Sacramento Scene

Political Bashfest, Funding, Shaping Ag Education

By Jim Aschwanden, CATA Executive Director

The political environment in Sacramento has been a little different so far this year. A substantial amount of time and energy has been spent:

1) Bashing the Trump administration for actual proposed policy shifts;
2) Bashing the Trump administration for potential imagined policy shifts;
3) Bashing the Trump administration for proposed or imagined cuts to their favorite social programs; or
4) Bashing Trump because he isn’t Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton.

Deserved or not, it’s been a nonstop bashfest! Not sure what the final outcome will be, but so far the rhetorical umbrage and drama have been fascinating to watch. Interesting strategy….

Incentive Grant Funding Extension

As we enter the legislative “crunch” time prior to adoption of the budget, the most impactful piece of legislation for our programs is AB 445, authored by Assembly Members Cunningham and O’Donnell. This bill would extend the funding for the Career Technical Education (CTE) Incentive Grant for three additional years, with $300 million available for each of those years.

In addition, it would call for a 1:1 match by local districts over that time. Obviously, this would be very helpful for all CTE programs, including agricultural education. This is a bipartisan bill, with bipartisan support, so we are hopeful it will survive the sausage mill as we move forward.

Budget Concerns

The proposed Governor’s budget is a major focus of concern for us, as it contains language that would result in the loss of $15 million in what we know as SB 1070 funding that has previously gone to the California Department of Education. These funds have supported Partnership Academies, Professional Development activities for CTE instructors, the UC Curriculum Institute, and the Career Tech-
Finding a Mentor — Being a Mentor

By Dave Gossman, CATA President, Atwater High School

Mentoring is a power-free, two-way mutually beneficial learning situation where the mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences, and teaches using a low-pressure, self-discovery approach. The mentor is both a source of information and knowledge.

The first step to success in finding a great mentor is admitting you need one — not always an easy step for individuals used to making it on their own and working alone.

“If you want success then it takes hard work, hard work and more hard work. But it also takes a little help along the way. If you are determined and enthusiastic then people will support you.” (Richard Branson – Virgin)

Start Simply

It is rarely a good idea to ask someone upfront, like “Will you be my mentor?” Identify with successful people, programs, etc… that grab your attention/curiosity and take genuine interest.

Relationships with these people/programs tend to blossom on their own. A mentor-mentee relationship takes time to grow, so start by asking simple advice on one project or problem, and move on from there.

A good mentoring relationship provides new teachers with someone who will share their professional knowledge and expertise in the field. A good mentor is available to answer any questions relevant to the job. Good mentor-mentee relationships are a two way street; consequently, if you want a good relationship with your mentor, become a good mentee. This requires a genuine interest in your mentor and a willingness to do what it takes to become successful as a new teacher in the field.

Following suggestions and recommendations as well as taking advantage of all available resources within the profession is a good way to show your mentor that you are committed to being successful and that you take your career and responsibilities seriously.

Being a Good Mentor

- Be credible: The best mentors are people that have credibility in, and have personally achieved success in, the area you are looking for support. For this reason, most people will seek the guidance of different mentors to help them develop specific skills or qualities, or to help them reach important decisions. Being credible doesn’t mean that you need to have all the answers. The best answers for your mentee will come from their own thinking, with the help of your wisdom to support them.
- Be a positive role model: Good mentors are respected by their mentees. A mentee can learn a lot from their mentor simply by watching how their mentor behaves in any particular situation.

Sacramento Scene

Political Bashfest, Funding, Shaping Ag Education

(Continued from page 1)

Technical Student Organizations (CTSO), among other things.

In the case of CTSO funding, the impact would be a loss of approximately $225,000 for the State FFA organization. This would certainly have a devastating effect on the FFA organization’s ability to pay for State FFA Officer visitations, leadership conferences, and other essential elements of agricultural education. The real disappointment here is that the money isn’t being eliminated from the budget; it’s just being shifted to the Community College Chancellor’s Office to augment other economic development funds. We have been working to get this situation reversed, and are hopeful that common sense will prevail. Feel free to share your concerns with your local legislator!

Moving Ag Education Forward

We do have some exciting opportunities over the next few months to help shape the future of our profession! As you are all aware, program growth and increased student participation have resulted in very real issues regarding Career Development Events and Field Day registration. We also have new state accountability measures that identify student performance and certification as one of the main tenets.

Luckily, we have a core group of dedicated teachers working hard on these issues, and we will be setting time aside at our Summer Conference in June to discuss how our high schools and community colleges can work together to move ag education forward. There are some interesting opportunities to rethink how we can improve access for more of our students, while identifying and validating the acquisition of skills valued by our industry employers. I would encourage all of you to engage in this discussion, and keep an open mind about how we can make ag education even more impactful for our students and the industry employers that rely on our programs.

Summer Conference

We are busy finalizing plans and sessions for the CATA Summer Conference, and we certainly appreciate all of you who have already registered for the event. There were a few bumps along the road due to some website issues, but we recently shifted to a new website provider and things seem to be operating more smoothly. If you haven’t completed your online registration yet, you may want to get that done as quickly as possible. We are facing some deadline dates for ordering meals, so the earlier you have firm numbers, the better. Don’t forget to make those hotel reservations as well—just remember that Summer Conference is a week later this year: June 25–29! Hope all of you are having a fun, productive spring. See you in SLO!
Officers’ Corner

Forced Perspective

By Robin Grundmeyer, CATA President-Elect, Norco High School

I’m sure that we are all familiar with the quote by the Greek philosopher Epictetus: “It is not what happens to you, but how you respond to what happens that dictates your success and happiness.”

Likemany inspirational quotes, they are all fine and dandy in word, but how do we really put them into action...other than hanging a poster on our wall?

Optical Illusion

It may be a matter of “forced perspective.” Forced perspective is defined as a technique which employs optical illusion to make an object appear farther away, closer, larger, or smaller than it actually is.

One of the single greatest examples of forced perspective is Main Street, USA in Disneyland.

The architecture is extraordinary; it gives the feeling that the buildings are larger than life! Guests are immersed in this special place that becomes the reality for the day.

All of this “pixie dust” is accomplished through scale. The first floor of the buildings on Main Street is full scale, the second floor is ¾ scale, and the third floor is at ½ scale. All of this works together to make the castle at the end of Main Street seem farther than it really is.

Lessons from Walt

What if we used the idea of forced perspective as we looked at the situations in our daily lives?

In the book The Wisdom of Walt: Leadership Lessons from the Happiest Place on Earth by Jeffrey Barnes, he talks about living an “inverted” life.

Instead of focusing our energy on daily problems and obstacles, we should spend the majority of our time in thanksgiving and gratitude.

Mr. Barnes says that our lives should stack up like this:

The first floor in full scale should be filled with gratitude, thanksgiving, and appreciation.

Our second floor at ¾ scale should be our visions, dreams, goals, successes, aspirations, and accomplishments.

The third and final floor at ½ scale should be our problems, challenges, difficulties, and obstacles.

He goes on to state, “You always get more of whatever it is”

(Continued on page 4)

Finding a Mentor — Being a Mentor

(Continued from page 2)

Finding a Mentor — Being a Mentor

A mentoring relationship is a very personal one, which is often very important to the mentee, so, as a mentor, you need to get to know your mentee personally, about their hopes and dreams, so you can help them in a way that meets their personal best interest.

For this reason, a parent is often not a good mentor for their child, as their parenting relationship and emotional connection will influence their guidance. That’s not to say that a parent can never provide a mentoring moment for their child — they can — however, a parent can’t be as objective as a person who is independent of the parenting role. In the same way, a manager is also not the best person to mentor someone on their team, as they’ll often have a conflict of interest to contend with, between what is in the best interest of each individual and what’s in the best interest of their team.

- Be genuinely interested in your mentee as an individual:
  A mentoring relationship is a very personal one, which is often very important to the mentee, so, as a mentor, you need to get to know your mentee personally, about their hopes and dreams, so you can help them in a way that meets their personal best interest.

- Share your experiences and insights:
  In doing so, choose stories that you feel are appropriate and helpful, but do so in a neutral way, without any attachment to how your mentee will use this learning. Be open to sharing your mistakes and failures too, as these are often where our biggest lessons are learned. It will also help your mentee be aware that challenges will arise, and the way you dealt with the situation might also help them gain insight about how to build resilience.

- Ask open questions:
  Asking your mentee open questions will help you as a mentor to identify their real needs, values and passions. It’s also a great way to get your mentee to think through situations themselves and draw out the consequences of the various choices or courses of action they can take. During these conversations, you can share your wisdom, without making decisions for your mentee. That’s their job.

- Act as a sounding board:
  Mentees benefit greatly from the opportunity of having a good mentor listen to them. Allow them to explore their thoughts and ideas openly with you. This will often help them unravel their thinking and gain insights about a situation as they share their concerns with you.

- Provide a fresh perspective:
  One of the benefits of working with a mentor is that a good mentor will often provide their mentee with a fresh perspective on an issue. A good mentor will often have the clarity of distance from an issue or problem that’s needed to provide objective feedback to their mentee. They can also hold up a “mirror” to the mentee to, for example, let the mentee see what their behavior looks like to others.

- Offer your advice, but only if your mentee asks for it:
  It can be very tempting for a mentor to jump in and offer advice before a mentee has actually asked for it, especially when you’ve dealt with a similar situation yourself. Being a sounding board for your mentee, allowing them to discuss the situation with you, then helping them to think through the situation by asking them questions to draw out the consequences of various actions, is always more empowering for a mentee than advising them what to do. It helps them work through the issue and come to their own conclusions. By doing so, you ultimately help them to learn to think through issues themselves and trust their own judgement, both valuable life skills.
Growing Pains Require New Ways of Thinking
By Monique Reid, Hilmar High School Ag Department

Although the spring is crazy busy and by the end of April I no longer know what year it is, there is an aspect of the season I do look forward to. Seeing many of the friends and past students I have worked with over the years is a great break from the daily grind of due dates.

The conversations in many of these meetings revolve around struggles stemming from a continual increase in FFA membership, which has increased the level of participation in almost every opportunity FFA offers.

While this is a great problem to have, it does result in frustration for those of us trying to navigate the system. Whether it be trying to register for a field day at midnight or trying to get into a leadership conference closer to home, we are all competing for limited spaces.

In order to accommodate the new state of the union, I challenge you to be willing to think outside of your box. We can’t keep doing FFA the same way we did in 1995 and expect to service thousands of more students.

Making Opportunities
One of the biggest concerns I hear about are the challenges surrounding Career Development Event (CDE) competitions and the limited space available for the number of students who want to participate.

Over the years, the number of universities and junior colleges with agriculture departments have remained relatively static. Many of the individuals in these ag departments have retired or are on the verge of retirement. New staff coming in may not have any knowledge about FFA, let alone CDE competitions.

The 1995 mindset tells us that competitions are the responsibility of the university or junior college. So we drop our kids off and head to get something to eat. While this mindset may still work for some competitions, like state finals, we (high school teachers) need to be willing to take on more of a role if we continue to want opportunities for our students to participate and compete.

Helping Fill the Gaps
I commend teachers who have stepped in to help fill the gaps when retirement has left a contest without direction or have offered to host a new competition at their site. I encourage all of us to look for opportunities to help facilitate existing competitions and add new opportunities.

More competitions would be able to accommodate more students at more locations. More hands being willing to help make less work for all involved, therefore making the whole experience a little easier to execute.

2020 thinking: How can I help?

Making Improvements
I would like to commend Josiah Mayfield and Zane Sheehan for being willing to think outside the box to try and solve the challenges that a growing membership has placed on the leadership conferences offered by FFA. They increased the number of Greenhand Conferences offered.

They are attempting to meet the ever-growing Made for Excellence (MFE) demand by separating it from the Advanced Leadership Academy allowing MFE more spots. They took the challenge of accommodating more members in the Sacramento Leadership Experience by utilizing the senate and assembly.

In order to meet the enthusiasm for the State Leadership Conference they are looking at alternate sites that can accommodate a larger group.

All of the proposed changes require that we do things differently from what we have done before. We cannot continue to accommodate hundreds of more students on a model that was developed 20 to 30 years ago for a lot fewer students.

2020 thinking: How do we make it better?

Using Technology
A shout out to all of you who have waded into the world of Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET). The learning curve has been steep and I don’t think any of us has mastered it yet, but in the end it is a more interactive and realistic way of approaching recordkeeping.

While many of us can still whip out a paper book with our eyes closed, AET offers more features for both students and teachers, and utilizes technology they are more likely to encounter in today’s workplace. It also offers a more standardized approach to electronic recordkeeping.

2020 thinking: How can I use technology to do things better?

Ways to Contribute
As we move through this new era of record membership and anticipation that this trend continues, I encourage you to have patience. Not every new idea will come off without a hitch, there are bugs to be worked out and feedback will be necessary to get it right. However, going back to the way things were is not possible without dropping a few thousand members.

I ask that you look for ways you can contribute and don’t be afraid to share new ideas. It will take all of us doing our little part to make a new and successful way for the whole. As we face these new challenges, think outside the way it’s always been done to how could it be done better.

2020 thinking: What can I contribute?
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Let the ‘Musical Chairs’ Begin

By Hugh Mooney, Consultant, Department of Education

This is the time of year that the agricultural education profession plays musical chairs. It begins with retirements and additions at individual programs. Some of these openings are community colleges that are looking to hire a good high school teacher for an open position. This then creates an open position at a high school. Often the community college hire comes from a high-profile high school program, so the high school program is able to attract a teacher from another program.

Thus, the musical chairs. Many of the open positions will be filled by teachers new to the profession. There are a number of reasons why this annual process occurs.

Memories
I know that I have become one of the “older people” in the profession. I can still remember what it was like to be a student teacher. Like many student teachers today, I mostly paid my way through school. By the time I had completed my credential and was able to seek a “paying” teaching position after having spent a semester paying university fees for the privilege of working for free, I was eager to sign a contract. The year was 1984.

Yes, I know that many of you reading this not only were not born in 1984, your parents had not even met. Unlike today, there were few jobs that were available before the end of the school year. I had applied for a job at Bret Harte High School and was not even invited to an interview. They hired Roy Beck, which I am certain was the correct person given his many accomplishments.

I interviewed at Yosemite High School in the San Joaquin Region and was offered the job. I turned it down basically because I did not see an opportunity for me to find a place for my cattle.

Next I went to Big Valley High School in the Superior Region and saw open space and was sure that I would find a place to keep my cattle. I truly enjoyed the five years I spent there. If they would have given me a sabbatical leave when I requested one, I might still be there.

Call from Galt
I left Big Valley and went back to Chico State for a year. Because of the success that some of my students at Big Valley had, I was in demand. One day a received a call from Galt and they described what I thought was a nearly ideal situation for me. I met with them and ended up accepting that job.

I had no idea two-and-a-half years later, I would leave to take over the California Agricultural Teachers’ Association (CATA). It worked out. I enjoyed 17 great years working at Galt and I am to this day very proud of all we accomplished because we put our students first.

Working for the State
On June 1, it will have been 10 years since I made the move to the dark side and joined state staff. I often think how things might have been different had I continued to teach. Now I get to deal with the bureaucracy of a state agency and commuting downtown and feeling lucky that I have a parking spot only four blocks from the building I work in.

There are some positives: I get to work with many teachers, students, and even administrators who want to better engage their students in learning. I also get to help teachers with the “musical chairs” that occur this time of year.

Decision-Making Process
In my opinion, many young new teachers make poor decisions when they accept a job. I know that many new teachers are driving a car that may struggle making the trip to and from an interview. If the interview will require an overnight stay, they find a friend to stay with, because they may not be able to afford a hotel room. They often go to the district office for the interview and have never seen the facilities that program has for agriculture education. They get a phone call and accept a job to work in a facility that they have never seen and often will be working with someone they have never met.

Would you rent an apartment sight unseen? Would you move in with a roommate that you have never met? I often wonder what we might change to better prepare our new teachers for the profession.

Changing Jobs
Then we have the experienced teachers that are making moves. Are you moving for a better opportunity or because you are not happy? If you currently have a teaching job, what do you like about it? What would you like to improve? What obstacles are there to improving? Is improvement under your control or are the obstacles out of your control?

If you are not happy, what is the reason? Will changing jobs address that reason? Are you certain that opportunities will be different if you change programs?

If you are interested in a job, take the time to visit the program. Find out what facilities they have. Are things in working order? Are the facilities consistent with what you expect for your students?

Call for Help
If you can’t find someone to help you find answers, call me. I will do everything I can to help you find the right place for you. I will spend some time assisting North Coast and Superior Region schools as they search for teachers. You may have no interest in teaching in Northern California. If you continue in the profession and teach elsewhere, that improves the opportunity for the schools in Northern California to find teachers.

I know that other members of state staff feel the same. We want to help you find the best fit for you. If we have more teachers with thirty year careers we might begin to close the gap.

The music is playing. Where will you be when the music stops?
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News and Views

‘Sciencing it Up’

By Jodi Evans, South Coast Region President, San Luis Obispo High School

To say this has been an easy and stress-free year would be a lie, but it has been a year of contemplation. We have seen our share of success over the past few years at San Luis Obispo High School. I have a fantastic co-worker, Anna Bates, with whom we have built a great program. We have amazing kids with amazing talents whom we enjoy spending time with, but sadly, these weren’t the accomplishments and achievements of all of our students.

Every program has its strengths and weaknesses, so we were forced to look at our program and scrutinize the areas where we fall short, as both teachers and advisors, and to begin to devise a plan to strengthen those areas of need.

Supervised Ag Experience

As proud as I was of our program, I knew we could do better. An area we knew we could address was engaging students in better Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects. Specifically, we decided to implement Agriscience Research Projects as a mandatory SAE for all Honors Ag Biology students as a starting point.

Last year was my virgin voyage in the world of research projects, but after attending the 2015 National FFA Convention and taking pictures of numerous research projects, I was determined to get the students excited and on board.

I stumbled, struggled and hobbled my way through with the students, but we were able to make a decent showing at State Conference by taking 4th place at the State FFA Finals our first year.

Trust me — I was shocked! I knew our students had good projects, but with the little time I had to give them feedback on their written work by the time they finished their research, I was happy they completed their papers and posters at all, let alone placed. Inspired by the 4th place win at State Finals, I knew I could do a better job of instructing the students, so I asked for help from those with more experience than me.

Competition-Worthy Project

With the help of attending a workshop at the South Coast Region Road Show from Matt Patton and assistance from student teacher Jordan Albiani, we were able to reach out to students who completed a project as part of a classroom assignment and develop it into much more of a competition-worthy research project.

Utilizing the expertise of individuals who have participated in the contest or have coached students to this level of competition is invaluable. With Jordan taking the lead, we were able to even inspire freshmen to participate in this event and have them ready to present their findings by the time the UC Davis and Chico field days were open.

Sending the students’ papers to these contests also provided excellent opportunities for the students to read through, edit and make revisions to their projects, something I didn’t take advantage of last year. Not only have the field days enabled the students to better review their papers; the field days also provided more opportunities to compete for the ever-coveted blue ribbon!

Healthy Competition

Amongst the hours of discussions at our school regarding science course sequencing and why we should or should not implement one science course over the other, it occurs to me that Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) are trying to instill more logic and higher-level thinking into our students.

I cannot think of a better way to incorporate NGSS into our courses than by implementing more research-based projects like the Agriscience Research Project.

The students struggle, even when given a highlighted copy to erase and type over (for ease of implementing some of the APA formatting), but they learn how to critically think, observe, utilize valid sources as well as literature references and get a much better handle on the scientific method during this process.

When the students in class are given feedback and suggestions, it sometimes leads to complaints and whining about the amount of work they must do or have already done, but learning continues. Although the students competing may still complain, they have become much more competitive, especially with each other.

We have several students who are in the same category of research and are trying to “outscore” each other with each revision and submission of their papers. This healthy competition further propels the students to increase their knowledge of their topic and to make it that much better.

Projects Are Time Consuming

I’m not going to lie; the projects are time consuming. I did create several small assignments and deadlines this year to give me time to read, correct and make changes to student work, but I haven’t figured out the shortcut to reading, making suggestions and revising the papers.

We have had students read and revise each other’s papers, which has made them better readers, writers and editors. A few of our students were even complimented by our English Department for their ability to both complete research and write a research paper.

Looking back last year, I realize a 4th place win wasn’t a huge accomplishment, but it was just enough to inspire our kids and our department to place more effort on a task the students can have assistance on in the classroom, but compete in outside of class time.

Engaged and Involved

If you haven’t thought about competing in or implementing the Agriscience Research Project into your science curriculum, I would highly encourage it. There are a lot of resources available to help and many opportunities to get feedback for your students.

For those students who don’t necessarily have time for a “team” event, this could be the best way to keep them engaged and involved in your program. I haven’t seen the impact of the changes in our program yet, but I plan to make it a requirement for all of our Ag Biology classes next year, so time will tell.

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GoldenSlate.html
Strictly Ag Mechanics…

By Mark Perkins, Willows High School

In the fall of 1992, I was headed off to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo to get a master’s degree and fresh out of my first decade of teaching. I knew pretty much everything and didn’t mind telling it to everyone, even if nobody cared. My first class at Cal Poly was AgEd 522 – Teaching Ag Mechanics with Dr. Bill Kellogg. 7 a.m. sharp! Ha, what could I possibly learn about teaching shop at 7 a.m.? Seemingly, Dr. Kellogg and I didn’t start our relationship seeing eye to eye on shop stuff (at least I remember it that way), BUT all these years later, much of the fundamental stuff he taught us in 522 has formed the basis for my shop safety and management policies that I still use to this day! So thank you very much!

Recently there have been a few things that have focused my attention on safety (as if the focus has ever left). Yet one recent accident made me ask myself, “Am I letting my guard down?” So I dug through my files from AgEd 522, specifically looking for common-sense shop safety ideas and to try and figure out just what is “negligence”?

Negligence

I have used these same handouts as references many times. Not being a lawyer, these papers basically tell us that shop teachers are to use “a degree of care that an ordinarily prudent person would have used.”

• To be held negligent, first you must have a “duty of care” toward the claimant.
• Second, we must have breached that duty by not exercising “reasonable care.”
• Our not exercising reasonable care must be shown to cause harm.
• The negligence must be a “proximate cause” of the harm.
• Finally, the claimant must be able to establish what kind of damages or compensation they should get.

This is where my teaching experiences and specifically the handouts from Dr. Kellogg come into play.

I’d also say it’s not worth trying to outguess lawyers, parents or school administrators, but we can focus on “degree of care,” “reasonable” and “prudent” in our shops!

Handout #1 SHOP I – ‘THE MODEL SHOP’

• Entryway door safety reminder sign.
• Outside eye protection caution sign.
• Entrance zone painted on the floor.
• Fire extinguisher location signs.
• Electrical outlets identified.
• Visitor safety glass storage box.
• Fire extinguisher(s).
• Numerous caution signs.
• Approved, self-closing rag storage.
• Receptacle voltages labeled.
• Face shields located at all machines.
• Hearing protection hung near machinery.
• First aid kit, stocked and inventoried.
• Safety signage, occasionally changed.
• Guards and shielding in use and adjusted.
• Cord cap lock-out boxes.
• Work zones around machinery.
• Non-slip paint on floors in “wet areas.”
• On/off switch direction labeled.
• Flammable liquids cabinet.
• Painted wall behind fire extinguishers.
• Inspection tags on fire extinguishers.
• Oily spill absorbent (cat litter).
• Water, gas and air lines labeled.
• Push sticks and over-blade guard.
• Riving knife or splitter (THE most important table saw guard).
• Over blade table saw guard.
• Safety bulletin board.
• Fire blanket.
• Exit markers.
• Fire drill and lock-down procedures.
• Escape routes and meeting areas defined.
• Eye wash station.
• Welding curtains/screening.
• Emergency lighting.
• Self-ejecting drill chucks.
• Portable “slippery when wet” sign.
• Circuit breakers labeled.
• Anti-kickback pals (table saws).
• Windows to let in natural light.
• Efficient “one key” tool storage and lock-up.
• Oxy-fuel check valves.
• Portable welding screens.
• Dust collection/air filtration systems in good working order and used.
• Clean-up tools adequate and accessible.
• Monthly “tailgate” safety meetings with each class, including a signed form.
• Overhead obstructions labeled.
• Aisleways clear of tools and projects.
• Organized and efficient tool storage that’s lockable.
• Separate and locked cabinets for extra supplies and valuable tools.
• Electrical tools requiring the ground prong in good repair. (Be sure it’s there and attached correctly.)

Handout #2 ‘WHAT TYPES OF CONDITIONS MAY RESULT IN INSTRUCTOR NEGLIGENCE?’

• Failing to show evidence of teaching safety (i.e., a copy of the safety test on file).
• Failure to periodically update your site administrators, ag advisory committees and school directors about safety in your shop.
• Leaving the shop or classroom during the class period.
• Being on your phone, computer or in your office, leaving students unsupervised.
• Allowing students to leave the grounds without permission from your administrator.
• Permitting the use of faulty machines, tools, equipment and facilities.
• Permitting the use of machinery without safety guards.
• Allowing students not in your class to pass through and/or use the shop.
• Allowing poor housekeeping to result in conditions hazardous to safety and health.
• Allowing students to wear unsafe clothing and accessories.
• Requiring students to use power equipment.
• Leaving the shop with an unqualified instructor in charge (and students working).
• Permitting students to operate machinery without proper instructions on performance and safety.
• Permitting students to work outside without supervision of qualified personnel.
• Allowing students to work unsupervised after regular school hours.
• Failing to complete accident reports in a timely manner.
• Failing to get written statements of witnesses of accidents.
• Failing to teach and exercise safety rules and practices at all times.
• Failing to recognize and practice additional safety precautions determined by law for minors (suspected child abuse, etc.).
• Failure to habitually remind students to wear their safety glasses about safety that always need to be reviewed. Not all of these, of course, can be applied to every shop, I get it, but most can. Some are very tough to follow. Teaching shop is not as easy as some may think. I believe we are all “extending ourselves,” legally, just by doing our jobs. Times are always changing. We need to be diligent. Reasonable. Prudent. Keep your guard up!
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Funding for the Plant Science curriculum was provided by the Fertilizer Research and Education Program, California Department of Food and Agriculture.

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Ag Educators Primed to Develop Meaningful Certification of Student Skills

By Jim Aschwanden, CATA Executive Director

In the January edition of the Golden Slate, there was a very interesting article regarding the teaching of Ag Mechanics, which also contained several observations questioning the need for pursuing some sort of certification process for our students. The key point in the article was that soft skills and good work habits were far more important to employers than actual skill acquisition, and that certifying the teaching of these important "soft skills" was dubious at best.

Keep in Mind

For the most part, I applaud the author for raising appropriate questions about certification, and for recognizing, up front, that he was not familiar with all that’s going on in this arena. As we move forward, some key points that I believe all of us need to keep in mind:

- It is absolutely correct that the most important things we teach in Ag Education are those “soft skills” like responsibility, work ethic, problem solving, etc., and we should continue to stress those skills because they are in high demand by employers.

- We also need to focus on what students actually know, and what they can actually do. Just being a three- or four-year completer of an Ag program isn’t enough anymore. We shouldn’t delude ourselves into thinking that just because a student occupied a seat in a classroom for a period of time that they actually absorbed these employability skills, or that they will always perform satisfactorily in the workplace. Some students are career ready when they leave our programs, and some aren’t. Pretending they are all equally ready isn’t helping our cause.

- If both points above are true, then why not develop a “certification” process that appropriately identifies the skill set of individual students in our program, including these important “soft skills,” rather relying on seat time as a measure of their ability? If our industry and higher education partners were part of the process of developing these certifications, and they had a level of confidence that these certifications were an accurate measure of an individual student’s strengths, wouldn’t it build more support for our programs over the long run? If our students understood that verifying their skill set was a good thing and that employers valued the skills that were being developed and “certified,” wouldn’t our students be more likely to take their education a bit more seriously?

- There are lots of challenges with developing a workable certification process, but a lot of good people are actively working on those issues. Who would be qualified to certify a student? Could our current Proficiency Award, CDE, and Degree programs be part of the process? Do we already have some performance indicators in place that we need to share and validate with industry? Lots of questions, but it’s exciting to think that industry partners and ag teachers are actively engaged in these discussions.

- An important point — the State Board of Education and the Department of Finance (DoF) have made it very clear that certifications will be an important part of any accountability process moving forward. DoF staff have made it abundantly clear that they are no longer interested in funding “inputs” into programs that can’t identify the “outputs” they produce. In other words, saying you’re doing it won’t cut it any longer; you are going to need to provide evidence that the money invested into your program is resulting in a real “value-added” return on that investment.

- One final point — I don’t think we ought to do some kind of meaningless “drill” on certifications just because some state bureaucrats want that to happen. I certainly don’t want to develop some silly “checkoff” list on the back of a meaningless “drill” document that won’t be valued by any employers. If we can agree that it would be in our — and our students’ — best interests to have a meaningful and practical way to identify and validate their personal skills, then I believe it’s in our best interest to lead the way in developing such a process. It has to involve our employers, it has to include those important “soft skills,” and it needs to be meaningful.

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2017 Draft CATA Conference Program

Sunday, June 25
9:00 to 11:00 Exec Comm Mtg
11:00 to 2:30 Governing Board
1:30 to 3:00 Vision 2030 Committee Meetings
* Action Item Committees #6, #9, #14, #22, #26, #27, #33
2:30 to 5:00 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 26
7:00 to 7:45 Registration at the Performing Arts Center
8:00 Opening Session
* Keynote Speaker – Flip Flippen
10:00 Late Registration: Room 10-241
10:00 Regional Meetings
10:30 State Ag Advisory Committee Meeting
11:30 Alumni Luncheons
1:00 Joint Division Meeting
* CDE Impaction
* Student Certification
* Ag Induction Program
2:30 Post-Secondary Division Meeting
Following above meeting:
* Student Activities
* Inservice
* Curriculum
2:30 Secondary Division Meeting
4:00 Operations Division Mtg
Following above meeting:
* Budget & Audit
* Student Activities
* Nominations, Bylaws & Professional Awards
* Curriculum
* Professional Ethics
5:30 Chico State Alumni Social
6:00 Bowling
6:30 Conference Reception Hosted by CSU, Fresno

Tuesday, June 27
7:45 Curricular Code General Mtg
8:00 Post-Secondary Statewide Advisory Committee Meeting
8:15 to 9:45 Professional Sessions
* FFA Field Day Organization Tips
* Horticulture Curriculum
* Ag Incentive Grant
* Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship
* New World of Work
* Floral - TBD
* Ag Induction Mentors - Part A
* Ag Induction New Teachers - Part A
* Intro to APA Writing Style
* TBD
10:00 General Assembly
* Greetings - Calif FFA Fdn
* State CTE Director
* State Supervisor’s Report
* Community College Report
* Executive Director’s Report
10:00 Post-Secondary DPR PCA Curriculum Meeting
12:00 Post-Secondary Division Meeting & Luncheon
12:00 FFA Advisory Committee Meeting
12:00 to 2:45 Farm & Idea Show
1:00 to 2:30 North Coast Ag Pathway Meeting
2:45 Curricular Code General Mtg
3:00 2017–18 Section Presidents Meeting
3:00 to 3:50 Curricular Code Mtgs
* Rotation #1
4:00 to 4:50 Curricular Code Mtgs
* Rotation #2
5:15 Softball, Cornhole, etc. at Sports Complex on Campus
6:30 Family BBQ - Sports Complex

Wednesday, June 22
6:30 5K Run
7:00 Prayer Breakfast
7:00 Post-Secondary Council Breakfast Meeting
7:45 Curricular Code Contest Chairs 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 to 3:30 FFA Adult Board Mtg
* Ag Induction Mentors - Part B
* Ag Induction New Teachers - Part B
* Ag Incentive Grant (repeat)
* Metabo Power Tools
* Free Money & Free Resources
* Floral
* Starting a Small Engines Team
* ID Techniques for Crops Contests
* Microsoft Certification
* TBD
5:00 Banquet Child Care Begins
5:30 Pre-Banquet Social
6:00 Banquet

Thursday, June 29
8:15 Regional Meetings
10:15 General Assembly
* Speaker
* Honorary American Farmers
* Recreation Awards
* Membership Awards
* New Teachers Awards
* Idea Show Awards
* Farm Show Report
* Election Results
* Officer Installation
12:00 CATA 2017–18 Governing Board Planning Session
1:00 Agriskills Classes Begin (June 29 and June 30)

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CATA Calendar of Events 2016–2017

May 6..........................................................................................State FFA Judging Finals........................................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 25....................................................................................Executive Committee Meeting..................................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 25....................................................................................Pre-Conference Governing Board.................................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 25–29...............................................................................CATA Summer Conference .....................................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 29....................................................................................Governing Board Summer Retreat .....................................Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

2017 Idea Show
Farm Shop – Building 9      Tuesday, June 27

Enter your great teaching ideas in this year’s Idea Show at CATA Summer Conference.

There are 11 areas to enter:

1. Ag Production/Processing & Products
2. Ag Mechanics
3. Ornamental Horticulture
4. Natural Resources/Rural Recreation/Forestry
5. Ag Science/Farm Labs
6. Departmental Operations
7. FFA Operations
8. SAE
9. Working with Support Groups (i.e. Ag Advisory, Ag Boosters, etc.)
10. Floral Design
11. Ag Business

Bring your entries to the Farm Shop (Building 9) 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!

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

- First: $20
- Second: $15
- Third: $10

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

See you with your entries at Summer Conference!