



A Handbook

for the

Creation and Operation

of an

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

inside

front

cover

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Purposes of the Advisory Committee	Page 3
The Teacher’s Role on the Advisory Committee	Page 4
Committee Member Selection	Page 4
Qualifications for Serving on the Advisory Committee	Page 5
Committee Structure	Page 5
Agenda for the First Meeting	Page 6
Agenda for Subsequent Meetings	Page 6
Miscellaneous	Page 7
Appendix	Page 8



INTRODUCTION

National Scene

Agriculture Education is at a crossroads in America. With the decrease in the number of family farms, fewer and fewer students are entering agriculture education with an agricultural background. Conversely, career opportunities in agribusiness are rapidly increasing and more and more students need the skills that are taught in agricultural education.

Recent Federal legislation has set the standard for local vocational programs to establish these partnerships by stipulating the need and expectation for greater program flexibility and increased accountability. In order to confront these changes in the educational needs of today's students, teachers and administrators must work with the various partners of the local community to collectively work toward meeting the needs of the student, school, community and agribusiness.

State Scene

Georgia's Agriculture Education program has undergone rapid changes since 1996 and continues to develop by improving the quality of instruction available to students and adults. The curriculum renewal initiative provided every teacher with a foundation of 1,200 lesson plans that were correlated with objectives and the State QCC list.

The "2020 Vision for Agricultural Education," a statewide initiative, resulted in the development of eleven theme areas for agriculture educators to focus while developing the agriculture education program for the year 2020. This initiative brought together stakeholders from all levels of business, education, agriculture and government to develop a vision for the future of agriculture education in Georgia. This visioning effort will direct its focus from the state level to the local level.

Local Scene

The local agriculture education teacher will lead this visioning effort at the local level. The local agriculture education teacher, in concert with the local advisory committee, will assist in creating and implementing the local vision. This visioning effort can provide tremendous assistance to the local teacher in upgrading, updating and creating the atmosphere for a more effective program.

The advisory committee is a useful tool used by many agriculture education teachers and assists schools and teachers as they continue to improve the quality of instruction. Agriculture education teachers, school administrators and boards of education have all realized the benefits they received from the advice of their advisory boards. An advisory committee that is a vital, valued part of the local agriculture education program provides many benefits to the school, program, teacher(s) and students. This pamphlet is intended to assist the agriculture education teacher plan and form an effective advisory committee.



PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS OF A LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The primary purpose of the local advisory committee is to provide to the agriculture teacher, school administration and board of education advice on issues affecting the agriculture program. Advisory committee members must understand the committee has no administrative policymaking or legislative authority.

Four secondary purposes of the advisory committee are to:

1. Provide advice on the quality of the curriculum in regard to its relevance and whether it meets the needs of employers.
2. Inform the school about the current and future labor market.
3. Inform the teacher of new and innovative technology being used by the local industry.
4. Serve as a resource to the local agriculture education program.

A well-functioning advisory committee will¹–

- ⇒ Evaluate the current agricultural education program to determine if it is providing realistic and current preparation and training for students.
- ⇒ Act as a change agent to increase the agricultural education program's relevance.
- ⇒ Help secure training sites and assist in the placement of program graduates.
- ⇒ Advise school personnel of changes in the job market.
- ⇒ Provide input and support for funding at the local level.
- ⇒ Act as a communications link to assist in the development of community understanding of and support for the agricultural education program.
- ⇒ Serves as a valuable resource during transitions between teachers.
- ⇒ Recruit students into the program.
- ⇒ Provide a service to the agricultural education program.

¹ Source: *Agriculture Teacher's Manual*. The National FFA Organization, Indianapolis, IN.

In order to accomplish these expectations, the advisory committee needs to:

- ⇒ Be familiar with the goals, curriculum, competencies, lesson plans, and classroom and lab formats of the agricultural education program.
- ⇒ Be familiar with the school policies, guidelines and expectations.
- ⇒ Identify the trends in education and employment for specific industries to determine how the agricultural education program needs to prepare the students for jobs in the community.
- ⇒ Identify the equipment and facilities used by business and industry.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE ON THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The agriculture education teacher plays an integral role with the planning and formation of the advisory committee. The teacher needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the purposes and role of the advisory committee. As a non-voting member of the advisory committee, the teacher should serve as the facilitator and may also serve as the committee's secretary since they will be responsible for maintaining committee minutes and making meeting arrangements.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SELECTION

Selecting the appropriate people to serve on the advisory committee is critical to a well-functioning committee. The teacher also plays an important role in the selection of the initial advisory committee members. In some schools, the local board of education or administration may have a specific procedure to follow in identifying and selecting potential committee members to serve. In either case, it is wise for the teacher to consult with their administration to gain endorsement of the proposed committee members. After initially selecting prospective committee members, the teacher should determine if they are interested in serving in this capacity.

It is advisable for the teacher to send an official letter of invitation to the members after the school endorses the prospective committee members. The Board of Education President or School Superintendent may sign the personal letter of notification. The teacher may also choose to visit each prospective committee member in order to explain the committee's function, time requirements and length of service. Providing background information about the local program before the first meeting is important.

The advisory committee should be representative of the types of agriculture present in the community. The committee should be diverse in its membership based upon race, gender, age, geographic region of the school district, type of agricultural enterprise and so forth. Listed below are the types of individuals and/or organizational representatives that could be asked to be on the advisory committee.

- ⇒ Farmers
- ⇒ Local citizens that are the 'movers and shakers' of the community, including those with no background in agriculture education.
- ⇒ Agricultural suppliers and services representatives including, but not limited to, agricultural mechanics, horticulture, forestry, livestock producers, crop farmers and agriscience firms.
- ⇒ Major agricultural organizations and companies such as:
 - Farm Bureau
 - Cattlemen's Associations
 - Poultry Associations
 - Grain Associations
 - Pork producers
 - Other animal and livestock associations
 - Feed and grain dealers
 - Agricultural machinery dealers
 - Local utility companies

- Bankers
- Lawyers
- Farm and rural real estate agents
- Veterinarians
- Livestock dealers
- Parents of agriculture education students
- Representatives of the FFA Alumni Association
- Current program students
- Former outstanding students
- Guidance Counselor
- Other teachers
- School administrators
- Board of Education Members
- County Agent
- Young Farmers (members of the Georgia Young Farmers Association)

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVING ON AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Each committee member must meet all of the criteria listed below:

- ⇒ Interested in education and youth.
- ⇒ Interested in the agriculture education program.
- ⇒ Time available to serve.
- ⇒ Willing to serve and ability to make a contribution.
- ⇒ An excellent reputation for honesty, integrity and good character.
- ⇒ Someone who is forthright with their views but builds consensus in the group.
- ⇒ Respected by their professional peers.

Structure of an Advisory Committee

The recommended size of the advisory committee is seven to eleven members, with nine members being an ideal number. Each member is elected to a three-year term with terms rotating so you will always have experienced members on the committee. The local teacher serves as a facilitator and is a non-voting member of the committee. Advisory committee meetings should be held three times per year and conducted using parliamentary procedure.

The advisory committee should elect a president, vice president and secretary annually to carry out the below listed activities:

- ⇒ President – calls the meeting to order, prepares agenda with the agricultural education teacher, and presides throughout the meeting.
- ⇒ Vice President – helps the president with their duties, presides in the absence of the president.
- ⇒ Secretary – records the minutes and is responsible for providing copies of the agenda and minutes to all members prior to the meeting.

AGENDA TIPS FOR THE FIRST MEETING

The first meeting will give the committee members an idea of the expectations of the advisory committee. Once the members have been identified and confirmed, the teacher should select a date for the first meeting. Also the teacher should select an appropriate location that will encourage attendance and send a letter at least two to three weeks in advance so members can clear their schedule. The letter should include the date, time, location and the agenda for the meeting. The teacher and/or a school administrator may be responsible for conducting the first meeting until officers are elected.

The agenda should include:

- ⇒ Welcome by the teacher, school administrator and/or principal, or school board member.
- ⇒ Self-introduction of members.
- ⇒ An explanation of the purpose of the advisory committee including its duties and responsibilities.
- ⇒ Description of the agriculture education program.
- ⇒ Update the committee on the current program progress and provide a general overview of the agriculture education at your school.
- ⇒ Tour of the agriculture education program facilities.
- ⇒ Determine by drawing or some other means who is to get one, two and three year terms.
- ⇒ Election of officers: President, Vice President, and Secretary.
- ⇒ Identify and review issues the committee might want to address.
- ⇒ Set date for next meeting.
- ⇒ Adjourn.

Note: Allow the committee members time to ask questions and get comfortable with their roles.

AGENDA TIPS FOR SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS

The advisory committee president and the teacher should plan subsequent meetings. A definite agenda needs to be planned and mailed prior to the meeting date. This correspondence should update the committee about program progress and new initiatives. Before placing an item on the agenda, several questions should be considered.²

- ⇒ Is the item of business an appropriate issue and is it worthy of the committee's time?
- ⇒ Can the item of business be addressed adequately and handled by a committee recommendation?
- ⇒ Is the expected outcome going to enhance the educational program?
- ⇒ Do members have sufficient knowledge of the facts and background information to make appropriate recommendations? If not, send the supplemental information along with the agenda and letter. Challenge the committee and keep them focused.
- ⇒ Is there a specific purpose for the committee meeting?
- ⇒ Is the committee meeting scheduled with sufficient time to allow for attendance?

² Source: *Agricultural Education Magazine* Article by Mr. Odell Miller, April 1981.

The best way to make an advisory committee effective is for the teacher to:

- ⇒ Allow the advisory committee president to conduct the meeting and ensures the committee members have the opportunity to voice their opinions.
- ⇒ Serve as a resource to the advisory committee.
- ⇒ Clarify the mission and responsibilities of the committee and the time commitment required of committee members.
- ⇒ Develop an agenda with appropriate items for the committee to consider.
- ⇒ Conduct a minimum of three meetings per year.
- ⇒ Seriously consider the advice of the committee.
- ⇒ Select dedicated and action-oriented persons to serve on the committee.
- ⇒ Have diverse individuals serve on the committee.

Miscellaneous Information

- ⇒ The teacher should take the initiative to prevent potential roadblocks the advisory committee may face by carrying out certain activities.
- ⇒ The teacher should notify all committee members by e-mail, phone and/or letter regarding the date, time and location of all meetings and activities at least two weeks in advance.
- ⇒ The advisory committee president should call committee members the day before the meeting to remind them about the meeting.
- ⇒ Ensuring the facilities, equipment and other requirements for the committee meeting are reserved and set-up in advance of the actual meeting date is another responsibility of the teacher.
- ⇒ The teacher should communicate to the committee the action the school administration and/or the Board of Education takes on the advisory committee's recommendations.
- ⇒ The teacher should communicate to the school administration regularly about the work and recommendations of the committee.
- ⇒ The teacher should supply committee members with copies of minutes and other information before each meeting to increase the committee's productivity.

APPENDIX

References:

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Experiences and observations of Jimmy L. Hill, President, The Hill Group Inc., based upon nearly 30 years of working with and for corporations, associations, non-profit groups and communities in Georgia.

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inside

back

cover

back
cover