

Golden Slate

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Sacramento Scene

Massive Cuts in Categorical Funds Proposed as Budget Uncertainties Continue

By Jim Aschwanden, CATA Executive Director

By now all of you should be aware that the Governor's budget proposal released in January calls for massive cuts to categorical program funding in education — the complete elimination of Career Technical Education programs, including the Agricultural Incentive Grant, ROPs, Partnership Academies, and Apprenticeship Programs. This proposal would instead direct funds to districts based on the percentage of English Learners and Free and Reduced Lunch recipients within their school populations. The big winners here are large urban districts — the losers would be everyone else.

An interesting aspect of this budget proposal was the lack of any accompanying policy language or legislation to address the issues inherent in such a massive overhaul of the education system. The budget subcommittees given the task of reviewing this proposal have expressed grave concerns over the lack of opportunity to discuss the policy implications of such a draconian move, especially in light of the severe financial picture facing most schools.

As this edition of the GOLDEN SLATE goes to press, those subcommittees are still in the process of working through the Governor's proposal, with little to no resolution to report.

The bottom line — we have no idea where this thing is headed. **May Revise**

The next big event that may shed some light on the future of this proposal is the release of the May Revise version of the state budget. In early May, the Governor's Office will release an updated proposal based on the latest financial forecast and revenue projections from the Department of Finance.

The mood in the Capitol right now clearly reflects a "wait and see" attitude, waiting for some more positive economic and financial news before really tackling these is-

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Sacramento Scene

Massive Cuts in Categorical Funds Proposed

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sues in a substantive way. The danger here, of course, is that waiting for the May Revise puts incredible pressure on the Legislature to construct an accurate, meaningful budget proposal by the legally mandated June 15 deadline. Not that we have had anything resembling an accurate, meaningful budget passed in the last few years....

In the meantime, we continue to meet with legislators and staff to make sure they are aware of the impact that this proposal will have on Agricultural Education and other CTE programs in California.

If it becomes necessary, we may be asking you and your students, parents, and other supporters to make those personal contacts with elected representatives to voice your concerns as well. We hope it doesn't come to that, but we are watching this situation very carefully. Stay tuned!

Legislation

On the policy front, there are a few bills that are worth mentioning. SB 1458 (Steinberg) is a follow-up to a bill that the Governor vetoed last year which would change how the API would be computed for districts, including a 40% maximum cap on the influence of standardized test scores. This bill is not as detailed and specific as the bill vetoed by the Governor, which may increase its chances of actually being signed into law. Although not specifically addressing how CTE might be used in evaluating district and school performance, this measure offers an opportunity to revise the singular and myopic focus on CSTs as the only measure of student success.

In addition, SB 275 (Hancock) has been amended and is now reactivated from last year's session. This bill would remove the total flexibility status currently affecting ROP funding and redirect use of those

funds for CTE purposes. It would allow for flexibility of ROP and other CTE funds at the local site level, but would limit the flexibility for use only within existing CTE programs, a dramatic improvement over the current misuse of ROP funding by many districts. This bill faces an uphill challenge.

Ag License Plates

On a much more positive note, you should all be celebrating the successful conclusion of the Agricultural License Plate program!

Ag programs throughout California really rallied to get this program in place, and all of you who worked so hard should be proud of the fact that your efforts helped make this happen.



The California Department of Food and Agriculture has confirmed that more than 8,340 plates were ordered, making the Ag Plate the first successful effort since the current process was created. It's truly a historic moment for Ag Education in California — thanks again to all of you who did your part.

Summer Conference

We hope to get these state budget issues behind us soon so we can focus on making sure that our annual CATA Summer Conference is exciting, dynamic and successful. The state CATA officers and members of the Governing Board have begun preparing some exciting opportunities for all members of our profession to contribute their viewpoint in refocusing our profession to meet the future needs of our programs and students.

We look forward to seeing you in San Luis Obispo this June, so get your registration materials in to Kerry and make those hotel reservations soon!

As always, don't hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or concerns — we're here to help. Hope you're having a successful and productive spring season! ☘

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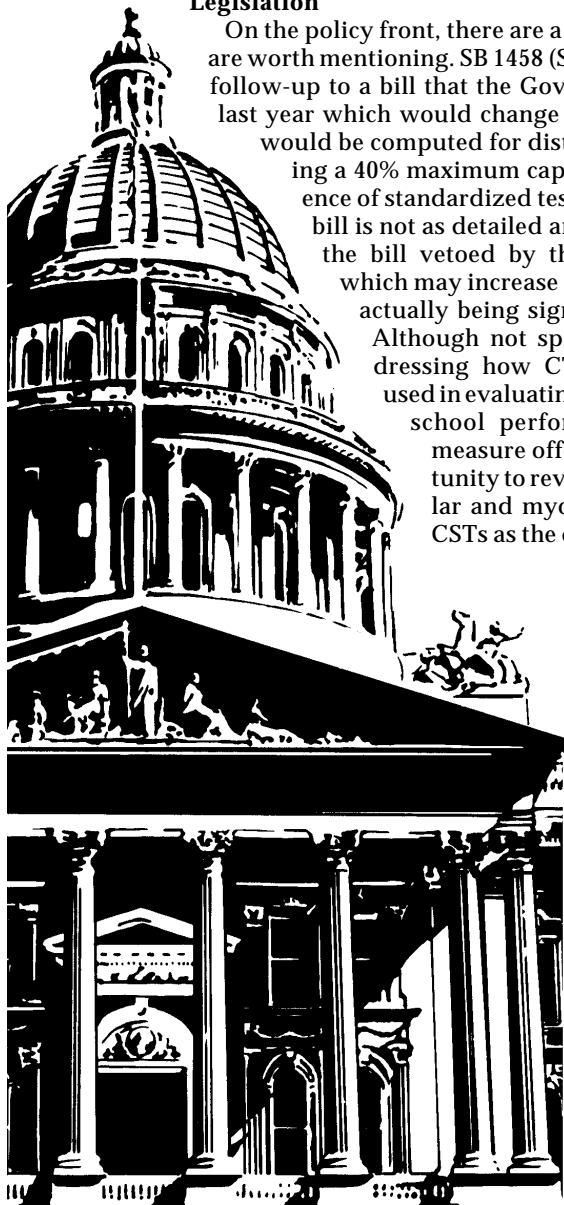
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Officers' Corner

Balance, and What Is 'It'?

By Jake Dunn, CATA State President and Dick Piersma, Hilmar High School

In my relatively short career as an agriculture teacher, I have noticed that some teachers "get it," and some don't. Now, "it" can be a lot of different things; each of us has our own definition and most of us *think* that we definitely get "it" (even if we don't). Those of us who have been in this job for more than a few years know its demands, and struggle with balance between the forces in our lives.

So, how do you be a teacher who gets "it" and have a successful program *and* have balance in your life? Though the answer to that may be as varied as the number of teachers out there, I think that there are common threads that define a successful agriculture teacher.

Veteran Teacher

If you ask a more veteran teacher, they might say that many new teachers coming into our profession today just don't get "it" at all and that they do not have a clear understanding of what it takes to build and/or maintain a successful program.

Today's teaching environment and the economy are putting tremendous pressure on our ability to even justify our existence within our districts. Veteran teachers fear what may happen to programs across the state if the Ag Incentive Grant goes away or is lumped in with other categorical funds that go to schools in a block grant (as it is currently proposed by Governor Brown).

Will your district keep your program around, or will they take your money and send you down the road so they can use those funds elsewhere?

In other words, the veteran teacher builds a program that targets student successes, knowing that community support grows with student success and that administrators will have a more difficult time liquidating your program when faced with a community that will be asking for the justification of their action(s).

Less Experienced Teacher

If you ask a younger less experienced teacher, they might say that they are still looking for "it" or that they don't know what "it" is.

Let's admit, the first years in an agriculture teacher's life are about survival and thoughts about building a program don't even enter their mind.

Even those new teachers who are fortunate to land in an established program find out quickly how much work teaching ag really is.

In the Middle

And finally there are the teachers in the middle. Many have young families that come with their own set of demands, like daycare, school, sports, and the list goes on. How can you be a teacher with "it" and find balance with all of our other demands?

Passion

Most of my ag teacher colleagues got into this profession because they have a passion for agriculture, kids, and the opportunities that agriculture education offers to our students. This "passion" is one of the common threads that run through ag teachers that have "it" and I believe is the driving force behind all that we do. Those who don't have a passion for this job soon find out how difficult it is to be successful and most of those don't last.

Costs

Veteran teachers will acknowledge that having "it" has its costs. Even though we have been told constantly that you have to make time for your family, and yourself, it is truly a difficult task.

At one point there were rumors of ag teachers getting more divorces than other professions and all sorts of negative personal effects from being a good ag teacher.

Of course, these were unfounded and not factual assumptions about our profession, but the fact remains that

being an ag teacher with "it" is not an 8-3 or even 8-5 job.

Struggle for Balance

I find myself in this middle group right now. I am constantly struggling to balance my work and my family life. Often I cannot distinguish the two, because I feel that my work is more than just my job.

For instance, anyone looking on my Facebook page for the past few months would have seen more information about getting an Ag Plate than about my personal life. Also, we are in the thick of the busy season for ag teachers, field days every weekend, project animals starting for summer fairs, state conference coming up quick, state degrees and then... um, well, we have to teach in there somewhere too.

Spring break is here and I have enjoyed seeing all the posts from my ag teacher friends who are doing work things with students while they are supposed to be off. I know that I am buying pigs on my break, holding team practices, and making project visits. But I am also having birthday parties, t-ball practice/games and celebrating Easter with friends and family.

Common Thread

Another common thread of successful programs is based on three things: FFA, SAEP and Classroom. Today more than any other time in Agricultural Education, what we do in the classroom is more strictly guided and scrutinized than ever before. This has left some of us feeling like FFA and SAEP are on the back burner and unfortunately for some, not even on the stove (because those units and activities are not on the district pacing guide or the benchmark exam)!

Agricultural Education works because we provide the experiential learning and these experiences are coming outside of the four walls of your classroom. In order for a student to be successful in FFA, they need all three of these areas to be addressed. If they don't want all three, why are they in your classroom?

SAEP is more than the county fair. How can we establish legitimate projects for all students that are meaningful to their education and make them better people? Successful programs find a way, another common thread.

Career Development and Leadership Events are crucial components to student success. Where else do we celebrate the success and reward the hard work that our kids put in than on a Saturday in May with a Silver Bowl? I still get chills when I hear the state finalists in Public Speaking or Creed when they take the stage and address the audience.

Fears

My fear is that not all of us are on the same page as far as getting "it" done. I was very discouraged and frustrated after our sectional speaking contest this year at the low turnout.

We hold our Prepared, Impromptu, Extemporaneous, Job Interview, BIG, Creed, and Cooperative Marketing Contests all on the same day in our section. We have hosted this event for several years and numbers have decreased every year.

In my opinion, every school should have a BIG team! Freshmen are timid; sometimes you just have to tell them to get in the ag truck and hold on!

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Officers' Corner

Where Do You Stand And What's Your Vision?

By Steve DeRose, CATA President-Elect

Every successful enterprise started from an idea, which then started a discussion, which then brought individuals together. They then created an "I can and together we will" attitude, which leads them to success.

The best of businesses and organizations are made up of a mixture of talents that communicate and work together toward a common interest and goal.

Not always do they agree 100% on everything, but because of mutual respect, these disagreements stimulate the discussion even further and

result in making even the best, better.

That sounds a lot like what we in Agriculture Education have done over the years and it's vital to our future success for this dialog to continue, in order to ensure that our path of "excellence" remains for generations to come.

Future of Ag Education

The future of Ag Education depends on what you, the CATA, believe it should be. Many have suggested that maybe it's time to look at our mission statement, maybe re-define a definition or two of what is and/or maybe what it should be?

There's a general feeling that we're not all on the same page when it comes to various topics and/or issues about classroom instruction, projects, the FFA and yes, even the role of the ag teacher.

Because of this, Governing Board has set up multiple

round table discussions for Monday's afternoon session at conference.

The idea is to bring your voice to that table in an effort to gather information from beginning teachers to veterans, from small to large programs, from inner city to those in the most rural locations.

Input Needed

EVERYONE'S input is needed. As we continue to address challenges, the time is now for us to "Refocus the Vision."

At a recent regional meeting, a colleague, John Avila, summed it up perfectly with a Helen Keller quote: "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

Let your views be heard and be an influence on the future of California Agricultural Education.

Enjoy your spring and if not before, I'll see you in June. ☼

Reflections

By Darol Fishman, CATA Past President

Last issue dealt with my career as a failure. So here I sit trying to figure out what to write for my last article as a state CATA officer. Let's see...I've covered failure, student preparation for contests, and who knows what other blather over the past four years. What in the hell am I going to write about? Then it happened! My cell phone went off with a text message from a past student. I read it, set my phone down, my eyes teared up and I began reflecting on my career as an ag teacher. We have no idea about the lives we'll affect or the paths we'll send students down so many years down the road... until we get a message from a student.

Student Message

So what was the ground-shaking message I read on my phone? It read: "It's funny to me how small things make the biggest impressions on our lives. Seems like only yesterday my mom walked me down to the half-buried beer can for freshman orientation and we met for the first time. In retrospect, it was almost a passing of the torch for her... I just didn't know it yet. Thanks for being my teacher Darol... I miss ya."

Let me fill in the gaps. The "half-buried beer can" was the Quonset hut shop I worked in with Richard Jacobsen for my seven years at Le Grand. It had heating and air-conditioning... they just didn't work during the right season.

This student's mother passed away from cancer during his time as one of my students. I understood his dilemma as my own mother passed away when I was a sophomore at Petaluma High School.

Much like Bill King providing direction, I did so for Mark

Thurman. Mark is still one of my favorites for his talents, confidence and demeanor. One didn't assign him a project... you just turned him loose and let him work his magic. We were very close as he grew and he was many times referred to as "my oldest son."

Guidance

As you go through your career, sit down and reflect upon those students you have helped, are still helping and will help in the future. You are a guiding light to so many without whom they may not have direction. Standards, shmandards... bunch of crap! Do what you do best and what's right in your heart and the world will be a much better place for that. Live by YOUR standards, make the right decisions... you know what they are... and set the example for generations to come. It all comes around.

I cannot express how much that one little message on my phone meant today. Richard Jacobsen does as we were both there for that youngster when

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Balance, and What Is 'It'?

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What to Do

I know that if you are reading this, you are one of those doing good things and that you care about our profession. So what should you do?

Well, maybe you are the more veteran teacher who thought you were in the middle somewhere and have not realized that the Al DeRoses, Bill Kings and Leonard DeRuiters are not in the room any more and you are the voice of experience that needs to be heard at the Sectional CATA meeting when things are not quite right.

Maybe you are a teacher who has been teaching for 10 or so years and are feeling comfortable as an ag teacher and have some valuable advice to give a

new teacher, be it on curriculum, coaching teams or balancing life.

What does it say about our profession if we ostracize teachers or programs that we don't feel are cutting it instead of trying to help them get better? On the other hand, new teachers need to grow a pair and be willing to ask for help.

For better or worse we are a family. Some of us are the crazy cousins, some of us are barely scraping by and some of us are kicking butt and taking names. Our goal must be to get all of us on the same page that everything you do as an ag teacher has to be to make a positive difference for the kids in your classrooms. ☼

Officers' Corner

Agriscience: Touching All the Bases

By Mike Albiani, CATA State Treasurer

As spring training ends and opening day approaches, it is time to evaluate your program before we head into the dog days of summer. Does your program need more project-based activities to challenge your students? Do some of your students need an SAE that requires little investment? Are you looking for another CDE to inspire your students to get involved? Then use your draft picks to add an agriscience project to your curricular lineup.

Curriculum

Lead off by getting a hold of the Curricular Code, which contains resources designed to make the project a hit. In the Code, you will discover an outline for the paper, layout for the board, scorecard, and information to help you get off on the right foot.

As the manager of your team, you can decide whether to jump in at the major league level or if it is in your students' best interest to start with your freshman in the minor league or novice division; either way, you will be opening up a whole new experience for your players.

As a good manager you have many resources at your finger tips that will help you to get started. Visit the National FFA website and get some relief with a video, PowerPoint presentation, guidebook, and research resource guide designed to get your players into the lineup in a hurry.

Advantages

The curricular advantages that are available through the Agriscience Program are widespread. Having your students complete an agriscience project exposes them to California State Standards in agriculture and science. Standards from the CTE Model Curriculum Standards Agriscience pathways include:

- ✓ C13.0 Students understand the scientific method;
- ✓ C13.1 Understand the steps of the scientific method; and
- ✓ C13.3 Use the scientific method to conduct agricultural experiments.

These activities also crosswalk to the science standards for investigation and experimentation.

Reflections

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he needed some inspiration. We both affected many lives in a tiny shop that now houses the weight room on the LGHS campus. The facility was a hell-hole to say the least, but that doesn't matter. What matters is what went on inside that "half-buried beer can" to make the lives of people better. Caring and support many times outweigh testing, skills, standards, high tech facilities, etc.

Make a Difference

Make a difference in your students' lives... show them your human face. Open your doors for them to walk through for a safe and secure haven. Regardless of what the experts say, youngsters like direction

and structure in their lives and the structure you provide could be nothing more than doing the right thing... be fair, be honest, be courteous, be a friend.

I have relished in serving as a State CATA officer but take the most pride in those lives I have had a positive influence on in my 28 years of teaching. That little message that showed up today reminded me of who I am and what I need to do for my students.

It's not in my contract nor can it be measured, funded or mandated... but it's what I do best and need to be reminded of that once in a while. I thank you Mark for that little nudge in the ribs this morning. ☘

- ✓ 1.a Select and use appropriate tools and technology to perform tests, collect data, analyze relationships, and display data.
- ✓ 1.c Identify possible reasons for inconsistent results, such as sources of error or uncontrolled conditions.
- ✓ 1.d Formulate explanations by using logic and evidence.
- ✓ 1.f Distinguish between hypothesis and theory as scientific terms.
- ✓ 1.j Recognize the issues of statistical variability and the need for controlled tests.
- ✓ 1.m Investigate a science-based societal issue by researching the literature, analyzing data, and communicating the findings.

No matter how you analyze the data, an agriscience research project is a big hitter in the instructional area of agricultural curriculum.

Digging Deeper

Once the educational value of the agriscience project is realized, the other benefits of starting the big hitter begin to pay off. Agriscience research can reinforce a student's SAE by encouraging students to dig deeper into their current project through research.

Students who are struggling to find an SAE program can extend the classroom aspects of the agriscience project into the SAE realm by conducting research outside of the classroom on their own time while keeping track of their hours, expenses and activities in their record books.

Many research projects have launched an interest in an agricultural career area that students would not necessarily have been exposed to without the challenge of agriscience research.

The areas of research cover all aspects of the agricultural career clusters. The categories include: Animal Systems, Environmental Services/Natural Resource Systems, Food Products and Processing Systems, Plant Systems, Power, Structural and Technical Systems, and Social Systems.

FFA Participation

The final statistic that will keep agriscience in your lineup is FFA participation. Agriscience lends itself well to FFA participation at the local, state and national level.

Many chapters hold a local or district agriscience fair that showcases the research and scientific discoveries to the school board, school administration, the local community and your own student's parents.

The University of California, Davis and California State University, Chico hold statewide contests that not only give students a chance to compete against their FFA peers, but provide feedback on how they can improve their projects and expand their research. The state contest is hosted by CSU, Fresno and awards state championships in each division and category.

Each of these winners earns the right to represent California in the National Contest. California will honor 24 state winners and a team award in both the Novice and Advanced contests.

If as a manager of your agricultural team you are looking for a big hitter that can deliver agriscience curriculum, SAE opportunities and FFA participation, give agriscience a contract to play and it will help your program maintain its position in the big leagues. ☘

Teacher Educator News

Cal Poly Pomona Update

By Kimberley A. Miller, Ed D, Agricultural Sciences & Education, College of Agriculture

The Cal Poly Pomona College of Agriculture turns 75 next year, and students, faculty and staff could not be more pleased to be a part of this agriculture legacy in Southern California. Fall and winter quarters at CPP were filled with good times and success for our Agriculture Science students, and we are all looking forward to a terrific spring and a peaceful summer. Here is a recap of some great moments of the 2011-2012 school year thus far.

Picture This

Agricultural Science majors brought families and friends together at the college's annual Pumpkin Festival last October, providing pictures with an antique Cal Poly tractor decorated with a happy harvest theme.

More than 50,000 friends of Cal Poly Pomona attend the fall kickoff event, picking their own pumpkins and enjoying the flavor of Cal Poly with an array of BBQ and specialty foods provided by all of the clubs in the College of Agriculture. Picture taking was a new fundraising venture for the Cal Poly Ag Science students, and it was a huge success! It was so successful that the group will be working hard again at the annual Strawberry Festival and Tractor/Car Show on May 12.

These annual events are fun for everyone and support, among other things, the clubs run by our future agricultural leaders. For more information on the Strawberry Festival and Tractor/Car Show, visit <http://www.csupomona.edu/~farmstore/tractor-car-show.shtml>

It's All about the Benjamin's

Congratulations to all of our 2011-2012 student teachers who received \$5,000 scholarships from the advocacy group "Partners in Education" at the sixth annual Sponsor a Future Teacher Scholarship Awards Dinner on February 22.

This scholarship program has been a great opportunity for many of our alum over the past six years. Funds awarded are used to help offset housing, living and travel expenses incurred during student teaching.

The College of Agriculture could not be more proud to continually have our future Agricultural educators recognized for their past work and future endeavors.

The New Club in Town

By June, CPP will have officially established a Collegiate FFA chapter, with a first-year membership of over 40 students from a variety of majors across the campus.

"I'm so proud to be a student here at Cal Poly Pomona and to be a founding member of our new Collegiate FFA chapter," said Stephen Daly, President of Cal Poly Pomona, CFFA. "This will be a great way to get more students throughout the College of Agriculture to come together and share high school FFA experiences and become mentors to our former chapters. It's a win-win situation for everyone!"

We look forward to the opportunity to share more with the CATA in the near future and we hope that, as festivities are planned for the 75th anniversary celebration, alumni and friends will be able to join us here at Cal Poly Pomona for multiple momentous occasions. Happy trails to all! ☞



Ag Business Management They'll Never Forget

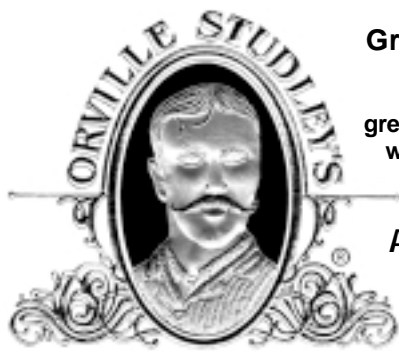


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News and Views

Take a Look in the Mirror

By Hugh Mooney, Consultant, California Department of Education

By the time you read this article, I will have been moved to a different cubicle. Once again the California Department of Education has been re-organized. I am not sure what purpose this serves. I do not know yet if my cubicle will have any different features. I do know that there are people who work near me who are not happy about moving. I decided many years ago not to lose sleep over things I cannot control. Maybe the new location will provide me an idea for my next article.

As I was writing this article, I reviewed several past articles I had submitted. Some of the titles included, "Can we Survive Tough Times?" "What Do They Think?" "We Need Leaders," and my favorite, "Help Me Help You."

Each of those GOLDEN SLATE articles addressed a challenge facing the profession. I hope that I helped you to develop

your understanding of issues. I wish that I could announce today that all of the challenges that our profession faced were behind us. Unfortunately, that is far from being an accurate statement.

Budget Mess

If you are a person who does not listen to the news, read the paper or pay attention to Jim

Aschwanen when he gives his report at the regional CATA meeting, let me share the news with you: The State of California budget is a mess. The Democrats in the Legislature want to raise taxes so they do not need to cut programs. The Republicans want to cut programs so they do not need to raise taxes. The Governor

wants to raise taxes and cut programs. What will be the end result of the 2012-2013 State Budget?

Threat to Incentive Grant

As most of you know, what may be the greatest threat to face agricultural education at the secondary level since the inception of the Agricultural

(Continued on page 12)

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Take a Look in the Mirror

(Continued from page 11)

Incentive Grant is the Governor's current budget proposal. A major feature of his proposal is to eliminate all categorical funding to schools. Your school district often refers to these funds as restricted. The agricultural incentive grant is a categorical fund.

The Governor proposes to allocate those funds to school districts using a formula based on the number of English Language Learners and students with financial need.

The funding formula also includes a cost-of-living adjustment that will allocate more funds to San Francisco public schools than a typical school district in the Central Valley.

Basically, this method for allocation picks winners and losers. Almost all agriculture education programs are located in districts that will be losers.

What does this mean? That depends on the budget that is eventually approved. If the Governor's proposal is adopted by the Legislature, I hope your advisory committee can influence the district to provide funding for your program while total funding to the district is reduced and there is no Agriculture Incentive Grant. That may be a challenge for many of you.

Pre-Incentive Grant Funding

There are not many agriculture teachers today who were part of the profession prior to the existence of the Agriculture Incentive Grant.

Few programs had a crew cab pick-up or van. If they did, they were bought from Army Surplus. If a program had an up-to-date computer, it was likely an Apple 2E or a Tandy 1000. There was no Internet. If you had an external modem, you connected by placing the receiver in the cups.

State curriculum was in outlines and stapled. If you had it all, it was in several four-inch binders.

With the passage of the Agriculture Incentive Grant, we had the opportunity to improve programs. It is truly amazing the growth that has been made since funding first became available during the 1983-1984 school year.

How has your program improved? For programs that have been around since 1983, how were those funds invested in program improvement? What plans has your agricultural education advisory committee approved for the future?

There are many people working tirelessly to convince the decision makers to continue funding for Career Technical Education and specifically agricultural education. They believe in what you do.

The CATA executive director has much weight on his shoulders. What have you done to help lift some of that weight?

Make a Change

One big reason many in the Legislature have supported the efforts of the California Agricultural Teachers' Association over

the years is because the funding that we have fought for cannot be spent on salaries.

If you teach in a high school agriculture education program and you are not a paid member of CATA, you need to look in the mirror and make a change.

Many of you have heard the song by the late Michael Jackson. The lyrics include the following:

"I'm starting with the Man in the Mirror. I'm asking him to change his ways and no message could have been any clearer. If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change."

Collective Effort

Working together we can accomplish our goals. Once we as a group put in effort, we reached the goal to get the CalAgPlate program started.

Because of our collective efforts, the California FFA will have a funding stream that will not be dependent on the state budget. If we continue to receive some state funding to supplement the budget, it will allow the FFA to develop programs and keep member cost down.

CATA makes a difference for our students. We should all be part of one of the few professional organizations that is truly member-driven.

When I look in the mirror, I see someone who has been a part of positive change. What do you see when you look in the mirror? ❁

One big reason many in the Legislature have supported the efforts of the California Agricultural Teachers' Association over the years is because the funding that we have fought for cannot be spent on salaries. If you teach in a high school agriculture education program and you are not a paid member of CATA, you need to look in the mirror and make a change.



News and Views

Are You My Mentor?

By Christine Henderson, Dinuba High School, Secondary Division Secretary

Being the mother of two, I have become familiar with the children's book *Are You My Mother?* by P.D. Eastman. This classic children's book was first published in 1960, and its lessons still hold true today. In the story, a little bird has hatched and goes in search of his mother. In reading this story many times, I have started to recognize its similarities to our careers in teaching agriculture. Instead of looking for our mother, let's substitute the word "mentor."

When I first began my teaching career, with observations, student teaching, long-term subbing, and as a full-time teacher, I was seeking my "mother," aka mentor, and didn't even know it. I was being influenced by my teacher educators, my master (aka cooperating) teacher, my department head, and every teacher who I networked with.

Take a moment and think about who has influenced you in your career of agriculture education. Who has been an example for you? Who do you look to for support and guidance when you are challenged with a new task?

Role Models

I had always considered my role models to be my own agriculture teachers. Coming from a large program, I was fortunate to see the teaching and advisor styles of multiple individuals; many are considered "greats" of agriculture education. I consider myself fortunate to have had their instruction and guidance.

Although I had great examples, I still found myself overwhelmed with the task of teaching, advising FFA, and being involved in CATA. Luckily, my journey was just beginning and I would have many opportunities to meet other teachers and learn from them.

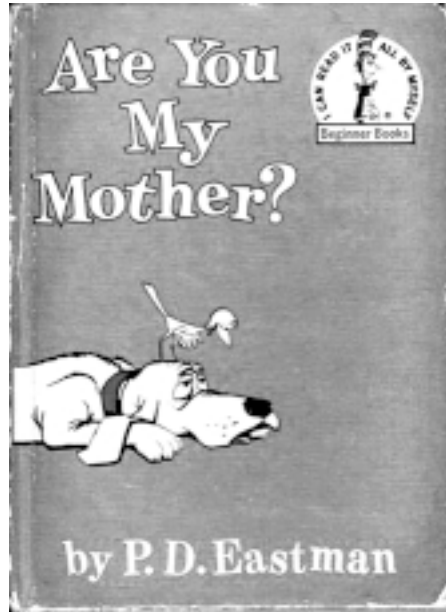
As I met other teachers, I was able to see their management of a program, teaching styles, and what CATA involvement meant to them.

The key is to find someone who fits your style and your goals, and ask them about their choices in their career. There are many steps in preparing for your teaching career. At each stage you will be influenced and changed as an educator.

Each teacher has their own way of reaching students. They all find a way to touch students' lives on a personal level, teach subject matter, encourage success, drive competitive spirit, and finally lead students to career choices.

Still Developing

Even after seven years of teaching, I am still learning and developing as a teacher. I try to not shy away from opportunities



to change and grow. I am always looking for the opportunity to learn from others. I can usually steal a new trick or idea that will work for my students in my classroom or on my FFA CDE teams.

CATA has provided endless opportunities to network with other educators. Think about what is available to you: Delta training courses, curriculum development workshops, CATA roadshow workshops, CATA skills classes, CATA officer positions, CATA committee involvement, FFA proficiency award scorings, CATA award scorings and so much more.

You might notice a common denominator in many of these professional development opportunities — it's being involved and taking advantage of what CATA has to offer.

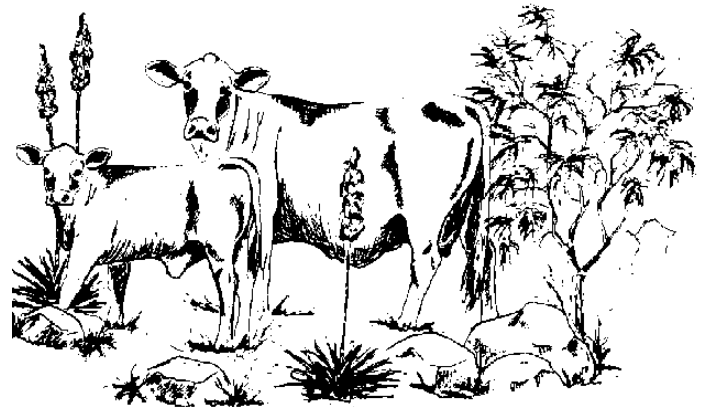
Find/Be a Mentor

The CATA state conference is just around the corner; I know that we are all looking forward to a chance to reflect, refuel, and

reconnect with our colleagues. Let me encourage you to take a further step in that reconnecting — find a mentor (or be a mentor!).

My highest recommendation is to attend the CATA committee meetings. You will find the true dedicated agriculture teachers who have made this profession their career, not just their job. They are there to see agriculture education through the long haul, and to ensure its success for our students. They are the ones who are involved in professional development, which in turn helps them succeed in their career choice.

In the end of the story, the bird finds its mother, and so we assume the bird is then guided and raised into an adult. If you look for your mentor, they can help to guide you and model for you, in teaching, advising, and professional development. ❄



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News and Views

To the New Teachers...

By Grant Ermis, Arroyo Grande High School

It's been nearly five years since I was thrown into the classroom, and I've seen a lot of things change since then, not only in the world of education, but also within myself. My Master Teacher, Mr. Bill Scott, told me nearly five years ago that when he was a student teacher, his credential advisor had all students and their spouses over to his house for dinner to celebrate their accomplishments. At the conclusion of their meal, he said, "Take a good look around, because in five years only half of you will still be remaining at this table, and to the remaining spouses it will be in large part because of your support."

I think about that night all the time, and what the table looked like for me five years ago — who was sitting next to me, and the faces I saw across the table. As a proponent for Ag Education I can only help but wonder why that's the case, and what can be done about it. What are we doing to help decrease the attrition rate, and can anything be done?

Currently, I'm in the last 10 minutes of my prep period as students clamor in the conference room next to me, and I think about rushing to my next class to deliver another attempt at a lesson I have never done before with Introductory Ag Mechanics students. Am I adhering to the principles taught to me during my student teaching year? Will I be effective enough in my classes so the students will learn something *and* want to come back next year? After all it is time for next year's registration....

We constantly think about some of these things because they affect our programs so greatly. If there's one thing I've learned in my past five years, it's that the key to keeping your sanity is being flexible enough to juggle 5-15 different things at once so that our students can have the maximum experience in our programs.

Key to Retention

Granted, we hear over and over that balance in our personal lives is one key to longevity, but I believe the key to teacher retention is finding that balance over time.

My first year as a full-time teacher, I remember beating the custodian to the school with 30 minutes to spare, and leaving after the night shift had been on their lunch break. I would slave over lesson plans just to stay one day ahead of the students. Now, I feel like I have a fairly well-oiled schedule that

allows time for me as well as my students.

I have arrived at a point where I can rely on myself and my colleagues equally, with a great deal of appreciation for how we work as a team and what we do collectively for students. Even through the paperwork and minutiae that can bog us down on a daily basis, I always maintain hope that the future will bring new and exciting things, but for now taking a deep breath can be enjoyed.

Awesome Moments

I'm right on the cusp of being a new teacher and a newly seasoned professional, but for those of you entering the field or in similar shoes, I look forward to you sticking with it for the long haul — not for the desire to prove it to yourself, or fall back on because something didn't work out; but for those awesome moments when

a student speaks up in class because you made them as accountable as everyone else, the light bulb that ends up blinding you with 1,000 candle power because a student's brain clicked with the process of mitosis, and the light in their eyes when you were the one who helped them win fourth at a local speaking contest.

It is possible to keep ag teachers, and the reasons how abundant if you stop to take a look around. It takes macaroni and cheese, a little laundry detergent, ponytail holders, the occasional band-aid, stress toys, cameras, and an appropriate amount of time.

To the new teachers... I look forward to sharing many tables with you in the future as the mentors of our time tell us that we *can* do it, and the support from our families and loved ones will make us that much better. ☘

Ramblings of an Ag Teacher

By Rob Norwood, Jurupa Valley High School

At the Southern Region fall meeting we chose the theme of the three R's — reduce, reuse, and recycle, or put more succinctly, Reduced, Reused, and Recycled, to describe the events of our members over the past year. That got me thinking about other R-words that fit our profession.

So many R-words fit the lifestyle of today's ag teacher. Reproduce for one. Yes, most of us have, and when you look around at a section or region meeting, it's pretty evident. Some are sitting right there alongside us having followed us into the profession.

That vision can lead some directly to thoughts of retirement. Retirement is something we over-the-hill, light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel, old codgers (extremely mature teachers) can look forward to.

Our meetings, field days, and contests through the year make me think of Rendezvous — those great gatherings of the past where men ate, boasted, and competed in games of physical and mental prowess. Conference will be here soon!

Repeat, after a couple of decades, sometimes don't you feel like you are caught in your own "Groundhog Day"? What year

R

is this anyway? Recover, recuperate, rehabilitate are words that come to mind when I think of our comrades who have succumbed to injury and illness this year.

How about reflect, redefine, and replenish, certainly another great set of R-words. I hope you take the time out to do these over summer break.

Here's a list of what I believe are remarkable R-words all ag teachers should keep in mind. In no

specific order: renew, recognize, recruit, reassure, recall, rally, rapport, reach, readjust, realize, reason, rebound, regroup, refine, refresh, relax, remain, reciprocate, renovate, revival.

I know some really think it's ridiculous to spend so much time talking about words that begin with R, but I'm sure some relish the rumination and reflection. As I am beginning to ramble, I will relent and relinquish my pen for now. ☘

Industry Viability Requires System to Produce Sustainable Leaders

By Chuck Parker, Consultant, California Department of Education

Did you ever stop to contemplate what happens to those great leaders developed in the agriculture education programs and FFA chapters? Recently, I was confronted by a well-respected member of our "family" who literally stopped me in my tracks with a question. They simply asked, "How many former FFA members are filling leadership positions?"

Wow, what seemed to be an easy question became one that caused me to search for answers.

Difficult Time

Now, I am fully aware that I do not know who serves on every board or committee. Yet, I found myself thinking through the historical names that were floating around in my head, and, to be honest, I had a difficult time coming up with many names.

Not being able to simply share a few hundred names left me truly wondering if in fact

we are developing *sustainable leaders* or simply FFA leaders. I found myself questioning what I thought was the foundation of my teaching and professional experiences.

#1 Youth Leadership Group

We, agricultural education and the FFA, profess to be the number one youth leadership organization in the world. We actively engage high school students in understanding the levels of leadership, characteristics of leaders, and the value of providing leadership. We

elect student leaders to guide chapter, section, region, state and national programs. We take students to a myriad of conferences where they have the opportunity to hear from some well-known motivational speakers, engage in committee work, and grow as individuals.

Everyone you talk to in education and agriculture speaks highly of the individuals who proudly wear the blue and gold. They enjoy interacting with them, hiring them to fill

vacant positions in their businesses and companies, and see a bright future based on the qualities displayed by these young men and women.

Smaller List

With this in mind, I spent a few hours thinking through various leadership roles, identifying former FFA members who serve. To my surprise, the list is considerably smaller than what I originally thought. I looked at state legislators, county supervisors, school

(Continued on page 16)

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News and Views

Industry Viability Requires System to Produce Sustainable Leaders

(Continued from page 15)
boards, and county Farm Bureaus, to name just a few.

To wrap my mind around what I was noticing, I took out my calculator and assumed that about 12% of our FFA membership are seniors, meaning that around 2,400 students each year were graduating from our programs. Based on these numbers, in the last 20

years, we have provided 48,000 well-trained leaders.

Where Are Leaders?

Where are these wonderfully prepared leaders, not only the ones who served as an officer, but the many others who attended conferences and sat in our classrooms? I am not questioning what we are doing in the classroom. I am confident we are providing experiences

for a large number of our youth, experiences they would not get anywhere else.

But, for some reason these experiences and lessons are not translating to developing *sustainable leaders*. I wish I had the answer, but I simply do not.

What I do know is that for agriculture to prosper and continue to be a viable industry in California, we must find what

is missing. We need articulate leaders serving on local boards, county seats, and in our legislature who understand the value of agriculture and have the moral fibers to guide our country through the challenging times.

Let us work together to figure out a system that does not simply develop FFA leaders, but sustainable leaders. ❁

Calendar of Activities 2012

May 5	State FFA Judging Finals	Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 17	Executive Committee Meeting	Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 17	Pre-Conference Governing Board	Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 17-22	CATA Summer Conference	Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
June 22	Governing Board Summer Retreat	San Luis Obispo