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CRITERIA OF SUCCESS IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

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It is the purpose of this article to point out some of the criteria which may be used as "measuring sticks" in judging of the success of a department of vocational agriculture in a high school.

Before outlining this discussion an attempt was made to get expressions of opinion from agricultural teachers and other authorities. Either because of procrastination or because of unwillingness to express an opinion, very few replies have been received. The criteria suggested in these replies seem sound, however, and a larger group would undoubtedly add nothing thereto but the weight of numbers.

Results Emphasized

In general, as might be expected, the term "results" is suggested as the main indication of success. Methods of procedure and plans of attack are subordinated to the final goal of results. Few would question this general statement and yet in itself the term "results" is too intangible to serve as practical criteria of success or failure. We must analyze the meaning, find what the factors are which indicate results of the desirable sort.

Before proceeding any further with this discussion it will be necessary to set up the aim which it is desired to attain in the teaching of vocational agriculture. We might readily accept the eight cardinal principles of secondary education as embodying the most comprehensive aim of agricultural education as well as of any other type. However, for more practical purposes we should frame a statement of aims fairly peculiar to vocational agriculture.

Aims

The following statements seem to fit the need.

1. The teaching of vocational agriculture should bring about a larger, broader, and more contented rural life.
2. It should result in the development of

leadership among rural people and a progressive rural citizenship.

3. It should enable farmers to produce larger crops more economically and market their products with less waste, thus making a greater profit.
4. It should result in reducing the unnecessary drudgery of many farm operations in fields, barns, and home.

Assuming that these four statements in their broadest meaning will make up the aim of vocational agriculture, it will be necessary to go a step further. There must be some more definite indications of success in attaining these aims. In outlining these indications it must be kept in mind that this is not a discussion of methods, but only of the results thereof. The clearest way of presenting this material is in the form of questions:

Increased Enrollment

1. Is the enrollment in the agricultural course increasing from year to year?

It should be recognized that any department in any school should grow to the limit of its capacity and to the limit of the demand for its services. Leaving out of the question the matter of capacity of the physical plant and teaching force, and attending to the question of demand, it seems fair to assume that growth will take place if the department is serving the community as it should. If the instructor is teaching in terms of community needs, if he is alive to the problems that are confronting the patrons of his school, if he attacks these needs and problems vigorously, then the farmers will be anxious to send their boys to him for instruction, and his classes will increase in size.

2. Is the enrollment in the agricultural classes in the high school made up of a considerable group of "over age" boys; a large proportion of farm boys; a group actually interested in the business of farming rather than looking for an easy credit?

This is a very simple matter to determine. The casual visitor in the classroom, with the aid of office records, would be able to determine it accurately. It is, however, a very important index

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and determiner of success or failure. Some departments have failed largely from lack of the above desirable conditions. Should the agricultural teacher find the reverse of these conditions to be true, he will be wise to take measures at once to bring about a change. His course is not functioning.

Project Results

3. Are projects resulting in increasing production and in better business methods and marketing practices?

The record of project work is a very definite means of ascertaining whether or not the teaching of agriculture has been influential. If a boy cannot produce more and better corn per acre after instruction, he should not have spent his time nor his peoples' money in attending school. If he can not bring a litter of pigs to marketable age at a less cost per pound of gain after taking a course in animal husbandry than he could before, then the department is of little value. It is an extremely easy matter to discover whether or not the projects are successful. Careful records must be kept and profit or loss clearly shown. Altho there are many unforeseen difficulties and uncontrollable factors entering into the success of a project, it seems safe to say that that department is most successful which year after year shows the greatest percentage of its projects resulting in a profit.¹ Nor is it enough to say profit alone. There are two other phases to be considered: (1) The profit made should be the result of better practices which have been learned through the agricultural class and must be larger than those made by farmers of the community. (2) The project training must result in the habit of scientific management in all lines of

agricultural activity in which the student may become engaged.

Community Service

4. To what extent is there a demand on the part of the farmers of the community for the services of the agricultural teacher? Does the department have the confidence and respect of the farmers?

The agricultural instructor should be far more than a teacher of boys. His department must be far broader than the classroom or school building. For many reasons he must and should develop community contracts. It should not be necessary to force his services upon the farmers but the demand should come from them. Part-time work, organization of coöperative enterprises, promotion of fairs and community clubs are only a few of the duties which the director of a successful agricultural department must fulfil. This is one of the most important criteria in judging success.

5. Has there been any marked improvement in the social life of the rural community directly traceable to the agricultural department?

This is usually a very difficult question to answer one way or the other; however, if a campaign for club organization, recreation, festivals, and other

¹ It should be clear that often there are adverse conditions which make for a loss rather than profit and which can not be helped. Social functions has been fostered and encouraged by the department it would be reasonable to attribute to it at least some part of the results. This should be a legitimate criterion for rural life improvement as it is one of the aims of the teaching of agriculture.

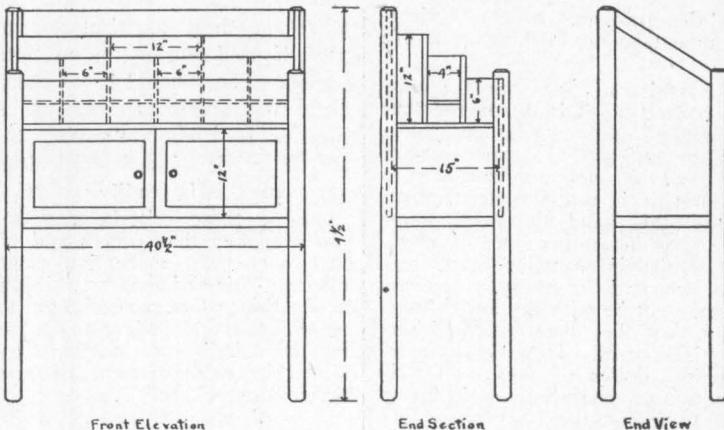
Farm Improvement

6. Is there a noticeable improvement in buildings, livestock and farm practices traceable to the work of the agricultural department?

Here again is a difficult matter to determine. So many agencies such as Extension service, bulletins and farm papers, are engaged in the work of improvement of this sort that it is difficult to isolate the results of the work of each. It is seldom that an agricultural teacher can point his finger at any improvement and say "I am solely responsible for that." It is possible, however, to have a large share in bettering conditions. It is only necessary to compare progress in two similar communities, one with a department of agriculture in the high school and one with-

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RACK
for
Current Magazines and Bulletins



Division of Agricultural Education
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RACK FOR JOURNALS AND BULLETINS

There have been several requests from men in the field for a suitable means of keeping current agricultural journals where they will be available at all times and arranged in an orderly manner. After consultation with supervisors, it is quite evident that there is no general method in use other than the attempt to keep the magazines in piles on a table or shelves.

The rack illustrated herewith is an attempt to solve the problem. Three spaces are provided for journals the size of the Breeders' Gazette, Hoard's Dairyman and others. A large space at the base of the rack is provided for the storage of back numbers of these journals as new ones arrive from week to week. Twelve spaces are provided for bulletins.

These will be found convenient for the displaying of new bulletins as they arrive and before they are filed. Immediate filing is likely to "bury" the bulletin and prevent students becoming familiar with the new material as it comes in. Another use for these spaces is in the placing of bulletins for current use by the whole class, i.e., when swine diseases are being studied, all bulletins related to this subject may be taken from the file and placed in the rack.

While the drawings shown do not represent complete working plans, they should be sufficient to show how to construct the rack. The stock used may be either soft or hard wood and should be finished to conform with the rest of the room equipment.

S. D.

DO YOU AGREE?

With the criteria of success in vocational agriculture suggested in this issue? We believe that you agree that "results" should be our guide in judging of success. You may not be ready, however, to accept what have been suggested as indications of these results. The Visitor would be more than pleased to have comments upon this article. We shall feel justified in assuming that you

agree with us unless we hear from you.

There may also be other criteria which your belief or experience leads you to think are of as much importance as those mentioned. As we are all in this work together, it is necessary that each should express his opinion for the good of all. The Visitor is anxious to act as one agency in "spreading the news" which will in any way improve the service that we are all giving to the public.—S. D.

(Continued from page 2)

out. If other things are equal, it is only just to say that the greater progress in the first case should be credited to the teaching of agriculture.

7. Do the graduates of the agricultural course take up farming as a life work?

Data on this question should not be hard to collect. If it is discovered that the majority of the boys who have taken work in the agricultural department are farming, we are not necessarily sure that the credit is due the department. If, on the other hand, the larger number have gone into other lines of work, we are justified in assuming that something is wrong. In many cases the trouble may not be with the agricultural instructor but be due to conditions beyond his control. However, one of the principal duties of the teacher of agriculture is to arouse interest in farming and to imbue the boys under his direction with a desire to make that their business. Success in this particular undertaking is a good indication of general success.

Rural Leadership

8. Do the boys who have had the agricultural course become the leaders in the farming community?

It is necessarily true that this criterion can not be applied to young departments. Boys just finishing school can not at once step into a place of prominence. Most are either working for parents or other relatives or in partnership with them, and consequently are in no position to act independently. This is especially true of the larger phases of leadership. There should be, nevertheless, numerous indications of the value of definite training in technical agriculture, reflected in some form of leadership. The more careful planning of new buildings, the adoption of advanced methods in planting or harvesting, the installation of sewage disposal, light, and water systems, and the spreading of propaganda for these things among neighbors are indications of leadership. When we find a young man actually spending much of his time campaigning for such things, acting as leader of clubs, representing his friends at group meetings, we should certainly say that he is showing qualities of leadership. It is a different matter and often a difficult matter, of course, to connect this leadership with his agricultural course. We should be able to discover that the knowledge gained under the direction of the teacher of agriculture has fur-

nished him the material with which to make his leadership effective.

The indications of success listed above as "results" do not complete the possibilities by far. However, they are in a sense the most practical and may be used, if used sensibly, by any intelligent person. They should be of value especially to superintendents and agricultural teachers who are anxious to evaluate the work of their agricultural departments. It is readily recognized that some of these criteria may be more easily applied than others and likewise, that some are more important than others. This article merely shows a few of the things that men who are thinking on this question believe to be the most important indicators of results to be attained by a department of vocational agriculture.—S. D.

MINNDICK IN USE

It is gratifying to note that suggestions offered in *The Visitor* are being put into practice. It will be remembered that the last volume of *The Visitor* contained an article outlining a method for the filing of bulletins in a simple yet convenient manner. A description was given of a home- or shop-made container for the bulletins which would add to the value of the system.

Arnold Hinrichs, agricultural instructor at Austin, has had each of his students make one of these filing cases and file his bulletins under the Minndick system. Each boy has his own bulletins properly filed and readily available. When he leaves school at the end of the year or at graduation, he will take his bulletins and case with him and have them as the nucleus of his bulletin library.

Victor Nylin, in charge of agricultural work at Bloomington, is using the Minndick case as the first problem in Farm Shop work. He says it makes a fine exercise for squaring and fitting and is especially good because each boy can see that it is going to be of continuous service to him. Mr. Nylin is having his students build up a collection of the most valuable and important bulletins and finds the boys interested in any method for keeping them in order.

If the directions for making this filing case have been misplaced, *The Visitor* will be pleased to send others, and if requested, a detail drawing will be provided.