Career Technical Education Funding Proposals Look Promising

By Jim Aschwanden, CATA Executive Director

As the legislative session begins in earnest in Sacramento, Career Technical Education (CTE) has certainly been at the forefront of education policy discussion and action in the Capitol. With the release of the Governor’s budget proposal in January, which proposes designated set-aside funding for CTE, a number of legislative proposals have emerged that offer great promise to reinvigorate these important programs in California.

Governor’s Proposal

The Governor’s proposal to create a CTE Incentive Grant program was certainly a big first step in beginning the discussion. The Governor’s proposal would create an annual allocation of $250 million per year over the next three years, which would require an equal match on the part of participating entities. Although due to sunset in three years, this proposal was a major change in direction for educational policy—due in part to the growing recognition that CTE programs were being devastated under the provisions of the categorical shift language and the Local Control Funding Formula.

As this proposal has been discussed in various policy committees, there seems to be growing consensus that a sustainable funding model for CTE must be developed that incentivizes districts to carry on these important programs beyond the three-year window. That discussion is encouraging, and hopefully there will be substantive policy development and action that accomplishes that goal.

Legislative Proposals

There are a couple of legislative proposals that we are following which take the Governor’s proposal and build upon it to increase both the funding and impact for CTE.

• The first, S.B. 148, is authored by Senator Mike McGuire from Sonoma County. The bill increases the funding level for the CTE Incentive Grant program to $600 million per year for the next three years, which would require an equal match on the part of participating entities. Although due to sunset in three years, this proposal was a major change in direction for educational policy—due in part to the growing recognition that CTE programs were being devastated under the provisions of the categorical shift language and the Local Control Funding Formula.

As this proposal has been discussed in various policy committees, there seems to be growing consensus that a sustainable funding model for CTE must be developed that incentivizes districts to carry on these important programs beyond the three-year window. That discussion is encouraging, and hopefully there will be substantive policy development and action that accomplishes that goal.

(Continued on page 2)
A Trip Worth Taking

By Cindy Rohde, CATA Past President

Besides being a busy farm wife and teacher, awesome grandma, and killer bowler, my Grandma Frankie was a Worthy Matron in Eastern Star. As she traveled around the state doing Worthy Matronly things she would come home with all kinds of little hostess gifts from the chapters she visited. Her house was full of lace doilies, crocheted potholders and Kleenex box covers, needlepoint magnetic clips that looked like mittens and daffodils, decorated fly swatters, and all manner of handmade things to fascinate a little girl.

Special Friendships

When she would show me, I would always think to myself, “Now that was a trip worth taking!” Of course, as I grew up, I realized what made those trips so special to her was all of the wonderful people she met and the special friendships and memories she made that lasted the rest of her life.

I have found that the same is true for me as a state CATA officer. From the stark and lonely beauty of the Southern Region to the rugged majesty of the Superior Region and every region in between, I have met so many wonderful people, made friends that I hope will last forever, and have such great memories to treasure.

Now as I take my leave of this great adventure, I want to tell all of you what an incredible honor and privilege it has been to serve you these past five years and to thank you for every kindness you have shown me these past five years and to thank you for every kindness you have shown me.

(Continued from page 1)
A Profession of Purpose, Commitment and Results
By Dave Gossman, CATA Secretary

“I remember the time I was kidnapped and they sent a piece of my finger to my father. He said he wanted more proof.” — Rodney Dangerfield

Like Rodney Dangerfield, agriculture gets no respect. It is taken for granted. It is not on people’s radar of important, even though without it, we do not live or survive. When it comes to agricultural education, it comes along with the stereotype that it is only for students who want to be farmers, even though it is a proven education model that serves ALL students and interests, not just agriculture students. When it comes to agricultural educators, we are looked upon as lesser than compared to our colleagues who teach a regular science core class, because our degree is an agriculture science degree, not a biology degree. How would anyone have the ability to teach a science, nonetheless a variety of courses effectively with such a degree?

“The purpose of life is a life of purpose.” — Robert Byrne

The fact remains, agricultural education is a proven education model toward a student’s academic success, personal growth, leadership, career exploration and (confidence) direction in life. Many of us enter the education profession with the heart, passion and interest “to make a positive difference in the lives of young people.”

What makes agricultural education so unique is the multitude of variety within the agriculture spectrum. Agriculture businesses, agriculture mechanics, agrisciences, animal sciences, floriculture, forestry, natural resources, ornamental horticulture, plant sciences and soil sciences are all pathways/sectors with a variety of courses and opportunities to cultivate one’s interests, cultivate one’s knowledge/thinking, and develop life and industry-related skills. It’s an education model that compares (one circle) to other classroom/lab (one circle) instructional education opportunities. However, when we (agricultural education) can meet or exceed the level of success with those core subjects/classroom/labs, we propel ourselves so far forward and beyond those core subjects, because of the implementation of two more circles that focus on the development of skill-based applications and experience (SAEs, CDEs, etc.) and the implementation of leadership, communication and personal growth through the FFA.

Simply put, there is no other educational model that can match the magnitude of productivity and the positive effect it has on young people than agricultural education. It is a model that serves ALL students regardless of gender, ethnicity, academic/personal/career interests, or socioeconomic situations.

“There’s a difference between interest and commitment. When you’re interested in doing something, you do it only when it’s convenient. When you’re committed to something, you accept no excuses — only results.” — Kenneth H. Blanchard

Every profession faces challenges; however, we in agricultural education face an extended version of challenges in terms of (lack of) respect, stereotype and the magnitude of (time/effort it takes to implement) the education model. What separates us from the others is terms of education is the 3-circle model.

What our profession needs is not those who have an interest, rather those who make the commitment. This profession extends beyond the classroom. Those who make the effort to implement and actively engage in those 3-circles are the ones who not only demonstrate success, but implement success through their programs and students.

“Agriculture is not the best leverage.” — Constance Chucks Friday

People will always invest in a good product, and agricultural education is a helluva product … when implemented. Implementing the product is the key. A school/district’s foundation assessment will always begin in the classroom/lab. That is the common factor at every school.

So when you can meet or exceed the level of success/achievement at the foundation level, you will certainly separate yourself from the pack with your time/efforts through the additional circles within the agricultural education model.

Once established and proven (over time), one will find you gain the leverage of growth and investment by all parties involved (district, school, community, students and industry) because you are producing and generating success.

“What matters more than where you are is the direction you are heading.” — Cameron C. Taylor

Hey, our job is certainly not easy. If it was, everyone would be doing it!

One cannot do everything, but a philosophy of always finding ways to be more efficient, getting students involved, and making the effort to implement the 3-circles of agricultural education is what it is all about — making a positive difference in the lives of young people.

That’s the purpose, commitment, and results through our chosen profession of agricultural education.

A Trip Worth Taking

(Continued from page 2)
Officers’ Corner

Knowing ‘Why?’ Helps Maintain Perspective
By Robin Grundmeyer, CATA Treasurer

This issue of the GOLDEN SLATE is one in which I was assigned to write an article. So, here I sit under the bright lights of a baseball field, the night before my assignment is due. I’m watching my oldest son, Seth, doing what he loves: play baseball! My youngest son, JW, is running around in the grass behind the bleachers, playing with a bunch of other kids. It’s been one heck of a day…setting up panels for an alpaca show in town, putting on a reward luncheon for some of our students, a wedding consultation, and practice for Job Interview over at the school district office. Oh yeah…and teaching five periods. If I’m lucky I’ll make it home by about 9:45 this evening.

Doing Best We Can
I know that my day is not much different than any of yours. Agricultural teachers are a different type of professional. We are folks who have to balance one of the most demanding professions on the planet and a personal life. Spring is our busy time: recruiting for our programs, judging team training and contests, leadership conferences, banquets, speech contests…Let’s be honest, the list is infinite. So, we do the best that we can with the resources available and we make some really amazing things happen.

Hearing the crack of the bat, people cheering and the giggling of the kids playing behind me allows me to relax. I reflect on the activities of the day. I think about the impending article that I must write. I jot down some notes and phrases while I watch the game. I’m still not 100 percent sure of what I’d like to share. I have every intention of writing the article while I sit here, but it’s just not going to happen tonight. I watch Seth make an outstanding play and a couple of errors and chat with some of the other baseball parents. As the game draws to an end, I sit in the bleachers with JW, sneaking a bite or two of his ice cream. It’s been an exhausting and amazing day; I am so truly blessed.

The topic of the article so graciously came to me…at about 3:30 in the morning…isn’t that when things like this come to most of us?

Fight to Save Incentive Grant
How many times over the past couple of years while listening to Jim’s report have you heard him talk about why? In our fight to save the Agricultural Incentive Grant we needed to have people hear from our students about why agricultural education is important, why students learn and stay engaged in our programs, and lastly, why agricultural education is worth funding. The battle has been fought and our students prevailed…the incentive grant is here this year and in the budget again next year. So, we can relax and enjoy the ride, right? Probably not…

Big Changes
The why is more important now than it has ever been. Funding is not the source of stress during the next few educational cycles, but there are some big changes on the horizon for Career Technical Education and our agricultural education family. We must all have our individual why and our agricultural education family why in place to make the most of the opportunities that will present themselves over the next few years.

What is the why? Simon Sinek, an expert on leadership, describes the why as “the purpose, cause, or belief that inspires you to do what you do.” My why will not be the same as your why… and that is okay. For most of us, it’s tricky to articulate, but we know how our why looks and how it feels. It’s our why that gets us out of bed in the morning and keeps us going in our insanely demanding profession.

So, how does one figure out their why? According to Margie Warrell, a best-selling author and keynote speaker, you can find your why by reflecting on four key questions.

• What makes you come alive?
• What are your innate strengths?
• Where do you add the greatest value?
• How will you measure your life?

Ms. Warrell sums it up with these words, “Knowing your purpose may compel you to take on challenges that will stretch you as much as they inspire you. Just as a boat under power can handle any size wave if perpendicular to it, when you’re powered by a clear purpose, there is little you cannot do.”

Wow! Think about the truth in that statement for just a moment. How often have all of us been in a tough situation at work or at home and when we are clear in our purpose, we can usually overcome insurmountable odds? Adversity allows for incredible opportunities if we persevere and keep focused on our purpose. The Agricultural Incentive Grant battle is just one example of this.

Conventional or Remarkable?
Another perspective on why comes from Simon Sinek, who asks, “Do you want to be conventional or remarkable?” In a widely circulated graphic, he demonstrates that those who start with the why and work from there are able to accomplish remarkable things. Those who start with what and the how get trapped in the conventional way of doing things.

Agriculture teachers are by no stretch of the imagination conventional…you accomplish amazing things all the time with your students, your schools and in your communities. It really all comes down to one thing…WHY.

So, now it is the day that my article is due. I made it home from a long day on Thursday by 9:50, just past my goal. Another school day has come and gone, with a new set of accomplishments and challenges. I am hopeful that if I get just a couple more items marked off of my to do List (this article included), that I will have time to go to my happy place — Disneyland — this evening. One more long weekend to tackle before a slight reprieve in this busy schedule appears in the form of spring break. I am not complaining, nor am I put off by the demands of my profession, because I am right where I need to be, and I know WHY I do what I do, and I love every minute of it. Well, almost every minute. +


WHAT
HOW
WHY
outside-in/conventional
inside-out/remarkable

What’s your WHY?
When you know why you do what you do even the toughest days become easier! dewritershub.com/featured/why
Unbroken... Or Is Our Endurance Broken?

By Mary Riley, Southern Region Reporter, Sonora High School – La Habra

All fall I lived in anticipation for the movie “Unbroken” to hit the theaters. After seeing the trailer advertised in the summer Olympic Games, how could you not be sucked into the story of the underdog immigrant overtaking unthinkable odds? The remarkable true story of Louis “Louie” Zamperini and the turns his life takes was no doubt big screen worthy.

Struggle

For those who didn’t see the movie, Louie probably reminds you of a student we struggle with in our class every day. With little motivation and trouble always finding him, Louie does nothing but disappoint his immigrant parents trying to make a life for their family in America — the great country of opportunity. After recognizing his running talent, his brother turns his life around by getting him to run competitively, which takes him all the way to the Olympics.

Louie goes on to serve in the war, where he is shot down by the Japanese in World War II, surviving on a raft for 47 days only to be picked up by the enemy, becoming a prisoner of war. For more than two years, Louie endures through beating, horrible living conditions, and malnutrition to defeat the prison camp leader by defying his power. Never giving up through this unfortunate turn of events, he is reminded of his brother telling him, “If you can make it, you can take it.”

Wondering

Watching this movie leaves you with countless emotions, but for me, it left me wondering if there are people with that endurance and commitment today? Do we inspire and equip our students enough to endure? And in our profession, are there some greats in the making enduring the struggles and innovations to adapt to meet our changing educational climate.

New Soldiers

As they spoke and shared their wisdom, it was apparent that new soldiers would soon need to be taking their place to endure and fight for this idea we all believe in called Ag Education.

Are there leaders ready to endure?

As we sit back and celebrate our Ag Incentive Grant Battle, we must push on to start anticipating the hardships of the future. Ag education is not immune to the expression “History Repeats Itself.”

Questions

To face the future and power through upcoming challenges, I believe some questions need to be asked of each one of us as an endurance test to prepare ourselves for the future.

• How are you making your classrooms unique learning environments that teach agriculture and not just traditional science?

• Are you following the Agriculture Program Standards, including having a productive advisory committee and not watering down the three circles so that your program can have longevity?

• Do you promote the career positively to encourage future teachers and mentor young teachers so they can endure their first years of teaching?

• Have you shared your history in the organization to inspire teachers that the battles they are fighting can be not only overcome but with victorious defeats?

And probably the most pressing:

• Will you step up to play a leadership role (CATA office or committee chair, pursuing working as a regional supervisor or as a university teacher educator, participating in the Vision 2030 movement, etc.) so that our profession will endure?

Perseverance

We can no longer sit on our past and let our endurance be broken by assuming others will steer us into the future. We need to be preserving our core values by being innovative — not watering down the foundation of ag education.

This perseverance is what makes this profession strong and is why I can see stories of endurance and overcoming battles in our future. “If we can make it, we can take it” and this profession will endure for years to come.+
Taking Care of Our Future

By John Williams, Operations Division Vice Chair, Madera South High School

As many of you know, my wife and mother of my child, Beth Williams, passed away this past January. Now, this article is not going to be about her struggles in her fight to live another day, but as a reminder for all of us to take into our mind as we manage our crazy lives.

In the Beginning

We all start this career to do one thing, be competitive in every aspect of our job. Whether it is CDEs, proficiencies, classroom instruction, leadership; the list goes on, as to what we can become the best in. If you knew my wife, she tried to be the best at everything she did. She coached five state champion teams in a row; she was named the National Agriscience Teacher of the Year, and took pride in having the best biology test scores in her district.

If you could paint a picture of a winner, my wife’s portrait is up there with Vince Lombardi; Muhammad Ali and Derek Jeter. She strived to be the best, and every new teacher coming out knew her name, no matter what college they were coming from.

She put in so much time into being the best at work, that things in her personal life were put on hold. But soon she started her family with a guy who taught at Madera South. What I learned from her was not only to try and be the best, but being the best needs to carry into your personal life as well.

We would have arguments on whose department was better, or who would do the dishes and laundry in the most effective way. Everything was a competition, but it strengthened our relationship, and made us stronger as a team. We understood each other’s jobs, so staying late to finish paperwork or practice with our teams was no problem.

Then we got married and were very surprised to find out that we would be blessed with our first child, John Silas.

The Change

When people say that your life changes when you have a child, they are right. Soon I was not only supposed to take care of myself and job, but now we had a little cub that quickly became the center of our lives. This did not stop us from being Ag teachers; our son went to Greenhand Conference, County Fairs, summer practices and dairies. He was even in a state champion team photo at Cal Poly when he was four weeks old. He went everywhere and our lives never stopped. Beth even had to convince her doctor to let her back to work early so that she could be at the fair seven weeks after John was born.

As Ag teachers we are bred to go out and get work done, no matter the circumstance and that’s just what we did. We push ourselves to be good in every aspect of our career, but are we putting our families and our health at risk? What’s it worth?

I’m not saying that you can’t be a good Ag teacher and a parent; all I am saying is that to be good at your job, you need to take care of yourself before you can take care of your job.

Beth went to National Convention with pneumonia a week before they found the tumor in her chest; she knew she was sick, but that didn’t stop her. We all tend to put our bodies at risk time after time; we work with kids who are sick, we care for animals that are sick and we work through colds, thinking it will go away.

So What Do We Do

Prioritize your family and health, and balance that with your job. If you’re sick, you shouldn’t be at work. It’s okay to get a sub, it’s okay to have others in your department/school help you. Give yourself enough time to get the things you want done in an efficient manner.

I procrastinate way too much, and this has always been a problem, but while scheduling my life last year around chemo’s and hospital visits and the unknown, I had to do a better job.

We all want to be at school as much as possible, because we miss so much for meetings, activities and conferences. But when our bodies tell us something is wrong, we need to listen. Regular physicals, doctor’s visits, daily vitamins and a healthy diet can help prevent most of our illnesses. Rest is the most important. We run our bodies like a factory that never stops. Giving our bodies enough time to recuperate will help in daily tasks.

Balance

Where do we find the balance? This question can be answered only by you, because everyone has different responsibilities in their program. But remember, this is a balancing act that has not been proven by many teachers. You have your family, and you have your students, and sometimes one or the other may be neglected, but you can always make it up to them.

Being one-sided is not the answer though. Sometimes significant others don’t understand our jobs; communication is key in this. If you communicate everything, set up a Google calendar so that your phones are synced, then you both will know what’s planned.

One Day at a Time

What does this mean? It means you do everything you can today. You spend as much time as you can being the best teacher/advisor and the best husband/wife/parent you can.

One thing I learned this year was that nothing is promised. Beth was three weeks from remission and the cancer came back with a vengeance.

If you do everything in your power to be the best at everything while taking care of yourself, you move through this life one day at a time. If you can learn one thing from this article, I hope it’s the realization that you as an agriculture teacher have the ability to do great things in your classrooms and in your life as long as you take the time to take care of yourself. The priorities will change, but the balance will always be there.

Lastly, I wanted to say thank you to everyone who has been in my life and my wife’s. The support has been overwhelming and my family appreciates everything everyone has done. CATA will always have a special place in my heart. The love and respect we have for each other in difficult times is second to none. Sure, we may want to beat each other on Saturday, but we will always be a family the other six days of the week.
Seeking Balance Key to Ag Teacher Survival

By Clay Freeman, San Joaquin Region President, Foothill High School

Every night before I go to sleep I run through the “list” in my mind…meet with officers before school, finish and email incentive grant reports, process requisition to pay for MFE/ALA, check and see if the district has paid the feed bill yet, put together a steel order for the shop, finish agenda for Regional Meeting, email schools reminder that poinsettia orders are due soon, get ready for parli pro practice after school; it goes on and on and on. At the same time another list spins off beside it…remember between sixth period and parli pro practice to pick up the kids from school because Jenny is going to have to work late, check on the kids’ show goats (they both have fungus now), try to get the pool clean before the next dust storm puts another inch of mud in the bottom, process the lambs in the back lot, and go to the feed store (again). On top of all of that, teach.

Finding ‘Balance’

It is enough to make you crazy, or at the very least, lose perspective. That is why we have to have balance. When I was going through the credential program preparing to be an ag teacher, I remember vividly professors explaining how much work it was going to be and if you weren’t ready for that level of commitment, maybe this wasn’t the profession for you.

Now it seems that young teachers are being coached to compartmentalize and separate their professional lives from their personal lives, making sure to budget “me” time. These two contrasting beliefs seem to be, like most philosophical shifts in education, opposite apexes of a pendulum. To survive, have a successful professional career and be able to honestly say that you have been a supportive spouse and parent, you will have to find your own version of balance.

Blending Model

For me, balance means very little separation. My first few years of teaching I worked with an ag teacher who I have always looked up to, Gerald Wenstrand. The quality that I admired most about Gerald was how he was able to blend his family life and his professional life. Gerald’s wife, Carol, was a leader in the booster club, a chuck wagon cook at the fair, the director of the end-of-the-year slide show, and a constant supporter of her husband and the program that he had built.

His children grew up traveling to livestock shows and eventually became highly involved FFA members of the Kern Valley Chapter. His son, Matt Wenstrand, is now a successful ag teacher in his own right, leading the Caruthers High School Ag Program.

Making It Work

Both Ralph and I have been able to make it work by keeping a few things in mind.

First, communicate with your spouse. Whenever there has been an issue, it has usually been because of a breakdown in communication. If everyone is on the same page and has access to a common calendar, there seems to be a lot less misunderstanding.

This brings me to my next point. Stay organized and keep a good calendar. Hard copy or digital, a good calendar will save you a lot of late-night arguments.

And lastly, keep your priorities straight. Your students are important, you are responsible for giving them direction and many times you’re the only one working on that goal. But you have them for only four years. Your spouse and children need you just as much.

Make Balance a Priority

No matter what your individual situation is, whether you feel compelled to immerse or compartmentalize, or if you’re somewhere in between, you need to make balance a priority.

That doesn’t mean spending eight hours a day being an ag teacher, eight hours being a husband and father (or wife and mother), and eight hours sleeping. We all know that depending upon the time of year, that is an unrealistic schedule to keep and still look yourself in the mirror and call yourself a professional.

It usually means when you see a little daylight in the calendar, make sure you don’t waste it. If you have the opportunity to get away and your being gone won’t place an unreasonable burden on your teaching partner, plan something special. Make sure that before you plan an activity that has some flexibility, check with your personal calendar.

And at the end of the day, when push comes to shove, if there is a conflict, take care of your family first.

This is a hard job. But it is no harder than any other profession if you are serious about being a professional. If you want to stick with it for the long haul, you need to stay organized, communicate, keep your priorities in line, and most of all seek balance.
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Better Support Can Help More New Teachers Survive

By Hugh Mooney, Consultant, Department of Education

It is difficult to remember the last year that we were not concerned about a teacher shortage. In 1984, before many of our current teachers were even born, I was looking for an agriculture teaching job. I was one of the few that had signed a contract before the CATA Summer Conference. I accepted a job to become the agriculture teacher at Big Valley High School in Northeastern California. The school population was about 100 students. Six of them had signed up for agriculture. I was hired to teach a full load of agriculture classes. I began on July 1, visiting potential students to recruit. When the school year began, I had 33 students. Naturally, I had everything figured out, so I thought.

Joining a Team

In 1990, I joined the staff at Galt High School. I made the transition from a single-person program to becoming part of a team. For those of you that have been around a while, I joined Jim Aschwanden and Larry Tosta, who had taught together since their Chowchilla days, and Carl Wright, who I had graduated from high school with. They made a decision to give me an assignment that would allow me to have success. I taught animal science and agriculture business management, which was an area of interest and strength for me. I was to supervise the beef cattle projects and coach novice parliamentary procedure and livestock judging.

Again, these were things I enjoyed to do. I had their support and because of that had immediate success. A few years later, Jim Aschwanden left to become the CATA executive director and for some reason I was made the department chair. That was the day I began getting grey hair.

Competitive Process

When the position to replace Jim was posted, we had 35 applicants. As I recall we interviewed eight. It was a very competitive process. Not everyone on the panel selected the same person to be at the top of the list. Because of that, it took some time for the administration to offer the job.

Today when hiring you do not have much time to reflect on the interview process to be certain you have the right fit. If you do not make a move quickly, the person you want will likely accept another job.

By the time this article is published, many of the openings will have been filled. I hope that programs have been able to hire the person they wanted and hopefully, teachers with a new employer have found the job they wanted.

The decisions made by your program and administration moving forward with the new hire will have a profound impact on whether you will be repeating the hiring process because that new teacher has moved on to another opportunity.

Assigning a Classroom

The first challenge for many programs is assigning a classroom to the new teacher. If your school has enough classrooms that every teacher has their own room, you are lucky.

Much of the time I was at Galt, the school enrollment was rapidly growing and many of the classrooms had to be used during teacher prep periods. Often if one of the teachers will need to move, it is the new teacher. Why do we do that in education?

Add to that challenge that the new teacher often is assigned to have the larger number of different classes to prepare for. Again, why do we do that?

The person with the least experience who is trying to find their niche in the program has the added challenge of teaching in multiple classrooms with three or four different preparations.

This practice is not unique to agriculture teaching. It is a common practice in all subject areas. Why do we do this?

Is it in the best interest of the students? Is it in the best interest of the development of the new teacher? Does it help with retaining teachers?

I would guess that the answer to those three questions is no. I ask again, why do we do it?

Choices

Obviously, in small programs there is no choice about having a variety of preparations. In programs where we do have a choice, why? Likely it is because that is just the way it is done.

When you were a new teacher, you were given the most challenging assignment in multiple classrooms. It worked for you, it will work for them.

You may be correct. We can call this “agriculture teacher survivor.” Few survive.

We all know we have a shortage of teachers. We have been talking about it for more than a decade. We must all be insane. After all, we continue to do the same things and expect a different result. If we retain a higher percentage of teachers, we might just reduce the agriculture teacher shortage.

Two Approaches

When our current CATA president was hired at Elk Grove High School, he may have been the most talented cattle fitter among the agriculture teaching ranks. He had been trained by Wendy Hall in college and could get it done right. At that time, the program had several rural students who showed cattle at a high level in the western states. The logical thing was to have him supervise the cattle projects.

He was assigned the sheep because the program had a teacher that was in charge of cattle. That may not have been the best thing for the students to develop their potential.

While at Galt, I was in charge of the cattle projects and enjoyed them very much. One year I hired a new teacher who had shown cattle and won at the National Western Stock Show. We assigned her to supervise the beef cattle projects because we thought it would be best for the students. It proved to be a good decision.

Support for New Teachers

I assume that in other articles the potential for additional funding for all of career technical education is addressed. This will lead to the need for more teachers. We must increase the number of quality teachers that we have in the profession.

We have struggled increasing the number of new teachers. Though we need to continue to recruit teachers, we must do a better job of retaining them as well.

We have struggled increasing the number of new teachers. Though we need to continue to recruit teachers, we must do a better job of retaining them as well.

(Continued on page 13)
Educators Receive Literacy for Life Grants

By Stephanie Etcheverria, California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

Three agricultural educators from throughout California have been awarded $500 Literacy for Life Grants to supplement their agricultural education curriculum from California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom (CFAITC).

“We are thrilled to acknowledge these educators for their hard work and dedication to agricultural education,” said Judy Culbertson, CFAITC executive director. “This grant program provides an important opportunity for these educators to enhance their already-established agricultural education lessons and activities. We are especially grateful to the Oreggia Family Foundation’s sponsorship of the Literacy for Life Grant program that makes these awards possible.”

Haley Clement, a teacher at Liberty Ranch High School, has received a grant to fund her project, Food and Garden Waste Composting Program.

This project is designed to reduce the amount of food and garden waste at Liberty Ranch High School by beginning a composting program.

The sustainability committee will maintain the program and create promotional and educational materials to be used in the agriculture program. The committee will assist with the upkeep of the composting and collection of food waste from the cafeteria.

They will take measures to educate the agriculture students about sustainability, design a bulletin board to teach students about composting, recycling and sustainability, and create a promotional video about composting that will be viewed in all agriculture classes. Lesson plans will be created and implemented in each class about sustainability and composting.

Natalie Stevano, a teacher at Gregori High School, has received a grant to fund her project, San Francisco Flower and Garden Show.

Students in Gregori High School’s new Resource ROP Landscape Career Class attended the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show at the San Mateo Event Center in March 2015. Students had the opportunity to watch and participate in industry-related demonstrations and experience other education and career opportunities.

Robin Dick, a teacher at Westminster High School, has received a grant to fund her project, Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?

Students will work to build new chicken pens on the Westminster High School Farm to provide access to real-life business opportunities in agriculture. Students will raise laying hens and sell the eggs on campus to the teachers and staff members.

The egg containers will be printed with information about where the eggs were laid, the California poultry industry, and jokes to help make the information relatable to the buyers. The students involved with the project will also host poultry information sessions at local events.

Better Support Can Help More New Teachers Survive

(Continued from page 12)

young teachers.

Those of us that have been in the profession for two decades or more must recognize that times have changed since we became agriculture teachers. I am not suggesting that we need to coddle our new teachers. However, we do need to support them, encourage them, mentor them, communicate with them, and as we do with our students, set them up for success.

Simple Changes

To do this we must be willing to change. We should always make decisions that are best for our program, which means the decision that is best for the students.

Many of these things are simple. Try to limit the number of preps for a new teacher to only two if possible. Assign them courses that they are best equipped to excel at engaging students. After they become acclimated in a couple of years, they can challenge themselves with additional preparations.

If you have a new teacher who was a state champion as a FFA member, let them coach that CDE. If they have exemplary skills related to SAEs, put them in a position to benefit your students.

Maybe the greatest thing that you can do is to teach young teachers how to become reflective. This is something I did not learn to do well until late in my tenure in agriculture education.

Working for Student Success

We all want what is best for our students. What is best is for programs to have everyone working to maximize student opportunities for success. We often get comfortable doing the same things year after year. Change can be refreshing; otherwise, we can just be insane.

Look for the Aggie Annex online at www.calagteachers.org/GoldenSlate.html
Enter your great teaching ideas in this year’s Idea Show at CATA Summer Conference.

There are 10 areas to enter:

- Ag Production/Processing & Products
- Ag Mechanics
- Ornamental Horticulture
- Natural Resources/Rural Recreation/Forestry
- Ag Science/Farm Labs
- Departmental Operations
- FFA Operations
- SAE
- Working with Support Groups (i.e. Ag Advisory, Ag Boosters, etc.)
- Floral Design
- Ag Business

Bring your entries to the Farm Shop (Building 09) on the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo campus between 7:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Remember, a lot of demos and class activities are based on handouts or displays. All of these would make great entries for the Idea Show. You can’t win if you don’t enter!

Awards

Monetary awards for first through third places in each area are:

- First: $15
- Second: $12
- Third: $8

The entry selected as the overall outstanding idea is awarded an additional $50 cash prize.

See you with your entries at Summer Conference!
# 2015 CATA Draft Conference Agenda

**Sunday, June 21**
- 9:00 Executive Committee Meeting
- 11:00 to 2:30 Governing Board Meeting
- 1:30 Vision 2030 Committee Meeting
- 2:30 New Teacher Meeting
- 3:15 Secondary Division Executive Committee Meeting
- 3:15 Post Secondary Council Meeting
- 3:30 CATA Scholarship Judging
- 4:45 Pre-Conference Registration Meeting
- 5:00 to 7:00 Welcome Reception & Conference Registration - OH Unit Arboretum

**Monday, June 22**
- 7:00 Registration at the Performing Arts Center
- 8:00 Opening Session
- 10:00 Regional Meetings
- 11:30 Alumni Luncheons
- 1:00 Joint Division Meeting
- 2:30 Post Secondary Division Meeting
- Following above meeting:
  - Student Activities
  - Inservice
  - Curriculum
- 2:30 Secondary Division Mtg.
- 4:00 Operations & Secondary Division Meetings
  - Budget & Audit
  - Student Activities
  - Nominations, Bylaws & Professional Awards
  - Curriculum
- 4:00 Post Secondary Division Landscape Irrigation Curriculum Meeting

**Tuesday, June 23**
- 5:30 Chico State Alumni Social
- 6:30 Conference Reception
- 7:00 Bowling

**Wednesday, June 24**
- 6:30 5K Run
- 7:00 Prayer Breakfast
- 7:00 Post Secondary Council Breakfast Meeting
- 9:00 General Assembly
  - Retiring Teachers
  - Hall of Fame Presentation
  - CATA Service Certificates
  - National FFA
  - Nomination Speeches
  - Division Reports
  - 12:00 20+/Past Presidents/Retiring Teachers/Hall of Fame Luncheon
  - 1:30 Professional Sessions-Draft
    - The Science of Food Safety
    - Public Speaking
    - School Farms
    - National FFA
    - Identification Techniques for Crop Contests - Veg & Agronomy
    - Shed Building for Instruction & Profit
    - CEV Student Certification
- 5:30 Pre-Banquet Social
- 6:00 Banquet

**Thursday, June 25**
- 8:30 Regional Meetings
- 10:00 General Assembly
  - Speaker
  - Honorary American Farmers
  - Recreation Awards
  - Membership Awards
  - New Teachers - Express ThemSelfie - Awards
  - Idea Show Awards
  - Farm Show Report
  - Election Results
  - Officer Installation
- 12:00 CATA 2015–16 Governing Board Planning Session
- 1:30 Professional Sessions-Draft
  - Agriskills Classes Begin (June 25 and June 26)
2015 Calendar of Activities

May 2.................................................................State FFA Judging Finals.................................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 21............................................................Executive Committee Meeting..........................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 21............................................................Pre-Conference Governing Board.....................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 21–25.........................................................CATA Summer Conference .......................................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 25..............................................................Governing Board Summer Retreat........................San Luis Obispo

2015 CATA Conference
June 21–25, 2015

Agriskills
June 25–26, 2015

Registration available at

www.calagteachers.org