

Attributes that Characterize Mentors

Mentors can make a real difference in the personal and professional life of their protégé teachers. Beyond knowing how to meet the psychosocial needs of their entry-level teachers (ELT), mentors must be prepared to assist the ELT in improving their teaching practice in order that their students achieve and perform at higher levels. Mentors, then, must have a variety of personal and professional attributes and skills that attract and garner respect from their ELTs. While no individual has all of the desired characteristics of agricultural education mentor, the following list illustrates attributes that are desired in mentors by entry-level teachers. Attributes, dispositions, qualities, skills, and/or characteristics include:

- A very good communicator
- A very good listener
- Accepting
- Accepting of alternate ways of teaching
- Advocate for entry-level teachers
- Advocate of the complete Agricultural Education Program
- Aid ELT in planning, delivering, applying, and evaluating their instruction as requested
- An effective coach
- Approachable
- Attend training, ELT seminar, and NAAE-affiliate-sponsored professional development events
- Available
- Aware of program curriculum standards
- Believe teachers develop at different rates
- Caring
- Collaborative problem solver
- Committed to teaching and the profession
- Desires to be a mentor
- Diplomatic
- Easily accessible
- Effective supervisor
- Encouraging
- Engages and promotes the value of reflection
- Enjoys building relationships
- Enjoys the teaching profession
- Enjoys working with students
- Enthusiastically assist with research efforts
- Exhibits wisdom
- Flexible
- Has a love of teaching
- Have perspective
- Highly-regarded, accomplished and effective teacher of agricultural education
- Hospitable

- Knowledgeable about professional teaching standards
- Knowledgeable about the development of teachers
- Knowledgeable of sources of instructional resources
- Knows Agricultural Education family members in the state
- Leader
- Lifelong learner
- Love of learning
- Maintains a happy and positive disposition
- Model teaching and advising practices
- Nurturing
- Openness
- Patient
- Perceptive and intuitive about the needs of others
- Positive role model
- Possess a sense of humor
- Promoter and advocate of the ELT as warranted
- Provide training at seminars for ELTs
- Provide useful feedback to the ELT
- Readily assist in program evaluation efforts
- Reliable
- Respected by colleagues
- Respects role of research, theory and practice in agricultural education
- Self-assured
- Shows respect for the ELT
- Sincere
- Skilled in using communication technologies
- Suspends judgement
- Tactful
- Team player
- Teacher of teachers
- Thoughtful
- Transparent
- Trustworthy
- Understand requisites of effective teaching
- Values and will attend initial and on-going mentor training
- Very approachable
- Will guard confidentiality of information
- Willing to listen to and discuss concerns, joys, and challenges of the ELT
- Willing to promote the induction program
- Willing to share instructional ideas with the ELT
- Willing to socialize with the ELT
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Securing Names of Potential Mentors. The task of identifying names of entry-level agricultural education teachers can be accomplished using a variety of strategies. Independent nominations of active and retired mentor teachers by several informed

individuals (state supervisor, executive secretary, NAAE-affiliate officers, teacher educators, and peers) is an effective strategy. Likewise, sending an application and request via an email will, likewise, supply a list of qualified and unexpected names of quality individuals who are currently teaching or recently retired. Common names will usually surface when simultaneously using more than once search strategy. Once a master list is created, a confirmed list of interested individuals needs to be secured from returned invitations and applications. It is the role of the program leader(s) to select and invite the the top-ranking candidates. Once candidates accept the invitation to serve as a mentor, arrangements need to be finalized to conduct the initial training of the mentors.