

Minutes

Byron J. McMahon

STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

October 22, 1954

A regular meeting of the State Advisory Committee on Agricultural Education was held October 22, 1954 in James Lick High School, San Jose.

Committee members present were:

Waldo Weeth, Coalinga
Harvey McDougal, Collinsville
Carl Avrit, Chico
A. J. Thille, Santa Paula
Eugene Boone, Modesto
Joe Russ, Ferndale
Robert Couchman, San Jose

Those absent were:

George Emde, Lodi
Keith Mets, Holtville

Others present were: Byron J. McMahon, Chief, Bureau of Agricultural Education; E. W. Everett, Assistant State Supervisor; George P. Couper, Special Supervisor; S. S. Sutherland, Teacher Trainer, University of California, Davis; H. H. Burlingham, Teacher Trainer, California State Polytechnic College; W. J. Maynard, Special Supervisor; B. R. Denbigh, Regional Supervisor; G. A. Hutchings, Regional Supervisor; Dr. W. O. Woodworth, Principal, James Lick High School; and, for parts of the session, Lionel E. Cross, Director of Agricultural Education, San Jose Unified School District, and Loren McNicholl and Russell Peysant, Instructors in Agriculture, James Lick High School.

Dr. Woodworth welcomed the Advisory Committee and Bureau staff members to James Lick High School.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Weeth. The minutes of the meeting of April 22, 1954 were read and approved.

The matter of the progress in college of high school graduates in vocational agriculture, as well as students from small and large high schools, was discussed by Mr. Sutherland. He said that studies made at the University of California, as well as at other land-grant colleges, showed that college grades of students who had studied vocational agriculture were higher than the averages of all students. The evidence is that students coming to college from smaller high schools do not do as well as those from larger high schools.

There ensued a general discussion of college entrance requirements in which the opinion was expressed by several that these requirements are stiffer than they need to be. Mr. Sutherland said that in the case of students in the College of Agriculture this has been recognized, and the University will accept vocational agriculture credits in lieu of foreign language credits. He said

also that no adequate study had been made to show a significant relationship between what the student takes in high school and his success in college. The Veterans Administration made such a study of veterans studying under the G. I. Bill of Rights, he said, and found only that those who do well in high school algebra usually do well in college.

Mr. Sutherland reported that information on requirements for admission to the College of Agriculture is being prepared for the guidance of high school counselors. Recommended patterns of study for high school students will be given.

Mr. Everett then distributed vocational agriculture department rating sheets on which five schools in each of the regions had been scored. The various items used in rating a department were discussed in detail, members of the Committee proposing modifications of several of them.

The question of student participation in F.F.A. district and regional affairs led to a discussion of showing entries in fairs. Mr. Cross stated that vo-ag students in San Jose schools are permitted to participate in only two fairs. Mr. Thille observed that it is important for students to learn where the profit is to be made, as well as winning show awards. Mr. McDougal said the Junior Grand National is strictly a market deal and winning exhibitors "do not get rich." He said shows had contributed greatly to the improvement of livestock in California and that student entries are an indication of what the vo-ag department is doing in livestock instruction.

Mr. Avrit thought it important that the students' attitude toward a department have a place in any rating procedure. Mr. McMahon explained that the rating procedure is not intended to be a basis for reimbursement, but an up-grading device.

On Motion of Mr. Thille, seconded by Mr. Boone, the Committee recommended to the Bureau that it try out the vo-ag department rating form, with suggested changes, in rating five schools in each region, and that the evaluation be made, if possible, with an Advisory Committee member, a school board member, and administrator, and the head of the vo-ag department present. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. Cross then presented a discussion of the problems of a vo-ag department in a larger school system. He said the first purpose of the vo-ag instructor, as for all teachers, should be to do the best possible job to help the student meet his needs. The second purpose, he said, as an agriculture teacher is to teach agriculture.

In the San Jose Unified School District, most of whose vo-ag students do not live on farms, the one criterion for accepting a student in vocational agriculture is that the student show an interest in agriculture.

The district has a 20-acre horticultural unit, he said, and has made arrangements with a commercial feed lot for accommodations for boys with livestock projects.

Mr. Cross said he did not agree with those who favored a general course of instruction in agriculture, but felt that the heart of the vo-ag program is the F.F.A. activity. All boys in vo-ag in San Jose are in F.F.A.

Mr. Everett stated that under the Smith-Hughes Act, a student enrolled in vocational agriculture must have a supervised project for at least six months of the school year.

The Committee then considered the progress that is being made in forming local Advisory Committees. Mr. McMahon reported that the Bureau is not pressuring schools to form Advisory Committees, but is pointing out to school administrations that there is a place for such a committee and that when it is considered it is hoped that the decision will be favorable. Mr. Boone suggested that the proposal might best be tied to some local event such as a change in school administration or employment of a new agriculture teacher.

Mr. Couper then presented a discussion of possible means of securing more crop and fruit projects in the California vocational program for F.F.A. He presented a copy of his remarks to each person present to be retained as a supplement to these Minutes.

After recessing for lunch, the Committee resumed its consideration of Mr. Couper's remarks. Mr. Denbigh called to mind the importance of the father-and-son arrangements where crop or fruit projects are undertaken. Mr. Meeth suggested the advantage of forming a project unit of six to eight boys to carry on a sound economic project.

Mr. Sutherland cited the importance of the natural interests of the teacher in the project program and that it is unlikely that a teacher with an animal husbandry background would encourage many boys to carry on crop projects.

Mr. Boone then presented a discussion on "How Can Farm Mechanics Instruction Be Improved?" He said a satisfactory farm mechanics program should cover four related activities: Repair and Maintenance, Planning and Design, Construction, and Adjustment and Operation.

In his opinion, adjustment and operation of equipment is of most importance, and this should be given priority in instruction so that operators will be equipped to operate the equipment properly and to make the minute-by-minute adjustments that have to be made if the equipment is to perform satisfactorily.

In planning and design, he said, the farmer must develop ingenuity to adapt new ideas to old problems and to see where real improvements can be made in present equipment.

In repair and maintenance, he said, it is important to emphasize the need to keep the machine or equipment in trim, and to instruct the student in good repair techniques.

In construction, he said, the student must learn something of the mechanical skills so that he can do a sound, workmanlike job.

Mr. Boone emphasized that the farm shop produces no income, but that if properly used it can be the means of reducing other costs. He then discussed six topics relating to a farm mechanics training program, listing them as follows:

1. The student--who cannot be changed very much in natural aptitudes.
2. Organization and curriculum--it is best to have a prepared plan to go by and it should be followed.

3. The teacher--he is the key to the whole program and the right man with the right training will do a satisfactory job.
4. Physical layout--it should be adequate to the program needs.
5. Supervision--more enthusiastic interest is needed.
6. Parent cooperation--this should be sought.

Mr. Boone concluded with the remark that a little agricultural mechanics should be taught in all the rest of the agriculture instruction.

Mr. McMahon then reported that since the last meeting of the Advisory Committee, a reimbursement system based on excess costs had been perfected and that it would be tried out on a trial basis. If it proves successful, he said, it will be adopted in another year. Mr. Everett commented that the plan would be presented at three meetings of school administrators for their comments and recommendations.

Mr. Russ reported to the Advisory Committee on his attendance at the national F.F.A. convention in Kansas City, his son being there to receive the American Farmer degree. He said he was amazed at the fine way the Future Farmers conducted themselves and carried on their activities.

The Advisory Committee then set Friday, March 18, as the date of its next meeting to be held in Coalinga, with Mr. Weeth to arrange for the meeting.

Mr. McDougal briefly reported on the livestock industry's promotion to secure increased consumption of beef. Mr. Avrit reported on changes in the vocational agriculture set-up at Chico High School, which he thought would result in a strengthened program.

The meeting was then adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Couchman

Robert Couchman
Secretary

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