THE VISITOR

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DESIRABLE ACTIVITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FARM PRACTICE WORK

This issue of THE VISITOR is prepared by members of the Agricultural Education Club. They have selected for their project the preparation of certain desirable activities and characteristics of farm practice work which may be regarded as standards for teachers to keep in mind as guides to better farm practice achievements of students in agriculture in the high school. Altho the standards set up do not represent a complete or perhaps wholly acceptable category of desirable activities and characteristics of farm practice work, they do present many helpful suggestions to teachers.

The neophyte teachers derived a great deal of enjoyment and help from their activities in preparing the material and THE VISITOR is pleased to pass it on to others with the hope that it may be of some interest and value.

A. M. F.

1. *Teachers should develop in the students the habit of carefully analyzing and planning the activities they decide to perform.*

It is worthwhile for the students to acquire the desirable trait of attacking the farm practice problems with a view of mastery. Practice in thorough planning should be continued until it becomes a fixed habit with each student. The plans should include objectives, complete enterprise analysis, important information, and the procedures for carrying the plans into operation.

2. *Students should be encouraged to carry each activity to its successful completion.*

Teachers should be very mindful of the fact that it is undesirable for students to start activities without finishing them. One of the best habits a student can acquire is to finish every job he starts. To achieve this ideal it is important for the teacher to counsel with the students to the end that the farm practice activities selected are appropriate to their need, ability, and opportunities for performance. From the point of view of habit formation it is best to avoid making plans of farm practice activities that are destined to fall by the wayside. It is important that farm practice planning be started early in the school year to give the student ample time for successful completion.

3. *Farm practice activities should have definite educative values.*

It is needless to say that those activities which have little or no real educative value to the students should be avoided in favor of those that will more fully contribute to the growth of the student. Students should be encouraged to discriminate between valuable and wasteful activities and select those which have the most value for the time spent on them. It is worthwhile to conserve time as well as material things in farm practice work. A careful analysis of the needs of the farm should precede farm practice selection.

4. *Farm practice activities should furnish opportunities for the expression of creative ideas.*

The students should be encouraged to do original and creative thinking in the planning and performing of the procedures necessary to carry on the work undertaken. Initiative and self-reliance are important traits to be encouraged in students.

5. *Farm practice work should develop desirable attitudes and ideals in the students.*

Among the desirable attitudes and ideals that should be given expression in practice are honesty, truthfulness, thoroughness, accuracy, neatness and perseverance. Farm practice work abounds in opportunities for the cultivation of these valuable character traits.

6. *Visits should be made to the farms by the teacher at critical times and at such times as are necessary for the good of the boy. There should be a definite objective for the visit.*

All farm practice has certain periods when supervision is especially necessary. The time to make the visit is when, or

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just before, these periods occur. There is not much point in visiting farm practice at other times.

"Men have been known to stop at a place and say something like this, 'We are out looking around and thought we would drop in,' or 'I thought I would stop in and talk with the boy this morning'—the best way in the world to give the parents the impression that the vocational program is of little importance, and that the teacher has nothing to do."—Lattig.

The teacher should have an objective—some definite purpose, in visiting the farm practice. He should know what is going on in each piece of farm practice. For example, when the pullets need culling he should know that the culling is being properly done or he should be on hand to help the student. Some times when a new problem comes up the boy calls for the teacher's assistance. There is no more opportune time to give help than when it is actually needed and solicited by the boy. A boy learns more when he has a need for it because he is more interested. The teacher who is alert is going to make use of this spurt of enthusiasm.

7. *Visiting farm practice work should not be left entirely for the summer months but, on the contrary, most of it should be done before school is out.*

Agriculture teachers are sometimes criticised because they leave their farm practice supervision until the summer months. It is then too late to do much constructive work with the boy for his practice is well under way and he is unusually busy during the day. He frequently does not have time to stop for a conference with the teacher. If the teacher visits him when the haying season or threshing season is at its height, he will be frowned upon by the farmers and probably build up a poor reputation which will not be easy to overcome. However, summer visits are necessary. By careful planning the teacher can arrange his visits without interrupting the boy's work much. A morning after a rain or during the evening might prove to be a convenient time to make such visits.

8. *The agriculture teacher should secure the goodwill of the superintendent and the school board toward his activities in the community.*

There is probably no teacher in the high school who must face more social problems than the agriculture teacher. He must be in good standing with the farmers in the community, the boys in the school, the business men in town; but he must be especially co-operative with the superintendent and school board. They have hired him to do a certain amount of work and they expect it of him. It is up to him to show them what he is doing. This can be done by publishing news items, making displays, giving demonstrations, and by taking school officials with him when he visits the farm practice work. It is important that the superintendent place the agriculture work on an equal basis with other departmental work.

9. *Permanent records of achievement in farm practice should be kept and filed.*

Cumulative summarized records of the achievements in farm practice should serve as valuable materials for study by the students in agriculture. These permanent records should include such items as results from various rations used by students, feeding practices, pasture used, methods used in crop production, yields, systems of soil maintenance, cost of production, machine costs, labor costs, and numerous additional problems met in the projects and other farm practice work. Teachers too frequently overlook the value of the practical experiences of students. For example, if a former student achieved unusual results in a swine enterprise his experiences and methods should be valuable study material for other students. The summaries and achievement stories should be classified on the enterprise basis. The materials may be filed in folders, envelopes, or any other convenient form. The records and achievements of former students should serve to motivate the work of students pursuing activities in similar enterprises. An ex-

cellent method of interesting students in the results achieved in former farm practice work is to prepare simple charts and graphs of essential data from important practice achievements.

10. *Visits to farm practice work should be planned so as to avoid duplication of mileage and waste of time.*

In arranging for visits to the different farms where his students are located an instructor should, whenever possible, have definite and systematic plans to avoid duplication of mileage. Such an arrangement would cut down expenses and avoid a great deal of waste of time, thus allowing the teacher more time for each student.

11. *Good farm practice work should be advertised.*

In this commercial age we should not forget that it *pays* to advertise the good farm practice work. If a boy has accomplished good work, other boys should learn about it so that the achievement might stimulate similar ideals in their minds. This can be accomplished in several ways, some of which might be listed as follows:

a. Arrange for putting up booths at county fairs that tell the story of achievement in farm practice work. The boys themselves will enjoy putting up such booths with the assistance of an able instructor.

b. Keep in touch with the editor of the local newspaper. He will be glad to allow space, at least once a month, in which you have pictures of the work along with printed results of the boys' accomplishments. A well arranged story in a local newspaper would be read by most of the local people and would stir up much added interest among new boys that would not otherwise be reached.

c. Arrange with the County Agent for short talks on the work of the boys at Farm Bureau meetings and other gatherings of farmers.

12. *Good pictures should be taken of the boys and their farm practice work.*

Actual pictures are among the best illustrations you can use in bringing the good news to others. There is nothing that tells the story more quickly or more to the point than good pictures of accomplished work. Such pictures are a great incentive to those students preparing to take up farm practice work as well as encouragement to new prospective boys in the field. The agriculture teacher should, therefore, have a camera with him on all visits to the boys' farms and be ready to snap a good picture whenever an opportunity presents itself. A bulletin board placed in some convenient place in the classroom filled with interesting pictures showing the accomplishments of the boys in their farm practice work will stimulate much interest among the boys of the class as well as other students in school. Such pictures could also be referred to by the instructor in planning with the boys for the following year's practice work.

13. *The farm practice work should correlate with the classwork.*

Insofar as possible farm practice work should correlate with the classwork because learning is really accomplished only when it has found expression in the lives of the students. Classroom work will be more interesting to the boys if they can see definite uses and attain tangible results in and through correlation of farm practice work with their studies.

14. *Farm practice tours should be conducted each year.*

In addition to the regular visits to the farm practice work during the year the teacher should arrange for a tour of all the members of the class to the homes of each member. These tours will tend to keep the students interested in their projects. The tour also offers a means for the students to gather new ideas for carrying out their own projects. Lastly, the tour encourages each boy to have his project in such shape that he can take pride in exhibiting it.

15. *Teachers should make thorough acquaintance with the parents of his agriculture students in order to secure their full co-operation.*

A teacher should make every effort possible to become acquainted with the parents of each student in his classes as soon as possible. This will give him the opportunity to explain the method of vocational agriculture teaching in the high school, the importance of farm practice work, and the valuable assistance the parent can give in formulating a program for agricultural improvement in the community.

The system of farming practiced and the needs of the farm cannot be accurately determined without close acquaintanceship with the parents. The teacher and student are handicapped considerably in selecting, planning, and conducting

farm practice work without the knowledge of home conditions and without friendly relationship with the parents. It adds interest and enthusiasm on the part of the boy to know that his farm practice plans meet the approval of his parents.

Much valuable information on farming in general can be acquired through close friendship with the fathers and mothers in the community. In securing the cooperation of the parents, some teachers in addition to personal visits plan parents' and sons' banquets or hold special get-acquainted meetings early in the year. Greater respect will be shown toward the agriculture department if the parents thoroughly understand the program, feel free to bring their agriculture problems to the department, and realize that all efforts are directed toward agricultural improvement.

In some cases, however, the parents are too willing to help and often assume full responsibility for the farm practice work. This can be avoided by impressing upon the boy and the parents the value of ownership of the project or full responsibility of the farm practice work. Quite frequently it is better to work with the student when the parents are not around. The boy or girl will feel more free to talk and ask questions, if alone with his teacher. Some fathers have the mistaken idea that they must entertain the teacher and forget that the agriculture instructor's main objectives rest with the boy and his farm practice work.

16. *The long time program of the agriculture instructor should include definite objectives concerning farm practice work.*

Abraham Lincoln said, "If we could first determine where we are and where we are going, we could better judge what to do and how to do it." This philosophy applies very clearly to farm practice work. One of the factors that help make a teacher of agriculture successful is a clear and definite long time program of rural life improvement. In such a program definite goals and ideals must be set up. The program is carried out step by step, chiefly through several short time definite projects by the boys in agriculture and through gradual improvements by the farmers. Definite objectives of the long time "community rural life improvement program" are first necessary. Objectives for the long time farm practice program on each farm can then be set up. The objectives and goals of the latter will aid in determining the choice and objectives of short time definite projects by the boys in agriculture. Thus, there will be a target to aim at. Each short time project will then be analogous to an arrow aimed at the bull's-eye. If the marksman does not see the target, he has very little chance of scoring a perfect hit.

17. *Farm practice plans should not only include the practical viewpoint but the esthetic one as well.*

Plans are determined by objectives. To bring greater economic returns is not the only object of improved farm practice. Agriculture is not only a method of making a living but it is a mode of life. The boy with an agricultural project is living now as well as learning for future use. Therefore, farm practice plans should be directed not only at improved agriculture but at improved and happier rural living. Happiness does not consist alone in having a wealth of material things, but in seeing the good and beautiful things in the life about us and in making other people happy. Since farm practice projects are a part of the boys' education and training for citizenship, they should provide for promotion of the ideals of making our homes and countrysides more beautiful and interesting.

18. *The actual condition of the project should be recorded at each visit.*

In order for a teacher of agriculture to note the trend of the project under his supervision he should keep a definite written record of the condition of the project at each visit. Then, by comparing his latest observations with those made on earlier visits he is in a position to lend his aid to improve the projects whch are not progressing satisfactorily. With numerous projects under his direction it would certainly be a Herculean task for the teacher to retain the multitude of details in his memory. For efficient supervision, therefore, it is essential that the teacher take written notes of the actual status of the project at each visit. A record of the condition of the project and further suggestions for improvement should be left with the student. This should stimulate the boy's interest in his work and encourage him to carry out the work as planned. It also gives the parents an opportunity to know just what is expected of the boy and his farm practice work.

(Continued in May issue.)

State High School Livestock Judging Contest, May 5, 6, 7, University Farm