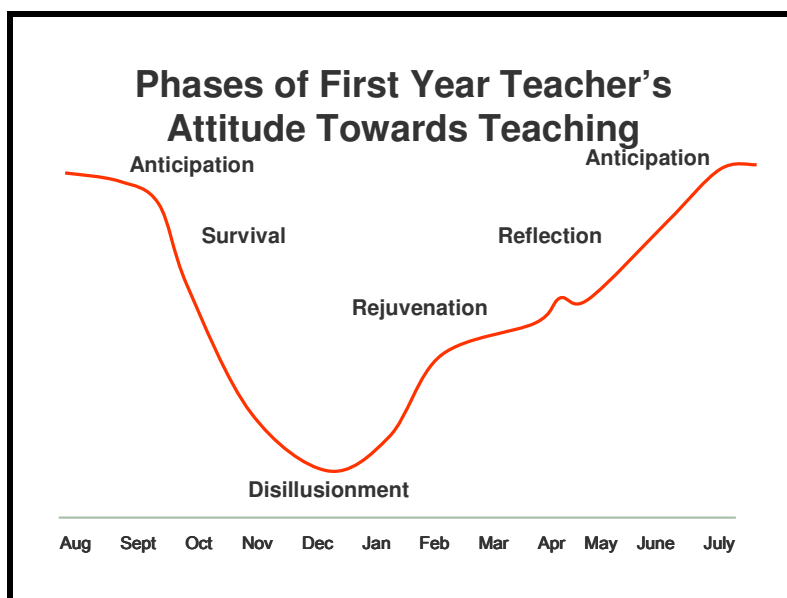


## Promising Psychosocial Support Activities For Entry-level Agricultural Education Teachers: *What Practicing Agricultural Education Teachers Can Do!*



Source: Moir, E. (1990, 1992)

Richard Joerger, Lyle Westrom, Brad Greiman, Brian Warnick,  
Greg Thompson, Barry Croom, Jim Armbruster, and Brad King

2007

This is a product of the National Teacher Induction and Mentoring Project. This special project was funded  
by the Council for Agricultural Education

# **Promising Psychosocial Support Activities For Entry-level Agricultural Education Teachers: *What Practicing Agricultural Education Teachers Can Do!***

## Introduction

Recommendations for promising psychosocial support and assistance for entry-level teachers (ELTs) following each phase of changing attitudes (Moir, 1992) were secured from 60 practicing agricultural education teachers from across the USA. The psychosocial forms of assistance included in the instrument were derived, in part, from a valid and reliable instrument developed by Greiman (2002). Fifteen female and 45 male teachers of agricultural education completed an on-line or hardcopy of an instrument that sought to identify the phases during which it is highly important that agricultural education teachers conduct selected psychosocial support assistance activities when assisting entry-level teachers (ELTs). On the average, the 60 respondents previously hosted five student teachers and formally mentored two entry-level teachers. The teachers, who averaged nearly 20 years of teaching experience, each reported informally mentoring an average of eight teachers.

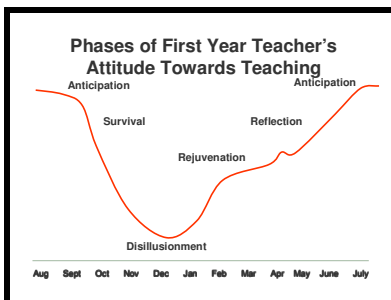
The characteristic feature of each phase of first year teacher's attitude towards teaching (Moir, 1990; 1992) is initially presented in this report. Subsequent to the description is an alphabetical listing of the psychosocial forms of support and assistance activities (Greiman, 2002) that 50% or more of the respondents indicated were highly important for practicing agricultural education teachers to implement with the ELTs.

Psychosocial and professional are the two major forms of support and assistance provided agricultural education teachers. Professional forms of assistance and support are designed to assist with the technical, pedagogical, and artistic aspects of teaching. Psychosocial forms of assistance and support address needs of the entry-level teachers for friendship, counseling, social activities and role models. Suggestions for the psychosocial support and assistance are listed for each phase of change in attitude as described by Moir.

**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!

The psychosocial forms of support and assistance activities (Greiman, 2002) which 50% or more of the respondents indicated were **HIGHLY IMPORTANT** for practicing agricultural education teachers to implement with the ELTs during the **ANTICIPATION PHASE** were:

- Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance
- Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate
- Be someone the ELT can identify with
- Convey feelings of respect
- Provide support and encouragement
- Serve as a confidant
- Serve as a role model for the ELT
- Serve as a sounding board for the ELT
- Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT
- Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague
- Show that you think highly of the ELT
- Show willingness to discuss the questions and concerns of the ELT



**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.

The psychosocial forms of support and assistance activities (Greiman, 2002) which 50% or more of the respondents indicated were **HIGHLY IMPORTANT** for practicing agricultural education teachers to implement with the ELTs during the **SURVIVAL PHASE** were:

- Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance
- Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate
- Be someone the ELT can identify with
- Convey feelings of respect
- Get together informally after work
- Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT
- Provide support and encouragement
- Serve as a confidant
- Serve as a role model for the ELT
- Serve as a sounding board for the ELT
- Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT
- Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague
- Show that you think highly of the ELT
- Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT

**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 psychosocial forms of support and assistance activities (Greiman, 2002) which 50% or more of the respondents indicated were **HIGHLY IMPORTANT** for practicing agricultural education teachers to implement with the ELTs during the **DISILLUSIONMENT PHASE** were:

- Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance
- Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate
- Be someone the ELT can identify with
- Convey feelings of respect
- Get together informally after work
- Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT
- Provide support and encouragement
- Serve as a confidant
- Serve as a role model for the ELT
- Serve as a sounding board for the ELT
- Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT
- Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague
- Show that you think highly of the ELT
- Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT

**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).

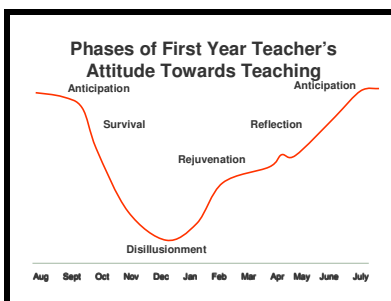
The psychosocial forms of support and assistance activities (Greiman, 2002) which 50% or more of the respondents indicated were **HIGHLY IMPORTANT** for practicing agricultural education teachers to implement with the ELTs during the **REJUVENATION PHASE** were:

- Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance
- Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate
- Be someone the ELT can identify with
- Convey feelings of respect
- Get together informally after work
- Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT
- Provide support and encouragement
- Serve as a confidant
- Serve as a role model for the ELT
- Serve as a sounding board for the ELT
- Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT
- Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague
- Show that you think highly of the ELT
- Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT
- Socialize with the ELT on a one-to-one basis outside of work

**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 psychosocial forms of support and assistance activities (Greiman, 2002) which 50% or more of the respondents indicated were **HIGHLY IMPORTANT** for practicing agricultural education teachers to implement with the ELTs during the **REFLECTION PHASE** were:

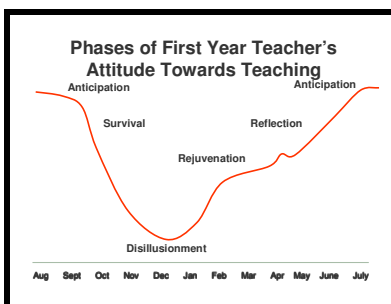
- Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance
- Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate
- Be someone the ELT can identify with
- Convey feelings of respect
- Get together informally after work
- Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT
- Provide support and encouragement
- Serve as a confidant
- Serve as a role model for the ELT
- Serve as a sounding board for the ELT
- Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT
- Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague
- Show that you think highly of the ELT
- Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT
- Socialize with the ELT on a one-to-one basis outside of work



**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 psychosocial forms of support and assistance activities (Greiman, 2002) which 50% or more of the respondents indicated were **HIGHLY IMPORTANT** for practicing agricultural education teachers to implement with the ELTs during the **ANTICIPATION PHASE** were:

- Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance
- Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate
- Be someone the ELT can identify with
- Convey feelings of respect
- Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT
- Provide support and encouragement
- Serve as a confidant
- Serve as a role model for the ELT
- Serve as a sounding board for the ELT
- Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague
- Show that you think highly of the ELT
- Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT



## **Appendix**

Table 1

*Phases During Which It Is Highly Important That Agricultural Education Teachers Conduct Selected Support & Assistance Activities With Entry-Level Teachers (N=60)*

Support and Assistance Activities	Phases to Conduct Support and Assistance Activities with ELTs						N/A
	Anticipation	Survival	Disillusionment	Rejuvenation	Reflection	Anticipation	
Show that you think highly of the ELT	33 55.0%	50 83.3%	46 76.7%	38 63.3%	31 51.7%	29 48.3%	0 0.0%
Serve as a role model for the ELT	44 73.3%	49 81.7%	44 73.3%	41 68.3%	39 65.0%	34 56.7%	0 0.0%
Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT	27 45.0%	32 53.3%	39 65.0%	31 51.7%	31 51.7%	27 45.0%	3 5.0%
Provide support and encouragement	40 66.7%	52 86.7%	51 85.0%	42 70.0%	37 61.7%	33 55.0%	0 0.0%
Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT	43 71.7%	47 78.3%	42 70.0%	38 63.3%	37 61.7%	31 51.7%	0 0.0%
Serve as a sounding board for the ELT	33 55.0%	42 70.0%	46 76.7%	39 65.0%	35 58.3%	27 45.0%	1 1.7%
Convey feelings of respect	36 60.0%	42 70.0%	43 71.7%	41 68.3%	40 66.7%	32 53.3%	2 3.3%
Serve as a confidant	33 55.0%	43 71.7%	46 76.7%	38 63.3%	36 60.0%	30 50.0%	1 1.7%
Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate	46 76.7%	40 66.7%	36 60.0%	40 66.7%	40 66.7%	33 55.0%	2 3.3%
Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague	35 58.3%	39 65.0%	45 75.0%	40 66.7%	40 66.7%	36 60.0%	0 0.0%
Be someone the ELT can identify with	43 71.7%	45 75.0%	46 76.7%	39 65.0%	38 63.3%	32 53.3%	1 1.7%
Socialize with the ELT on a one-to-one basis outside of work	28 46.7%	26 43.3%	28 46.7%	31 51.7%	24 40.0%	24 40.0%	8 13.3%
Get together informally after work	28 46.7%	36 60.0%	32 53.3%	35 58.3%	31 51.7%	26 43.3%	7 11.7%
Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT	28 46.7%	41 68.3%	41 68.3%	39 65.0%	34 56.7%	29 48.3%	2 3.3%
Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance	47 78.3%	45 75.0%	45 75.0%	43 71.7%	44 73.3%	40 66.7%	2 3.3%

Note: <sup>1</sup> Frequency <sup>2</sup> Percentage of Agricultural Education Teachers.

