Battle Ahead Over Implementation of New Funding Formula

By Jim Aschwanden, CATA Executive Director

One of the challenges of writing this column for publication in January is that it has to be written in December — the slowest month for political activity in Sacramento. The Legislature has been on Interim Recess since September 13, and won’t reconvene until January 6. It is a time to prepare for the second half of the biennial session and for accessing the “rumor mill” that ramps up in anticipation of the return of legislative members to Sacramento. Like most rumors, some are believable and some are not, but given the unpredictability of Sacramento politics, it’s often hard to tell which to believe. We do have some pretty good indications of potential activities, and those are what I would like to share with you at this time.

Local Control Funding Formula

One of the biggest, and potentially ugliest, battles in the coming year will be promulgation of policies and regulations governing the implementation of the Governor’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). The Governor and top administration advisors have indicated their desire to allow local school districts unfettered control of the use of education dollars — even those sent to districts based on their enrollment of low-income and English Learner populations. Advocates representing those student populations, however, have openly and vociferously stated that the funding sent to districts based on those demographic groups must be spent on services directly benefitting those students who are identified as low-income or English Learners.

ROP Funding Falling

Other issues also are shaping up as we implement LCFF over the next several years. As most
of you know, all funds that have supported Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) over the past several decades have been folded into the LCFF, wiping out a huge source of funding that currently supports Career Technical Education (CTE) programs throughout California. Although the Governor agreed to phase in this change over the next two years, the guillotine is still falling on ROP funding, albeit in slow motion.

On June 30, 2015, absent some substantial reinvestment in CTE funding, the guillotine will have done its job — ROP funds supporting CTE will be gone. $384 million that used to support CTE will be redirected to all districts throughout California for their discretionary use, without any restrictions.

Clearly, this will decimate CTE programs in our schools because the other drivers that motivate and incentivize districts will still be fully in place — existing graduation requirements and our predominant reliance on standardized tests to assess and rate the performance of our schools. Regardless of the “spin” generated by advocates of this new funding methodology, the basic rules of educational productivity remain in place — schools will do what is required, measured, and funded.

Over time, programs and activities not protected by one of those three fundamental drivers will disappear from our school system, since there is no motivation, incentive or reward for providing services or programs that fall outside this triad. The “guillotine in slow motion” may have temporarily delayed the impact of LCFF on Career Technical Education in California, but the effect of this action is inevitable. I believe that as the impact of these actions are more fully realized, legislative and administrative leaders are going to have to come up with some viable solutions. I just hope that the programs and services needed by students won’t have been completely destroyed in the interim.

One-Time Backfill

On a related note, much ado has been made about an allocation of $250 million in one-time funding to create a grant program called the California Career Pathways Trust — one-time money that purportedly will be available for “new” and “innovative” Career Technical programs over the next two years.

Great — only in Sacramento would we ignore the elimination of $384 million in ongoing funding for CTE while celebrating the “investment” of $250 million in ONE-TIME monies for CTE. Shouldn’t take a genius to figure out that this backfill won’t really change the inevitable outcome for CTE in our schools.

One-time money does not generate sustainable, ongoing programs or activities in education, and “celebrating” this program may make for a momentary “feel good” opportunity for a few, but it’s an ineffective distraction over the long haul.

We will need to develop more realistic attitudes and policies regarding CTE if we expect these programs to remain a viable presence for the thousands of students in our schools who both desire and need these programs to succeed in life. I would still encourage you to apply for one of these grants — just don’t get too giddy about their impact absent some tangible action by the Governor or legislature to create a more sustainable investment plan!

Ag Education Incentive Grant

As I write this column, one of the big unknowns is the fate of the Agricultural Education Incentive Grant program within the Governor’s budget. Although funding was sustained for 2013–14, the Governor indicated that his administration would be reviewing the continuation of this funding going forward. We can only hope that the efforts you made to have students, graduates, and supporters reach out to the Governor and legislative leaders have been effective.

Regardless of the outcome, those of you who did your part to influence and inform these policy leaders are to be commended! Over time, those efforts must become part and parcel of every program in California. Again, thank you to those who rose to meet the challenge.

Finally, I would like to recognize the efforts of all CATA members who have really engaged in the Ag Education 2030 process. Despite the many challenges we face, I am more confident than ever that the Agricultural Education profession will thrive and prosper.

It may not look exactly the same, and we may have to stay pretty nimble as we deal with the realities of change, but the efforts of CATA members to engage, discuss, and solve problems is truly inspiring.

Thanks again for all you do to make a positive difference in the lives of young people!
I am currently involved in a group project to write a job description for the 26 agriculture teachers of our district. How we got by for the past 35+ years without one is beyond me, but we did. I guess in the old days, an ag teacher knew what the job was about before they got hired and there was seldom a problem with an ag teacher either not knowing what he or she was supposed to do, or doing more than they were supposed to do. In any event, our district personnel office called me in and asked what should be in this job description for an agriculture instructor.

**Why Job Description Needed**

Our job description need was necessary primarily because of how our agriculture instructors get paid. Ag teachers usually get compensated with an extended contract of some type because many work well beyond the contractual hours of the classroom. The California Education Code (Section 52454) calls for “…teachers to be employed on a 12-month basis.”

Some teachers in California work under the old school, tried and true, “12-month contracts.” Others work under a 10-month plus “some number of days” contract; ours is 10 months, 36 days. In addition, others may get a project supervision period during the school day and/or some type of an FFA stipend. Many others across California get parts or all of these forms of compensation.

**Why Extra Pay?**

The question in our district (and maybe in yours too) is: what is the district paying us this extra money to do? The district, the teachers union, and of course teachers want and need to know this information as well, so there is no misunderstanding as to why you are being paid extra. My suggestion to our district was to allow the ag instructors of our district to come up with their own recommendations for what the extra compensation for ag teachers should entail.

**Conflicting Views**

We had two main camps on this issue:

- **✓ the “extra pay is for supervising projects in the summer, period” group;**
- **✓ the “extra pay is for compensating teachers for ALL of the hours worked by a teacher outside the classroom” group.**

The conversations this topic generated were awesome and insightful on both sides of the issue. The term “Summer Pay” was used liberally because that is when you did much of the work and that is also when you received the money (Summer Pay—pay that you received in the summer).

“Extended Contract” was another term and referred not only to compensation for work done in the summer, but all the stuff you do outside of class during the year. These discussions helped everyone involved realize the task of being an effective ag teacher and it made us realize how fortunate we were in having a district that was dedicated to ag education in our part of California.

**Issues**

Below are some of the issues that we dealt with when working on a job description for ag instructors. You may have some of the same issues in your district as well.

- **We all realized that ag teachers work within the three circles of the model for ag education that has been around since the 1920s.**
- **Those three circles, as most of you already know, are: the Classroom (knowledge), the Supervised Agricultural Experience (hands-on learning), and the Future Farmers of America (Leadership).**
- **This model is also covered in California Education Code 52454:**
  a) The curriculum of school districts that choose to participate in the state program of agricultural vocational education shall include all of the following components:
  1) Organized classes in the study of agricultural science and technology.
  2) A student-supervised occupational experience program in agriculture.
  3) A program of leadership, organization, and personal development.

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We also all know that almost all teachers (no matter what the subject) get paid with a 10-month contract for teaching in class during the school year. So, that takes care of how you get compensated for the “classroom” circle.

It should be noted here that academic teachers get this same contract and many of them work outside of the classroom for no extra pay. English and math teachers often grade papers and projects for many hours each week and on the weekend. It is expected and is understood that this is part of the job. Ag teachers (who also grade papers and projects after school and on weekends) are aware of these obligations and do not expect or get extra compensation for their regular classroom workloads.

That leaves the other two circles of the model for ag education. Let’s take them one at a time.

**Supervised Ag Experience**

The SAE part of the job requires lots of time outside of the classroom and includes things such as (but not limited to):

- visiting projects;
- doing home visits;
- filling out entry forms;
- fitting livestock and arranging showmanship practices;
- visiting job sites;
- helping with record books and proficiency awards applications;
- attending shows and fairs;
- working in the shop, greenhouse, or school farm after school, on weekends and in the summer;
- purchasing livestock, buying feed, medication, and equipment; and
- any other task associated with a student’s SAE.

This extra workload should be tailored to the needs of a particular school and to the students involved. This work should be compensated for by the district as part of an extended contract.

**FFA**

The other part of an ag teacher’s job description (according to the California Education Code) involves “leadership training, organization, and personal development” of the members in our program. We typically have called this the FFA part of the job.

Some schools give a stipend to the FFA advisor, but I contend that the FFA part of the job is everyone’s responsibility and the person getting the stipend is only the person who is the main organizer. Others in a program may actually do more work above and beyond the classroom in this area. Here is just a general sampling of the tasks that should get done in an ag program:

- recruit, elect, and train FFA officers;
- conduct monthly FFA meetings;
- attend conferences like GLC, MFE, ALA, SLE, etc.;
- plan for and attend State FFA Leadership Conference;
- train students on CDE contests;
- attend field days and other competitions;
- plan and conduct fundraisers;
- plan and conduct an FFA Banquet;
- order supplies and awards;
- help students fill out degrees and individual and chapter award applications;
- conduct field trips of the ag industry;
- conduct and perform community service projects.

**Profession by Choice**

Earlier in my career I kept a daily log of my hours. If I did not count classroom hours, hours I got paid as department chair, BTSA hours and compensation, or any of the 36 days of my summer contract… I still worked 862 hours in one year beyond what I was being paid for.

What’s new, you say? I am not sharing this with you to garner sympathy; many in our profession work far more. Rather, I share it to show that our profession is one of choice, not chance. Like many of you, I enjoy every minute of time I spend with my students coaching their teams, driving up and down the highway, eating pie at a restaurant on the evening before a contest, or helping them with a degree application. After all the discussions and points made about ag teacher compensation for our district, it all boiled down to the fact that most ag teachers work hard, enjoy their jobs and “what the contract says” is usually irrelevant to job satisfaction.

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Teachers Matter

By Ann M. De Lay, Teacher Educator, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

According to David McNally, “We were created to fulfill a purpose and it is that purpose that empowers, inspires, and gives meaning to our lives” (McNally, 1990, p. 40). Perhaps this perspective answers the question as to why we teach and why we in agricultural education remain primed for challenge. Teachers wield great influence in the lives of others. We matter to students, their parents, the school, the local community, and the agriculture industry. The power of this position fills us; it fuels to accomplish more than we could ever imagine possible. At Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, it is our honor and privilege to cultivate this realization in our students. By helping them understand the power of purpose, they expand their perception of possibility and grow as leaders.

Student Visibility

Nowhere is this mission more evident than in our students’ visibility on campus. Tatiana Prestininzi (Fallbrook) is serving as Chairman of the Board for Cal Poly ASI. By interacting regularly with donors, elected officials, campus administrators and our university president, Tatiana is raising the department’s visibility campus and community wide.

Maddie Dunlap (Maxwell) is serving the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) as an Ag Council officer. Mere weeks into her term, Maddie developed a social media presence for the group. This seemingly small gesture has helped the leadership team communicate with students, faculty and administration throughout the college and enabled Ag Council to better demonstrate its viability.

Amanda Meneses (Tulare) is serving as a Poly Rep and fulfills university outreach responsibilities by communicating about Cal Poly and CAFES to those who express an interest.

Quincy Freeman continues to let her entrepreneurial spirit shine by winning the National Elevator Pitch Competition at the College Entrepreneur’s Organization Conference in Chicago, IL in November. She presented her business idea to a panel of judges within the one-minute timeline. Quincy pitched a proposal to grow her western wear fashion line at Ariat into an independent company. She was awarded $3,500 in startup funds; a meeting with a venture capitalist; and $1,500 to spend at an e-business support site. What a way to demonstrate Cal Poly’s mission of Learn by Doing!

National FFA Convention

Cal Poly president, Dr. Jeff Armstrong, celebrated the accomplishments of those Cal Poly students who attended the National FFA Convention in Louisville, KY. Those students who received their American FFA Degrees, competed for a national proficiency award, or competed in a national career development event were invited to attend a breakfast reception.

Dr. Armstrong applauded the students for their excellence and commitment to the FFA’s mission of premier leadership, personal growth and career success. He also shared his own experiences wearing the blue and gold, which was a definite highlight.

Student Teachers

Student teaching is a rite of passage virtually every California agriculture teacher will make. This experience helps young teachers make connections between the roles their own actions and beliefs play in achieving results. At Cal Poly, we are blessed to have the opportunity to place our teacher candidates with purpose-driven cooperating schools who value the tenets of a quality experience as much as we do. We will have 14 new teachers to present to the profession at the State CATA Conference in June.

The fall 2013 candidates include: Erica Guido (Atwater), Matthew Marshall (Buhach Colony - Atwater), Elizabeth Basham (Enochs - Modesto), Katie Chamberlin (Foothill - Bakersfield), Monica Moules (Hilmar), Alexa Stanton (Kingsburg), Cassie Burrows (Nipomo), Luke Gocke (Santa Maria) and Brandi Criello (Templeton).

The spring 2014 candidates include: Sue Kirlan, Maggie Maratsos, Kevy Souza, Kirsti Whitmyre and Dana Ready.

More information on each candidate may be accessed at: http://aged.calpoly.edu/content/credprogram

Awards/Honors

Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing philosophy continues to provide students with purpose in the form of academic relevance. This relevance often leads to awards and honors, as students receive recognition for their outstanding work.

At the CAFES end-of-the-year banquet, Jennifer Ray (Buhach Colony) was presented with the Outstanding Senior Award, shining amid all seniors in the college.

Under the direction of Dr. Robert Flores and CAFES Librarian Catherine O’Clair, the Latinos in Agriculture club won the Small Club of the Year award. This achievement was no small feat as it was the result of the desire to make an impact. The club hosts the highly successful 26 Hours in Agriculture, Science and Technology program every spring with a limited number of members.

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Teacher Educator News

(Continued from page 4)

Agriculture Communicators of Tomorrow, advised by Dr. Scott Vernon and Megan Silcott, was runner up for Small Club; and CFFA, advised by Jerry Clark, received second place in the Large Club category.

On the national stage, the Cal Poly Agriculture Communicators of Tomorrow club was recognized at the 2013 Ag Media Summit held in Buffalo, NY. Ag Circle Magazine’s online presence was celebrated as it was named Best Online Publication. The student members’ individual entries were rewarded as well.

The best honor was in how our students interacted with industry representatives and how they conducted themselves in a professional setting. Ag Circle magazine can be accessed on its ISSUU page at: http://issuu.com/brockcenter

Stay in touch with the Brock Center by subscribing to its blog at: http://brockcenter.wordpress.com/

The honors continued with the invitation the Agriculture Communication students received to take part in the Produce Marketing Association’s annual meeting in New Orleans, LA in October. Our students participated in the mentoring program and had the chance to hear from top executives in the produce industry, witness product launch events, and network with companies for whom they might work.

Several students even met the Ocean Spray cranberry farmers featured in national campaigns. Best of all, through this industry exposure, the faculty can share a broader understanding of the produce industry with other students in the program.

Recruiting Teachers

Ag Education seems to love a challenge because through hard work, great purpose is brought to light. Nationally, Agricultural Education has worked actively to recruit teachers for secondary agriculture programs. At Cal Poly, we have taken this responsibility very seriously. With many retirements on the horizon, and a dip statewide in teacher candidate numbers, recruitment has been a fixture on our weekly department meeting agendas.

As a team, we have made on-campus presentations to introductory classes for other CAFES majors. The focus of these discussions is to highlight Ag Ed as an important career consideration. We have planned and delivered several Teach Ag Workshops to different audiences. At the State FFA Conference last April, we worked with other university teacher educators and community college instructors to connect with current high school students interested in agriculture education. Most recently, we delivered a workshop at the New Professionals Institute, to get teachers to consider ways in which they can encourage and mentor young people to consider agriculture education as a major and a career.

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definging a relationship with each potential teacher to ensure we have an adequate supply in the pipeline.

**Cal Poly Mascot**

Robin and Michelle Baggett recently donated a mustang to Cal Poly, to serve as a living mascot to the campus community. Moonstar will make its debut at university events during the 2014 Cal Poly football season. Cal Poly is excited to have a new ambassador and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences is thrilled to host the mascot program.

It is expected school spirit will continue to rise as Moonstar is integrated into campus events and spreads the philosophy: A Mustang is never conquered. Learn more about the mascot program by visiting: http://calpolynews.calpoly.edu/mustang.html

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**Image from Cal Poly State University**

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**Learn by Doing**

Our department enrollment has remained strong, with students acknowledging the power and influence associated with a Cal Poly degree. Department enrollment is currently at 269 with 74 first-time freshmen and 15 transfer students welcomed this year. We have 158 students enrolled at various stages in the credential, master of science, and master of agricultural education degree programs and have the space to continue to grow.

This year, our masters program enacted a scheduling change to permit graduate students time to participate more fully in the CATA Conference; a move met with rave reviews.

To learn more about our Learn by Doing undergraduate and graduate programs, visit our website: http://aged.calpoly.edu/

As always, we invite you to bring your students to campus. We would love to meet with you and the Cal Poly Agriculture Ambassadors are ready to provide college and campus tours. To make an appointment, submit an email to: agambassadors@calpoly.edu

Our lives are hollow when we are not useful (McNally, 1990). Fortunately, Agricultural Education has yet to experience such emptiness. We encourage you to continue the amazing work you do. Be certain to participate in the many professional development opportunities available to you throughout the year. Furthermore, share your efforts with others. Post your successes to our department facebook page — Cal Poly, SLO — Agricultural Education & Communication Dept. Anyone who lacks meaning and purpose in their lives is certain to find rich both within our ranks.

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**Reference**

New Professionals Institute Sets Record
By Courtney Serafin, Golden West High School

The New Professionals Institute took place on Thursday, November 21, 2013, and Friday, November 22, 2013, at the Piccadilly Inn in Fresno. First, second and third year ag teachers from across our state came together for several different purposes; gaining additional resources to add to our new teacher “toolbox,” networking and making connections with fellow ag teachers, and to visit and catch up with friends. This year set a record for the largest number of participants with an astounding 110 new teachers in attendance.

Day One

Our conference began with a warm welcome, words of encouragement, and a room full of laughter from Charles Parker. Day one continued with an engaging and dynamic presentation from Dave Gossman about “Getting the Job Done.” He ignited our passion for agriculture while providing insight and helpful ideas to know, implement, market and promote the agriculture product. His workshop gave guidelines for first-, second- and third-year teachers to not only survive, but tackle projects and create goals and visions for their programs.

After lunch, our group headed to Fresno State to participate in a series of Animal SAE workshops led by Clint Cummings and Susan Henderson-Perry. We had the opportunity to rotate through hands-on workshops that provided techniques for feeding, showing and managing students with beef, sheep, swine and goat SAE projects.

Workshops

Our final day of New Professionals moved us through various workshops presented by current ag teachers and leaders. As always, Greg Beard played the role of Santa Claus and showed the first-year teachers how to work smart and manage their time. As a third-year teacher, I watched those first-year teachers come out of this workshop and wish that I could once again sit in his workshop and listen to that Christmas music.

John Coon, ag teacher at Redwood High School, gave us the insight that being a single-person department, teaching multiple courses and having a family is possible — you just have to take it one bite at a time!

Teaching economics in agriculture was a rewarding workshop led by Jessica Forster. Whether you currently teach economics or not, Jessica was able to provide classroom activities and lessons that could be adapted to any type of curriculum.

There’s no one solution for the question of how to incorporate multicultural students in your program, but despite that, Clemente Ayon and Clay Freeman tackled this question and gave their audiences ways to include all students despite language barriers, finances and cultural differences.

Final Presentation

Once our rotations through these workshops were complete, we came together for a final presentation on teaching agriculture. Jerry Clark, Dr. Ann De Lay, and Dr. Ben Swan left an impression of urgency and realization with each one of us. Although we are just beginning our careers, we are the ones who will step up to be the leaders and mentors to the next generation. Why not start now and begin identifying and tagging those students who we believe should teach ag?

Big Picture

I have attended the New Professionals Institute all three years and each year I have walked away with something just a bit different. As a new teacher to this profession, I have acted as a sponge and absorbed and taken as much as I can. This year at our conference I took away some bigger picture items.

My days consist of teaching horticulture and ag biology, both of which were not on the agenda for this year, but I was able to take and adapt what each workshop and group of presenters had and use it for my classroom and department.

While sitting in Clemente and Clay’s workshop, I thought, what if instead of spending 20 or 30 minutes playing a game on my iPhone, I downloaded a language app and began learning Spanish to further my connection to my students and their families?

While sitting in the Tagged to Teach ag workshop, I began to see our new group as the up and coming leaders. We will be the ones to lead a legacy. Let’s identify those to follow in our footsteps now, just like our teachers and mentors identified us as the ones to join this profession.

Go to Institute

I am out of New Professional Institutes to attend, but am so thankful and grateful that I had the last three years to participate.

If you are in your first or second year teaching, go to the Institute. This isn’t a suggestion. It’s a request. This is the time to build those relationships and meet your ag ed family.

Thank Yous

A huge thank you goes out to everyone who has invested their time, effort and money into new teachers. Without you as our mentors and guides, we would be reinventing the wheel, spending an excessive amount of time on lesson planning and paperwork instead of with our students and working harder, not smarter. Thank you to all who have helped us grow and continue to grow in this profession. And lastly, thank you to anyone who has aided in setting up, running and presenting at the New Professionals Institute. We truly appreciate you.
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News and Views

Where Are They Now?
Former Students Can Help Tell Ag Education Story

By Hugh Mooney, Consultant, Department of Education

I am writing this article the Monday before Thanksgiving. My cubicle is quiet and I have not received a single phone call. This is likely because many teachers have the week off. On days like today, I am able to reflect on the many challenges facing agricultural education.

The greatest challenge is the threat of elimination of the Agricultural Incentive Grant. Most of you are aware of the Governor’s signing message attached to the 2013–2014 budget. This message included notice that an investigation would be conducted to determine whether to continue funding agriculture education in the future. If you read Jim’s article in the October issue, you know about the visits the Department of Finance was to make at two programs near Sacramento.

I was able to attend those visits and can tell you that if the visit by the Department of Finance was going to make a difference in the decision, then a positive decision will be made. Of course, we have no idea of the process to make the recommendation, who will make the recommendation to the Governor or when.

Telling Ag Ed’s Story

In Jim’s October article, he challenged each of us to get supporters of our programs to make contact with elected officials to tell agriculture education’s story. I know that some of you have gotten that done. Some of you have thought about it but have not made progress. Some of you have done nothing.

I attended an advisory committee in October where a discussion occurred about the impact that the loss of Agriculture Incentive Grant funding would have. The members of that committee were not concerned about the loss of the funding because they were certain that the local school district would continue to fund the two agriculture education programs. I would suspect that they are correct; those two programs will continue to be supported by the local district.

I would expect that likely about half of the programs in the state would continue to exist as they do today with local funding. I would think that about 25% of the programs will have very limited support, and the other 25% will be eliminated. Hopefully, we will never find out if my prediction is correct.

Reduction Scenario

The scenario described above would likely result in a reduction of California FFA membership of about 25,000 members. Though your program may continue to be funded by the local district, how will a reduction of state membership by one-third impact your local program? The state FFA budget will be cut by one-third. Conferences will be cut by one-third. The budget for the State Convention will be cut by one-third. FFA participation will be cut by one-third. How might this impact the experience for your students?

Former Students

When we discuss what is different about agriculture education, we often focus on the relationships that we develop with students while they are involved in activities outside of the classroom. We have contact with many of these students long after they graduate from our programs. What are these students doing now?

They are involved in production agriculture and agribusiness. They are doctors, lawyers, teachers, mechanics, CEOs, elected officials. What do all of them have in common? They can vote.

The alumni of our programs value the experiences they had and want students today and in the future to have the same opportunities. Do they know about the challenges to agriculture education funding?

Use Social Media

Many of us are in contact with past students through Facebook and other forms of social media. Let people know of the threat to agriculture education. You know that many of your former students would do anything to help keep your program for the future. What type of network have you created for your graduates? What are they doing today?

Since I work in Sacramento, I have the opportunity to have lunch with former students and other former members with whom I have developed relationships over the years. It is amazing how easy it can be to make a connection to people. Among our ranks are teachers who have former students who work for elected officials.

This would be a good time to reach out to them. I know that each of you have someone who supports your program who is also a supporter of elected officials. Now would be a good time to reach out to them. The relationships that we have are what will make the difference with this or any challenge that we face.

You have many former students who will tell people that the experiences that they had in your program changed their life. Where are they now?
Is Our Perception of Success a Reality?

By Norco Ag Department Staff

Success in ag education cannot be defined as so much of education is today. There is no standardized test for us to base our year in the classroom on. We don’t have information printed in the local paper that shows how we contributed to the school’s API. So how do we determine if our programs are successful? How do we know if we are on the right track?

We have all heard the numbers being given, either in an award application or nomination speech. American Degrees, State Degrees, Proficiency winners, scholarship recipients — the list goes on and on. While those numbers help to contribute to the success of programs, it should not be their only strength. Is our perception of success a reality?

Is our perception of success a reality? What is success? How can we determine if our programs are successful? How do we know if we are on the right track?

We have the Agriculture Incentive Grant (for now), which does include quality criteria. But does checking off all of those things really mean we are being successful? The AIG check sheet can be used as a stepping stone, but programs should not stop there to determine their success.

We have been told to “celebrate success.” With that being said, we have been challenged to question, what is success? How can we celebrate success?

Everyday Successes

Here are just a few examples of some of the everyday successes we have had:

✔ Watching a student walk the graduation stage at the end of the year with a diploma… when you know the struggles, hardships and obstacles that have been in his/her path. You’ve helped that student not to become a statistic.

✔ Having a graduate come back and ask, “Why didn’t you do that project with us?” This simple question shows progress in the classroom and prevents us from becoming stagnant. We can become tired and/or bored teaching the same lesson year after year. Kids change; so should our lessons and projects. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel, but it is OK to re-tread it!

✔ Eating lunch together allows for success. Some days we talk business, other days the conversation is far from it. Either way, our camaraderie, communication, and ability to work together as a cohesive team is strengthened tremendously by this one simple act. This time also allows us time to laugh and vent as needed, to keep issues within the department from becoming issues outside of the department. Our celebrations come as special lunches and even the occasional surprise birthday party, decorations and all.

Supporting Students

Ultimately, it is not about the awards for us; celebrating success is watching our students be successful. Some students demonstrate their success by improving low grades, some by graduating from the college of their dreams, and others by putting the skills they learned with us to work right after high school. Whatever it is, our joy comes in supporting them and supporting their dreams.

Let’s face it, ag education and agriculture programs are not a cookie cutter. What works in one area of the state may not work in another. Ag education is successful because we are able to find strengths in our students, our communities, and programs and then use them to our advantage.

Are you utilizing your strengths and the strengths of those around you to do what is best for all of your kids? +

To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends, to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch… to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

— Emerson

Superior Region Teachers Attend Power 3 Summit

By Elizabeth Ammon, Lassen High School

Nineteen teachers from the Superior Region attended the Power 3 Summit Conference at Lake Almanor over the Veteran’s Day weekend in 2013. Throughout the three-day conference, teachers had open discussions about topics relating to their FFA programs. The goal by the conclusion of the conference was for each teacher, regardless of their years of service, to be able to take away three powerful ideas to add to their program.

Teachers were able to bring ideas to the table about student leadership promotion, successful fairs and banquets and improving the perception from the community about our programs. For those teachers who struggle in departments, fellow teachers were able to add personal examples about managing department duties and pitfalls to avoid as a new teacher or as a bad habit.

There was also an overview of the CATA, including its history, the importance and the current condition of our association.

This is the third year this conference has been offered in our region. Our hopes are that this conference will bring all of our teachers from all ages of service together. We walked away having strong connections with teachers in our region we have not had the time to know on a personal level. This conference has been fundamental in keeping the teachers in our region together as a family unit, willing to help one another throughout the year and into the future. +

Aggie Annex Now Online

Look for the Aggie Annex online at www.calagteachers.org/GoldenSlate.html

(Front) Lori Niesen, Alice Munger, Andree’ Earley, Janice Lohse, Angie Verar, Nicole Flosi, Katie Alling, Kelli Hargett. (Back) Cindy Rohde, Matt Pritchard, Tim Reid, Rich Darrach, Mike Somerville, Clarissa Rowley, Matt Reed, Sheena Sloan, Jake Hargett, Elizabeth Ammon.
Your CATA Family:
A Professional Support Network

By Emily Keverline, San Joaquin Region, Kern Valley High School

I come from a family of educators. Grandparents, cousins, siblings, and my mother all have worked in public education in and out of California over the last 70 years. My mother, who was a kindergarten teacher for 30 years, was one of my biggest influences on my career choice (my agriculture teacher was the other). Nonetheless, you can definitely say that teaching runs in my family. When I started out as an agriculture teacher in 2000, I came to appreciate a whole new family of educators — the CATA.

**Professional Collaboration**

My mother, the 30-year veteran, was amazed when she attended her first CATA state conference with me. She said that in her teaching experience, the weakest point in developing as a professional had always been the lack of opportunity to network and collaborate with her peers.

As a teacher, we sometimes isolate ourselves in our classroom and don’t have a support structure of mentors and peers. In the CATA, she saw these mentors and peers and told me that this was the best example of professional collaboration and support that she had seen in the teaching profession.

**Extended Family**

She’s not the only one to recognize the extended family that I have. My FFA students think that I “know every FFA advisor there is,” because no matter where we are — sectional through national events — I always run into teachers who I know and we spend time catching up and exchanging ideas and advice.

When I travel with other teachers, parents or administrators to an FFA activity, the common comment is on the willingness of other FFA advisors to stop and support their fellow teachers.

**Embrace Your CATA Family**

The opportunity to collaborate with your agriculture family is always there, both informally and through our organized CATA events. The five minutes of conversation at your county fair can be just what you need to motivate you for the rest of the week.

The best piece of advice that I can offer to agriculture teachers is to embrace your CATA family. Whether it’s the friend who you can always rely on for a laugh or the mentor who can answer your questions, or the teacher who is new to your section — there is always an agriculture teacher there.

Just the way we are there for our FFA students, we are there for our CATA family. No other group of educators in the United States has the support and network of the CATA and agriculture education family!

---

2014 CATA Conference registration available at [www.calagteachers.org](http://www.calagteachers.org)

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2013–2014 Calendar of Activities

January 16–17 ........................................ Winter Governing Board ............................................................... Galt
January 16–17 ......................................... Student Teacher Conclave ......................................................... Modesto
January 25 ........................................ Natural Resources State Finals ......................................................... Reedley
February 1 ........................................ Winter State Finals - Citrus, Tree & Vine Pruning ...................... CSU - Fresno
February 22 ........................................ Central Region Meeting ......................................................... Stockton
February 22 ........................................ San Joaquin Region Meeting .................................................. Lemoore
February 24 ........................................ South Coast Region Meeting ................................................... San Luis Obispo
March 1 ................................................ Superior Region Meeting ....................................................... Chico
March 22 ................................................ North Coast Region Meeting ............................................... Ukiah
April 5 ................................................ Southern Region Meeting ....................................................... Cal Poly, Pomona
April 12 ............................................... CSU - Fresno Field Day ....................................................... CSU - Fresno
April 12–15 ....... State FFA Leadership Conference ............................................................... Fresno
April 16–19 ........................................ NAAE Region I Meeting ......................................................... Honolulu, HI
May 3 ............................................... State FFA Judging Finals ......................................................... Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 22 ............................................... Executive Committee Meeting .............................................. Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 22–26 ..................................... Pre-Conference Governing Board ........................................... Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 22–26 ........................................ CATA Summer Conference ................................................... Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 26 ........................................ Governing Board Summer Retreat ......................................... San Luis Obispo

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