

WHAT A FIRST YEAR AG TEACHER NEEDS TO KNOW



NEW TEACHER HANDBOOK

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Association Information

Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas

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Supervisors

Keep in mind that you are on a probationary contract. Your administrators want you to succeed, but you still have a responsibility to build a strong sense of trust with your administrators that will lay the foundation for a stronger future relationship. To stay on top of this relationship you need to:

- Communicate with your supervisor weekly
- Know what is expected of you
- Know and follow all policies and rules
- Get policies approved by administration or local school board
- Follow directives of your supervisor

As an Agricultural Science Teacher, you will be away from your classroom more often than some teachers in your school. This can be a source of tension between you, and your administration. To be sure that this tension does not develop into a conflict, make sure you:

- Get out of class activities approved
- Engage administrators in your plans
- Be timely with all requests
- Know and follow all policies and rules
- Update chapter website regularly
- Be sure your supervisor knows what you are doing and where you are going

Remember, your administration changes. Be flexible, and know that with each new administrator, comes a new administrative philosophy. Just know exactly what is expected of you, and work your hardest to accomplish that expectation. Administrators can be your best friend, or your worst enemy. It's up to you which one they will be.

Parents and Support Groups

Parents are both a strength and weakness to your ag program. On one hand, they are the people that help build and support your program, but on the other, some tend to be most concerned with advantages they can provide their child. When dealing with parents, make sure you remember:

- Social interaction is difficult with the parents of your students
- Be professional in dealing with parents
- Inappropriate relationships could damage your career

Support groups are vital for the success of your chapter, but often teachers have a hard time initiating a support group. To know how to start a support group, it's important to recognize what support groups are out there; these groups include, but are not limited to:

- Young Farmer Chapters
- Booster Clubs
- Alumni Chapters

While it's hard to set up a support group, it's even harder managing one. When dealing with a support groups, make sure you remember that:

- They can help or hinder
- You cannot let them control you or your program
- You have the power to dismantle
- You must follow school rules concerning support groups
- You do not handle support group money, and they don't manage your programs money

If managed properly, parents and support groups can help your chapter take off. They want to help you, and they want to help your program whether it's for their child or if it's because they believe in the FFA. So make sure you use them as a tool for your chapter.

Students & Teaching Partners

As a teacher, your students are your number one priority. Everything you do as a teacher is going to affect their lives, whether you know it or not. That being said you have to be careful how you treat your students, and how you act around your students. When you work with students, always be sure to remember the following:

- Always be professional
- Use social media wisely
- Be careful how you use the school's computer and e-mail
- Never play favorites
- All kids need you – some more than others

If you have a teaching partner, you are going to have to spend a lot of time together. You will either rise together, or fall together. You have to make sure that you establish a strong working relationship so that you can be there for the people who matter, your students. To make sure that your relationship with your teaching partner is a productive one, try the following:

- Establish mutual respect
- Plan and discuss division of responsibilities (who specializes in what, who goes to what contests)
- Make sure that each teacher carries his/her share of the load
- Avoid polarizing the department (our kids, not mine and yours)
- Share successes
- Communicate daily (discuss issues and problems & don't be petty)
- Find and use mentors

You will work with your students and your teaching partners on a daily basis. They might frustrate you, they might do things you don't like. Just be professional, be calm, and most of all be forgiving because at the end of the day the most rewarding part of your job comes from these two groups of people.

Money & Buying Livestock for Students

Handling money is one of the most challenging things a teacher can do. If you are not careful, that money can cost you your job. You have to make sure that when you handle any sort of money, you are responsible with it. To be sure that you handle money correctly, keep the following in mind:

- Receipt all money, checks, etc.
- Never co-mingle your personal funds with school funds
- Do not use a school credit card for personal goods or services
- Have money counted in your presence when you make a deposit (school activity account)
- Keep accurate records (fundraising, etc.)
- Account for materials and supplies used for any personal project
- File accurate travel reports
- Never accept gifts or gift cards that might be considered a “kickback”
- Better to prove innocence than be suspected of wrong doing

Buying livestock for a student is another major risk for a teacher that is often overlooked. Buying livestock, like handling money, can cost you your job if you're not careful. That being said, when you are buying livestock for a student you have to be responsible. To be sure that you are taking the right approach to buying livestock, keep the following in mind:

- Make sure you have administrative support
- Assure that you have a fair distribution system
- Make sure you handle money appropriately
- Be careful about arrangements that appear to benefit you in some way

Handling money and buying livestock might be intimidating, but it's an essential part of your job. Just make sure you follow the rules we have given you, and you can be able to confidently execute those responsibilities.

Livestock Shows & Project Centers

SAE's are important, and are required in active FFA programs. Most SAE projects are animal projects and many school districts provide project centers for students. In almost every case, ag teachers are charged with the management of these facilities. To make sure that you manage these facilities appropriately, use the following procedures:

- Have policies and rules in place
- Establish regular and fair duties including workdays and cleaning schedules
- Set expectations for students and parents
- Maintain regular hours

One of the most important aspects of stock show animal projects is stock shows. These shows are essential to the success of your students SAE projects. To make sure that you are a useful resource during stock shows for you students, be sure to do the following:

- Know the show rules (some are standard, some are unique to the specific show)
- Know validation dates, and other processes
- Keep track of registration for breeding animals
- Know entry dates
- Keep up with entry forms and processes

You also need to develop a plan for livestock shows, and communicate that plan to students, parents, and administration. This plan should include:

- Transportation plans for students and livestock
- Weigh-in, check-in, set-up
- Show calendar (times to meet and leave, times for students classes, return times)
- Chaperones, hotel arrangements
- Student expectations
- Work schedule, free time, etc.

Livestock show animal projects are important to your students, and it's your job to know the rules of livestock shows, and manage project centers. Be sure that you do the best you can.

FFA Activities

The FFA is going to be another important part of your program. There's a lot that goes into an FFA chapter, and you are responsible to make sure that your chapter is being run properly. To make sure you are running a proper FFA chapter, you need to make sure you do the following:

- Assist your officers in developing a Program of Activities (POA)
- Help your members construct and maintain the chapter constitution and bylaws
- Make sure your chapter officers are conducting regular meetings
- Give your students the information they need to be successful. That includes awards, FFA degrees, competitive events, and scholarships.
- Make sure you conduct an ethical program

With the FFA being a prominent part of your job, traveling to and participating in FFA contests and other activities is going to be equally challenging. To make sure that you are managing FFA activities properly, follow these few tips:

- You are a teacher first, FFA advisor second. Make sure you take care of your classroom before you take care of FFA activities.
- Do not let LDE and CDE teams be the focus of your class. Use the class period to develop the skills of all your students, use outside class time to train teams.

When you go on overnight trips for an FFA activity, make sure you do the following.

- Have permission forms for each student
- Supervise your students at all times
- Have approved chaperones
- Set rules and expectations for your students
- Make sure students are in their rooms when they are supposed to be
- Always be where you're supposed to be

Remember, FFA is an important part of your job, but it's not the main part of your job. You are in the classroom to teach your students, FFA members or not. That being said, put the time and effort into your FFA chapter that is needed. When it comes down to it, it's all about balance.

VATAT Benefits

The VATAT is here to support you throughout your ag teaching career. Make sure that you take the time to understand what we do, and that you take advantage of all the benefits we offer you. Some of these benefits include:

- Lobbying efforts on behalf of ag teachers and ag education
- Legislative updates concerning agriculture science
- Legal assistance for active members
- Online member directory
- \$1 million Professional Liability Insurance Policy
- Access to the VATAT Credit Union
- Monthly VATAT Newsletter
- A career page on the VATAT website
- FFA 15% discount at LaQuinta Inns and Suites nationwide
- Hertz rental car discount
- Annual VATAT awards and recognition
- VATAT scholarships for active members' children
- Special VATAT events at the annual Professional Development Conference
- Use of the Agricultural Education Ford Texas FFA Leadership Center
- Kenneth Hughes Life Insurance Plan

We provide these benefits to help support you. Use them. Your time as an ag teacher is going to be hard, frustrating, and even disheartening at times, but it will also be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Just remember to make time for your family, make time for your students, and most of all make time for yourself. Good luck with your year, we hope you make the most out of it.

Texas Team Ag Ed



Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas (VATAT) is a professional organization for agriculture science teachers. The VATAT represents our educators in the classroom and in various aspects of educating our students. The association advises teachers regarding best practices, while also unifying our voice in the state legislature. The VATAT serves as the ambassador of agricultural education issues to decision makers at the state and local level. The VATAT also assists with the adult education component of our structure in supporting the Texas Young Farmers Association.



Texas FFA Association is the student leadership development component of agricultural education. The Texas FFA Board of Directors is one of three governing boards within Texas Team Ag Ed. The Texas FFA Board of Directors represents educators, university personnel, Board of Student Officers (Texas FFA Officers) and business/industry professionals. Texas FFA members participate in Leadership Development Events (LDE), Career Development Events (CDE), awards, degrees, scholarships, student officer development, conventions and leadership camps. The Texas FFA oversees the Texas Collegiate FFA Association, Texas FFA Alumni Association and the Past State Officer Alumni affiliate (PSO) organization.



Texas FFA Foundation seeks to strengthen agricultural education and our FFA program, so each student can develop their potential for personal growth, career success and leadership in a global marketplace. Our primary focus is development, acquiring the resources needed to execute a collaborative strategic plan, a plan inclusive of Texas Team Ag Ed. Development of resources serves as the fuel to make our vision a reality. Our strategic goals are: Support, Leadership, Advocacy and Stewardship. The Texas FFA Foundation employs sound management, investment strategies and business processes to ensure in perpetuity the integrity of all gifts and disbursements of funds per donor intent.



Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources (AFNR) while the name of our program has changed several times within the ranks of Texas Education Agency, the mission to develop, enhance and position Texas students and educators for career success has remained a constant. As with agriculture, science and economies of the world, our program has remained prepared to meet an ever demanding Texas and global economy. Our course offerings provide rigor, relevance and relationships in addition to critical thinking and personal life skills which makes Texas a better place to live, work and raise our families.

Important Contacts

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Texas FFA.....	512.480.8045
Texas FFA Foundation.....	512.480.8047
VATAT Credit Union.....	512.472.3258
National FFA.....	317.802.6060
CTE Director, Ron Whitson.....	512.463.8984
Young Farmers of Texas, Don Beene.....	254.625.0509
Texas FFA Alumni, Kelly White.....	512.921.7825
AET, Roger Hanagriff.....	936.661.4163
San Antonio Livestock Show.....	210.225.0575
Houston Livestock Show.....	832.667.1125
Fort Worth Livestock Show.....	817.877.2400
Rodeo Austin Livestock Show.....	512.919.3000
State Fair Livestock Show.....	214.421.8723
Swine Validation Chair, Barney McClure.....	512.472.3128
Steer Validation Chair, Christopher Boleman.....	979.845.1211
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