

idea corner

Some Cooperative Activities That Work!

Two groups of educational specialists, agricultural Extension agents and vocational agriculture teachers, are important agricultural educators in Nebraska. Both groups deal with youth and adults in production agriculture and agribusiness. Recent Nebraska studies show that the job functions of both groups include several activities common to both programs. When joint planning takes place, both Extension and vocational agriculture programs have greater success than if conducted separately.

Dissemination of Agricultural Knowledge. Community and countywide annual planning of adult education programs by Extension agents and agriculture teachers working together allows each to focus on specific clientele, and serve more people effectively. In many cases, the agriculture teacher can provide agricultural mechanics instruction more effectively because of expertise and facilities. The Extension agent can plan production and marketing meetings and workshops effectively because of the availability of state Extension specialists.

The exchange of reference and media materials is an important way for the Extension agent and agriculture teacher to have the benefit of the most up-to-date information for specific clientele groups. This includes using each other as resource people in groups or classes when needed.

Community Organizations and Resource Development. By including 4-H and FFA youth officer representatives in the planning of community projects, youth groups have helped achieve what might not have been possible. Construction of parks, swimming areas, public building renovation, and health and recreation programs are examples of community projects Extension agents have helped plan, with 4-H and FFA groups helping in the implementation.

Youth Development. Most examples of where programs complement each other occurred in the youth development area. To avoid overlap in county 4-H and FFA programs and make efficient and effective use of time, Extension agents and agriculture teachers in Nebraska are supporting each other's program by:

1. Conducting tractor operation and safety courses on a county basis, with agent and teacher either jointly teaching, alternating in teaching, or agreeing that one of the two will conduct the program.
2. Training each other's judging teams. Planning within the county has allowed the agents and agriculture teachers to conduct practice sessions for both 4-H and FFA members at the same time.
3. Conducting judging contests simultaneously. Conducting

county or area crop, land use, and livestock and poultry judging contests for both 4-H and FFA at the same time allowed more efficient and effective use of time, facilities, and personnel.

4. Helping judge each other's leadership and public speaking contests.
5. Assisting in the judging and evaluation of awards in each other's program.
6. Combining efforts in planning and carrying out the county fair exhibition program.

What is it that makes the activities we've discussed successful? *First*, the Extension agent and agriculture teacher must recognize the need for some joint planning to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, and to find ways to help each other. *Second*, for both agent and teacher to identify major tasks that may overlap within each job function that both can give leadership to, while complementing each other's program. *Third*, plan on a county and/or community basis how the major tasks may be carried through. *Fourth*, have an annual evaluation of the joint efforts, and identify ways for improvement.

An Extension agent once asked, "Who should make the first move in suggesting some joint planning activities among the Extension agent and vocational agriculture teachers in a county?" My answer was, "Either one, because the intent is to show a positive professional spirit for the benefit of youth and adults in that county!"

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