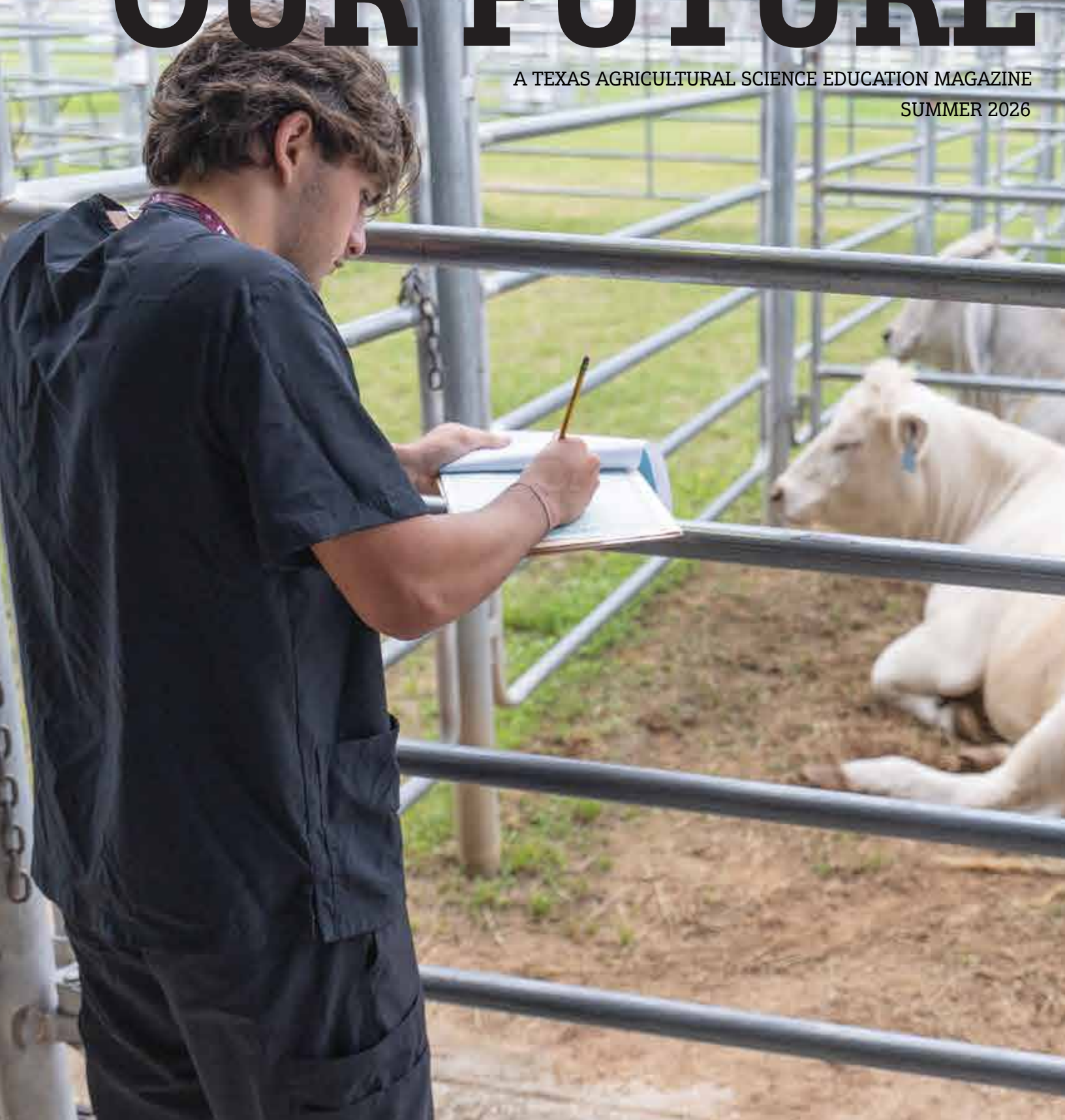


GROWING OUR FUTURE

A TEXAS AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE EDUCATION MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2026



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Growing Our Future:
A Texas Agricultural Education Magazine

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Texas A&M University
Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

FROM THE EDITOR



Ashley Dunkerley

The value of agricultural education at the local level can sometimes feel difficult to explain. There is an old saying at Texas A&M University: “From the outside looking in, you can’t understand it. And from the inside looking out, you can’t explain it.” While sometimes explaining the benefits of our programs can feel like this, we cannot allow that saying to define and represent how we communicate the impact of agricultural education and the Texas FFA.

The truth is, the benefits of Texas agricultural education and the Texas FFA are too important not to shout from the rooftops. Our programs shape students, strengthen communities, and prepare future generations for success both inside and outside of agriculture. It is our responsibility to go beyond simply living the experience. It is our duty to promote it, explain it, and demonstrate its value so clearly that those on the outside fully understand the impact it has on students, schools, communities, and the future of agriculture itself.

We hope you enjoy the Summer 2026 issue of Growing Our Future and feel inspired to advocate for the value of agricultural education at the local level. ■

2026 INDUCTEES



The Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas Hall of Fame exists to recognize and honor agricultural science teachers whose careers, achievements, and contributions stand exemplary. Inductees are known as well-rounded professionals that have proven their success with FFA activities, in the classroom, as well as community involvement. They have proven their desire to provide students with opportunities for premier leadership, personal growth and career success over a significant period of time.





INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF **ADVOCATES**

BY: RUSSELL BOENING
TEXAS FARM BUREAU PRESIDENT

Everyone needs a battery charge every now and then.

I often find energy from a good conversation or from a dynamic group meeting. The extra momentum from those experiences helps me at home and on the road.

Home is my family's fourth-generation farm and ranch in Wilson County.

I grow feed grains, cotton and wheat, as well as raise cattle and operate a dairy with my brother, near Floresville.

On the road includes my travel and efforts as president of the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), the state's largest general farm organization.

It is an organization I have been proud to serve as president since December 2014.

I can always count on a visit or meeting

with high school and college leaders interested in agriculture providing a battery charge.

I am continually inspired by the members of FFA, 4-H and other youth leadership organizations.

They give me hope for the future of not only agriculture but for our state and country.

Agricultural science teachers are terrific mentors in our schools.

I am a passionate advocate of agriculture because of my family experience and growing up in agriculture.

I am proud of TFB's efforts supporting production agriculture in our leadership and education outreach programs and materials.

Our partnership with schools and educa-

tors is making a difference.

We are doing all we can help agricultural science teachers connect back to the classroom.

Teachers can access a variety of free classroom resources through TFB, including lesson plans, reading materials, companion learning resources, and programs designed to connect students with where their food and fiber come from through the Ag in the Classroom initiative.

Educators can also participate in professional development opportunities through the Summer Ag Institute and Early Ag Teacher Professional Development workshops.

The Student Success Series, a leadership and career development program for students in grades 8-12, allows students and educators to connect with industry professionals, explore agricultural careers, and build skills that support both classroom success and future ca-

reer readiness.

TFB also offers four different scholarship opportunities for high school students, including scholarships for students pursuing agriculture-related degrees and for students who have participated in the Student Success Series, helping support the next generation of agricultural leaders and professionals.

The mission of Texas Farm Bureau is to be the Voice of Texas Agriculture.

An effective voice needs energy and passion.

I am grateful for the young leaders in Texas and their teachers who share their energy and passion for agriculture every day.

Our organization is committed to supporting and amplifying those voices.

Together, we are making a difference. ■



BURNET FFA MEMBER APPLIES HERD HEALTH MANAGEMENT TO NURSING SCHOOL DREAMS



2025 STAR CHAPTER PLACEMENT

Hannah Brooks of Burnet FFA is utilizing her Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) at Evans Livestock to benefit both her medical career and her family's ranching legacy.

"Some may wonder how animals relate to human anatomy, but the learning process is very similar," Brooks said. "My responsibilities include a wide variety of tasks related to livestock management, including daily care, flushing and embryo transfer procedures, and maintaining accurate records."

Brooks said that she has been involved with Evans Livestock since before she was old enough to show animals. Her role started with feedings and vaccinations, and have since developed into a full scope of work.

Brooks said that one of her biggest accomplishments is developing her skills in not only recognizing respiratory issues in goats, but also doing it quickly. Recognizing behaviors such as being lethargic, sunken flanks or eyes, and not wanting to play with the other kids can indicate these issues.

"Sometimes, you have to slow down and really observe their behavior by listening,

watching, and paying attention to signs that the animal is struggling," Brooks said. "With the help and guidance of my grandfather, I've gotten better at recognizing respiratory problems sooner and treating the animals more quickly."



Brooks aims to keep her herd healthy and prevent issues by being observant and paying attention to animal behaviors that indicate sickness.

"These lessons will support not only my future in agriculture but also my long-term career goal of attending The University of Texas to major in nursing and become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthesiologist (CRNA)," Brooks said. "These experiences have helped me to better understand the surgical process and will support me as I work toward a career in healthcare." ■

WHY ATTEND?



FIVE DAYS OF CONTENT

Attendees can receive up to 30 PD hours throughout the week of Conference. These hours include virtual workshops that can be accessed throughout the year.

INSPIRING KEYNOTE

The Tuesday General Session includes a motivational keynote speaker.

EXHIBIT SHOW

Attendees have opportunities to visit with teaching material, agriculture curriculum providers, fundraisers, and agricultural business and industry representatives.

WORKSHOPS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Workshop and certification topics range from a variety of ag education topics and are both teacher and industry-led, providing tools to use in the classroom throughout the year.

NETWORKING

District and Area planning meetings take place, where individuals establish and approve rules. Additionally, statewide committees convene to enhance contests and improve events across the state.

TEAM AG ED UPDATES

Attendees will hear current updates from the Texas Education Agency, Texas FFA, Texas FFA Foundation, and ATAT. These updates keep attendees informed about changes that impact every aspect of their profession.

The ATAT Professional Development Conference is the premier professional development event for agriculture science teachers in Texas.

the Association informs ag teachers about the latest agricultural education practices, encourages higher standards of teaching agriculture and provides agriculture education a unified voice in the state legislature.

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It's called a langstroth hive

Kenzi Williams poses for a photo after winning an FFA competition.

Kenzi Williams, a junior at Canadian High School, started a bee business through FFA.

Photos courtesy of Canadian ISD

THIS ARTICLE ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE APRIL/MAY ISSUE OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARD'S MAGAZINE, TEXAS LONE STAR. IT IS REPRINTED/REPUBLISHED HERE WITH TASB'S PERMISSION.

When Kenzi Williams entered Canadian High School as a freshman, she was pretty sure she knew the career path she wanted to follow.

"I wanted to go into physical therapy, and that's definitely a lot different than what I'm planning on doing now," Williams, a junior, said. "That mainly is just because I got involved in FFA. It really opened up my eyes to what all the (agriculture) industry has to teach me and what I can do in the industry."

Now, Williams has her eyes set on a career in agribusiness and agricommunications where she can share stories about those in the industry, she said. Though she started participating in FFA in seventh grade, it was in high school where she began to blossom and hone her leadership and business skills to support her business, Middle of Nowhere Bee Farms, which she manages on her family's property in Higgins.

When people hear the name FFA, they

likely aren't thinking about beekeeping. FFA was founded in 1928 in Kansas City, Missouri, by a group of farmers wanting to prepare future generations for the challenges of feeding a growing population. Originally known as Future Farmers of America, the name was updated in 1988 to reflect the growing diversity and new opportunities in the agriculture industry.

A Community Cornerstone

Canadian ISD's FFA program was chartered in 1936 and has 144 active members in high school and 24 junior members at the middle school. The district, located in the small town of Canadian about 100 miles northeast of Amarillo, has about 800 students.

The district's rural setting in the Texas Panhandle makes opportunities like FFA even more meaningful, said Superintendent Julia McMains. "Agriculture remains a cornerstone of our community, and our students benefit from learning in ways

that are connected to their surroundings, their families, and the industries that help sustain our region,” McMains said.

“Our agricultural science teachers have done an exceptional job building a program that not only supports FFA success, but also prepares students for college, careers, and entrepreneurship.”

Agriculture influences the life of every Texan, every day, said Stacy K. Vincent, professor and head of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at Texas A&M University.

“With one in seven Texas jobs — more than 4.4 million positions — connected to the agriculture and natural resources sector, agricultural education is not simply an elective; it is a vital component of our state’s economic strength and community resilience,” Vincent said.

For school districts, the impact is both immediate and long term, he said. “Agricultural education provides a direct pathway to high-demand careers while cultivating informed, engaged citizens who contribute to the well-being of their local communities.”

Buzzworthy Business

Williams’ interest in beekeeping began when her mother suggested they take a class, and it blossomed from there.

Getting the apiary up and running meant Williams’ family had to initially purchase a lot of equipment. Among the many items were the hives that house the bees, internal frames, a protective beekeeping suit, equipment to extract the honey, smokers, other hive tools, and last but not least, the bees.

Initially, Williams had three hives, with about one to two pounds of bees per hive or roughly 12,000 bees. But a well-established hive can have as many as 50,000 bees.

As a seventh grader, the apiary was just

a hobby. Upon entering high school, she began to see it as a business opportunity.

“We started talking about our fall contest and my ag teacher knew that I raised bees,” she said. “After we had competed, my ag teacher talked to me about doing an SAE (supervised agricultural experience) and he explained what it was, and how I could tie it from a business to FFA.”

The SAE program allows students to participate in practical agricultural activities outside of classroom and laboratory time, according to FFA. It also offers students real-world career experiences in an agriculture area that interests them.

A Hive of Activity

Williams uses the honey and beeswax she collects to make a variety of products, including soap, lotion, salves, lip balms, shampoo, and she is working on formulating a hair conditioner. She sells the items at farmers’ markets, including the one in Canyon, and through her family’s retail space.

“We didn’t start out with a plan to make the soap, but my mom owns dairy goats, and she was having a lot of milk production and was wondering, ‘What can we do with all this extra milk?’” she said. “Over time, as we both figured out how to make the soap, we decided to start adding in some of the bee products.”

Williams’ business also provides bee ex-trication services. When she does a removal, she may try to keep the bees — if she has the space — or rehome them to other hives.

Tending her apiary keeps her busy, requiring care year-round, even in winter. She leaves enough honey for the hive as a food source for the winter. “Then, they eat the honey and make more. And them working is what helps heat the hive,” she said.

More than 'Cows, Plows, and Sows'

While FFA has its roots in production agriculture, over the years, agriculture has grown and changed, said Kristy Meyer, communications manager for the National FFA Organization, which is headquartered in Indianapolis.

"Agriculture is all around us — from the food we eat to the fuel we use to the clothes we wear," Meyer said. "With more than 350 careers in agriculture, we strive to prepare our members to be the next generation of leaders. We see that leadership every day in our members — from their dedication in the classroom, in their leadership skills, and how they continuously give back to the communities around them through various community services."

Williams is a fitting example of that leadership, McMains said, adding that through FFA, she has developed leadership skills, confidence, and a strong work ethic.

"Combined with the academic knowledge she gained in the classroom, those experiences allowed her to create and grow an entrepreneurial venture beyond school," McMains said. "Stories like hers reflect the purpose of these programs and the lasting impact they can have on students' lives."

Williams takes honors classes, dual credit courses, participates in National Honor Society, student council, and helps with yearbook. She also has a 4.3 GPA and is president of her FFA chapter.

Rebecca Noggler, an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Canadian High School, said Williams has won multiple awards for the work she's done with her SAE. She has won proficiency awards in the specialty animals area and the Star Greenhand award, where she was a state finalist in agribusiness. Last year, she was the Star Chapter State Winner in Agribusiness.

Noggler wished similar opportunities

were available when she was a student.

"It was more cows, plows, and sows, farming and animal raising. But now, it's bigger," she said. "There are more leadership opportunities. These kids have a chance to grow and meet people in the community, and they get to start the internships a lot younger. And that sets their pathway, whether they want to go career based, or they want to go research based, or anything in that direction."

The students tend a variety of animals, Noggler said. From sheep to goats, steers to heifers, rabbits to pigs, and chickens to bees. And their interests aren't limited to just animals.

Today's agricultural education programs extend far beyond traditional farming, Vincent said. They prepare students for careers in medical sciences, community development, food security, environmental management, and economic analysis.

"As Texas communities continue to evolve, these programs help develop a workforce that is innovative, adaptable, and prepared to meet the challenges ahead," he said.

Bee Public

Williams' teachers have watched her grow through the program, and this year, she is like a different person, said Marshall Swafford, another Canadian High School agriculture teacher and FFA advisor.

"Kenzi is most definitely the type of young person who benefits from all that the FFA has to offer," Swafford said. "By participating on a variety of CDE (career development events) teams, she has learned the value of teamwork and how to be a good team member to support her fellow members/students."

The hands-on learning through FFA, tied with what students gain in the classroom, are both important skills for students, Godino said.

"Through these experiences, it helps students be better prepared for the real world as they move on to their next steps in their careers," he said.

All that Williams has learned about bees and her business couldn't prepare her for some of the challenges she has experienced.

In February 2024, the Smokehouse Creek Fire — the largest wildfire in Texas history, affected towns in Hemphill, Roberts, and Lipscomb counties, including Canadian and Higgins, where Williams' family lives. The fire grew to more than 1 million acres, destroying homes and causing two deaths.

"After the fire happened, the smoke stayed for a week or two, and that is when we started noticing that our hive health was decreasing," she said. "Over time, the hives that decreased in health just ended up leaving, probably looking

for somewhere else where they could have better vegetation without some of the environmental stressors."

Between the fires and other environmental factors such as pests and drought, Williams has had her share of obstacles.

"I think one of my biggest takeaways is that sometimes things don't always go your way," she said. "Like your bees have gone, but you can always come back stronger. After all my bees had left, I've had to plant a bunch of flowering plants near their hive and then bring new bees in. So, I think that is just one of the biggest takeaways: Adapt and adjust." ■

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THE TEACHERS BEHIND THE LEADERS

GARY ROSENBUSCH'S FFA LEGACY



BY: FRANCES WILSON
LONGVIEW FFA MEMBER

Not every agricultural science teacher can say they taught two national officers, multiple state officers, and the United States Secretary of Agriculture, Brook Rollins. However, for Gary Rosenbusch, this is the case. For 37 years, Rosenbusch shaped the lives of students that have become engineers, professors and CEOs.

Rosenbusch was destined for the agricultural industry from a young age. Growing up on a small farming operation in Florence, Texas, and being involved in his FFA chapter, he began to realize what career was right for him.

"When my older brother got to Tarleton I got to see what he was doing," Rosenbusch said. "That's when I felt I knew that was what I wanted to do."

Following in his brother's footsteps, Rosenbusch later attended Tarleton State University and studied to become an agricultural science teacher. In 1976, Rosenbusch began working for a school in

Crawford, Texas, where he taught for six years. In 1982, Rosenbusch was hired at Glen Rose High School, where he taught for the next 30 years. After retiring from Glen Rose, Rosenbusch began teaching at the college level in the agriculture education department at Tarleton State University. In 2014, Rosenbusch began the position as the Area VIII Coordinator and continues to inspire the youth of agricultural education in this position.



"I think you just have to get the kids out there," Rosenbusch said. "I'm just the bus driver. If I can get them on the bus and get them exposed to something new



and different then I think potential builds from there."

Gary Rosenbusch's career is not only inspiring, but it shows that FFA creates opportunities that teach students discipline, hardwork, communication, and above all, leadership they will carry with them long after they take the blue and gold jacket off.

"It's all about the kids," Rosenbusch said. "You have to be in it for the right reasons."

The tenured educator believes that today's FFA advisors play a critical role in developing the next generation of agricultural leaders by providing diverse experiences and unwavering support.

"Exposing students to as many different activities and events as possible is the key," said Rosenbusch. "It's about helping them find their passion and reach their full potential."

While Rosenbusch humbly downplayed

his role, it is evident his mentorship with Secretary Brook Rollins' has made a significant impact.

One large enough that Secretary Rollins invited her former ag teacher to attend her Senate confirmation hearing, marking a profound moment in both their lives.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be there," Rosenbusch recalled, noting the pride he felt seeing Rollins, who had grown under his mentorship, take her place in front of the Senate. Her decision to invite her Texas FFA officer team to the hearing underscored the deep connections she continues to maintain with those who shaped her path.

For Rosenbusch, the experience was a bittersweet reminder of how far Rollins had come, reflecting on the values she developed in FFA. "It wasn't just about policy," he said. "It was about seeing one of our own step up and take on one of the most important jobs in the country." ■

VALUE BEYOND THE LESSON

BY: MICHELLE VASBINDER
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
AGRICULTURE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

Creating High-Impact Learning Experiences That Prepare Students for Careers, Leadership, and Life

Agriculture education has never been more important than it is today. Agriculture science teachers are no longer simply teaching students how to weld, identify livestock breeds, or grow plants. They are preparing future industry leaders, entrepreneurs, mechanics, veterinarians, environmentalists, educators, scientists, communicators, and community leaders.

At the same time, agriculture classrooms are increasingly expected to produce measurable academic growth, career readiness, leadership development, technical skill proficiency, and community engagement. The challenge for educators is balancing all of these expectations while still creating meaningful, engaging experiences for students.

The agriculture science classrooms that leave lasting impact are not always the largest, newest, or most heavily funded. The programs students remember most are the ones intentionally adding value every single day.

Adding value means creating learning experiences that go beyond minimum curriculum expectations. It means helping students connect classroom concepts to real careers, develop confidence, solve problems, communicate effectively, think critically, and discover purpose. Value is added when students leave class with skills

they can immediately apply in the workforce, at home, in leadership positions, or within their communities.

The good news is that meaningful improvement does not require a complete program overhaul. Often, the most powerful changes come through intentional classroom systems, relationship-building, relevant instruction, and consistent opportunities for student ownership.

Dive into practical strategies agriculture science teachers can implement to create stronger programs and more meaningful student experiences.

Create Relevance in Every Lesson

One of the fastest ways to increase engagement in an agriculture classroom is helping students understand why what they are learning matters.

Students are far more invested when they can connect classroom instruction to careers, real-life situations, or industry needs. Many students enter agriculture programs with limited understanding of the vast opportunities available within the agriculture industry. Teachers who intentionally build relevance into instruction help students see agriculture as a pathway and not simply a class.

Transform Students From Participants Into Leaders

The strongest agriculture classrooms intentionally develop leadership daily not only through FFA competitions. Leadership development should not be limited to officers or highly involved students. Every student should leave an agriculture program more confident, responsible, and capable of working with others.

.....
"THE CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATORS IS BALANCING ALL OF THESE EXPECTATIONS WHILE STILL CREATING MEANINGFUL, ENGAGING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS."

Transform Students From Participants Into Leaders

The strongest agriculture classrooms intentionally develop leadership daily not only through FFA competitions. Leadership development should not be limited to officers or highly involved students. Every student should leave an agriculture program more confident, responsible, and capable of working with others.

Make Hands-On Learning a Daily Expectation

Agriculture education is uniquely positioned to provide experiential learning opportunities that many traditional classrooms cannot offer. Students learn best when they can physically apply concepts, manipulate materials, solve problems, and see immediate outcomes. Hands-on instruction also improves retention, engagement, and classroom culture.

Intentionally Align Classroom Instruction With FFA and SAE

The three-circle model of agricultural education remains one of the greatest strengths of agriculture programs. However, many programs unintentionally separate classroom instruction, FFA activities, and SAE experiences. High-impact programs intentionally connect all three components.

Increase Community Visibility and Program Support

Many agriculture programs struggle with funding, recruitment, and community awareness. Often, the issue is not lack of success but lack of visibility. Programs that consistently share student success build stronger support systems.

Teach Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy

Agriculture classrooms provide natural opportunities to teach business management, budgeting, and entrepreneurship. Many students will eventually own businesses, manage operations, supervise employees, or oversee financial decisions. Agriculture educators can help students build these skills early.

Build a Program Culture Students Want to Join

The strongest recruitment tool is a positive classroom culture. Students are drawn to programs where they feel connected, challenged, included, and successful.

Build Cross-Curricular Connections

Agriculture education naturally integrates science, mathematics, communication, technology, and business concepts. Teachers who intentionally highlight these connections help students understand the academic rigor and relevance of agriculture. Cross-curricular instruction also strengthens support from administrators and stakeholders.

Agriculture education changes lives because it provides students with opportunities to experience success in meaningful, authentic ways. For some students, success may come through winning a competition. For others, it may come through completing their first welding project, successfully growing a plant, speaking publicly for the first time, or discovering a career path they never considered. Every lesson, lab, leadership activity, SAE experience, and conversation has the potential to shape a student's future. Adding value to the agriculture classroom is ultimately about creating experiences that matter.

Experiences that build confidence.

Experiences that develop responsibility.

Experiences that create purpose.

Experiences that prepare students not only for careers, but for life.

And that is what makes agricultural education one of the most powerful classrooms in any school. ■

FULL ARMOR CHRISTIAN ACADEMY FFA MEMBER COMBATS BEEF DECLINE WITH IMPROVED HERD GENETICS



Motivated by the record low in United States beef cattle, Baxter Whitworth of Full Armor Christian Academy FFA is combating the decline with his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE).

"As a young cattleman, the challenge is how do we do more with less?" Whitworth said. "We are witnessing record losses of cropland and pastureland with increasing population. I take this challenge to heart as I make breeding decisions based off of EPDs and carcass data."

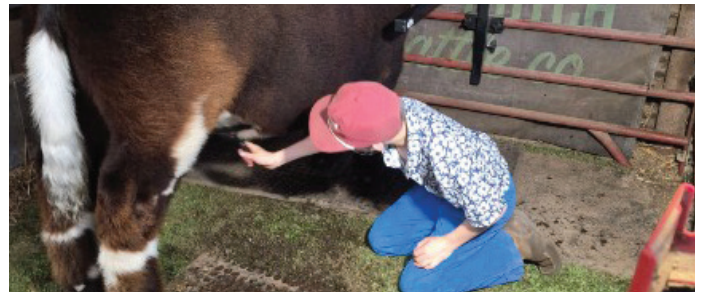
To combat these issues, Baxter Whitworth took a more hands-on approach to the cattle industry and started his own cattle company for his SAE.

"I am a very inquisitive young man, so I began to ask a lot of questions about nutrition, reproduction, cattle markets, and much more," Whitworth said. "The answers I found and the deep passion I experienced for the cattle industry prompted me to start my own cattle company called Top Notch Cattle Company in 2021."

As the primary manager of his herd, he currently owns 4 Herefords and 15 Brahmans. In order to improve genetics within his herd, he said he researched expected progeny differences (EPDs) of bulls

to breed to his females to maximize their breed characteristics.

"To obtain a 100% conception rate, I decided to breed my heifers this past year to my own herd bulls, instead of using an



A.I. method," Whitworth said. "It is important for my cattle to have low birth rates, high weaning weights, and a good set of feet and legs to move around in the pasture for longevity."

Whitworth said that through this experience, he has developed a wide range of skills in livestock care and management, from feed rations and forage management to marketing and record keeping.

"Not only have I accomplished having bred and owned calves in my show cattle SAE, but I am also producing high-quality genetics in my show cattle herd." Whitworth said. ■



**AGRICULTURE
TEACHERS**
ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

POSTER PD

SUCCESSFUL FIRST DAY/WEEK OF SCHOOL

THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL IN AN AGRICULTURE CLASSROOM SETS THE TONE FOR EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS. IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, STUDENTS ARE NOT ONLY LEARNING CONTENT—THEY ARE BECOMING PART OF A PROGRAM, A CULTURE, AND OFTEN A COMMUNITY THAT EXTENDS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM WALLS. A SUCCESSFUL START BUILDS TRUST, CREATES EXCITEMENT, ESTABLISHES EXPECTATIONS, AND HELPS STUDENTS SEE THE VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

WHY THE FIRST WEEK MATTERS

STUDENTS BEGIN FORMING OPINIONS ABOUT:

- Whether they feel welcomed
- If the classroom is safe and organized
- How much the teacher cares
- What level of engagement they can expect
- Whether the class will be meaningful or memorable

IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION SPECIFICALLY, THE FIRST WEEK CAN INFLUENCE:

- FFA participation
- SAE involvement
- Classroom behavior
- Student retention in the program
- Recruitment for future classes

THE GOAL IS NOT SIMPLY TO GET THROUGH RULES AND PAPERWORK. THE GOAL IS TO CREATE BUY-IN.

FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE RIGOR

Students learn best from teachers they trust and respect. Before diving into heavy content, prioritize connection.

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT STUDENTS WANT TO ENTER

Your classroom atmosphere matters.

TEACH PROCEDURES THROUGH PRACTICE

Many classroom issues arise because procedures were mentioned once but never practiced.

MAKE DAY ONE HANDS-ON

Agriculture students often enroll expecting active learning. Starting with a lecture-heavy first day can lower enthusiasm.

BUILD EXCITEMENT AROUND FFA EARLY

Students cannot join something they do not understand.

SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS WITH WARMTH

Students respond best to classrooms that combine structure with support.

ESTABLISH A PROGRAM CULTURE, NOT JUST A CLASS

Successful ag programs feel like communities.

COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILIES EARLY

Positive communication early in the year builds long-term support.

PLAN FOR STUDENT SUCCESS FROM DAY ONE

Students need early wins.

REFLECT AND ADJUST

Even experienced teachers refine their first-week routines yearly.

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FOR A LIST OF FIRST
WEEK ACTIVITIES AND
GAMES SCAN HERE





MENTORING OUR OWN

A GUIDE FOR THE TEACHING PARTNER TO AN EARLY CAREER TEACHER

SET THE PARTNERSHIP UP FOR SUCCESS

- Define “who owns what” in writing. Split responsibilities by strengths, not just fairness (e.g., livestock species SAE checks, school travel paperwork, FFA duties, etc).
- Weekly 15-minute check-in Same day, same time. Agenda: How are things in classroom, what’s coming up, deadlines, allotted time for questions. No venting spiral—problem solve.
- Shared digital hub One Google Drive/OneNote with lesson plans and resources, program documents, FFA calendars, budgets, and contacts. No “where is that file?” drama.

MODEL NOT MICROMANAGE

- Share the “why,” not just the “what” Explain why you manage something your way- instead of “this is the way we do it”. Be open to discussion-it accelerates growth fast.

FFA & SAE MENTORING

- Discuss strength and weaknesses prior to assigning duties. It is not always reasonable to assign all duties that a new teacher is inexperienced with.
- Split FFA advising roles clearly, a One advisor per team, officer group duty, SAE, etc. whenever possible. Students and parents need clarity on who to come to, and new teacher needs leadership role in the program.
- Do a few SAE visits jointly early on to model questioning, record review, and feedback style.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH & LONGEVITY ENCOURAGE

- Introduce them to your network including; administration, ag boosters, local producers, vets, extension agents, ect.—relationships matter. Isolation only eliminates collaboration which impedes growth.
- Boundary setting early, model works life balance, saying yes to “everything,” and protecting personal time. This may actually HELP your balance!
- Present a united front to students, parents, and administration. Address disagreements privately.
- Celebrate small wins with them, even when feels ridiculous. First smooth lesson, first contest traveled to, first successful season—acknowledge it, it matters to them.

QUICK MENTOR MINDSET SHIFTS

Don’t rescue—coach

Don’t assume—ask

Stay aligned publicly—resolve differences privately

Don’t gatekeep—share & communicate

VIEW, PRINT, AND REFERENCE
FULL GUIDE HERE:



FFA FRIDAY

FFA FRIDAY ALLOWS TEACHERS TO SATISFY THE SAE/RECORD BOOK REQUIREMENT FOR COURSES WHILE ALSO CREATING LEARNING EXPERIENCES FROM STUDENTS THAT LIE WITHIN THE CORE OF THE 3-COMPONENT MODEL.

Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the significance of agriculture. (What Does Agriculture Mean?) How does FFA contribute to agriculture? 	130.2.(c) (4) (5)
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAE Show and Tell Have experienced members discuss their SAE with classes. Have them bring in animals or items that assist in explaining their SAE. Explore the various SAE opportunities. 	130.2.(c) (2) (4) (5)
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AET Profile Set-up, AFNR Courses, and Resume 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (4) (5)
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Various Types of SAEs 	130.2. (c) (1) (2)
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Traditional SAEs 	130.2. (c) (1) (2)
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce Leadership Development Opportunities 	130.2. (c) (1) (5)
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting Up Your Experiences in AET 	130.2. (c) (1) (5)
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding Expenses/Income to Your SAE 	130.2. (c) (1) (2)
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career/Personality Profile 	130.2. (c) (1) (2)
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students complete modules over SAE For All in order to develop their roadmap. 	130.2. (c) (1) (2)
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Record Books 	130.2. (c) (1) (2)
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resume Development 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (6) (9)
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing A Cover Letter 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (6) (9)
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mock Interviews 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (6) (9)
Week 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech Writing Update Record Books 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (5) (6) (7) (9)
Week 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule a visit to a local elementary classroom to share an agricultural lesson and promote your FFA chapter. 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (5) (6) (9)
Week 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Speech to Class Plan Elementary Visit 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (4) (5) (6) (7) (9)
Week 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Speech to Class Update Record Books 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (5) (6) (7) (9)
Week 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce Career Development Events 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (5) (6) (9)
Week 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Record Books and Prepare to Submit any Applications 	130.2. (c) (1) (2) (5) (6) (9)



LISTEN TO THE
FFA UNRAVELED PODCAST EP. 7
 FOR MORE FFA FRIDAY RESOURCES



at these farms ensured that they produced the best yields possible. Their goal was never quantity or currency, it was quality.

In addition to produce tours, we saw plenty of ranching operations while overseas. We first visited an incredible dairy farm. This operation was special due to their focus on agritourism, ensuring that the younger generations knew exactly where their chocolate milk came from. We got the pleasure of touring an Iberian Ham processing facility as well, where we were welcomed with open arms. The staff provided a ham and cheese tasting for us, which was delicious! Our animal visits concluded with a beef feedyard. I learned that in Spain, they tend to slaughter bulls instead of steers, giving the beef a different taste and texture than what we have here in America.

As for all other visits, they were incredible as well. We toured a multitude of cathedrals and castles, giving us insight into the heritage and culture of Spain. However, must say that my favorite visits were those involving the art of bullfighting. We were able to not only tour a bullfighting arena, but a fighting bull farm. We ended our last day with a tour at the Spanish embassy. They gave us invaluable information on international trade and ag policy. We then enjoyed one last treat from the beautiful country of Spain by enjoying a Flamenco show!

All in all, this was truly an unforgettable

experience. The friends made, knowledge gained, laughs had, and memories formed will be those that we will never forget. My teammates and I would like to thank everyone who helped make this opportunity possible for us. We are so glad we made the decision to step out of our comfort zones and take this chance! ■





TEXAS FFA RESOURCES

for Advisors

READY-MADE LESSON PLANS FOR YOU!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VALUABLE RESOURCES, TOOLS, AND SUPPORT THAT TEXAS FFA PROVIDES ADVISORS TO ENHANCE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SUCCESS ACROSS TEXAS.

POA PLANNING

TEXAS FFA HAS PROVIDED CHAPTER PLANNING RESOURCES INCLUDING TEMPLATES, ACTIVITY IDEAS, A CHAPTER OFFICER PLANNING GUIDE, TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE POA DEVELOPMENT.



FFA FRIDAYS

FFA FRIDAY ALLOWS TEACHERS TO SATISFY THE SAE/RECORD BOOK REQUIREMENT FOR COURSES WHILE ALSO CREATING LEARNING EXPERIENCES FROM STUDENTS THAT LIE WITHIN THE CORE OF THE 3-COMPONENT MODEL.



CAREER WEEK

QUALITY RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS TO UTILIZE TO PROVIDE A VALUABLE CAREER UNIT EXPERIENCE. TEACHERS ARE PROVIDED A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THAT CAN BE EASILY IMPLEMENTED INTO THE CLASSROOM.



CHAPTER EVENT PLANNING

RESOURCES FOR FFA CHAPTERS WITH TOOLS, TEMPLATES, AND STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY ORGANIZE GOALS, ACTIVITIES, AND MEMBER ENGAGEMENT FOR A SUCCESSFUL YEAR.



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JERKY OF THE MONTH:

HOW TALKINGTON FFA MEMBERS ARE BLENDING FOOD SCIENCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BY: KAYLEE SWAIM
LONGVIEW FFA MEMBER

The Talkington FFA chapter in the Lubbock ISD Agristem program has found a flavorful way to blend food science education, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. Their student-operated "Jerky of the Month" program has quickly become one of the most talked-about initiatives in the school district; and it's entirely led, produced and marketed by students.

What began as a small pilot project in the fall has grown into a full subscription-based operation, giving students hands-on experience in meat processing, product development, marketing, and customer service. The program's success has not only strengthened the chapter's agricultural education offerings but has also created a unique connection between students, teachers, families and the broader community.

Each month, students take on every step of the jerky-making process. They trim and slice roughly 80 pounds of beef eye-round roasts into three-eighths-inch pieces, marinate the meat for at least 24 hours using Cabela's jerky kits and dehydrate the product in a smoker. Once the jerky is ready, students package it into monthly subscription bags.

The program also includes a cross-campus collaboration. One of the school district's graphic design classes creates custom labels for each flavor, giving students experience in branding and visual communication.



"The program has helped us learn real-world skills you don't always get in a classroom," emphasizing the teamwork and responsibility required to produce a consistent, high-quality product," said a student in a district video highlighting the project.

The fall pilot offered subscribers three months of four-ounce jerky packages for \$20. With around 125 subscribers, the chapter quickly realized the program's potential. This spring, the chapter expanded to a four-month subscription of three-ounce packages for \$35. The response grew to 145 subscribers, including teachers, faculty and parents.

Superintendent Dr. Kathy Rollo praised the program, noting that it showcases a level of creativity, rigor, and real-world relevance that reflects the district's broader commitment to expanding meaningful learning opportunities.

"This program offers the kind of innovative, hands-on learning that prepares students for future careers," Rollo said during a district interview.

Beyond the jerky itself, the program teaches students valuable lessons in business management, food safety, communication, and leadership. Students coordinate orders, manage inventory and interact with customers; all skills that translate directly into future agricultural and food science careers.

Conner McKinzie, the chapter's advisor, explained in a video that the project has played a significant role in helping students develop

confidence and a sense of responsibility as they work on something that directly serves their community.

"The project has helped students take ownership of something meaningful," McKinzie said, adding that the pride they feel when community members enjoy their product is one of the most rewarding parts of the experience.

What started as a simple idea has become a standout example of student innovation in agricultural education and a reminder that sometimes the best learning happens when students roll up their sleeves and get to work. ■



MENTOR PROGRAM

AGRICULTURE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

New teachers entering any discipline in the public schools of Texas face many challenges. A beginning agriculture teacher has a regular educator's responsibilities, as well as managing an FFA program, livestock show and project center responsibilities, booster clubs, and many competitive leadership and judging activities. The Agriculture Teachers Association has established a professional mentorship program. The program includes careful selection of the mentors and mentees through an application process, where new teachers indicate their interests and areas of need.

NEW TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM HAVE ACCESS TO OUR MENTOR'S COMBINED EXPERIENCE OF OVER 400 YEARS OF AGRICULTURE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE, AND THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS:

- ON-SITE CLASSROOM AND FACILITY VISITS
- YEAR-ROUND COMMUNICATION
- FACILITATION OF MEETINGS WITH ADMINISTRATION
- INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT



IF YOU ARE A BEGINNING AGRICULTURE TEACHER AND WOULD LIKE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS PROGRAM, PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION BY AUGUST 1, 2026.

LINK TO APPLICATION:



**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY:
TEXASAGTEACHERS.ORG/MENTOR-PROGRAM**



AG TEACHER TALK

AN AG ED PODCAST



AG TEACHER TALK IS NOW A MONTHLY PODCAST!

These podcasts provide monthly discussions, professional development, association updates, and idea sharing to our members.

SCAN TO SUGGEST A TOPIC



TAG TO TEACH AG

As your year comes to an end, we would love to connect with your students who are considering becoming Agricultural Science Teachers. If this career is in their "top five" career choices, we ask that you tag them to teach ag by entering their information in the QR code.

**THANK YOU TO THE CHS FOUNDATION FOR MAKING TEACH AG TEXAS
TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION INITIATIVES POSSIBLE.**

**NOMINATE
YOUR STUDENTS**



MENTOR, MOTIVATE, MAKE A DIFFERENCE

KLEIN FFA MEMBER USES POULTRY RESEARCH TO SHAPE AGRICULTURE'S FUTURE



As consumers continue to seek inexpensive protein options, Reven Brummond of Klein FFA aims to use her years of work in the poultry industry to inspire passion for the future of agriculture.

As part of her Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE), she completed a variety of research projects to help create larger broiler chickens for consumers.

"With the use of electrolytes and probiotics, I was able to [raise] larger chickens for my consumers," Brummond said. "With my research, I was able to produce chickens in a six-week period that averaged about a quarter of a pound more a bird for my consumers, which is a 3.7% increase in total meat produced per bird for consumption."

Brummond said that her SAE included seven different research projects. She was able to present information to 10 different groups to advocate for the agriculture and poultry industry during high school.

She said her greatest challenge throughout the projects has been combating the weather's influence on her flock's health and growth, as well as the influence on bacteria on petri dishes.

"When testing electrolytes and probiotics on the growth of broilers, the warm and humid weather can affect the broilers' consumption of feed and their ability to want to get up and eat," Brummond said. "To try and fix this problem, I have even tested different insulations to allow steady temperatures and better airflow to ensure they are getting as much air as possible, as ammonia and dust can become very overpowering in the summer heat."

One of her projects tested eco-friendly cleaner options to effectively remove harmful bacteria left by raw poultry, like Salmonella and Staphylococcus aureus. Some of the options tested were vinegar, hydrogen peroxide, Clorox, and lemon, oregano, and thyme essential oils.

"Throughout my experience of raising breeding and market poultry and doing research projects in the poultry industry, I have formed a love for the poultry industry and want to continue learning about the poultry industry in the future," Brummond said. "I want to get a degree in poultry science and then proceed to get my doctorate in veterinary medicine and practice in the poultry industry." ■

2026

AGRICULTURE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

KYNLIE BAIRD
DALLYNN BISHOP
EASTON BRANAM
MADISON BURRIS
BRYCE BYRD
KENDALL COMPTON
ZOEY EASON
TRISTIN EDDINS
CAYDEE ESPITIA
MILEY EVANS
ANDRIA GARDNER
DEZIRAE GARZA
KAYDEN GILLIT
BRYSON GOODMAN
ANNABELLE GRIFFIN
LESLIE HALL
KORI HAMMOND
KORD HENRY
MADELYNN HOPKINS
KAYLEE JACKSON
SAWYER KERSTEN
AVA KING
MORGAN KRASUCKY
SAVANNAH LAMPMAN
RICARDO LEAL IV
LOGAN LIERE
PRESLEY LONG
WESLEY MARTIN
EMMA MARTINEZ
KYNDAL MCRAE

HAYDEN MOWREY
DYLAN MUEHLSTEIN
WESLEY MUEHLSTEIN
JUAN SAMUEL MUNOZ
ASHLYN PETERS
BLAKE PHILLIPS
RUGER REEVES
JAKE RESSLER
MACKENNON SAMMON
MASON SAUNDERS
STARLYN SCHNITKER
MEGAN SHAW
AVERY SISAK
BRAYDEN SMITH
GRACE SMITH
HOLDEN SMITH
KINDER STANLEY
RAELEIGH TAYLOR
LAYNE THOMAS
LANE TINDEL
RHETT TURNER
DAVA CLAIRE VELA
KYLIE VOGLER
SOPHIE WADE
PAISLEY WATKINS
CAIDEN WATSON
TATUM WESTBROOK
ADDISON WILEY
CAIN WILLIAMS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE GRANT

THE FOLLOWING RECIPIENTS WILL RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COVERING THEIR CONFERENCE FEES, HOUSING IF NEEDED, AS WELL AS MEALS THROUGH THE WEEK. ENSURING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH THAT WILL NOT ONLY BENEFIT THEM BUT THEIR STUDENTS AND PROGRAMS AS WELL.

AISEY STEELE FLEENOR, CARROLTON FARMERS-BRANCH ISD

ALLISON TALBOTT, FORT BEND ISD

BETHANY HINNANT, GOOSE CREEK CISD

BETHANY MALONE, FORNEY ISD

CASEY WILSON, EL CAMPO ISD

DAEMARY DIAZ, HAYS CISD

HOPE COTTEN, KELTON ISD

JACE ROBERSON, CANYON ISD

JENNA LAWHORN, DEER PARK ISD

JUSTICE FITZGERALD, THREE WAY ISD

KATHERINE GERING, MONAHANS ISD

KRISTIN CLARK, ARLINGTON ISD

LAUREN MCKINNIE, JUDSON ISD

LESLIE DOHNALIK, FORT BEND ISD

MAKENZY MULDE, BRAZOS PORT ISD

MAKAYLA BAIN, FORNEY ISD

MARISSA CERECERES, CANUTILLO ISD

SIDNEY LEE, SHARYLAND ISD

SUSAN ABKE, NEW WAVERLY ISD

TAMARA SEELY, HUMBLE ISD

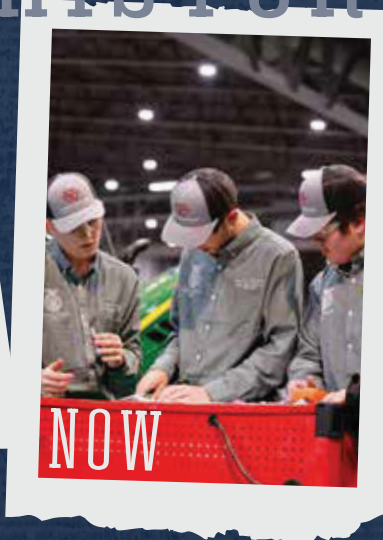
TANNER SMITH, ARLINGTON ISD

TRENTON TROTTER, LINGLEVILLE ISD

SPONSORED BY:



A bit of TEXAS FFA HISTORY



The Texas FFA Tractor Technician Career Development event has been a staple contest for over 60 years. Seen here in the late 1980s and 2026, this unique event allows members to appraise components and parts of tractors and agricultural implements and to locate and correct five deliberately placed malfunctions in diesel-fueled tractors within the 30-minute time limit. Not only is it educational, but it is a sight to see for spectators!

Texas FFA is working on a history project to capture stories and historical data. One that will tell the story of the past century. We look forward to continuing this initiative to share the history of the Texas FFA! If you have any historical information or artifacts pertaining to our organization's various initiatives, we would love to hear from you!



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 2026

CONFERENCE

AGRICULTURE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

NEW TEACHER RECEPTION

MONDAY, JULY 20, 2026 | 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM
OMNI CORPUS CHRISTI - NUECES ROOM

GREENVILLE FFA MEMBER DESIGNS LANDSCAPE AND AGRIBUSINESS FUTURE



Jose Yepez of Greenville FFA may operate a small business, but there is nothing small about the landscape projects that are just a part of his routine within his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE).

“My SAE project encompasses the operation and expansion of my small business, Yepez Signature Landscape, an outdoor service business dedicated to designing, installing, and maintaining outdoor spaces for all residential and commercial clients,” Yepez said.

Through his business, he designed landscapes, integrated irrigation systems with sod installation, poured concrete, mowed lawns, and installed flower beds, retaining walls, and walkways.

When Yepez began his SAE, his responsibilities mainly included mowing lawns, trimming hedges, and cleaning up properties. But as the business grew, so did his responsibilities as the business owner. He began handling scheduling, billing, maintenance, and marketing.

“I began making more management-level decisions, such as selecting efficient

equipment, figuring out a pricing structure on properties based on time and property size, and developing tailored seasonal service plans for each client's needs,” Yepez said. “These changes reflect a shift from being a laborer to becoming a business owner and operator.”

Yepez was motivated to strengthen his business and directly support his family financially by hiring his father full-time.

“Having a trusted family member execute jobs with me enabled me to have more time to focus on the growth aspect of the business rather than physical job execution,” Yepez said. “Through this decision, I have been able to fund my sister's tuition, home renovations and improvements, and provide a stable job for my father.”

He has a goal to operate a multi-million-dollar outdoor service business that prioritizes customer satisfaction and quality work. He is studying at the McCombs School of Business at UT Austin to leverage his education to scale operations and solidify his company as the “forefront of outdoor services.” ■



AGRICULTURE
TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

Stipend Recipients

Spring Student
Teachers

2026

**\$500
GRANT WINNERS**

Jaidyn Minor
Lance Nicholas
Monique Gonzalez
Campbell Offield

**\$250
GRANT WINNERS**

Madison LeBrock	Emily Montgomery
Kole May	Ashley Pitts
Olivia Driskell	Kalyn Patranella
Kayla Driver	Kadence Fangman
Sophee Dever	Alayne Stancik
Katelyn Kelley	Victoria Fuentes
Ryan Smith	McKenna Watthuber
Rebekah Hawkins	Jackson Miller
Hailey Gordon	Steleigh Markham
Owen Hoge	Sophie Casarez
Kayla McCall	Emily Spiess
Tristyn Reed	Michael Calvert
Emorie Dornak	Liberty Heidenreich



IS AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION A VALUE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

BY: RAY PIENIAZEK
AGRICULTURE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I worded my title as a question, but it should be a statement. Agriculture Education is valuable for a local community. As many programs in school are valuable, agricultural education provides a well-rounded approach to prepare students for the next step in their lives and to develop them into contributing members of the communities they are involved with. From the basic agricultural practices learned to the leadership and soft skills students have the opportunity to develop, agricultural education is a key component of a community's enrichment.

.....
"FROM THE BASIC AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES LEARNED TO THE LEADERSHIP AND SOFT SKILLS STUDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP, AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IS A KEY COMPONENT OF A COMMUNITY'S ENRICHMENT."

As we all know, agricultural education programs often incorporate STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) principles, making our students highly relevant in today's job market. Our ag students learn about biotechnology, data analysis, machinery operation, and agricultural chemistry. These skills are highly transferable and prepare students for a variety of careers, including agribusiness, agricultural engineering, veterinary sciences, and food technology. If we look at the employability skills common to all of our agricultural science classes, we can see a vast array of items that will prepare our students.

Agricultural science students are given opportunities to develop the following in all of our programs of study. They include:(from the employability TEKS in our curriculum)

- Identify career development, education, and entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture, food, and natural resources;
- Identify and demonstrate interpersonal, problem-solving, and critical-thinking

skills in agriculture, food, and natural resources;

- Describe and demonstrate appropriate personal and occupational safety and health practices for the workplace;
- Identify employers' legal responsibilities and expectations, including appropriate work habits and ethical conduct
- Describe and demonstrate characteristics of good citizenship in the agricultural workplace, including promoting stewardship, community leadership, civic engagement, and agricultural awareness and literacy; and
- Identify training, education, and certification requirements for occupational choices in agriculture, food, and natural resources.

All of the above will give our students an advantage over other academically oriented students. Being able to problem-solve, think critically, work with teams, and communicate are highly prized skills in the workplace.

Those agricultural education students who go directly into the workforce after high school are sought after, knowing they have these employability skills and are trainable. We also know that our students who head to college do not always end up in an ag related field but use those skills and trainability to return to communities to bring other knowledge back in fields such as medicine or engineering.

We know that with the training received our students will help support the economic vitality of local Texas communities by helping preserve the agricultural heritage, promote the sustainability of the community, and help address future food

security challenges. We know we have a declining number of young people choosing careers in production agriculture. According to the Texas Department of Agriculture, many experienced farmers and ranchers are nearing retirement age, creating a critical need for new talent to sustain the industry's growth and stability. Our agricultural education programs are instrumental in bridging this gap by inspiring students early and equipping them with the skills necessary for future careers.

.....
"WE KNOW THAT WITH THE TRAINING RECEIVED OUR STUDENTS WILL HELP SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC VITALITY OF LOCAL TEXAS COMMUNITIES BY HELPING PRESERVE THE AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE, PROMOTE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COMMUNITY, AND HELP ADDRESS FUTURE FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES."

Investing in agricultural education not only supports economic growth but also strengthens community identity, promotes sustainability, and enhances food security. We have to continue empowering our youth with agricultural knowledge and skills so we can create a resilient and thriving future for all communities.

In my 37 years of being involved in agricultural education, I have always believed that what we are doing in our communities is valuable to the community as a whole. When our communities are involved in our programs, our value goes up even more. Make sure you support your community, and it will support you.■

Convention



98th Annual
Texas FFA
State Convention

PLANNING TIPS FOR ADVISORS

CONSIDER THESE ITEMS WHEN YOU'RE
PLANNING YOUR CONVENTION TRIP

SCHEDULE



WORKSHOPS



MEALS



BANQUETS



SERVICE PROJECT



CHAPTER PLANNING



LOCAL ATTRACTIONS



HOUSING

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A PARKING PLAN. IF NECESSARY, ASK YOUR HOTEL IF THEY HAVE SPACE FOR OVERSIZED VEHICLES.

SEND THE HOTEL YOUR ROOMING LIST.

IF YOU'RE PAYING WITH A CHECK, SEND IT WITH YOUR TAX-EXEMPT FORM IN ADVANCE.

FIND OUT IF THE HOTEL OFFERS BREAKFAST AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

SET CLEAR RULES FOR YOUR STUDENTS SO THEY REPRESENT YOU WELL AT THE HOTEL.

STUDENT PACKING

PROVIDE A PACKING LIST. ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO PACK EXTRA OFFICIAL DRESS. THIS INCLUDES A LOT OF PANTYHOSE, MORE THAN ONE PAIR OF SHOES, AND FLATS FOR GIRLS.

DOUBLE-CHECK THAT ALL STUDENTS' OFFICIAL DRESS IS WITHIN THE DRESS CODE, ESPECIALLY FOR DELEGATES AND AWARD/SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS GOING ACROSS THE STAGE.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO DOUBLE-CHECK THAT THEY HAVE THE NECESSARY TOILETRIES FOR THE WEEK. THEY NEED TO PLAN TO SHOWER DAILY - IT WILL BE A HOT JULY IN TEXAS.

REMIND STUDENTS TO PACK EXTRA CASH FOR SOUVENIRS IF THEY ARE INTERESTED.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO PACK AN OUTFIT FOR A FUN NIGHT; REMEMBER, THE THEME IS SPACE.

HAVE THEM BRING A JOURNAL OR SMALL TABLET TO TAKE NOTES DURING SESSIONS OR WORKSHOPS.



DELEGATE INFORMATION

THE 2026 DELEGATE BUSINESS SESSION PACKET IS AVAILABLE ON THE TEXAS FFA CONVENTION WEBSITE.

SAFETY

MAKE SURE PARENTS HAVE AN ITINERARY AND ALL OF THE CONTACT INFORMATION THEY NEED TO REACH YOU.

ENSURE YOU HAVE AN UP-TO-DATE PERMISSION SLIP WITH EMERGENCY CONTACT AND INSURANCE INFORMATION FOR EACH STUDENT.

LIMIT USING YOUR PHONE ON THE ROAD, AND DO NOT TEXT WHILE DRIVING.

THERE'S SAFETY IN NUMBERS, AND STUDENTS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED NOT TO GO ANYWHERE ALONE.

REVIEW THE CONVENTION EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS BEFORE THE EVENT.

**HEALTH
AND
SAFETY
INFO**



CHECK IT OUT!

CONVENTION PIN CHALLENGE

EVERYONE CAN EARN EXCLUSIVE ENAMEL PINS BY ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN ALL THE CONVENTION OFFERS. KEEP AN EYE OUT AROUND THE CENTER AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR INFORMATION ON HOW STUDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



MAKE IT FUN

PACK TREAT BAGS OR CARE PACKAGES FOR YOUR STUDENTS. YOU MIGHT SEE IF YOUR LOCAL SUPPORTER GROUP WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HELPING.

MAP YOUR TRAVEL TO AND FROM FORT WORTH, AND SELECT A FEW FUN STOPS ALONG THE WAY.

CREATE CHALLENGES FOR THE WEEK THAT ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENTS TO INTERACT WITH ALL CONVENTION COMPONENTS. GOOSE CHASE IS A FUN APP THAT ALLOWS YOU TO CREATE A SCAVENGER HUNT.

CHECK OUT THE CONVENTION PROGRAM FOR SOME INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES. EXPLORE OUR HOST CITY AND THE FUN THINGS IT HAS TO OFFER. IF NEEDED, BUY ANY TICKETS IN ADVANCE. TAKE STUDENTS FOR ICE CREAM OR DESSERT ONE NIGHT AS A SURPRISE





THE POWER OF THE LOCAL FFA CHAPTER

BY: JESSICA REEVES
AGRICULTURE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS
PRESIDENT

As my dad prepares to be inducted into the Agricultural Science Teacher Hall of Fame this year, I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on the true impact of the local FFA chapter.

Growing up in an impoverished community in deep South Texas, there were very few thoughts about state and national FFA events or the opportunities they provided. Our local chapter was the heartbeat of our community and our students.

The FFA motto was not simply recited; it was lived out daily. Every student learned skills that would prepare them for future career success and help break the cycle of generational poverty. Sponsorships allowed students to raise livestock that they poured their hearts and souls into with the hope of earning money many families desperately needed to survive, or even something as simple as earning a buckle to hang on an otherwise empty wall at home. "Living to Serve" was not a slogan, but a way of life. Members of the community constantly came together to love on and support one another.

The agricultural science classroom became the foundation for future careers and successful lives. Leadership opportunities gave a voice to students who felt invisible or unworthy. Raising livestock taught responsibility, budgeting, work ethic, record keeping, sacrifice, and perseverance. Weekend events gave students purpose and countless opportunities to experience success.

FFA was family.

.....
"THE AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE CLASSROOM BECAME THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE CAREERS AND SUCCESSFUL LIVES."

Every family brought food to share around a campsite. Every parent and student had a role in ensuring the success of one another. There was an entire cheering section for every single student, whether they won or lost. In those moments, students learned they mattered.

When I became an agricultural science teacher myself,

my perspective was very different from many others because I had witnessed firsthand how the local chapter could completely change lives. I grew up watching the local FFA chapter become both the pathway to a successful future and a family for students regardless of race, financial status, or background.

My dad always taught us to love the quiet person sitting in the back of the room. He taught us to look past appearances, ignore rough exteriors or behavior issues, and search for the heart of a student. He believed every student had value long before they believed it themselves.

You see, the majority of my exposure to FFA was solely at the chapter level.

As a young agricultural science teacher, however, my eyes were quickly opened to the countless opportunities available within the FFA organization beyond the local chapter. While I never took for granted the students in my classroom, I began chasing the banners, buckles, trophies, state qualifications, and national contests because, as a young teacher, I mistakenly believed those things defined success.

It is easy to become consumed with qualifying for state contests or earning national recognition and unintentionally overlook the true impact happening every single day at the local level.

But as I reflect on the last twenty-five years of teaching, I realize the students whose lives were impacted the most were not changed because of banners hanging on a wall or buckles sitting in a case.

They were changed because of the local chapter.

They were changed because an agriculture teacher showed up early, stayed

late, drove the bus home at midnight, sat beside them at livestock shows, tutored them before school, prayed for them during difficult seasons, celebrated their victories, and refused to give up on them.

.....
"BUT AS I REFLECT ON THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF TEACHING, I REALIZE THE STUDENTS WHOSE LIVES WERE IMPACTED THE MOST WERE NOT CHANGED BECAUSE OF BANNERS HANGING ON A WALL OR BUCKLES SITTING IN A CASE.. THEY WERE CHANGED BECAUSE OF THE LOCAL CHAPTER."

Briana was the quiet student who spent the first week of school praying no one would notice her. Before long, she no longer dreaded coming to school because an agriculture teacher saw something in her that she could not yet see in herself. That teacher encouraged her to join a team when she believed she had nothing to offer.

Emily was the bubbly girl whose mother worked three jobs while her father sat in prison and whose only hope of a college education was FFA. Through FFA, she found purpose and direction on the agricultural issues team (that never advanced to state). That experience eventually led her to become an agricultural lobbyist, with college paid for through agricultural scholarships.

Chris was the dyslexic student who had often been dismissed as unintelligent. Instead of accepting those labels, his ag teacher pushed him to join a team, work hard, and believe in his abilities. He eventually became a state qualifier but more importantly, the confidence gained secured him a successful career.

Jake struggled academically and trusted very few people enough to ask for help. The only teacher he would allow to tutor him was his agriculture teacher, so she arrived every morning at 6:30 to help him pass his classes. Jake never showed livestock or competed on leadership teams. He was the quarterback of the football team, yet today he is a high school teacher because of the impact of his ag teacher. Jake and his family often say they prayed for a male coach to pour into him and teach him how to be a man, but instead it was his female agriculture teacher who changed his life.

Aaron had been written off because of his behavior long before he ever entered an agriculture classroom. However, in FFA he was valued, loved, and held to a higher standard. Through accountability, encouragement, and purpose, he transformed into a Top Hand Award winner for his service at the chapter level and later went on to serve in the United States Army.

Hunter lost her father and legal guardian just before beginning her freshman year of high school. During one of the most difficult seasons of her life, her agriculture teacher worked to build consistency, encouragement, and support both inside and outside the classroom for her. She later became a teacher because of it.

These stories are repeated in agricultural classrooms across America every single day.

The greatness of the FFA organization does not begin on a national stage. It begins in small agricultural classrooms and local chapters where teachers choose daily to love, mentor, challenge, and believe in students who simply need someone in their corner.

That is the true heartbeat of the FFA.

As agricultural science teachers, perhaps

we must challenge ourselves to remember that our greatest impact will rarely be measured by banners, buckles, trophies, or national rankings. Our true legacy is often found in the students who are the hardest to reach, the easiest to overlook, and the most difficult to love.

.....
"THE GREATNESS OF THE FFA ORGANIZATION DOES NOT BEGIN ON A NATIONAL STAGE. IT BEGINS IN SMALL AGRICULTURAL CLASSROOMS AND LOCAL CHAPTERS WHERE TEACHERS CHOOSE DAILY TO LOVE, MENTOR, CHALLENGE, AND BELIEVE IN STUDENTS WHO SIMPLY NEED SOMEONE IN THEIR CORNER."

It is easy to pour ourselves into the students who are talented, driven, respectful, successful, and easy to coach. But the true power of the local chapter is found when teachers intentionally seek out the quiet student in the back of the room, the student struggling academically, the student carrying trauma, the student masking pain with anger, or the student who simply needs someone to believe in them.

Those students may never win a national contest or hang a banner on the wall, but changing the trajectory of a young person's life will always matter more.

The local chapter is where futures are shaped, confidence is built, families are formed, and lives are forever changed.

And that is the legacy we all should strive to leave behind. ■

END OF SUMMER CHECKLIST

For Advisors

GENERAL FFA

- MARK IMPORTANT DATES ON YOUR CALENDARS AND SET REMINDERS FOR IMPORTANT DEADLINES.
- SHARE YOUR CHAPTER'S UPDATED CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND POA WITH THE TEXAS FFA OFFICE. HAVE YOUR STUDENTS WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN STATE-LEVEL EVENTS COMPLETE THEIR WAIVERS.
- PLAN ALL CHAPTER AND OFFICER MEETINGS AND ADD DATES TO YOUR CHAPTER CALENDAR.
- PLAN THREE SOLID SERVICE PROJECTS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR AND DELEGATE TASKS TO YOUR OFFICER TEAM.
- WORK WITH YOUR CHAPTER OFFICER TEAM TO ESTABLISH A PLAN FOR YEARLY CHAPTER MEDIA EFFORTS. WE RECOMMEND SCHEDULING FACEBOOK POSTS NOW FOR THE THINGS YOU ALREADY HAVE DATES AND FLYERS FOR.
- PLAN YOUR FUNDRAISERS AND GAIN ANY APPROVAL NEEDED FROM YOUR ADMINISTRATION.
- CREATE A TRAVEL FOLDER AND SAVE ALL DOCUMENTS SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO RECREATE THEM FOR EACH TRIP:
 - PERMISSION SLIPS
 - PACKING LISTS
 - INFORMATION SHEETS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS
- SCHEDULE TIME WITH YOUR TEAM TO DISCUSS FFA WEEK PLANS AND DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES.
- SAVE YOURSELF A DAY OF PLANNING EACH WEEK AND INCORPORATE FFA FRIDAYS INTO YOUR PLANS (OR WHATEVER DAY YOU PREFER). ALL STUDENTS WILL HAVE A FOUNDATIONAL SAE, AND YOUR RECORD BOOKS WILL BE IN GREAT SHAPE BY SPRING.
- INCORPORATE CAREER WEEK INTO YOUR LESSON PLANS. THREE WEEKS OF COMPREHENSIVE LESSONS WITH LITTLE TO NO PREPARATION NEEDED!
- IF YOUR CHAPTER AFFILIATES, COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND IT TO THE STATE OFFICE.
- IF YOU HAVE JUNIOR FFA MEMBERS OUTSIDE OF THE DISTRICT, COMPLETE THIS WAIVER AND SEND IT TO THE STATE OFFICE.
- PLAN TO HAVE YOUR STUDENTS ATTEND ONE OF THE TEXAS FFA EXCELLENCE CONFERENCES HELD NEAR YOU.

CONTESTS

- REVIEW THE RULES OF THE CONTEST YOUR STUDENTS WILL PARTICIPATE IN.
- RESEARCH TOPIC IDEAS FOR LDE CONTESTS TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS AND BEGIN WORKING ON SCRIPTS.
- CREATE ACCOMPANYING PRESENTATIONS AND PROPS TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS FOR COLLABORATION.
- START A LIST OF ANY NON-DIGITAL NECESSARY VISUAL AIDS AND MATERIALS.

SAEs

- DESIGNATE A DAY EACH WEEK TO SPEND TIME AT THE BARN AND CONDUCTING PROJECT CHECKS.
- COMMUNICATE THIS DAY AND LET PARENTS AND STUDENTS KNOW THAT WHILE YOU'LL BE CHECKING ANIMALS MORE OFTEN, THESE ARE THE TIMES YOU'LL BE AVAILABLE TO OFFER ASSISTANCE.
- UPDATE YOUR BARN CONTRACT AND HAVE ALL PARENTS AND STUDENTS SIGN.
- VISIT WITH INCOMING STUDENTS REGARDING PROJECTS.
- VISIT WITH STUDENTS AND PARENTS REGARDING VALIDATION DATES, LOCATIONS, AND TIMES.
- SHARE QUALITY COUNTS INFORMATION WITH STUDENTS EARLY AND HAVE THEM START WORKING ON COMPLETING IT.
- SCHEDULE A STOCK SHOW PRE-MEETING AND ENTRY NIGHT. HAVE A NOTARY ON SITE SO EVERYTHING CAN BE COMPLETED THE SAME DAY.
- DETERMINE A LIST OF POTENTIAL DEGREE AND AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR THE YEAR. START WORKING WITH THEM TO UPDATE THE INFORMATION IN THEIR RECORD BOOKS AND APPLICATIONS.



USEFUL LINKS
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LOCAL ROOTS, LASTING IMPACT: THE VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

BY: JENNIFER JACKSON
TEXAS FFA ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

If you spend any time in an agricultural science classroom, you know something important is happening there that does not always show up on a spreadsheet.

You will see welders running before the first bell rings. You will see students practicing parliamentary procedure during lunch. You will see young people who never thought they were “a school person” suddenly realize they are pretty good at animal science, floral design, or ag mechanics. Somewhere in the middle of all that, learning is happening.

The value of agricultural education at the local level is easy to see when you walk into a classroom or attend a chapter meeting. What can be harder is helping others understand that value when they are looking at budgets, schedules, and accountability ratings.

But the truth is, agricultural education delivers on every metric schools care about.

It prepares students for careers.

It strengthens academic skills.

It builds leadership.

And it connects schools directly to their communities.

Not bad for a program that also teaches students how to change

a tire, wire a switch, propagate a plant, judge livestock, and keep a budget.

Learning That Sticks

One of the things I admire most about FFA advisors is that they see the value of **doing to learn**. Students in agricultural education programs do not just read about concepts. They often apply them.

They manage projects.

They keep records.

They communicate effectively with adults and industry partners.

They solve problems when something inevitably goes wrong.

If you have ever watched a student explain their supervised agricultural experience to someone who knows nothing about agriculture, you know exactly what I mean. They become teachers themselves.

That kind of learning builds confidence, and confidence is often the missing ingredient for students who are still trying to figure out where they fit.

Strengthening Schools and Communities

Agricultural education is sometimes described as a program, but

in many communities it functions more like a hub.

It connects students from different backgrounds.

It engages parents who might not otherwise interact with the school.

It builds relationships with local businesses and agricultural leaders.

FFA chapters also add value through intentional service, engagement, and participation in a well-developed Program of Activities. These experiences encourage students to contribute to their local economy, advocate for and educate others about agriculture, and build meaningful relationships with community leaders.

When these efforts are consistent, they create a two-way relationship. The more visible and engaged a chapter is within its community, the more support it often receives in return. Community members, industry partners, and local leaders are more likely to invest their time, resources, and expertise, helping share the responsibility of the program rather than placing it solely on the agricultural science teacher.

In today's accountability environment, those connections matter.

Schools are evaluated on multiple measures including academic performance, college and career readiness, and student engagement. Agricultural education contributes directly to many of those indicators. Students gain career preparation, leadership development, communication skills, and exposure to real workforce opportunities.

In other words, agricultural education does not compete with accountability systems. It supports them.

The Multiplier Effect

There is another piece of the conversation that sometimes gets overlooked.

In Texas, Career and Technical Education courses receive weighted funding through the state school finance formula. A traditio-

nal academic course carries a funding weight of 1.0. CTE courses that are not included in a program of study generate funding at a 1.10 multiplier. Courses within an approved program of study generate additional weighted funding, with Level 1 and Level 2 courses funded at 1.28 and Level 3 and Level 4 courses funded at 1.47.

In simple terms, districts receive between ten and forty-seven percent more funding for students enrolled in CTE courses.

That multiplier exists for a reason. CTE programs require equipment, materials, facilities, and hands-on instruction that traditional classrooms often do not. But those programs also produce something incredibly valuable for schools and communities: students who graduate with real skills, direction, and a sense of purpose.

When agricultural education programs are strong, they do not just benefit students. They strengthen the entire district and often the entire community.

Another important piece of this conversation is how students are counted and funded within a school system.

In Texas, funding is driven by student attendance and participation, often measured through full-time equivalents, or FTEs. Courses with higher weights, such as Career and Technical Education, generate additional funding because they require more resources, equipment, and hands-on instruction.

What this means at the local level is simple. When students enroll in agricultural education courses, they are not only gaining valuable skills, they are also contributing to the financial strength of their campus.

In other words, agricultural education is not just an investment in students. It is also a strategic investment in the sustainability and growth of the school itself.

There is also strong evidence that students who participate in Career and Technical Education are better prepared for both college and the workforce. Research shows that CTE students are more likely to graduate from

high school and develop employability skills such as problem solving, communication, and technical proficiency.

Studies also indicate that students who concentrate in CTE programs are more likely to be employed after high school and are just as likely as their peers to continue their education, particularly through two-year colleges and credential programs.

At the same time, employers consistently report a need for individuals who have both academic knowledge and practical skills, which is exactly what high-quality agricultural education programs are designed to provide.

This work also directly supports Texas accountability measures, particularly College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR). High-quality agricultural education programs provide students with opportunities to earn industry-based certifications, develop technical and employability skills, and gain real-world experience through supervised agricultural experiences. These outcomes align directly with CCMR indicators and help schools demonstrate that students are prepared for success beyond high school.

There is also strong evidence that students who participate in Career and Technical Education are well prepared for both college and the workforce. Research shows that CTE students are more likely to graduate from high school and develop employability skills such as problem solving, communication, and technical proficiency. Studies also indicate that students who concentrate in CTE programs are more likely to be employed after high school and are just as likely as their peers to continue their education, particularly through two-year colleges and credential programs.

Organizations like FFA strengthen this impact by providing a structured framework for leadership development, career exploration, and applied learning. Through participation in supervised agricultural experiences, career development events, and chapter activities, students are able to connect classroom instruction to real-world application in a meaningful and lasting way.

Agricultural education is one of the few programs that simultaneously strengthens student outcomes, supports school funding, and meets workforce needs.

The Real Impact Happens Locally

The strength of agricultural education and FFA in Texas has always come from the local level. It is the teacher who stays late to help a student prepare for a contest. It is the advisor who encourages a shy freshman to run for chapter office. It is the community partner who shows up to judge a contest or sponsor a scholarship. That support does not happen by accident. It is built through consistent engagement, service, and visibility within the community. Strong chapters understand that when they invest in their community, their community is more likely to invest in them.

Those local efforts are what create the bigger impact we see across the state.

Today, more than 175,000 Texas FFA members are learning leadership, responsibility, and agricultural literacy through their local chapters. While state conventions and national awards are exciting, the real work happens every day in classrooms, barns, shops, and greenhouses across Texas.

The Value That Matters Most

At the end of the day, the value of agricultural education and FFA is not just about funding formulas or accountability systems.

It is about students. It is about helping a young person discover they are capable of more than they thought. It is about building leaders who understand agriculture, community, and responsibility. And it is about making sure the next generation is ready to solve the challenges our industry will face.

That work begins locally and thanks to dedicated agricultural science teachers/FFA advisors and strong FFA chapters, it is happening every single day across Texas. ■

SOURCES

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WHAT'S THE FUTURE WORTH?

BY: AARON ALEJANDRO
TEXAS FFA FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Let's start with the bottom line. Texas needs agricultural science education and the FFA; and agricultural science education and the FFA needs Texas. Our state and country are blessed with three vital and renewable resources: youth, agriculture, and leadership. Agricultural science education and the FFA combine all three to form well-rounded leaders today who will become dynamic influencers in the future.

As we look at the resources of our great state, I hope we can all agree we want Texas to lead in every possible area. [NOTE: I hope we don't ever lead in annual snowfall.] I want to see our state thrive in education, business, industry, trade, commerce, entertainment, and most importantly agriculture. To do this, we have to make agricultural science education / FFA a priority so we can continue to lead in the future. Legendary hockey player Wayne Gretsky was asked once, "What makes you such a great hockey player?" He responded, "Most players skate to where the puck is while I skate to where the puck is going." Let's look at where we are now, but more importantly where we are going.

As our discussion develops, when I mention "agriculture" in this article, think of it as "food." According to Forbes, surveys show a disconnect between farmers / ranchers and the consumer. Unfortunately, many Americans lack basic agricultural literacy. Studies, including notable polls on eating habits, reveal that a surprisingly high percentage of the public is detached from how their food is produced, sometimes confusing grocery stores with the origin point of their meals.

Most Americans struggle to identify everyday agriculture, commodities, and economics. Agriculture is more than just feeding humans. Crops are not just for human consumption but also used for livestock feed, industrial oils, and ethanol production. With less than 2% of the U.S. population working in farming, most citizens rely on highly processed or packaged goods. Unfortunately, this hides the agricultural origin from the consumer's daily experience.

People need to eat, and there are going to be more people. We need to prepare and lead as the food challenges continue to mount. Abraham Lincoln

said, "The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next." We need to ensure our young people know about food, the food chain, supply chain, and a sense of gratitude for our Texas farmers / ranchers. This is a great opportunity for Texas and our agricultural science education and FFA programming.

Present

According to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, we are a national stronghold for agriculture. Texas consistently ranks among the top four states in the U.S. for agricultural cash receipts. It also leads the nation in the total number of farms, boasting over 248,000 operations. This is in addition to economic impact. The **agricultural and food supply chain** is a massive economic engine, pumping over **\$800 billion into the Texas economy** and generating over \$15 billion in annual exports. Roughly 86% of all land in Texas is dedicated to some form of agricultural production, totaling over 127 million acres. In addition to our efforts to produce more food, agricultural science education affords us the chance to ensure our students understand the importance of conservation, protecting our natural resources like the land and water.

According to the Texas Tribune, we are growing with a current population of 31.7 million. This means we rank 1st in the U.S., adding over 391,000 new residents. According to the Texas Demographic Center, Texas' growth remains hyper-concentrated in major metropolitan areas, specifically the "Texas Triangle" formed by Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston. Over 95% of the state's growth occurred in its 26 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). Conversely, more than one-third of Texas's 254 counties have seen a population decline.

Why Now? It is Time to Act... Or, We're Going to be Hungry and Not Lead

Food challenges are coming (where is the puck headed?). The world population is projected to be about 9.8 billion in 2050, according to the United Nations. We will not have more land or natural resources. Arid lands make up over 40% of the earth's land surface. These "drylands" are defined by low rainfall, high temperatures, and significant water scarcity, with some estimates placing the combined area of arid and semi-arid regions at around 41% of the total land mass, excluding Antarctica. We will face greater strains on finite resources due to increased population, urbanization, and industrialization. Under a business-as-usual scenario, humanity would require the equivalent of almost three planets by 2050 to meet the needs of a hungry world.

Do you see the big picture? More importantly do you see the opportunity? The answer to production, storage, distribution, and food challenges can be met and overcome by the education and leadership development through agricultural science education and the FFA.

The Opportunity

Some things are timeless: relationships, collaboration, and communication. We have the opportunity today to encourage, equip, and empower our Texas agricultural science education students to be visionaries to engage in ANY part of the food supply chain. Production, processing, technology, marketing, distribution, communication, and retail are all present opportunities for Texas young people to learn today and lead tomorrow. Texas needs agricultural science education and the FFA; and agricultural science education and the FFA needs Texas.

What is the value of agricultural science education at the local level? You tell me what the future is worth. ■

YOUNG FARMERS OF TEXAS UPDATES



We got rain! I hope everyone received at least some of it. Those early May storms can be brutal!

The school year is winding down. Seniors are already making plans for their future, whether that means continuing their education or heading straight into the workforce. It's an exciting but stressful time in their lives. Younger students are already looking ahead and getting anxious about next year.

Most county shows have wrapped up, but I'm already seeing advertisements for early shows scheduled near the beginning of the next school year. Our local show ended the first Saturday in May. It's amazing how, at any event involving our kids, you see such tremendous support from parents, teachers, and community members. People continue to show up in a big way to support our youth.

The Texas Young Farmers have been busy. We have selected the site for our next convention, which will be held in Victoria, Texas, January 7-10, 2027. Registration and hotel links will be available online soon. For those who may not know, our website address has changed to www.txyoungfarmers.com. It was previously a .org address. We are looking forward to a great convention and hope you will consider attending.

The Young Farmers will also have a boo-

th at the Texas FFA Convention in Fort Worth and at the Ag Teachers Conference in Corpus Christi. Be sure to stop by and see us!

Now for our big news: we will be awarding two scholarships this year. **Congratulations to Cole Mims of Teague, Texas, and Blake Phillips of Fairfield, Texas!** The Texas Young Farmers also sponsors a scholarship through the Texas FFA Foundation each year. We are honored to have the opportunity to support students through these scholarships.

Hope to see everyone in Fort Worth or Corpus Christi!

YOUNG FARMERS OF TEXAS

Incoming Executive Secretary

Larry Mendenhall
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Upcoming and Important Information

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, July 22 - Corpus Christi, TX

Join us for Board of Director elections, cash door prizes, and a review of financials.

Annual School Supply Drive

We will be collecting school supplies for the local community during the week of conference. The area with the heaviest box will WIN \$\$\$ toward their scholarship fund!! Stay tuned for Booth # to drop off!

Board of Director Elections

We have 4 open positions available for our board of directors! We need volunteers to serve on our board for our members. Apply online at vatatcu.org under About > Board of Directors. Email info@vatatcu.org for more information or questions.

Dormant Accounts

Did you opten an account at conference and then forget about it? Accounts without any activity on them in the last 3 years will be turned over to the state on July 1. Make a mobile deposit into your account or apply for loans!

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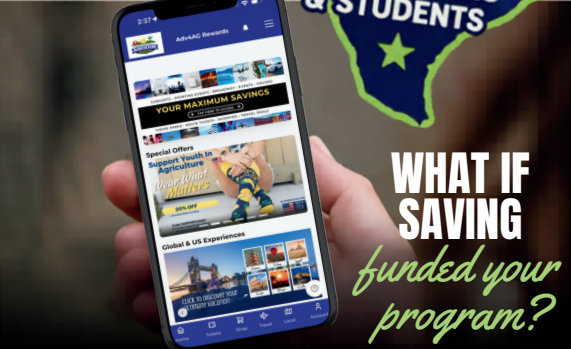
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TIMELY LEGISLATIVE UPDATES CONCERNING AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE EDUCATION



ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEE IS WAIVED



ACCESS TO LEGAL ASSISTANCE



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