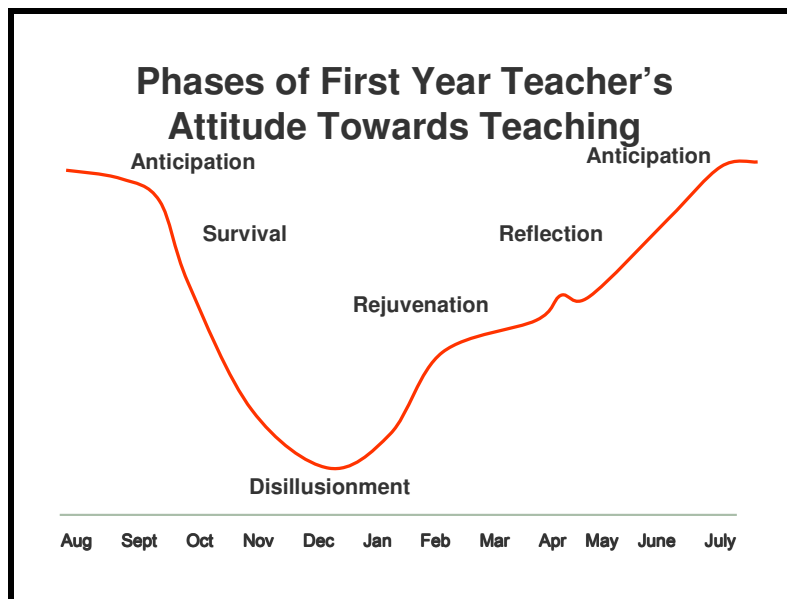


Promising Professional Support and Assistance Activities for Entry-Level Teachers: *What Agricultural Education Teachers Can Do!*



Source: Moir, E. (1990, 1992)

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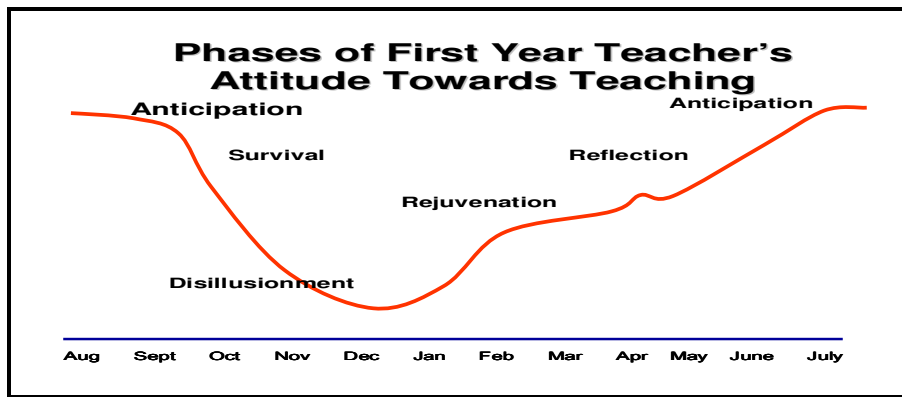
Introduction

Recommendation for support and assistance of ELTs following each phase of changing attitudes (Moir, 1992) were secured from 60 practicing agricultural education teachers from across the USA. The forms of assistance listed in the instrument for each phase of the attitudinal development were derived from interviews with 8 agricultural education teachers from across the United States. Fifteen female and 45 male teachers of agricultural education completed an on-line or hardcopy of an instrument that sought to determine how strongly they recommend use of selected forms of support and assistance.

What characterized the teachers who participated? On the average, the agricultural education teachers who responded had hosted five student teachers and formally mentored two entry-level teachers. The teachers, who averaged nearly 20 years of teaching experience, reported informally mentoring an average of eight teachers each.

What follows is an initial listing of the forms of support and assistance activities that the 60 agricultural education teachers *strongly or very strongly recommended* they and peers use 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.

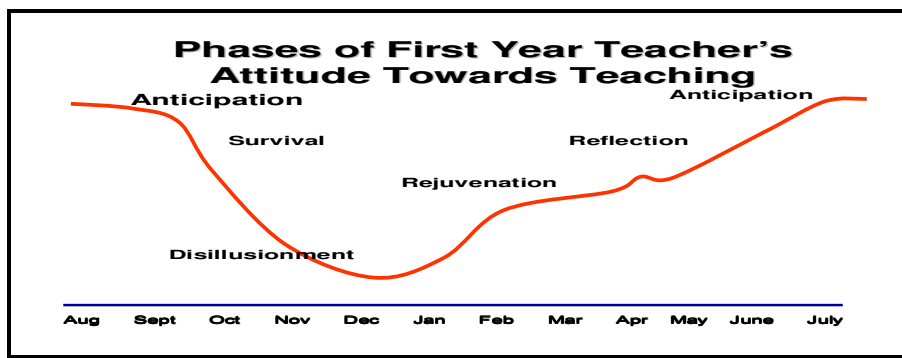
The characteristic feature of each phase will be initially presented; immediately following will be the forms of assistance that the agricultural education teachers strong or very strongly recommend contemporary teachers conduct in each phase of attitudinal changes of the ELTs.



Anticipation Phase. As discussed by Furlong and Maynard (1995), the entry-level teacher (ELTs) has a tendency to romanticize the role and position of the teacher. ELTs initiate their jobs with a tremendous commitment to making a difference and a somewhat idealistic view of how to accomplish their goals. Feelings of excitement carry the new teachers through the first few days to weeks of school. They often believe they are going to be the best teacher their program has ever had, and that they have the skills, attitude, and dispositions to complete the role!

As noted on the graphic below, the anticipation phase characteristically occurs from the time entry-level teachers sign their contract through the early days of teaching in the fall. The summarized ratings from the practicing agricultural education teachers involved in this case study suggest that they **strongly to very strongly recommend** that all agricultural education teachers implement the following forms of support and assistance with entry level teachers (ELTs) of agricultural education:

- ❖ Answer the questions posed by the ELTs
- ❖ Assist the ELTs in selecting a suitable agricultural education teacher mentor
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to attend the National FFA Convention
- ❖ Encourage them to participate in the Dodge “Turn the Key” program
- ❖ Inform ELTs of individuals who can assist with expected tasks
- ❖ Listen to the concerns, ideas, frustrations, joys, and solutions of the ELTs
- ❖ Make sure that the ELTs are aware of various reports (e.g., annual FFA report, program standards, annual report of student enrollments) they must complete along with the corresponding deadlines
- ❖ Observe the ELTs teaching, then provide encouragement
- ❖ Participate in informing ELTs about the nature and expectations of teaching
- ❖ Provide a “who’s who checklist” within the state (department of education, NAAE) and the individual school district; this also includes “chain of command”
- ❖ Provide ELTs with instructional materials and resources
- ❖ Provide strategies for dealing with the pressures of teaching and advising the FFA
- ❖ Provide the ELTs with a prioritized “things to do list” (survival guide) that will help them prioritize their daily efforts
- ❖ Share ideas of how to effectively work with community members
- ❖ Share proven strategies for effectively managing time



Survival Phase. Entry-level teacher (ELTs) learn a lot at a rapid pace. They are instantly bombarded with a variety of problems and situations they had not anticipated, and are caught off guard by the realities of teaching. They struggle to keep their heads above water and become very focused on the day-to-day routine of teaching, with little time available to stop and reflect on their experiences. They often report spending up to 70 hours per week on school-related work and activities. In addition, they are overwhelmed by a constant need to develop curriculum and instructional materials. They are not sure which instructional materials and strategies will work and many expend considerable effort thinking about and developing their instructional plans for the first time. Much to their disappointment, they experience the negative consequences of poorly-prepared lessons. ELTs are surprised by the amount of work involved in being a teacher. They usually are able to maintain a high level of energy throughout this phase. They report being hopeful the stress and strain will subside and maintain belief there is a 'light at the end of the tunnel'. During this phase new teachers often feel alone and really desire that others will reach out to them.

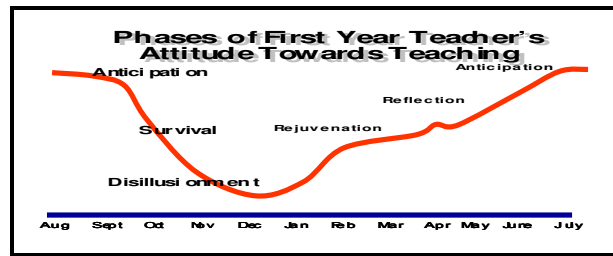
As noted on the graphic below, the survival phase usually occurs during the early days of the fall teaching assignment. The summarized ratings from the practicing agricultural education teachers involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** that all agricultural education teachers implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs of agricultural education:

- ❖ Assist by providing ideas for teaching and supervising SAE/WBL programs
- ❖ Assist ELTs with finding and securing teaching resources and materials
- ❖ Assist in setting up a group meeting for ELT's
- ❖ Assist them in creating and or completing program forms (e.g., FFA rosters, state degrees, proficiency applications, officer applications, annual FFA reports, POAs, annual state department of education reports)
- ❖ Assure them that they are having experiences that are typical for many ELTs
- ❖ Be accessible to listen and respond to the questions and concerns of the ELT
- ❖ Discuss and share different instructional strategies that enhance student interest, engagement and achievement
- ❖ Discuss the usefulness of various curriculum items with the ELTs
- ❖ Encourage ELTs to communicate and interact on a regular basis
- ❖ Encourage them by providing belief in their abilities to be a successful teacher and FFA advisor
- ❖ Encourage them to communicate with peers, administrators, and other teachers
- ❖ Ensure that the ELTs have copies of contact information for all members of the Ag Education team of the state
- ❖ Ensure that the mentoring component of the teacher induction program meets the ELT needs
When feasible, assist ELTs in getting to know their community
- ❖ Express interest in the personal well-being
- ❖ Express interest in their program
- ❖ Offer and provide support and assistance
- ❖ Provide strategies of how to address the pressures of teaching
- ❖ Supply ELTs with proven strategies of how to effectively manage their time
- ❖ Take the ELTs along to professional teacher meetings and related events

Disillusionment Phase. The entry-level teacher (ELT) realizes things are not going as smoothly as earlier envisioned. Low morale leads to disenchantment with the job. They question their competence and commitment. The level of stress and worry often leads to bouts with illness. The situation is compounded by new events including back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, and initial evaluations by the administrator. Many of the beginning teachers find that classroom management is more stressful than anticipated. The unexpectedly large time commitment brings complaints from family members and friends. Teachers in this phase express self-doubt, have lower self-esteem, and question their professional commitment. This is the toughest phase for many new teachers.

The disillusionment phase may occur during the later days of the first and may last until the holiday break of the fall teaching assignment. The summarized ratings from the practicing agricultural education teachers involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** that all agricultural education teachers implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

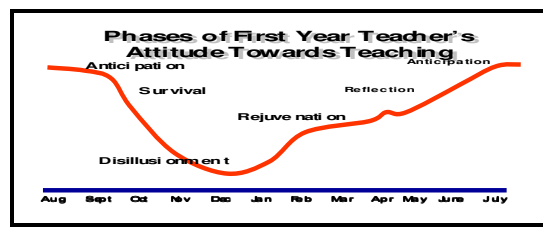
- ❖ Assure that the NAAE-affiliate sponsors a mid-year professional development activity for ELTs to address their challenges and needs
- ❖ Be readily accessible to the ELTs in person or via telephone, and/or e-mail
- ❖ Clearly express that you and most other teachers had similar feelings and experiences as an entry-level teacher
- ❖ Encourage the ELT to use the trimester or semester break to make changes to ensure the presence of a classroom atmosphere that supports student learning
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to constantly improve their lesson planning efforts
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to focus their energies on effective student management
- ❖ Encourage them by informing them that students likely appreciate them more than they show
- ❖ Encourage them to persevere and work hard
- ❖ Encourage them to take time for exercise, personal health, and wellness
- ❖ Personally meet or ensure that their assigned mentors meet with ELTs on an as-needed basis
- ❖ Provide ELTs with requested instructional materials, information, and contact information
- ❖ Provide encouragement and support
- ❖ Remind them that sometimes they need to take time for themselves and forget about being a teacher (learn to clock out occasionally as other jobs do every day)
- ❖ Talk with the ELTs and find out what types of assistance and support you can provide



Rejuvenation Phase. During this phase, entry-level teachers experience a gradual improvement in their attitude toward teaching. They make an effort to prepare new and better instructional materials, and are ready to acknowledge their accomplishments while putting past problems behind them. Better understanding of the school system occurs along with an acceptance of the realities of teaching. Experience taught them coping strategies and skills to prevent, reduce, or manage many problems they are likely to encounter in the second half of the year. The teachers experience some sense of relief as they realize only half of the year remains before they can take a break. During the rejuvenation stage, novice teachers focus more on curriculum and instructional materials development, long-term planning and teaching strategies. This phase often lasts into spring. As the phase starts to come to a close, the beginning teachers become more concerned about getting everything (i.e., units, tests, competency exams) completed by year's end as well as student performance and levels of achievement on various assessments).

As noted in the graphic, this phase usually occurs after a holiday break, when new teachers find time to reflect and invest more time in planning curriculum and instruction. The summarized ratings from the practicing agricultural education teachers involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** that all agricultural education teachers implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

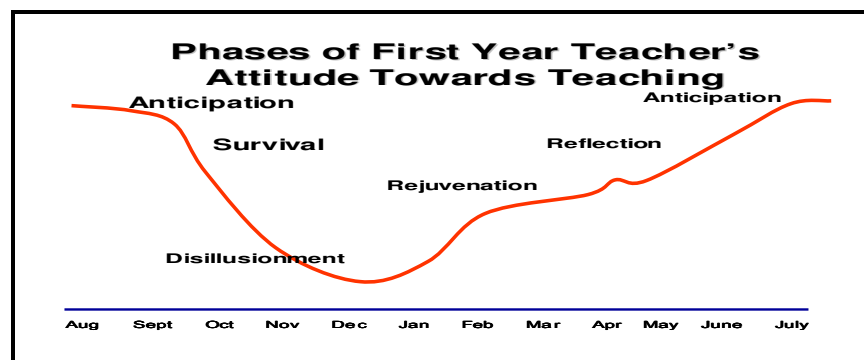
- ❖ Ask state, university, and/or NAAE-affiliate officers to provide for regional or professional meetings to discuss needs and challenges of ELTs
- ❖ Assist the ELT with information and strategies for completing state degrees & proficiency applications
- ❖ Be available to listen
- ❖ Discuss important and timely activities for managing the program with the ELTs (e.g., marketing, recruitment, retention, reflection, and SAE)
- ❖ Encourage participation in school and/or NAAE-sponsored professional development activities such as the NAAE "Dodge Turn the Key Program"
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to participate in activities of the NAAE-affiliate organization
- ❖ Encourage them to communicate with other agricultural education teachers about needs for instructional materials and resources for the second half of the year
- ❖ Encourage them to create a curriculum map (scope and sequence document with dates) for viewing their instructional activities for the remainder of the academic year
- ❖ Encourage use of the NAAE technology website
- ❖ Inform the ELTs of the importance of creating curricula and identifying related teaching resources for the upcoming year
- ❖ Offer a variety of forms of support and assistance
- ❖ Remind them of the importance of maintaining a balance among their teaching, FFA advising and SAEP supervisory roles.
- ❖ Remind them to assess the progress they are making on their annual professional goals
- ❖ Remind them to have the materials prepared for course registration for the upcoming year
- ❖ Share instructional resources with the ELTs
- ❖ Share syllabi or materials from your program



The Reflection Phase. This is a somewhat invigorating time. During this phase the ELT can reflect upon the successful and least effective instructional strategies and activities. The teachers begin to think more about what they will do differently in the future with regard to management, curricula, teaching strategies, resources, and any intra or extracurricular activities. They start to anticipate what teaching will be like with all of the changes they are envisioning.

During the reflection phase the comments and feelings expressed in Moir's (1990) study reflected the personal assurance and satisfaction associated with the ELT completing the first period of teaching. The summarized ratings from the practicing agricultural education teachers involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** that all agricultural education teachers implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

- ❖ Advise ELTs to focus upon developing and delivering quality daily lessons and activities
- ❖ Assist the ELTs in establishing realistic goals for the upcoming year
- ❖ Be sure the ELT continue to meet with their mentor(s)
- ❖ Celebrate the professional and FFA achievements of the ELTs
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to express their appreciation to mentors, guides, teacher induction program personnel, and others who have assisted them throughout their initial year of teaching
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to stay and become more involved in the teaching profession if they have experienced a reasonable amount of success and satisfaction
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to use the advisory committee to assist with planning for the upcoming year
- ❖ Encourage them to have a recognition banquet to showcase the success of their students
- ❖ Ensure that the ELTs convene as a group to reflect upon their year, celebrate their successes, and plan for their futures
- ❖ Meet with the ELTs and model how to reflect upon the activities and outcomes of the year
- ❖ Remind them of the importance of being present at the professional development activities of the upcoming summer conference that is sponsored by the NAAE-affiliate
- ❖ Share ideas with the ELTs for officer training and preparation for CDE's, FFA banquet, and the state convention
- ❖ Stress the importance of community involvement with the ELTs
- ❖ Stress the importance to ELTs of taking time to reflect and prepare for the upcoming academic year



Anticipation Phase II. As they finish their first year of teaching, entry-level teachers express a heightened sense of what they hope to accomplish in the classroom and laboratory settings. They have less concern for survival. They focus more on their impact on students, and less on themselves. They have greater concerns with quality instructional materials and teaching strategies than they did during the initial time of anticipation that occurred before and during the first couple of weeks of teaching.

As noted in the graphic, the end-of-year anticipation phase usually occurs toward the end of their first year of teaching. The ELTs express a heightened sense of what they hope to accomplish in the classroom and laboratory settings. The summarized ratings from the practicing agricultural education teachers involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** that all agricultural education teachers implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

- ❖ Ask that the NAAE-affiliate promote spousal involvement and support system by encouraging spouses to attend the summer conference; by providing child care; and explaining how spouses can be involved in the teacher- spouse's teaching efforts
- ❖ Be professional and develop a relationship with ELTs
- ❖ Discuss issues germane to young parents, especially females, such as maternity leave, finding substitutes, and how you give up a program for a lifetime event such as childbirth
- ❖ Encourage ELTs to attend the summer conference and workshops
- ❖ Encourage ELTs to examine and revise old and write new curricula
- ❖ Encourage ELTs to join professional teacher associations and groups
- ❖ Encourage NAAE & other stakeholders to conduct beginning teacher workshops that fit the needs of ELTs
- ❖ Encourage NAAE to develop and establish a support system that may deal with gender specific issues of ELTs
- ❖ Encourage the ELTs to re-evaluate appropriate family time
- ❖ Provide social opportunities for ELTs at NAAE-affiliate summer conference and meetings

