, resources, and advice for beginning teachers.
6. Assist with local, district, and state networking by introducing beginning teacher to people in the profession.
7. Provide constructive feedback regarding program operations.
8. Identify areas of concern and help beginning teacher overcome specific struggles through problem solving.
9. Demonstrate coaching skills to aid the beginning teacher with FFA advisor responsibilities.
10. Conduct follow-ups as needed with the beginning teacher.

V. Beginning Teacher Roles & Responsibilities

Position Summary

First year teacher of Agriculture Education in New Jersey is encouraged to participate in the mentoring program. First year teachers often feel overwhelmed and isolated. The mentoring program is designed to offer first time teachers a support system that will promote successful collaboration, networking, and program development. Beginning teachers should be forthcoming with any questions and concerns that they encounter and seek advice from their mentor.

Expectations

1. Is highly encouraged to attend professional development workshops and conferences.
2. Communicate with your mentor as needed via an established communication method
3. NJAAE membership strongly encouraged.

Skills and Abilities

1. Maintain a passion for learning through collaborating with others.
2. Should be open-minded and tolerant of new ideas.
3. Be able to identify areas of concern and problem solve with mentor's assistance.
4. Respect mentor's time.
5. Be able to willingly accept mentor's advice and assistance.

Required Job Functions

1. Generate a list of questions to bring to meetings.
2. Become familiar with mentor's curriculum/courses.
3. Share experiences, questions, successes, and failures with mentor.
4. Reply to mentor contacts in a timely manner and initiate contact with the mentor as needed.

IV. Recommended Discussion Topics

(this is a general list to aid discussion as needed- assistant will vary by mentee)

Classroom

- Classroom management
- Sub plans
- Share curriculum and discuss available resources
- Program budgeting and accounting
- Grading - tips and tricks
- Course offerings for next year
- AFNR standards implementation
- CASE curriculum
- IEP/ 504 modifications
- Facilities management
 - Animal Facilities
 - Greenhouse Facilities
 - Shop Facilities
 - Classroom Facilities
 - Lab Facilities
- Lab & Shop Safety

SAE

- Types of SAE's
- AET Utilization
- Award applications
- Summer planning/ SAE Visits

FFA/ Alumni

- Establishing Alumni Chapters
- Alumni groups role
- State FFA activities
- Fundraising
- FFA banquet ideas
- Recruiting for FFA
- Officer team selection and training
- Fairs/ summer activities

CDE's

- State CDEs planning and management
- Choosing which CDE's to participate in
- CDE preparations/ practices/ coaching

Advisory Councils/ Total Programs

- Community outreach
- Establishing Advisory Councils
- Advisory Councils role
- Grant funding sources
- Articulation agreements
- Approved program requirements

Professional Memberships/ Development

- New Jersey Association of Agricultural Educators
- National Association for Agricultural Educators
- Professional development opportunities- Region 6 conference
- ACTE Membership
- Summer in-service opportunities

Teacher Wellbeing

- Time management
- Share successes and struggles
- Solutions for common hurdles
- Self-care- mental health days, avoiding illness
- Areas for improvement
- Reflective practices
- Managing paperwork- student and teacher side
- Email communications/ organization
- Acronyms (SAE, NJAAE, NAAE, ACTE, etc.)