

THE VISITOR

Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

Vol. XXIX

July, 1942

No. 4

THE GUIDANCE APPROACH TO TEACHING VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

S. R. FISHER, Vocational Agriculture Instructor, Thomson Township Schools, Esko, Minnesota

The guidance approach to the study of vocational agriculture has been used by the writer during the past five years with varying degrees of success. The interest in using this approach developed from the result of a series of incidents occurring over a period of several years. Briefly, they are as follows:

I. The writer had since early high school been interested in entering the medical profession as a vocation. Due to lack of educational and vocational guidance, he was permitted to apply for entrance to a medical school without adequate educational and financial preparation. In the emergency the College of Agriculture was selected.

II. A friend upon graduation from high school and applying for entrance to a School of Nursing was told that she could not be admitted because she did not have a "B" average in her grades. Had she known of this standard, she could easily have made the required scholastic average. The outcome was that she spent an extra year in high school.

III. Several friends signed up for highly advertised training and correspondence courses. Some of the schools turned out to be fraudulent, others did not live up to their contracts in promising to secure jobs for the students. In most cases the students for various reasons did not finish the courses, thus losing all they had invested in them.

IV. One student because of her lack of ability had advanced only to the tenth grade after four years in high school. Her original classmates had become seniors. This girl, with her parents, came to the high school graduation exercises. The parents were expecting to see their daughter graduate.

V. A recognition, on the part of the writer, that every farm boy should not necessarily be established in farming, no more so than should the son of a teacher become a teacher. Farmers should be selected on the basis of their abilities and interests the same as for any other occupation.

VI. On several occasions the writer has been asked to write letters of recommendation for former students. Often the information about the student was so meager and

incomplete that it was impossible to do justice to the student. This resulted in the development of an individual folder for records and data on each student.

VII. Often during the school year, students would come to the writer asking for information and literature pertaining to various occupations, usually those related to agriculture, but sometimes of a more general nature. In 1937 one student, with no agricultural background and no interest in agriculture whatsoever was, because of necessity, required to enroll in vocational agriculture. In an attempt to work out a study program for him, it was decided that he could make a detailed study of two or three occupations in which he was interested. Only one old book on occupations was available at that time, so a search for reference material began. Today the writer has a file of over 300 separate pieces of occupational literature, most of it obtained at little or no cost. The above student is now a telegrapher for a western railroad. One of the occupations he analyzed was telegraphy.

VIII. Probably the greatest reason for using this approach is because of the excellent opportunity for motivation of the students. Deep down inside, every boy wants to become something worthwhile, and likes to be made to feel that there is a place in life for him. Through a series of lessons using this approach, the teacher can become better acquainted with the student, his parents, and his home situation. This is very desirable early in the school year. By being frank with the students and telling them that it is not expected that all of them will become farmers, yet pointing out to them the opportunities through the vocational agriculture program, a much greater spirit of cooperation can be attained.

IX. The opportunities for contact and closer working relationship with other members of the faculty is another important asset of this approach. One teacher of several year's experience commented that the carry-over of ideas from the agriculture class to her social science class by the students was of great satisfaction to her. She had not experienced it with any other class.

VISITOR

Published quarterly during the calendar year in October, January, April, and July, by the Division of Agricultural Education, University of Minnesota, University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Entered as second-class matter at the post office at St. Paul, Minn., under the act of August 2, 1912.

Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized August 2, 1918.

THE STAFF

A. V. STORM | A. M. FIELD | G. F. EKSTROM
 A. M. FIELD, *Editor*

Faculty meetings to discuss common guidance problems should be an important feature of every secondary school system.

Important Factors To Consider

In using this approach, the writer has had to acknowledge certain factors often unrecognized as important when setting up a local agricultural program. The first as stated above is acceptance of the fact that all the boys, even though they may all be from farms, will not become farmers nor should they be expected to (6). Second, a survey of the reasons why the student came to school. These usually boil down to the following: because of age requirement; his parents forced him; his own desire to come; to get out of work at home; someone may have encouraged him to come, either his parents, relatives, a chum, or maybe his local agriculture teacher. The third factor involves a knowledge of why the student is taking vocational agriculture. If he is taking it because of his own free choice, his attitude will be considerably different than that of the boy who is required to take it for one reason or another. Many schools require that all freshmen boys take vocational agriculture.

Suggestive Procedure

To make clearer the approach used by the writer, a few of the introductory units used with a ninth grade class are listed below. These are not in their exact order because the course of study sequence varies to fit the needs of the students, the farm, the seasons, the school program, extra-curricular events, Future Farmer events, and other school and community events. Some of these units may be combined in one class period, other units may require several class periods to complete them. Although the units are suggested specifically for the freshman year, the guidance program really continues throughout the entire high school period and after that through follow-up work with the students.

I. First day. Each student in class to give a brief oral report about himself including such items as: name; where he lives (location), distance; tell about his parents and other members of the family; if on a farm, the size and kind; work he does there; what he owns on the farm and how he earned it; what his definite responsibilities are, if any; what he likes or dislikes about the farm. If from town, where and size of lot; responsibilities; ways he has earned money, if any; his investments and net worth; the advantages and disadvantages of town life; kinds of work done, jobs held, pay received, etc.; organizations of which he is a member; his hobbies and interests; his life work interest, giving reasons why. What does he expect the work in Vocational Agriculture to be like.

II. Make a visit to the home of each boy with the class. Try to visit first those boys who have something definite to show as a result of their own efforts. Meet the boys' parents, briefly explain the vocational agriculture program to them. Offer the services of the department. Get a general mental picture of the farm layout. Ask the student to show any work that he has done—particularly anything that he owns. Take pictures of anything that can be used to put across an idea later. Look for suggested activities that the boy might work on in connection with the agriculture program—such as buildings and grounds improvements; a farm shop; machinery and equipment survey; needed production equipment; certain types of production activities. Get his parents' reactions to these suggestions.

III. What kind of work would he like most to do upon leaving high school? Why? Develop this question through class discussion with the boys. The experience of the writer has been that many of the boys will indicate aviation, engineering, or some other mechanical occupation. One device often used is to ask the boy if he knows what the qualifications, training, etc., are for the occupation. Ask him if he likes mathematics. Then, proceed to illustrate from an aviation or engineering bulletin the number of mathematics courses required. This can be done with most of the occupational fields. It is done to indicate to the student that there are many things to consider before selecting an occupation.

IV. What kind of work will he most likely do after graduation? Develop this through class discussion. Take a random survey of former graduates and see what they are doing. Will those in this class be much different?

V. Ask the students to name as many different occupations as they can. Their limit is usually around twenty-five or so. Point out that there are some 45,000 (2:199) occupations, and ask them if they feel qualified to make a selection.

VI. Explain how occupations are classified, using the U. S. Census classification. Have the students name several examples of occupations in each of the classifications. Point out the similarity of work within each class and the general characteristics of each class. Ask them to indicate the class from which they would choose their life's work and tell why. Check this choice against the one made the first day in their oral report. The writer makes use of several stories and articles collected from magazines to point out some of the general problems in selecting a career.

VII. Develop with the students a list of points by which to analyze and study any given occupation (4:505-506).

VIII. Permit each student to select, analyze and report on an occupation in which he is interested. This requires considerable reference material, and it must be current and up to date if it is to have any definite value. Harden (7) has compiled many valuable reference materials on agriculture and related occupations.

IX. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of farming as an occupation (8), (9), (10). Ordinarily some of the boys will have reported on this already. Bring in other boys who are becoming established in farming as well as successful farmers to talk to the class. Visit a few farms to point out that farming does pay if properly carried on. Discuss the possibilities of a family-partnership arrangement.

X. Discuss "The Field of Agriculture as an Occupational Area." Make use of Dr. V. E. Nylin's "Occupational Intelligence Scale of Agricultural Occupations" (12:210-222).

XI. Have the boys name some related agricultural occupations. Make visits to near-by creamery, hatchery, elevator, farmer's cooperative store, etc., and point out such occupations. Use illustrations of former Future Farmers who are now in related fields. Andy Sundstrom, for example, who is now an editor on the *Farm Journal* Magazine.

XII. Develop the question "How will a study of vocational agriculture be of value to you?" Defy the boys to name an occupation in which a knowledge of agriculture will be of no value to them.

XIII. To what youth organizations do you belong? Have a member of each organization talk to the class. Point out the excellent opportunities for preparation for worthwhile citizenship, leadership, cooperation, and for making their home and community a better place in which to live through active membership in such organizations as the Future Farmers of America, Scouts, 4-H Clubs, Hi-Y, Junior Holy Name Society, and Epworth League.

XIX. How do you plan to secure the necessary funds to become established in the life work that you have chosen? From here

on, the approach is through the development of a farming program for the individual students.

Aspects of Guidance for Agriculture

The more common classes of guidance problems usually considered are as follows: vocational, educational, social, health, leadership, personal, and economic. This discussion will be limited to vocational, educational, and leadership guidance, though it is recognized that the agriculture teacher may also play a very important role in the other guidance areas.

Vocational guidance may be defined as the process of assisting the individual to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter upon and progress in it. Youth wants to work. Their patience and persistence in seeking occupational opportunity and the hours they have spent waiting in the lines formed at the employment agencies are evidence of their desire to work. Theirs is not a blind desire for work opportunity, they have desires for particular kinds of employment.

High school boys are interested in looking ahead to the problem of making a living. They want security and the realization of interests and goals. They want to prepare for occupations. Carlson (2) says, ". . . we find that about seventy per cent of youth under twenty-five years of age are today untrained for any skilled occupation, and that forty per cent are not prepared for work of any kind. Again, we learn that about seventy-five per cent of high school graduates have had no vocational training, and that only about nine per cent continue school beyond high school."

Such guidance should make available to the student all possible information relative to kinds and extent of education and preparation necessary for one who wishes to enter the vocation in which his interests and qualifications best fit him. Information about working conditions, remuneration, hours, opportunities for advancement, and services to society are also important. Such an outline is given in *American Farming, Agriculture I* (4).

Vocational guidance should provide opportunities for various kinds of tryout experiences in all possible areas while the student is in school in order that there be some understanding of aptitudes and interests before final choices are made. Here again, the student in vocational agriculture has an excellent opportunity through the development of his farming program. Guidance will assist the boy to recognize his limitations and to make new choices and establish new vocational goals in relation to his capacities before too much time, effort, and hope have to be sacrificed.

Educational guidance involves giving the student assistance and counsel in the

choice of courses and in the selection of activities related to such courses. It is dependent upon a knowledge of the capacities, interests and needs of the individual student.

Leadership guidance is another phase of the guidance program in which the program of vocational agriculture can make many worthwhile contributions. Much criticism is heard today of the lack of competent leaders. The school must accept the responsibility for the development of leadership qualities in its students. The Future Farmers of America has long been recognized for its outstanding work in leadership activities, and one of the seven essentials of a good chapter as stated by W. A. Ross (1) is "Capable Officers and Leaders."

Space does not permit the development of the other phases of guidance, but suffice it to say, they are equally important and in most cases are inseparable from those already mentioned. Likewise, the teacher of vocational agriculture can play an equally important part in recognizing problems in those areas and assisting in their correction.

Compile Adequate Records

Another phase of guidance work that should be mentioned is that of records and information needed for diagnosis and counseling. The maintenance of adequate records and reports is a part of the guidance program of the school. If no such file has been developed, it will be to the agriculture teacher's advantage to develop one of his own. Cumulative records should be as simple as possible in form, should be easily readable by all who will need to use them, and should contain only relevant data. The records should be so organized that the teacher or guidance worker will be able to find the information desired with little waste of time and energy.

A separate folder should be provided for each student, and might contain records divided into sections dealing with the following: personal and home data; health information and data from physical examinations; records of participation in activities and of positions of leadership held; records of achievement and teacher's evaluation of work done; evaluations, by sponsors of activities, of social behavior exhibited in various social functions, family and group relations, and in leisure-time activities; records of educational and psychological test data; hobby or avocational interests; records of vocational and educational interests and plans; honors received; work or vocational experiences; personality traits and test data; daily schedules; attendance records; copies of reports to parents and contacts with the home; records of interviews and conferences with the student; case studies; and autobiographies. The agriculture teacher will, no doubt, supplement these records with data and records pertinent to the boy's farming program as carried in his vocational agriculture program.

In Conclusion

Guidance is not to be considered as an extra "something" in the school program, to be administered by the home-room teacher or a specialized worker. It should be an integral part of the entire curriculum. A guidance program involves much more than just vocational guidance. Educational guidance, leadership guidance, health guidance, social guidance, personal guidance, economic guidance, etc., are problem areas for most youth and even adults, and should be given proper recognition.

The teacher of vocational agriculture because of his background, training, interest in agriculture as a way of life, and close contact with the students and their parents should play a very important role in a guidance program.

If our work has been successful in terms of the objective as stated by Dr. A. M. Field (13), that of "taking the boy from where he is and as we find him through a series of experiences to where and what he ought to be," we will have had a functional guidance program.

References

- Ross, W. A., "Future Farmers of America," Official Manual, French-Bray Printing Co., Baltimore, Md., 1940.
- Carlson, Dick, "Tomorrow and You," Stewart Publishing Co., Santa Rosa, Calif. 1939.
- Jones, Arthur J., "Principles of Guidance," McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc. New York. 1934.
- Boss, A., Wilson, H. K., Petersen, W. E., "American Farming, Agriculture I," Webb Book Publishing Co., St. Paul, Minnesota. 1939.
- Wrinkle, W. L., "The New High School in the Making," American Book Co., Chicago. 1938.
- Merritt, Eugene, "The Opportunity in Agriculture for the Farm Boy," Ext. Cir. 264, U.S.D.A. Washington, D.C. May, 1937.
- Harden, Leigh H., "Occupational Information in the Integrated Course of Study in Agriculture," *The Visitor*. January, 1940.
- , "Do We Want To Be Farmers?" G. 67 Gen. Inf. Series, Rev. June, 1940. U.S.D.A., Washington, D.C.
- Merritt, Eugene, "Helping Farm Young People with Their Choices," December, 1937. Ext. Serv. Cir. 278, U.S.D.A., Washington, D.C.
- Baker, O. E., "Why I Want My Boy To Be a Farmer," Ext. Serv. Cir. 300. February, 1939. U.S.D.A., Washington, D.C.
- , "How To Choose a Career," Occupational Monograph 7, Science Research Association, Chicago, Illinois.
- Nylin, Victor E., "An Evaluation of Certain Factors That Influence the Occupational Choices of Rural Boys. A Ten-Year Study," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Minneapolis; Graduate School, University of Minn. 1937. 222 pp.
- Field, A. M., "Course of Study," Whither Agricultural Education. A series of articles published and printed for the *Agricultural Education Magazine* by the Meredith Publishing Company, Des Moines, Iowa. 1938.