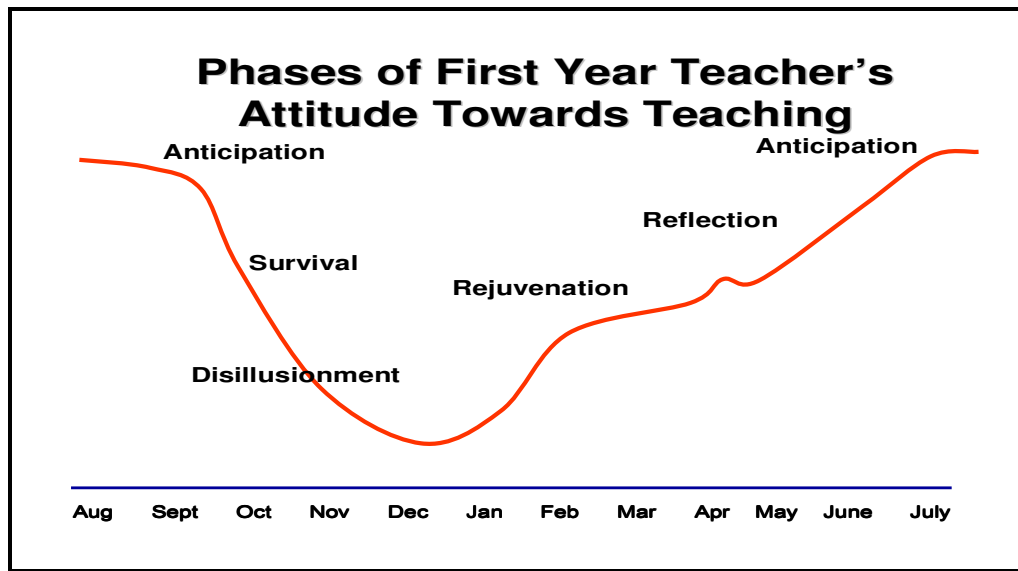


## Promising Support and Assistance Activities for Use With Entry-Level Teachers: Recommendations From Second Year Agricultural Education Teachers



National FFA Teacher Induction and Mentoring Project  
R.M. Joerger, Project Leader

## 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 8 Second Year Teachers from across the United States. Fifty-six second year 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. Characteristics of the participants show that there was a similar share of males and females. Eighty-two percent had mentors during their entry year of teaching. Nearly 90 percent completed their pre-service training through a traditional teacher education program.

Table X

*Characteristics of Second Year Agricultural Education Teachers (N=56)*

Characteristics	N/%	%
Sex		
Female	29	51.3
Male	27	48.7
Mentor		
Yes	46	82.1
No	10	17.9
Pr-service Preparation		
Traditional 4-Year College	50	89.3
Fifth Year	4	4.7
Provisional	1	1.7
Additional License to Existing	1	1.7

What follows is an initially listing of the forms of support and assistance activities that the 56 second year teachers *strongly or very strongly recommended* mentors, teacher educators, state supervisors, NAAE-affiliate officers, and other agricultural education teachers 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 Recommendations from Second Year Teachers for Mentor, Teacher Educator, State Supervisor, and Ag Teacher Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Anticipation Phase (N=56)*

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
With the involvement and approval and of the entry-level teacher, identify a local school district teacher and area agricultural education teacher to serve as a designated mentor or guide.	5.4	0.8
Be readily available to discuss progress, challenges, successes, and concerns associated with teaching roles and education.	5.2	0.7
Supply appropriate amounts of encouragement and advocacy for the ELT.	5.2	0.8
Share a realistic picture of the rigors of teaching and advising the FFA.	5.2	1.1
Ensure that the local mentor or guide assist the ELT in becoming familiar with school district policies and practices.	5.1	0.9
Emphasize and provide approaches and strategies for meeting parents, business, faculty, and other community members.	5.0	0.8
Ensure that the local mentor or guide assist the ELT in becoming familiar with the policies and recommended practices outlined in the faculty and student handbooks	5.0	0.9
Provide examples of instructional plans and typical school schedules for the first day of school.	4.9	0.9
Show examples and assist in creating effective syllabi, unit and lesson plans.	4.9	1.0
Share communication contact info for teachers, state, NAAE-affiliate officers, and university staff.	4.8	1.2
Be available to provide assistance for selecting and/or developing instructional activities for lessons.	4.8	0.9
Provide information concerning how to complete teaching and advising roles with students interested and involved in local, county, and state fairs and expositions.	4.8	0.9
Provide ideas for organizing the classroom and laboratory(ies).	4.7	0.9
Provide an overview of the typical teaching day routine in the local school.	4.6	1.0
Suggest effective approaches for understanding the history of the department.	4.2	1.2

*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 Recommendations from Second Year Teachers for Mentor, Teacher Educator, State Supervisor, and Ag Teacher Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Survival Phase (N=56)*

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Supply appropriate amounts of encouragement and advocacy for the ELT.	5.3	0.7
Encourage ELTs to regularly talk with friends, peer teachers, mentors, administrators, and other agricultural education teachers.	5.3	0.8
Organize a special meeting in early fall for ELTs to socialize and address a variety of topics including, but not limited to: working with school principals and administrators, advising the FFA chapter, sources of instructional resources, and student management.	5.1	1.0
Provide strategies and processes for prioritizing teaching and FFA activities.	5.0	1.1
Provide the rationale and strategies for gaining support from parents.	4.9	0.8
Share the benefits of reaching out to community members, and local program support groups such as the FFA Alumni.	4.8	1.1
Encourage the ELT to take initial steps to establish an advisory committee, or schedule a meeting for an existing committee.	4.7	1.3

*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 Recommendations from Second Year Teachers for Mentor, Teacher Educator, State Supervisor, and Ag Teacher Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Disillusionment Phase (N=56)*

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Encourage ELTs to take intermittent breaks from various teaching roles, even during the busiest times. Examples of activities include: personal hobbies, watching movies or TV, and attending local sports activities and other student performances.	5.2	0.9
Encourage the ELTs to maintain a social life.	5.1	1.2
Encourage ELTs to plan and participate in a variety of activities with family and friends during fall and winter holiday breaks.	5.1	1.2
Invite the ELT to social activities sponsored by peers and other Ag Ed professionals.	5.1	1.2
Disclose that the difficulties, questions regarding their competence and commitment to teaching, and other negative emotions are quite normal during this stage of teaching.	5.1	1.0
Ensure that area agricultural education, state staff, teacher educators, mentors and/or other agricultural education professionals visit the ELT at professional meetings, CDEs, and/or in their department.	5.1	1.2
Provide ideas for additional teaching resources (e.g., instructional guides, lesson plans, teaching activities).	5.0	0.8
Provide ideas and sources for other effective instructional methods, strategies, and/or tactics for teaching a variety of subjects.	4.9	0.9
Advocate for the ELT in their school and community.	4.8	0.9
Advise ELTs to participate in community events.	4.7	1.2
Discuss the benefits of inviting, preparing, and profiting from visits from the principal.	4.7	1.1
Maintain written and verbal communications that encourage the ELTs.	4.7	1.2

*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 Recommendations from Second Year Teachers for Mentor, Teacher Educator, State Supervisor, and Ag Teacher Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Rejuvenation Phase (N=56)*

Encourage ELT to participate in professional development activities provided by state departments, the local school district, and professional teacher organizations.	5.4	0.8
Make ELT and other early-career teachers feel welcome at professional development events and professional teacher organization meetings.	5.2	0.7
Create a list of changes needed for improving their teaching performances (e.g., instructional strategies, changes in curricula, equipment, and supplies).	5.2	0.8
Provide strategies for becoming more organized as a teacher.	5.2	0.8
Encourage ELT to reflect upon and learn from their teaching mistakes.	5.1	0.8
Promote the importance of maintaining communications with friends, peers, and professional associates.	5.1	0.9
Encourage ELT to identify and celebrate their teaching, SAE, and FFA successes.	5.1	1.1
Share effective classroom and student management strategies.	5.1	0.8
Promote the importance and strategies for creating a more balanced professional and personal life.	5.0	1.0
Provide strategies for establishing realistic one-year and extended year professional teaching goals.	5.0	0.8
Encourage the ELTs observe the teaching of very effective teachers within their school	5.0	1.0
Share the importance of becoming involved in community activities and involving community members in instructional and FFA program activities.	5.0	1.0
Sponsor a 1-2 day social activity solely for ELTs.	4.5	1.3

*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 Recommendations from Second Year Teachers for Mentor, Teacher Educator, State Supervisor, and Ag Teacher Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Reflection Phase (N=56)*

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Identify and reflect upon the changes that need to be made to enhance the program in the upcoming academic year.	5.1	0.7
Provide encouragement. (The ELT is experiencing demanding FFA activities, course registration activities for upcoming year, and the decision to continue teaching.)	5.1	1.0
Disclose the value of the first year of teaching experience for having a successful second year in the classroom.	5.0	0.9
Provide strategies for enhancing organizational skills for teaching, SAE, and FFA roles.	4.9	1.1
Provide encouragement and materials for creating goals for the upcoming academic year.	4.9	0.8
Assist the ELT in evaluating the merits of continuing to teach in the present school in the upcoming school year.	4.9	0.9
Assist the ELT in identifying concerns and challenges that will limit future success in the classroom, FFA, and SAE.	4.9	1.0
Provide names of vendors and recommended practices for ordering supplies, equipment, and textbooks for the coming year.	4.8	1.0
Provide ideas, rationale, and materials to ELT for establishing an advisory committee if not yet established.	4.7	1.4
Share ideas regarding how to create a program budget for the upcoming year.	4.6	1.0
Share strategies and materials with ELT for surveying students and/or community for future instructional needs.	4.5	1.2

*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 Recommendations from Second Year Teachers for Mentor, Teacher Educator, State Supervisor, and Ag Teacher Use of Selected Forms of Assistance and Support During the Anticipation Phase (N=56)*

Support and Assistance Activities	M	SD
Encourage the ELT to visit a neighboring school to observe another program and gain ideas to improve their program.	5.5	0.7
Encourage ELT to establish program goals for the upcoming year.	5.3	0.9
Provide materials and encouragement to conduct and end-of-year program evaluation.	5.2	0.7
Establish an end-of-year activity for the ELT that allows other agricultural educators, mentors, and school administrators to provide feedback about their first year of teaching.	5.2	0.8
Provide questions to sponsor additional thoughts about possible changes the ELT should make in the program for the coming year.	5.0	1.1
Share ideas of how to create, locate, and/or update curricula so it features quality “hands on/minds-on” activities.	5.0	0.7
Involve ELT in programs designed for next year’s beginning teachers.	5.0	1.0
Provide instruction that addresses how to identify health and safety issues, and if needed, means to finance the needed changes in equipment and facilities.	4.7	1.0
Communicate sources and types of professional development activities and events available during summer.	4.7	1.2
Provide instruction and information to further develop and promote FFA activities in the upcoming year.	4.7	1.2
Encourage ELT to examine school student performance data .	4.4	1.0
Encourage the ELT to visit a neighboring school to observe another program and gain ideas to improve their program.	5.5	0.7
Encourage ELT to establish program goals for upcoming year.	5.3	0.9

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

**Second Year Agricultural Education Teacher Views of the Most Important  
Characteristics of An Effective Mentor (N=56)**  
Winter 2006

<b>Most Important Mentor Characteristics</b>	<b>Second Most Important Mentor Characteristics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Available/Accessible (6)</li> <li>➤ Effective Listener (6)</li> <li>➤ Supportive (4)</li> <li>➤ Ability To Relate (3)</li> <li>➤ Caring (3)</li> <li>➤ Compassion (3)</li> <li>➤ Encouraging (2)</li> <li>➤ Honesty (2)</li> <li>➤ Positive (2)</li> <li>➤ Exhibits Understanding (2)</li> <li>➤ Assists With Networking</li> <li>➤ Can Assist In Finding Resources</li> <li>➤ Close In Age</li> <li>➤ Compatible Personalities</li> <li>➤ Displays Integrity</li> <li>➤ Effective Communicator</li> <li>➤ Effective Teacher In The Classroom</li> <li>➤ Informative</li> <li>➤ Kind</li> <li>➤ Knowledgeable</li> <li>➤ Passionate For The Job Of Mentor</li> <li>➤ Patient</li> <li>➤ Personable</li> <li>➤ Provides Verbal Support</li> <li>➤ Respectful</li> <li>➤ Responsible</li> <li>➤ Role Model</li> <li>➤ Shows Flexibility</li> <li>➤ Sincere</li> <li>➤ Trustworthy</li> <li>➤ Will Provide Assistance In Your Weak Areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supportive (4)</li> <li>➤ Accountable (2)</li> <li>➤ Available/Accessible (3)</li> <li>➤ Good Listener (3)</li> <li>➤ Helpful (3)</li> <li>➤ Gives Good Advice (2)</li> <li>➤ Organized (2)</li> <li>➤ Positive Attitude (2)</li> <li>➤ Source of Creative Ideas (2)</li> <li>➤ Willing To Share Ideas, Information And Materials (2)</li> <li>➤ A Good Example To Follow</li> <li>➤ Can Assist With the Mountains Of FFA Paperwork</li> <li>➤ Caring</li> <li>➤ Considerate</li> <li>➤ Effective FFA Advisor</li> <li>➤ Empathetic</li> <li>➤ Encouraging</li> <li>➤ Enthusiastic About The Profession.</li> <li>➤ Experienced (Older)</li> <li>➤ Good Rapport With Mentee</li> <li>➤ High Moral Standards</li> <li>➤ Honest</li> <li>➤ Inclusive-Esp. In Social Times W/Other Ag Teachers</li> <li>➤ Involved</li> <li>➤ Knows Sources of Curricula Materials</li> <li>➤ Non- judgemental</li> <li>➤ Open - minded</li> <li>➤ Passionate</li> <li>➤ Professional</li> <li>➤ Provides Feedback And Guidance</li> <li>➤ Recent Practitioner With Ideas To Share</li> <li>➤ Respectful</li> <li>➤ Responsible</li> <li>➤ Shows Knowledge Of Students And Subjects</li> <li>➤ Trustworthy</li> <li>➤ Understanding of Your Situation</li> </ul>



Table 7

*Phases During Which It Is Highly Important that State Supervisors, Teacher Educators, Mentors, NAAE-affiliate officers, and Experienced Ag Teachers Conduct the Selected Support & Assistance Activities With ELTs (N=56)*

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	32 57.1%	41 73.2%	47 83.9%	32 57.1%	31 55.4%	29 51.8%	0 0.0%
Serve as a role model for the ELT	44 78.6%	46 82.1%	46 82.1%	37 66.1%	36 64.3%	35 62.5%	0 0.0%
Interact socially outside of the school setting of the ELT	26 46.4%	34 60.7%	36 64.3%	30 53.6%	26 46.4%	22 39.3%	3 5.4%
Provide support and encouragement	39 69.6%	46 82.1%	48 85.7%	40 71.4%	34 60.7%	28 50.0%	0 0.0%
Show willingness to discuss the questions & concerns of the ELT	38 67.9%	44 78.6%	40 71.4%	35 62.5%	35 62.5%	28 50.0%	0 0.0%
Serve as a sounding board for the ELT	31 55.4%	38 67.9%	39 69.6%	30 53.6%	26 46.4%	20 35.7%	0 0.0%
Convey feelings of respect	37 66.1%	38 67.9%	36 64.3%	37 66.1%	36 64.3%	35 62.5%	0 0.0%
Serve as a confidant	31 55.4%	41 73.2%	43 76.8%	32 57.1%	32 57.1%	25 44.6%	1 1.8%
Be an individual the ELT may desire to emulate	43 76.8%	41 73.2%	39 69.6%	37 66.1%	37 66.1%	32 57.1%	0 0.0%
Show acceptance of the ELT as being a competent teacher & colleague	33 58.9%	37 66.1%	39 69.6%	38 67.9%	36 64.3%	36 64.3%	0 0.0%
Be someone the ELT can identify with	38 67.9%	37 66.1%	38 67.9%	36 64.3%	29 51.8%	27 48.2%	1 1.8%
Socialize with the ELT on a one-to-one basis outside of work	27 48.2%	28 50.0%	29 51.8%	24 42.9%	24 42.9%	20 35.7%	7 12.5%
Get together informally after work	25 44.6%	30 53.6%	31 55.4%	27 48.2%	30 53.6%	20 35.7%	5 8.9%
Share personal experiences as a perspective for informing the problems of the ELT	32 57.1%	39 69.6%	41 73.2%	34 60.7%	31 55.4%	20 35.7%	1 1.8%
Be a trustworthy professional acquaintance	48 85.7%	46 82.1%	47 83.9%	43 76.8%	40 71.4%	41 73.2%	0 0.0%

Note: <sup>1</sup> Frequency <sup>2</sup> Percentage of Second Year Teachers.