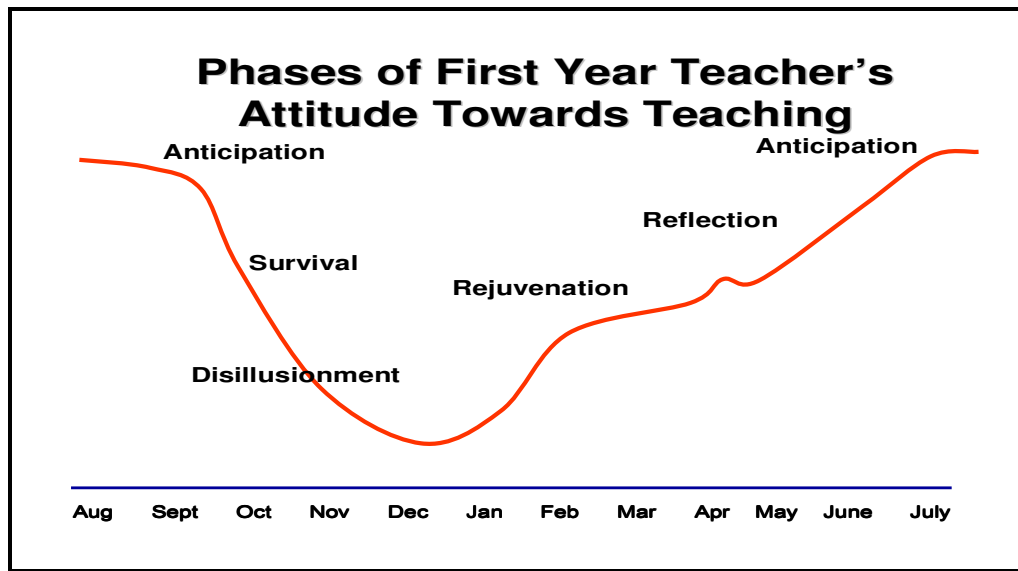


Promising Support and Assistance Activities for Use With Entry-Level Teachers: Recommendations From Mentors



National FFA Teacher Induction and Mentoring Project
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Introduction

Project personnel desired to know what different stakeholders involved in the life of the entry-level agricultural education teacher should do to assist the entry-level teacher as they proceed their initial year of teaching. An on-line instrument was selected as the mechanism to collect data.

The forms of assistance listed in the instrument for each phase of the attitudinal development were derived from interviews with 6 mentor teachers from across the United States. Eleven mentor teachers of agricultural education completed an on-line or hardcopy of an instrument that sought how strongly they recommend use of selected forms of support and assistance. There had an average of 18.5 years of teaching experience. Characteristics of the mentors that responded indicate they had experience working with student an average of four teachers. Likewise, they each have formally mentored three teacher sand informally assisted 10 teachers.

Table X

Characteristics of Mentor Participants (N=11)

Characteristics	M	SD
No. of student teachers hosted	4.2	4.6
No of entry-level teachers formally mentored	3.1	2.1
No. of entry-level teachers informlly mentored?	10.0	9.8
No. of years of experience teaching middle, secondary, or post secondary Agricultural Education	18.5	8.6

What follows is an initially listing of the forms of support and assistance activities that the 11 mentor teachers *strongly or very strongly recommended* mentors implement at different phases during the attitudinal development of entry-level agricultural education teachers. The phases for which forms of assistance were developed in the instrument were anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection, and anticipation.

Table 1

Strength of the Recommendation for Mentors Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Anticipation Phase of the ELT (N=11)

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Assist the ELT in selecting a suitable in-school mentor or guide	5.75	0.62
Establish a personal level relationship with the ELT	5.58	0.51
Establish communications links with the ELT (e.g., email, telephone, fax)	5.58	0.67
Discuss the merits of setting high standards for their work & behavior	5.58	0.51
Establish a professional rapport with the ELT	5.50	0.52
Provide ideas for helping the ELT effectively manage their time	5.50	0.52
Discuss strategies for becoming acquainted with community leaders and local business people	5.50	0.80
Meet the ELT at summer events such as the NAAE state affiliate meetings, beginning teacher breakfast, and professional development events	5.50	0.52
Introduce them to the state supervisor, NAAE affiliate officers, FFA executive secretary, university staff, and area agricultural education teachers	5.33	0.78
Contact the ELT during their first week of school to listen to their experiences and to offer encouragement, assistance and support	5.33	0.98
Encourage them to attend professional development workshops	5.25	1.22
Assist the ELT in establishing realistic goals for their first year of teaching	5.17	0.58
Assist the ELT in creating course outlines	5.17	1.19
Provide the ELT with information about regional and state Ag Ed events	5.17	0.83
Encourage them to conduct on-site instructional visits to the FFA officers and other students	5.08	0.90
Encourage them to establish high standards for student work and behaviors	5.08	1.08
Assist the ELT in preparing for the first days of school of the fall term	5.00	0.85
Discuss the challenges and opportunities of the initial courses they will be teaching	5.00	1.04
Discuss how to work effectively with administrators	5.00	0.74
Serve as an advocate for the ELT when interacting with faculty, administrators, community members and state staff	5.00	1.21
Encourage them to conduct on-site instructional visits to the FFA officers and other students	4.83	1.19
Encourage them to become acquainted with area agricultural education teachers in order that they can eventually select a suitable area mentor	4.83	0.58
Express the importance and benefits of being well-prepared for teaching, FFA advising, and SAE/WBL supervisory activities	4.75	0.87
Assist the ELT in identifying and evaluating teaching resources	4.73	0.79
Provide an overview of the features, schedules, and benefits of the teacher induction program	4.50	1.24

Note: Scale: Strength of Recommendation 6 = Very Strong, 5=Strong, 4 =Somewhat Strong, 3=Somewhat Weak, 2=Weak, 1=Very Weak.

Table 2

Strength of the Recommendation for Mentors Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Survival Phase of the ELT (N=11)

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Discuss and celebrate their successes	5.92	0.29
Be positive and supportive	5.83	0.58
Discuss their teaching challenges along with strategies to remedy	5.75	0.45
Discuss available resources and how to find resources in areas they are lacking	5.75	0.45
Ask the ELTs about the nature of FFA activities including the preparation for CDEs	5.67	0.65
Provide clear responses to questions from the ELT; refrain from using philosophical jargon	5.42	0.67
Demonstrate concern, understanding, and sensitivity when discussing teaching events with the ELTs, especially those who have experienced limited success	5.42	0.51
Encourage the ELTs to maintain objectivity when evaluating their personal performances	5.42	0.67
Provide ideas of how to network with other teachers and resource people	5.33	1.15
Encourage the ELTs to attend fall seminars, workshops, and NAAE-affiliate meetings	5.33	1.23
Observe the ELT teach	5.25	0.62
Discuss and offer suggestions for improving instruction and student management	5.25	0.87
Encourage the ELTs to interact with other ELTs on a regular basis	5.17	1.03
Explore the types of support and assistance the ELTs receives from their local and area mentors	4.83	0.72
Meet the principal and in-school mentor/guide to discuss the progress and experiences of the ELTs	4.75	1.06
Maintain weekly communications in order to accurately monitor changing performance and attitudes of the ELTs	4.75	1.14
Explore the benefits and limitations of employing student helpers	4.58	0.51
Provide the ELTs with strategies of how to prepare for and profit from evaluative visits by the principal	4.58	0.79
Plan and invite ELTs to small social gatherings of ELTs	4.50	1.09

Note: Scale: Strength of Recommendation 6 = Very Strong, 5=Strong, 4 =Somewhat Strong, 3=Somewhat Weak, 2=Weak, 1=V. Weak.

Table 3

Strength of the Recommendation for Mentors Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Disillusionment Phase of the ELT (N=11)

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Provide support and encouragement	5.92	0.29
Encourage them to invest time with their families, self, and significant individuals	5.83	0.39
Listen and talk with them about topics of interest through email messages, phone calls, and personal visits	5.67	0.49
Assure them that their experiences are typical of many ELTs	5.67	0.65
Discuss things that have gone well and assist them in creating a reasonable action plan for addressing current challenges	5.67	0.65
Encourage them to continue to modify student and classroom management techniques	5.67	0.49
Remind them of key FFA events that occurring	5.50	0.67
Encourage them and provide them with ideas for conduction more hands-on/minds-on class activities	5.42	0.67
Assist the ELT in identifying, locating, and effectively using teaching resources	5.42	0.79
Observe the ELT teach, then arrive together with concrete strategies for enhancing the instruction	5.33	0.65
Assist them in building a network of professional acquaintances at the local, regional, and state level	5.25	0.97
Assist them in creating useful lesson plans	5.17	0.94
Discuss course and curriculum changes needed for the next semester	5.08	0.67
Provide them with resources and ideas of how to conduct parent/teacher conferences	5.08	0.79
Encourage the ELT to meet with members of an existing advisory committee. If non-existent, begin to establish a local advisory committee	5.08	1.00
Attend and participate in professional development events with the ELT whenever possible	5.00	0.95
Advocate for the ELT's when visiting with other stakeholders	5.00	1.28
Encourage them (ELT's) to attend NAAE affiliate meetings or district sponsored workshops	4.83	1.95

Note: Scale: Strength of Recommendation 6 = Very Strong, 5=Strong, 4 =Somewhat Strong, 3=Somewhat Weak, 2=Weak, 1=Very Weak.

Table 4

Strength of the Recommendation for Mentors Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Rejuvenation Phase of the ELT (N=11)

Discuss strategies for ensuring a successful student registration for courses for the upcoming academic year	5.73	0.47
Respond to questions regarding the FFA Degrees and proficiency award, otherwise direct the ELT to a knowledgeable resource individual	5.64	0.67
Assist the ELT in identifying changes needed to strengthen the program in the upcoming year	5.45	0.69
Model and promote reflection	5.45	0.69
Discuss the importance of finishing the year with success in the classroom, FFA, and SAE/WBL programs	5.45	0.69
Encourage them to use a variety of instructional strategies to influence student learning and achievement	5.36	0.67
Assist the ELT in making changes during the second half that will ensure greater success	5.27	0.79
Monitor email, voicemails, requests, and use alternate forms of personal contact when personal visits are curtailed	5.27	0.90
Discuss grading; tell them that a good grade for less than optimum performance will not be a good long term solution	5.27	0.79
Encourage their attendance and participation at professional development events	5.18	1.25
Explore alternative approaches to effective student assessment	5.09	0.94
If not yet created, assist the ELT with information and ideas for establishing an advisory committee	5.09	0.83
Remind them of the importance of interactions with others in the school and community	4.91	0.94
Suggest the ELT attend student activities outside of the Ag Ed program to show interest	4.82	1.54

Note: Scale: Strength of Recommendation 6 = Very Strong, 5=Strong, 4 =Somewhat Strong, 3=Somewhat Weak, 2=Weak, 1=Very Weak.

Table 5

Strength of the Recommendation for Mentors Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Reflection Phase of the ELT (N=11)

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Compliment the ELT about the successes they have experienced	5.82	0.40
Encourage the ELT to reflect about all aspects of teaching, advising the FFA, and supervising the Seeps	5.64	0.67
Celebrate successes in all components of the agricultural education program	5.64	0.50
Visit, listen, and share reflections at the state FFA Convention, CDEs, or leadership conferences	5.45	0.82
Assist the ELT in identifying changes that should be made in the program for the upcoming academic year	5.36	0.67
Encourage the ELT to be ready for next fall through revising courses, SAE programs, and the FFA program of activities (POA)	5.36	0.67
Maintain easy accessibility to the ELT	5.36	0.67
Talk with the ELT about the development of a summer calendar of activities	5.27	0.90
Encourage the ELT to participate in the summer NAAE affiliate meetings and other professional workshops	5.27	1.56
Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of staying in the current school for the upcoming academic year	4.82	0.87

Note: Scale: Strength of Recommendation 6 = Very Strong, 5=Strong, 4 =Somewhat Strong, 3=Somewhat Weak, 2=Weak, 1=Very Weak.

Table 6

Strength of the Recommendation for Mentors Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Anticipation Phase of the ELT (N=11)

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Encourage networking with other agricultural education teachers	5.73	0.47
Share how the experiences of the first and second year are similar and different	5.55	0.52
Maintain accessibility	5.55	0.82
Encourage them to take time off for themselves, their families, and other significant individuals	5.55	0.82
Participate in an end-of-year celebration for all ELTs involved in the teacher induction program	5.55	0.82
Encourage participation in the NAAE affiliate summer conference	5.45	1.21
Encourage the ELT to visit other agricultural education programs to obtain ideas for strengthening their program	5.36	1.03
Encourage them to evaluate classroom, SAE, and FFA components for the past year using data from the stakeholders	5.36	0.81
Discuss the plans of the ELT for improving classroom and laboratory instruction, SAE/WBL programs, and the FFA	5.36	0.67
Attend and visit with the ELTs at the state FFA convention and summer conference	5.09	0.94
Assist the ELT in ordering supplies, equipment, and textbooks, if needed	4.64	1.43

Note: Scale: Strength of Recommendation 6 = Very Strong, 5=Strong, 4 =Somewhat Strong, 3=Somewhat Weak, 2=Weak, 1=Very Weak.

Mentor Views of the Most Important Characteristics of An Effective Mentor (N=11)
 Winter 2006

Most Important Mentor Characteristics	Second Most Important Mentor Characteristics	Third Most Important Mentor Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good Listener (2) ➤ Honest (2) ➤ Supportive (2) ➤ A Friend ➤ A Role Model ➤ Caring ➤ Encouraging ➤ Helps Mentee Be Reflective ➤ Highly Effective Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A Sounding Board ➤ Assist with Lesson Planning Modifications ➤ Available ➤ Being Objective ➤ Caring ➤ Concerned ➤ Encourage Professional Growth ➤ Helpful ➤ Knowledgeable ➤ Provides Praise ➤ Readily Available ➤ Supportive ➤ Understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Caring (2) ➤ Able To Identify And Offer Solutions To Problems ➤ Available ➤ Experience ➤ Helpful ➤ Models A Progressive Program ➤ Professional ➤ Resources ➤ Respected Experience ➤ Share Common Goals ➤ Willingly Share Teaching Experiences

Mentor Views of the Primary Challenges Facing Entry-Level Teachers (N=11)
Winter 2006

Greatest Challenge Facing ELTs	Second Greatest Challenge Facing ELTs	Third Greatest Challenge Facing ELTs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Time Management (5) ➤ Classroom Management (2) ➤ Lack Perspective Of Daily Workload ➤ Motivating Students ➤ Not Allowing Time For Themselves – Burnout ➤ Not Knowing When Activities Happen ➤ Influence Of Previous Ag Teacher--Good Or Bad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administrative Support ➤ Choosing Too Many FFA Activities To Participate In ➤ Curriculum Materials ➤ FFA ,SAE And CDEs - Specific Content Knowledge ➤ Managing Time ➤ Needed Resources ➤ Not Understanding Regional FFA Issues ➤ Overwhelming Amount Of Activities & Class Load ➤ Do Not Realize Real Results Are 4 -6 Yrs Away ➤ Resource Management ➤ Running The FFA Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administrative Support ➤ Guidance Counselors ➤ Making Community And Parents Ties ➤ Not Being Prepared For Classes Daily ➤ Not Knowing Where To Find Information Or Help ➤ Overwhelming Amount Of Work ➤ Politics Of School System ➤ Resources ➤ Respect From Other Subject Teachers ➤ Time Management - Leave School At School ➤ Timeline Of Academic and FFA Activities

Table 7

Phases During Which It Is Highly Important that Mentors Conduct the Selected Support & Assistance Activities With ELTs (N=11)

Support and Assistance Activities	Recommended Phases to Conduct Support and Assistance Activities with ELTs						
	Anticipation	Survival	Disillusionment	Rejuvenation	Reflection	Anticipation	N/A
Show that you think highly of the ELT	10 90.9%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	10 90.9%	8 72.7%	0 0.0%
Serve as a role model for the ELT	11 100.0%	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	0 0.0%
Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT	5 45.5%	7 63.6%	5 45.5%	3 27.3%	5 45.5%	3 27.3%	2 18.2%
Provide support and encouragement	9 81.8%	10 90.9%	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	0 0.0%
Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT	10 90.9%	9 81.8%	10 90.9%	7 63.6%	7 63.6%	9 81.8%	0 0.0%
Serve as a sounding board for the ELT	10 90.9%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	7 63.6%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	0 0.0%
Convey feelings of respect	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	0 0.0%
Serve as a confidant	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	0 0.0%
Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	7 63.6%	0 0.0%
Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	7 63.6%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	0 0.0%
Be someone the ELT can identify with	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	7 63.6%	8 72.7%	8 72.7%	0 0.0%
Socialize with the ELT on a one-to-one basis outside of work	5 45.5%	5 45.5%	5 45.5%	2 18.2%	4 36.4%	1 9.1%	3 27.3%
Get together informally after work	5 45.5%	6 54.5%	6 54.5%	3 27.3%	4 36.4%	2 18.2%	3 27.3%
Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	10 90.9%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	0 0.0%
Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance	10 90.9%	10 90.9%	9 81.8%	9 81.8%	8 72.7%	9 81.8%	0 0.0%

Note: ¹ Frequency ²Percentage of Mentor teachers.