



Pennsylvania Association of
Agriculture Educators

Mentoring Handbook

“A mentor empowers a person to see a possible future, and believe it can be obtained.” –Shawn Hitchcock

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National Association of Agricultural Educators Ag Teacher's Creed

*"I am an
agricultural
educator
by choice
NOT BY
CHANCE."*

I am an agricultural educator by choice not by chance.

I believe in American agriculture; I dedicate my life to its development and the advancement of its people.

I will strive to set before my students by my deeds and actions the highest standards of citizenship for the community, state and nation.

I will endeavor to develop professionally through study, travel, and exploration.

I will not knowingly wrong my fellow teachers. I will defend them as far as honesty will permit.

I will work for the advancement of agricultural education, and I will defend it in my community, state and nation. I realize that I am a part of the public school system.

I will work in harmony with school authorities and other teachers of the school. My love for youth will spur me on to impart something from my life that will help make for each of my students a full and happy future.



Role of Mentors

- Act as a liaison
- Answer Questions
- Observe, listen, assess and provide meaningful feedback
- Promote relationships and set the tone at the beginning of the academic year
- Identify novice teachers' needs
- Provide instructional, professional and personal support
- Ensure a confidential relationship with mentee
- Provide motivation, support and encouragement
- Orient the mentee to the culture of the Ag. teaching profession
- Serve as an active role model
- Offer assistance in classroom management and teaching strategies
- Help the mentee establish primary goals for the year
- Inform mentee about job benefits, activities and day-to-day routines
- Encourage mentee to reflect on issues and help them problem solve
- Encourage them to become independent
- Execute follow up procedures with mentee
- Share best practices
- Initiate contact in a timely manner
- Do not put your mentee out of your mind and wait for him/her to call you
- Remember that your role is not to solve all their problems, but to offer support and advice
- Reflect high ethical standards for your mentee to emulate
- Offer to remind them about important deadlines or help in dealing with specific events

Tips for Mentors

- Set ground rules early
- Help changes happen
- Avoid information overload
- Share decision making
- Know when to intervene
- Maintain the relationship
- Don't forget content
- Know when to wean
- Find time to mentor
- Reflect on your mentoring
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Remember student learning is the ultimate goal

The Role of Novice Teachers

- To be committed to learning and improving
- Be willing to listen to others, be open-minded, willing and accepting
- Seek honest feedback and don't be surprised when other Ag. Teachers give you honest feedback
- Identify needs and ask for help
- Observe experienced teachers
- Offer reflections on his/her own teaching/advising practices
- Request release time to observe other teachers
- Participate in professional development
- Attend programs offered in the district/state
- Become knowledgeable about curriculum/frameworks/textbooks
- Do not hesitate or be afraid to call your mentor. They volunteered to help you for a reason
- Realize that your mentor's role is not to solve all of your problems, but offer support and advice
- Don't be afraid to contact other sources for assistance in curriculum or FFA specific areas
- Realize that you are not expected to be the "perfect Ag teacher" or do everything
- Respect mentors time and personal obligations
- Generate a list of questions before meeting up with your mentor

Questions to Answer Up Front

- What does each of you agree to do?
- How will you work together to hold each other accountable for making time to do what you plan?
- What do you agree to in terms of deciding when each one might need to seek the assistance of others?
- What are your routines for collaborative conversations or problem-solving strategies?
- When and how do you agree to communicate with one another?
- What are the topics that are relevant?

Suggestions for Mentoring

Process and Timeline

Please use the following topics as a list of suggestions to assist in your interaction during the school year and the mentoring process. This is not a required list of items but some suggestions to get you started.

First 9 Weeks

- Current and Updated Course Frameworks to follow
- Instructional Materials and Lesson Planning
- Meet with or call Mentee/Mentor once a month
- Help with AET set up and management
- Strategies for Classroom Management
- Strategies for working with Special Needs Students
- Invite Mentee to observe you in the classroom
- Conversation about grading process

Second 9 Weeks

- Call or email Mentee/Mentor once a month
- Provide suggestions on planning CDE practices
- Remind about important deadlines/dates
- Review organization and record keeping skills
- Review planning for substitutes in the classroom
- Review classroom management and discipline strategies
- Spend informal social time with mentee/mentor
- Encourage mentee to reflect on teaching experience

Third 9 Weeks

- Call or email Mentee/Mentor once a month
- Encourage parental contact
- Set goals for remainder of school year
- Review procedures for field trips
- Review State Convention forms and procedures

Fourth 9 Weeks

- Call or email Mentee/Mentor once a month
- Remind mentee about accumulating clock hours/credits for re-licensing process
- Remind them to update curriculum files
- Give suggestions for keeping momentum and student interest
- Encourage mentee to think ahead to next year
- Help with end of year forms
- Remind mentee of the importance of attending PAAE Summer Conference

I got the job...now what???

School Policies, Procedures and Routines

- _____ Access to Previous Teachers Files (both electronic and hard copy)
- _____ Contact Person and Process for Purchase Orders
- _____ Access to Computer, Copy Machine and Printer
- _____ Take inventory of supplies in classroom and facilities (barn/greenhouse/shop)
- _____ Salary, Pay Dates and Payroll Options
- _____ Sign-up for Health Benefits
- _____ Sick Leave/Personal Leave Policies and Contact Information
- _____ Field Trip Forms
- _____ Lesson Plan Procedures
- _____ Location of Materials/Resources in the Building
- _____ Building/District Policies on Student Discipline Procedures
- _____ Building Policy on Homework
- _____ Fire/Security Drill Procedures
- _____ Procedures for Student Illness/Injury
- _____ Daily Procedures for Attendance and Tardy Policy
- _____ Building Policies on Grading and Report Card Procedures
- _____ Telephone Call Procedures
- _____ Special Education Contact Person and Access to Student Information
- _____ Grade Level/Department Plan and Expectations
- _____ Counseling and Student Support Services Contact
- _____ Location of Records and Forms needed
- _____ Location of Textbooks and Other Curriculum Guides (electronic or hard copy)
- _____ Extended Days Contract Policy
- _____ School District Business Manager and CTE Director
- _____ School District Calendar

Ag Program and FFA

- _____ FFA Chapter Constitution and Bylaws
- _____ FFA State and National Deadlines
- _____ FFA Local, Area, Regional and State Calendar Dates
- _____ FFA Career Development Event Information
- _____ SAE Opportunities Available
- _____ FFA Roster and POA Submission Procedures
- _____ State and National FFA Convention Registration and Forms
- _____ Identify Students Eligible for Awards and Degrees
- _____ Ordering Procedures from National FFA (FFA chapter number)
- _____ FFA Fundraiser Forms Submitted
- _____ County Fair Dates
- _____ Ag Program and FFA Budget Available
- _____ Ag. Program Advisory, FFA Alumni or Booster Club Contact People

Tips for Efficiency as an Ag. Teacher

- Put the extension for the nurse's office on your phone so it's easily visible
- Keep a backup copy of all your files on a USB drive/online platform (Google Drive or Box)
- Put important deadlines and activities on your calendar at the beginning of the year
- Post a visual copy of your FFA Chapter's POA up in your classroom to track progress
- Set individual goals as a teacher/FFA advisor at the beginning of the year and post in classroom/office space
- Keep track of your extended days each month on a spreadsheet
- Keep a file of the Purchase Orders you write each year
- Keep a file of pictures taken for all teachers and FFA officers to access at anytime
- Divide up responsibilities between teachers in a multi-person program at the beginning of the year
- Research previous suppliers that were used to support your Ag. program
- Turn in all fundraiser forms at the beginning of the year for your FFA chapter
- Add Important FFA events to your school district calendar (gain community support)
- Organize files by subject matter and upload them to Google Docs to access from home
- Create combination Permission Slip/Medical Release Forms that can be used for each CDE (all dates for travel on one form to seek parent permission once)
- Create a calendar for your program that parents/students can access on a website
- Label cabinets in classroom for easy access of materials
- Keep a 3-ring notebook for each class with a hard copy of each assignment/activity
- Create a versatile sub plan that can be added to when needed with important classroom management guidelines and daily class schedule included
- Link your calendars on all personal and school electronic devices for ease of planning
- Schedule CDE practices for the same day and time each week
- Keep your school keys in the vehicle you drive to work and separate from your car/house keys
- Place your keys in a specific drawer or location in your classroom each morning to avoid losing them during the day
- Add program supply contacts to your cell phone (you never know when you might need them)
- Review your FFA Chapter Constitution each year to ensure that no changes need to be made
- Create study handbooks or notebooks for each CDE team member to help them study on their own time
- Keep a supply of thank you cards on hand
- Flag emails that you need to answer the same day they are received
- Remember that you are not required to assign a grade to each assignment or activity that students complete in class (stamp student's work to show completion or knowledge gained)
- Keep a copy of all invoices you turn in for FFA or your Ag. Program to be paid by your school district
- When you find an important website add it to your favorites right away
- Place shortcuts on your computer desktop for all files and websites you access regularly

Helpful Tips for the Workplace

Working with Administrators

A supportive administrator can play a key role in your success the first couple of years as a teacher. Gaining their support is essential to your growth as a teacher and FFA advisor. It can be intimidating to interact with administrators or have them visit your classroom, so I suggest the following tips:

- Invite them to visit your classroom before being formally evaluated to ensure that you are less nervous and more at ease with your students, and ask them to give constructive feedback.
- Ask about professional development opportunities offered to staff members, but limit yourself to just a couple.
- Seek advice on how to interact with a difficult parent or staff member.
- Ask them about the discipline procedures they would like you to follow to avoid issues in the future.
- Try to handle classroom discipline yourself to avoid sending students to the office each time there is an issue. If you do send a student, call ahead and let someone know who to expect.
- Invite administrators to help judge CDE's that you host, and thank them formally for helping out.
- Seek their assistance in maintaining the facilities you use to ensure the safety of your students at all times. They would rather you told them than the parents of your students.
- Let them know your plan for being absent from the classroom for FFA events/activities as substitutes can be hard to come by.

Connecting with Parents

Parents can have a profound influence over their students' involvement in your program. Therefore it is important to connect with parents in a positive manner and provide outreach opportunities that will ensure your success as a teacher and FFA advisor.

- Invite parents to a FFA/Classroom orientation night and plan an agenda that will impress them.
- Send home a newsletter of upcoming FFA events/activities and recap the success of students involved in the activities that have already been completed.
- Provide opportunities for parents to get involved in your program whether through an Alumni or Booster Club so they feel invested in their students' success.
- When an incident happens in the classroom with a student, make sure to call home or make contact with their parents.
- Make sure to ask for a parent/teacher conference if their student is causing issues in/out of the classroom. Do yourself a favor and invite your administrator to attend the conference as well.
- Make sure to update classroom grades regularly to avoid parent discontent.
- Realize that not all parents are as involved in their child's education as others. Sometimes you take on the parent role, but remember that they have all the legal rights.

Helpful Tips for the Workplace

Sharing Students between Coaches/Club Advisors

We all know that students can learn a great deal of leadership, responsibility and work ethic through their involvement in FFA, but it is also important to realize that students are also passionate about other activities on campus. It is in your best interest to find a way to work with the other coaches/club advisors to share these dynamic students so that everyone can benefit as a result. I suggest trying some of the following ideas:

- Personally make contact with coaches or club advisors when issues of participation in FFA events arise. Do not assume that your student made them aware of the situation or told them the entire story. All adults can be intimidating in this case.
- Look up the sports schedule for fall/winter/spring sports and be aware that if you plan something for the same evening you might lose attendance.
- Get your FFA activities on the calendar at the beginning of the school year to help coaches/club advisors plan around FFA events.
- Attend other events that your students are involved in on campus to show support of their activities. This could help build positive and professional relationships between other adults in your students' lives.

Effective use of Social Media/Electronic Devices

In the age of electronics and social media it is important to remember some tips that will help you use them effectively both in and out of the classroom.

- Any device or computer owned by your school district has a way of tracking all uploads, files and deleted items, so remember to use them in a professional manner at all times.
- Creating and uploading information to social media is accessible by the public. I would take a second look at your security measures and make sure you are the only one who can upload to your accounts. Also consider what pictures you post of your personal life.
- Consider who you choose to be friends with on your social media accounts. With the exception of your FFA chapter or School District Facebook pages that you create for keeping students informed, I would not personally friend any current students in your program.
- Avoid accessing Social Media sites during the school day unless uploading to school sponsored websites or Facebook pages.
- Do not post or give out passwords for any personal electronic device or school sponsored internet sites (grading, attendance, websites) where information can be modified or uploaded on your behalf.
- Double check all emails and texts you write before sending them. With spell check these days on our devices it can definitely change the meaning entirely. Also check the reply to sender/reply all buttons before sending emails.
- Close or minimize all files, websites, etc. before leaving your classroom for any reason as students may take this as an