

From Local Ag Teachers:



Thoughts in Passing



Editor's Note: This is the second of many articles in a special column written by various agriculture teachers in our service area. The articles are designed to be of interest to and have educational value for all farm people. At the same time, they offer an opportunity for the farm community to become better acquainted with the teachers and for the teachers to express their own interest in the local agricultural community.

By Michael J. Burton,
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Vocational Ag Teacher

Most people associated with vocational agriculture know what a supervised experience project is, but may not know that it is outdated.

An agriculture student raises a crop or animal that is his own and keeps all necessary records on it. He does this so that when he graduates he will have the necessary foundation, stock and capital, along with management skills to start farming.

Supervised farming projects like these do not meet the needs of today's agriculture. Only five per cent of the nation's work force is actively engaged in farming, but 40 per cent are employed by the vast agriculture industry.

So the supervised farming project is not doing its job if it prepares all these students to enter farming, and not agri-industry.

To meet the changing needs of agriculture, vocational educators had to revamp their supervised experience program. The result is the supervised work-experience program. It places a student in an approved local business under close supervision of the agriculture teacher, the employers, and his parents.

Here the student is exposed to as many different phases of the business as possible. Thus, when the student graduates, he will know how the entire business operates. This knowledge, along with his agriculture training, will make him a valuable employee.

The supervised work-experience program can be used by the student two ways. He can work in an approved agri-business all through high school earning money, and possibly entering that business at a more advanced position after graduation; or he can carry a supervised farming project while in high school and go out on work-experience as a senior.

Under work-experience type program the student is exposed to the business that he selects over a period of six to ten weeks. During this time, he changes jobs within that business three or more times to obtain a general outlook of the whole business.

For example, he may enter a

farm machinery dealership. The first two weeks he may work in the repair shop. The next two he spends with the field serviceman, and finally two more weeks with a salesman and in the office. This gives him an understanding and an appreciation of the whole farm machinery business.

Now that both programs have been briefly explained, some may question the value of having students spend school time earning money or acquiring capital to start farming.

However, the supervised experience programs (farming and work experience) do more than provide a student with money, livestock, and experience. They give a student a chance to explore the many facets of agriculture

firsthand. He is exposed to many situations which help develop him as a person and improve his chances to succeed in life. Some of these opportunities are:

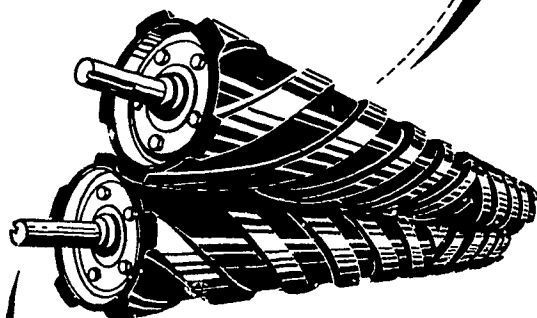
—Developing responsibility: getting up every day to feed his animal or to go to work.



Michael J. Burton

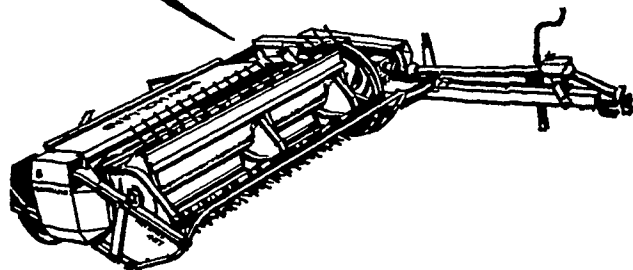


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—Making decisions: which bull to use for breeding or whether the tractor needs overhauling.

—Importance of keeping records: whether he makes a profit or loss from his steer, how he takes inventory.

—Analyzing records: pounds feed per 100 pounds gain, cost per bushel of corn produced.

—Managing money: budgeting his paycheck, investing in production inputs.

—Exploring agriculture;

looking for careers in both agri-business and in farming.

—Learning skills: milking cows, servicing machinery, judging livestock, etc.

This small sampling of experience shows the value of supervised farming program and the supervised work-experience program. Alone, or in combination, they provide meaning and relevance to education.

At a time when youth is demanding that education be relevant, the new supervised work-experience program helps to prepare students for a career in today's modern agriculture.

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