New ‘Mod Squad’ Leaders Supportive of Ag Education

By Jim Aschwanden, Executive Director

As this edition of the Golden Slate goes to press, political activities in Sacramento are heating up. The resignation of Assembly Member Henry Perea instigated a shift in leadership within the Assembly, with Assembly Members Cooper and Salas taking over as leaders of the “Mod Squad” — a loose coalition of moderate Democrats who tend to be a bit more business-friendly than some of their peers. This group has had some success in influencing the passage of bills, and is a force that cannot be ignored within the Capitol. Both of these new leaders have been highly supportive of Ag Education and the FFA organization, and we look forward to working with them in the future.

January also is the time when other significant political events occur — the return of the Legislature back to Sacramento, and the release of the Governor’s budget proposal for the upcoming 2016–17 fiscal year. With state revenues remaining healthy, it would appear that additional funds will be devoted to educational priorities and programs, and we can only hope that the Governor and Legislature devote a portion of these dollars to supporting Career Technical Education (CTE) in a sustainable way.

Career Technical Education Funding

The CATA, along with its partners in the GetREAL coalition, will continue to seek additional funds to support the CTE Incentive Grant program and other initiatives that enable us to do our important work. There continues to be growing recognition within the halls of the Capitol for the need to foster and support Career Technical Education — we just need to see meaningful action taken.

As we move forward this spring, we should see additional movement to disburse funds via the Career Technical Education Incentive Grant. This process has taken much longer than originally planned, but hopefully this indicates a desire to do it “right.” We know that some districts will attempt to apply for funds for non-CTE programs and courses, and others will not complete the steps necessary to meet the program quality criteria identified (Continued on page 2)
Record Attendance

Leadership conferences at an all-time high. This is a tribute and activities such as the New road shows, regional meetings far this year, with attendance at opportunities in record numbers so members have taken advantage of professional development opportunities. Time will tell….

Multiple Evaluations

Unlike other teachers, which are only evaluated by their principal, agricultural education teachers are formally evaluated by administrators (twice a year), California Department of Education regional supervisors (informally through applications and participation in CATA), and community members and peers. The administrator evaluates the agricultural education teacher on their classroom effectiveness, the regional supervisors and the community evaluate the success and participation of the students in the FFA and quality of SAEs, and peers evaluate their personal participation in the professional organization (CATA).

Many of the young professionals in agricultural education have had limited or no participation in FFA and do not realize all the opportunities there are for their students, and none of the teachers know anything about CATA, unless we invite them into the organization and encourage their participation.

Mentoring

When you accept the responsibility of supervising a student teacher, there is an expectation from the universities that you will mentor the student teacher in the classroom and your department will get them excited about the opportunities there are in the CATA and NAAE for personal and career growth and recognition. But, first and foremost, the option — we need to grow our own if our programs hope to stay viable in the future. Take a few moments during the craziness of field days, fairs, and other opportunities to talk to your students about entering the profession — as Dr. McCabe frequently points out, ‘The program you save may be your own’!

Finally, I would like to encourage those of you who desire to take a leadership role within our profession by running for sectional, regional, or state office this spring. Yes, it involves some personal time commitment and may make your life a bit more complicated, but the personal growth and leadership development you will experience are well worth the price. Many of you encourage your students to “step up” — perhaps it’s time for you to do the same.

Have a fun, productive spring season!

Sacramento Scene

New ‘Mod Squad’ Leaders Supportive of Ag Education

(Continued from page 1)

in the legislation.

We can only hope that the California Department of Education has the fortitude and leadership to hold all districts accountable for meeting the requirements of the grant. These few dollars are too vital for our programs to tolerate being hijacked by district bureaucrats for their own use instead of serving the students who want and need our coursework and programs. Time will tell…. Record Attendance

In the meantime, the Ag Education profession continues to grow and prosper. CATA members have taken advantage of professional development opportunities in record numbers so far this year, with attendance at road shows, regional meetings and activities such as the New Professionals and Advanced Leadership conferences at an all-time high. This is a tribute to your dedication and desire to grow as a classroom teacher, and should prepare you to take advantage of the opportunities to grow your program and do a better job of meeting the needs of students in your community. As we enter the season of career development events, field days, fairs, and other opportunities for students, keep in mind that your enthusiasm and positive outlook are vital in motivating your students to do their best.

Mentor Others

As we enter this busy season, please remember to continue to support and mentor others in our profession. Your willingness to assist others goes a long way in maintaining the health and vitality of our profession, and makes it much easier to get through the challenges of being an effective ag teacher. Also continue to encourage your students to consider Ag Education as a career option — we need to grow our own if our programs hope to stay viable in the future. Take a few moments during the craziness of field days, fairs, and other opportunities to talk to your students about entering the profession — as Dr. McCabe frequently points out, “The program you save may be your own”!

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Be a Mentor and Friend in Agricultural Education

By Dr. Lynn Martindale, Teacher Educator, University of California Davis

We were all once newly credentialed teachers, but I can tell you when I was credentialed in 1985, we only had one test to pass, the CBEST. Many of my friends had trouble with that test, and were prevented from student teaching until it was passed. Once hired, we basically had to stay out of trouble until the beginning of our third year of teaching and we earned tenure. We did have continuing education requirements of 150 hours every five years to renew our credentials. It seemed much simpler then.

Today, a newly credentialed teacher must pass or meet the equivalency of CBEST, go through a waiver program in agricultural or pass the CSET, and pass the State Required Standard Based Portfolio for credentialing (PACT, EdTPA and Credentialing Portfolio) before they complete the credentialing program. Once the newly credentialed agricultural education teachers are hired, they juggle the complex requirements of a new teacher and understanding agricultural education, having a mentor may be the key to the agricultural education teacher’s success and retention.

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(Continued from page 2)
classroom must be mastered. Then we move on to giving them more and more responsibility outside of the classroom.

When the student teacher is looking for a position, please encourage them to make a pro/con list of what they want at their first school: one of the pros should be a supportive administration of the agricultural department; another is supportive colleagues that will guide and mentor the newly hired teacher, not give them everything they don’t want to do.

Attrition

If a young professional goes into his or her first position, not feeling confident about the classroom there is a much higher attrition. According to Norton (1999) a “satisfied teacher is far more likely to find personal self-fulfillment...” in teaching than one who is not satisfied with “…working conditions, administrative leadership and support, school climate, teacher autonomy, student behavior and parental support” (p. 53). When a teacher is dissatisfied with one or more of the above-mentioned conditions there is a greater chance for teacher turnover.

Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) state there are three types of teacher turnover: attrition, teacher area transfer and migration. Voluntary attrition is when teachers leave the classroom for any reason, including going to other educational positions, such as counseling, administration, or district office positions. It is projected that within the first five years of teaching, one-third of all teachers leave due to attrition.

According to Whittington, McConnell, and Knobloch (2006), in the first three years of teaching, “two factors that have a significant impact on teacher efficacy are the number of class preparations the teacher is responsible for and the perceived excellence of the student teaching experience” (p. 36). In addition, beginning agricultural education teachers struggle with the stresses and frustration that accompany of a new profession, ultimately adversely affecting their self-efficacy (Knoblock and Whittington, 2002).

In agricultural education, it is acceptable and even encouraged for young teachers to go to another school to see if they could be more successful. Walker, Graton and Kitchel (2004) identify factors that have a positive effect on agricultural education teachers “achievement, advancement, recognition, responsibility and the work itself” (p. 29). Factors having a positive effect on teachers, also that influence self-efficacy of teachers and desire to remain in education (Cochran-Smith, Cannady, McEachern, Piazza, Power and Ryan, 2011).

There are many challenges to professionals in agricultural education, especially those just beginning the profession. Below are four challenges to become mentors and friends in Agricultural Education: 1) Supervisors of Student Teachers, 2) CATA Sectional Officers, 3) Experienced Teachers (anyone with more than 5 years’ experience) and 4) Young Teachers.

Challenge #1 – Supervisors of Student Teachers

Supervisors of student teachers are charged with holding the most important leadership role in our profession: molding young professionals. Preparing them to be excellent classroom teachers. Helping the young professional to have a positive attitude about the classroom, advising FFA activities, supervising SAE projects, and attending and participating in CATA events and activities. The supervisor of student teachers has one of the largest impacts on their attitude toward all areas of the profession of agricultural education.

Offer to assist a young teacher who is struggling with the classroom, application, team, or SAE. Be a role model for the young professionals.

Challenge #2 – CATA Sectional Officers

CATA Sectional Officers, please reach out to all new teachers in your section by making them feel welcome at every sectional event. Carpooling to CATA meetings is one way to get to know new teachers in your section. Also, be kind—don’t railroad them into positions of leadership until they are ready. At least wait until they have tenure.

Challenge #3 – Experienced Teachers

(Continued on page 4)
Is the Discovery FFA Degree on the Way?

By Hugh Mooney, Consultant, Department of Education

Just as agriculture teachers are given “other duties as assigned,” members of the State Staff have similar assignments. Some of those other duties are attending events or providing a message and a presence on behalf of the State Advisor. Other duties are to provide answers for the profession. One such assignment was FFA membership for seventh and eighth grade agricultural education students. This other duty has created many questions to be answered.

Some have asked why this change is being considered. As was the case with membership for agricultural education students attending private schools, the issue is being discussed because people in the field asked why we do not allow membership for these students. Federal Carl D. Perkins funding can be used to support Career Technical Education (CTE) programs at the middle school level provided that they meet the requirements for a CTE program.

To meet the leadership development requirement, students must be members of an approved Career Technical Student Organization (CTSO) or provide a similar opportunity for their students that provides the opportunity for involvement beyond the local level.

This same requirement exists for the CTE Incentive Grant applications that many of your districts have recently submitted. For the Agriculture and Natural Resources Industry Sector, the approved CTSO is FFA. After several contacts from district and site administrators asking about the “Discovery” FFA Degree, it was decided that it was time to consider middle school FFA membership.

Open Committee

I was asked to head a committee to look into what would be the benefits and challenges of extending membership to seventh and eighth grade agricultural education students. This is not a closed committee, so if you are interested in being involved, let me know. After gathering information, a conference call with interested people, discussions with teachers currently teaching agriculture in middle schools, it was time to make a decision. Either the FFA members in California will want to extend membership to seventh and eighth grade students, or they do not.

It was my opinion that there was no benefit to invest significant time in developing guidelines for middle school membership if FFA members do not vote to expand membership. At the State Staff meeting in September, it was decided to submit a constitutional proposal to the members. If the State FFA Executive Committee decides to place this question before the members, then they will vote in April.

More Decisions

What would happen next?

If the members vote no, then nothing will change. Should the members approve the change that would allow seventh and eighth grade membership, then others will have decisions to make.

The State Staff will need to decide how the following statement applies to middle school agricultural education. “Be regularly enrolled in an agriculture education course for an agricultural occupation and have satisfactory and acceptable plans for a program of supervised agricultural experience.”

What will be the course requirements? What will be the SAE requirements? What will be the FFA Leadership Development requirements? The committee will continue to discuss these issues to provide a recommendation to the State Staff.

Next CATA will need to make decisions related to the comment that Discovery FFA members will be allowed to participate in. At the national level, seventh, eighth, and ninth grade members have been allowed to participate in Agriscience Fair, Creed, and Novice Parliamentary Procedure. This committee has had some discussions on this issue and will continue to do so to provide recommendations.

Finding Teachers

The big challenge will be finding teachers. The committee has had some discussions related to this issue. Though they do not have answers, there are some ideas. For example, if Discovery Degree members are limited in terms of the activities they can be involved in above the section level, there may be an opportunity to bring back some qualified teachers who have decided to step away from agriculture teaching because of the time commitment outside of the classroom. If this were limited to some section activities and maybe a trip to the State FFA convention, some of these teachers may be recruited back to agricultural education in middle schools.

Should the members approve FFA membership for seventh and eighth grade students, the decision to offer such programs will be made locally. I am certain that if approved, some schools would have a Discovery Degree ceremony in the fall. Other schools will decide to continue with only FFA at the high school level. If approved, schools will need to decide if they will have their own middle school chapter or be part of the existing chapter. If the members approve the change, we will have much work to do. If not, programs will continue as they are. I am sure the members will give this issue the attention it deserves.

Teacher Educator News

Be a Mentor and Friend

(Continued from page 3) do makes a tremendous impact on the students that go through our programs.

We want to fill all of the open positions in California with qualified agricultural teachers that will continue to offer opportunities in the classroom, through FFA activities and SAE projects. People who will continue to make a difference in the lives of every student that goes through their classroom.


News and Views

Big Experiences in The Big Easy
By Anna Bates, San Luis Obispo High School

From November 17 through November 21, five South Coast Region teachers attended the 2015 National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) convention in New Orleans, Louisiana. This national agricultural education professional development event included general sessions for all six regions, awards ceremonies for award recipients, numerous workshops for teachers at all stages of their teaching career, and opportunities for networking with industry professionals all over the country. This convention took place in conjunction with the Association of Career & Technical Education (ACTE).

One of the days of the convention was dedicated to a large career tech expo with vendors promoting everything from industrial arts supplies, science lab software, and robotics activities, to accessing certifications and how to incorporate science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) into your mechanics classrooms.

Workshops
As attendees of this convention, we were able to attend three full days of over 60 workshops relating to our content areas. Workshops varied from 30-minute “Snap” sessions to up to two-hour “Deep Dive” sessions, depending on the presenter.

Topics of workshops included several STEM-oriented science labs, the history of FFA, classroom engagement strategies, math skills in agriculture careers, inquiry-based learning, using aerial drones in the classroom, global food security, best practices for school work release programs, and much more.

Programs for Ag Teachers
The NAAE provides several special programs for agriculture teachers to promote furthering their skills in the classroom.

✓ The National Agriscience Teacher Ambassador program is a week-long academy to help develop inquiry-based learning techniques and to enhance current science teaching strategies.

✓ The Teacher Turns the Key scholarship program is a unique program for second, third, and fourth year teachers to help new teachers with early professional development.

✓ The XLR8 Experience Teacher Program is for teachers who have been in the classroom for 7–15 years, and is aimed at mentorship and retention of teachers for agricultural education.

2016 Convention in Las Vegas
This convention is definitely worth investing your time and energy behind. The opportunities for growth, collaboration, social networking, and a nationwide look at agricultural education makes this an opportunity everyone should take advantage of. The 2016 National NAAE Convention is in Las Vegas, November 29–December 3, 2016.

For more information about NAAE membership, the convention and/or special professional development programs offered, visit the NAAE website at www.naae.org.
Expand Your Resources with NAAE

By Chris McKenna, CATA Operations Division Chair

I have always taken part in CATA and embraced as many opportunities that I could, since I first started my teaching career. This year I had an amazing opportunity to attend the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) Convention. Although I knew NAAE was similar to CATA, I had never attended anything that NAAE has put on.

After hearing from teachers who have gone to NAAE in the past about some of the great professional development opportunities at the convention, I decided that I wanted to go see the convention for myself. The enthusiasm that my fellow CATA members came back with after attending was what encouraged me to attend and to see what NAAE had to offer.

Many Workshops

I had a great experience while at convention; I was very impressed with the vast number of workshops that were available for every teacher to choose from. Over the course of four days, there were over 100 workshops offered on a wide variety of topics.

The workshops were put on by other high school agriculture teachers, college instructors, and industry professionals.

Ideas to Use

I have always told myself that if there is one thing that I take back and utilize in my classroom, my time was well spent.

What makes me happy is that I was able to pull multiple ideas from this convention that I will be implementing in my classroom and our agriculture program.

Network of Teachers

I also got to create quite the network of ag teacher friends from across the nation. A few California teachers and I got to meet teachers from Alaska, Montana, Oregon, Georgia and Idaho.

We ate dinner with them during convention and had conversations about agriculture in everybody’s states, as well as got to know them as individuals.

Attending this convention was a great experience and I am grateful for the opportunity. I am very excited about future opportunities with NAAE and cannot wait to attend more NAAE events in the future.

The past few years, California has had only a handful of members attend the NAAE Convention. This year we had 13 people.

Get the Experience

For those who have not had an opportunity to get involved, I highly encourage you to get the experience of the NAAE convention. This year it is in Las Vegas, November 29–December 3, 2016, and I hope that California can be well-represented and increase our involvement in NAAE.
Corporate Membership

Our Corporate Members are listed with a brief description of their products on the next few pages. We encourage your patronage of our Corporate Members, as they have shown a commitment to supporting agricultural education in California.

If you are aware of any others who may be interested in this type of membership, call (209) 744-1614 or email cata@calagteachers.org so we may send pertinent information.

Honorary American Degree Recipients: Pictured (from left): Mike Mederos, Clemente Ayon, Kim Arntz, Scott Duffin, and Matt Patton. Not pictured: Darol Fishman, Mark Nower, and George Wold

National VIP Award Recipients: Each year, at the National FFA Convention & Expo, those who have made outstanding contributions to FFA are honored with VIP awards. In 2015, Bill Kellogg (left) and Jean Landeen (right) were both honored for their many years of dedicated service to FFA and agricultural education.

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Animal Health Products Distributor
Strictly Ag Mechanics:
The Common Core/‘Bore’
By Mark Perkins, Willows High School

After a really nice industry tour last weekend with a stop at COE Orchard Equipment in Live Oak, I was struck by the comments our presenter made. He’s a really sharp Cal Poly ag engineering and local ag program graduate. He told us that all the college stuff he learned is useful to him on his job, but all the time he spent in his high school ag shop really is the most useful part of his education.

We, of course, have always known this, but in the age of “old is new again” in education, I think it is important, as ag mechanics teachers, to not lose sight of emphasizing to our students how our subject area relates. First there are the things we teach that are common to the real world of ag mechanics, such as the designing and building of equipment that actually works for farmers, like they do at COE. Build, refine and rebuild. Never a one and done process.

Secondly, there are the things that we teach that are common to the “core classes” on our own campuses and even at the college level. I will disclaim of other core subject materials there is no limit to application cross over to shop stuff, but really fun in that.

I AM learning/relearning new things so there is some intrinsic fun in that.

Math and science naturally crossover to shop stuff, but really there is no limit to application of other core subject materials in ag mechanics. I will disclaim being an expert on what the new common core is all about, but I do positively know that problem-solving skills in students from middle school to the university level, especially those that involve higher-level thinking skills, are not very strong!

Ag Mechanics in Disguise
I have been so “blessed” to having the opportunity (one and done each year) to teach World History, Math 9, Ag Math and now this year, Chemistry. Wood shop classes of course. Yet I find it hard not to see what I’ve always known, that in these core subjects, much of what I was teaching is really ag mechanics in disguise. And vice versa.

It’s a pain to prep new stuff, but I AM learning/relearning new things so there is some intrinsic fun in that.

Math problems are really no different than facing a pile of wood supplies and then measuring, marking, cutting and building a shop project. Not as fun, I guess....

Physics/Chemistry
Small engine lessons on ignition systems and charging systems are really physics and chemistry disguised in a small engine. Magnets, coils of wire and batteries make really nice teaching tools for teaching about electrical systems on engines, but they are really the electron theory and transition metal properties found on the Periodic Table.

Batteries teach periodic trends and ionization energies. Don’t forget to mention metalloids (C-D ignition coils) because of their role in the things that are so near and dear to our students—namely cell phones and computers.

Carburetors are examples of the Bernoulli and Venturi principles and exactly why airplanes fly. Physics.

Fuels and lubricants are great examples of fractional distillation. Combustion is a basic reactants and products chemistry reaction.

Nest boxes for owls, bats, ducks and song birds are biology and natural resource lessons.

‘Practical Core Skills’
Much more could be added for examples of cross-over “core stuff,” but there are the “practical core skills” of ag mechanics that need to be taught as well.

As an example of what I mean by “practical core skills,” back in the day as a student, I ran the small engines contest at UC Davis. In setting up the troubleshooting, I pulled the valve

It is not so much that the Common Core is new to any of us; it is that references in our lessons need to specifically and tirelessly mention where our lesson fit into the “core classes” and at regular, obvious intervals.

Something I might have said in both Ag Power and World History: “The invention of the mechanical flyweight governor, like the one on your engine, helped to shape the Industrial Revolution...Without it engines could not stay at the right speeds to do the intended job and this is what your governor does on your engine.”

(Continued on page 13)
(Continued from page 12)

spring retainers off the valves. I did this mostly because it’s easy to do, but also I wanted to simulate problems with the valves, thus generating thoughtful diagnosis, something unexpected but related. (Of course I could have pulled the valves and beat them with a hammer.)

Complaints at the critique were that this would “never happen in real life.” Possibly true, but simulated symptoms of valve trouble added higher-level thinking skills maybe never seen before in the contest.

Planning for Projects

Another example is once again from our industry tours this past weekend. Our recent tour highlighted one of my pet peeves, and that is the lack of emphasis in the use of accurate plans and complete bill of materials when building projects.

Not much of what we saw at COE and OMC in Yuba City was left to chance! It simply costs businesses too much money to do trial and error. Planning, drafting, reading plans and making adjustments in problem areas, thus “coloring inside the lines,” was abundantly evident at these businesses and of course applied higher-level thinking skills.

Yet what do you do when it’s not exactly like it’s drawn up? Or what do you do when you know the design is not going to work? Here is where the “practical core skills” or “real world skills” are used and we must be obvious and deliberate in teaching them.

It’s not enough to only have a fixed and known set of problems (aka lists of what can be “broken”) to troubleshoot in a small engines contest. In the same way, it is not very useful to only build projects that do not need to fit design specifications in an ag mechanics class.

Planning for Projects (Continued)

It is not so much that the Common Core is new to any of us; it is that references in our lessons need to specifically and tirelessly mention where our lesson fit into the “core classes” and at regular, obvious intervals.

Something I might have said in both Ag Power and World History:

“The invention of the mechanical flyweight governor, like the one on your engine, helped to shape the Industrial Revolution... Without it engines could not stay at the right speeds to do the intended job and this is what your governor does on your engine.”

Of course it would be nice if that was also said in the other world history classes too, but don’t count on it.

On the other hand, let’s be sure to teach the exact governor adjusting procedures found in the manual for your engine and don’t be afraid to hold your student accountable for doing it exactly as specified.

Slip the valve spring retainers. Crazy stuff happens.
News and Views

Educational Survival Tips for First-Year Agriculture Teachers

By Dr. Lloyd McCabe, Program Manager, California Department of Education

I don’t know about you… but I hate to fly. I subscribe to that time-honored axiom that if “man was meant to fly, then God would have given him wings.” Unfortunately, here I am again, on Southwest Airline Flight #655, traveling at 600 mph at an altitude of 32,000 feet above seawater. Oh, the pain of it all!

I think my fear of flying has something to do with my concept of death.

It galls me to no end that if the plane crashes, the only vestige of my existence is the pilot’s last immortal words on the “black box” called a flight data recorder. As we all know, normally the pilot either becomes “very religious” or says a few “expletives deleted.”

This fear of flying can bring out your worst primal emotions and interestingly enough is very similar to what I believe many first-year agriculture teachers experience on the job.

Now veteran agriculture teachers will tell you that it is a “rite of passage” for first-year agriculture teachers to encounter a few bumps in the road. But these “bumps in the road” can cause any sane teacher to jump off the deep end and perhaps even quit the profession.

First-Year ‘Bumps’

Listed below are some of the bumps that I have heard from first-year teachers over and over:

✔ First day on the job… no curriculum, no lesson plans, and no visible instructional support to be found anywhere in the agriculture department!

✔ For those of you who replaced a popular teacher who left the program… students constantly telling you that Mr. Smith never did it that way! Worst yet, juniors and seniors questioning your fitness as a teacher and refusing to participate in activities that you organize.

✔ For those of you who come into an agriculture program that has had numerous staff departures… encountering students who are unmotivated and have never been disciplined in or outside the walls of the classroom.

✔ For those of you who become department chairs during your first year… the avalanche of paperwork required from you by the school, ROP/Cs, and California Department of Education.

✔ During school orientation, the principal informing the faculty and you to “do more with less” and “we are going to hold each of you accountable for the successful performance of every student!”

There are of course many other examples, but I think by now you get the picture.

So the question remains, what can young agriculture teachers do to successfully survive their first year?

Tips for Survival

Listed below are a few helpful tips for survival:

1 Always be prepared in the classroom. Be sure to have your lesson plans done and remember that the classroom is “Job One” in the eyes of your administrators.

2 In dealing with students — always be fair, but firm in dealing with discipline problems. Remember that administrators prefer that teachers “skin their own skunks!”

3 Don’t try to do everything at once! As a first-year teacher, your goal is to learn the school system, learn from your mistakes, and learn to survive.

4 Prioritize! Make sure that the important school “paper stuff” is accurately completed and done in a timely fashion. Teachers who fail to live up to their school obligations can easily annoy site administrators.

5 Students first, in all decisions! When making tough decisions affecting your program, always ask yourself this question: “Is it good for students?” If the answer is “no,” then you probably are making the wrong decision.

6 Don’t isolate yourself from the rest of the campus. A common mistake that agriculture teachers make is that they stay within the confines of the agriculture department and rarely venture outside to meet other teachers on their campus. This isolationist tendency is not healthy for your program or your own professional growth!

7 Perception is reality! Always keep the agriculture department, classroom, and school farm laboratory neat and clean. The quickest way to erode administrative, parent and community support is for you to convey the perception that the agriculture program is a “junk yard.”

8 Always maintain a positive attitude in front of your students! Students invariably mimic or model their teachers. If you become “negative,” then all of a sudden you have an entire program full of negative students.

9 Never criticize your district or site administrators in front of students, parents or the community. Remember: “Loose lips sink ships!”

10 Be professionally involved! All educational research has shown that teachers who are professionally involved become more effective and successful classroom teachers.

11 Honesty is the best policy. Just because you are a teacher doesn’t mean you are expected to know everything! If you don’t know, be honest with the person you are dealing with and say, “I don’t know, but I will try to find out the answer.” The quickest way to undermine your credibility is to tell a “lie” about a given subject because your pride won’t allow you to say, “I don’t know.”

12 Never take anything personally as an educator! If you encounter a belligerent student or parent who is unhappy about a grade or policy, don’t take their remarks personally and never take this part of the job home with you because it will eat you up inside!

Now of course if any or all 12 tips fail to improve your situation as a first year, you can always do what I do when I fly. I take this doctor-prescribed green pill, and trust me, if that plane ever crashes, I won’t feel a darn thing!
Grooming Leaders in Wonder Valley!

By Lauren Stroud, Vision 2030 Vice-Chair, Red Bluff High School

“Great leadership is not a position or a title, it is action and example!” — Unknown

With the start of a new year comes reflecting, refocusing, and goal setting. Thirty-five ag teachers had the enlightening opportunity to attend the Advanced Leadership Conference in Wonder Valley at the end of 2015—filling our buckets with items to ponder during this time of reflection.

How can I improve as a classroom teacher? Am I content with being a classroom teacher? What level of involvement in CATA do I desire? Do I want to take action and set positive examples for other ag teachers? Questions that take information, guidance, and mentoring to answer and that is exactly what the Advanced Leadership Conference provided!

Information

The conference did an excellent job at disseminating “the good, the bad, and the ugly” of serving as CATA executive director, state staff, teacher educators, and community college teachers. Jim, Lloyd, state staff, teacher educators from Fresno, Davis, and Cal Poly, as well as teachers from Merced and Modesto junior colleges, initially presented to everyone in rotational workshops to provide just enough information for everyone to select one specific profession/role they wanted to learn more about that evening.

The evening workshops provided a more personal look at what these roles truly entail since we were allowed to ask the presenters any questions we had. The information not only gave insight into what our lives would be like if we served one of these roles, but it also enlightened us on what these individuals really do for our profession, day in and day out. I personally walked away with a newfound appreciation for each of these leaders in our profession; what we see them do is just the tip of the iceberg.

Guidance

It would be challenging for any teacher to leave their classroom, their students, and their departments in order to take on one of these leadership roles. Therefore it is crucial that any teacher thinking of doing so has been guided to ensure the right professional decision has been made.

The presenters were open, honest, and did not sugar coat the information in order to effectively guide us through the exploration of these positions, and ultimately deciding if serving one of these leadership roles is the best career path for us.

Our leaders do not want to just fill positions or hand out titles to anyone; they want to guide the right people into the right position; the Advanced Leadership Conference is allowing them to do just that.

Mentors

Successful people do not become successful alone — they have mentors help them along their journey.

After attending this conference, I am confident that we have excellent mentors to support us, motivate us, and encourage us to eventually take over these roles in our profession.

We have a high-quality pool of ag teachers to eventually fill these open seats, and mentors who will help those high-quality teachers become even higher quality leaders.

It Could Be YOU!

The big succession of leaders in our profession is going to happen sooner than we want to believe. This conference was designed to find individuals who will fill those positions.

If you are even remotely considering serving as our executive director, state staff, a teacher educator, or teaching at a community college, I urge you to attend the Advanced Leadership Conference in the future. If it does not put you on a new career path or set new goals, it will at least solidify your decision to stay on the path you are currently on! Stay tuned for information on the 2016 Advanced Leadership Conference!

Cheers to a new year, new goals, and new achievements! And remember...

“Great leadership is not a position or a title, it is action and example!”... This is your year to take action and set positive examples!
## 2015-2016 Calendar of Activities

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<td>June 23</td>
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### 2016 CATA Conference

**June 19-23, 2016**  
**Agriskills June 23-24, 2016**

Registration materials available at [www.calagteachers.org](http://www.calagteachers.org)