

## **Characteristics of Effective Agriculture Teachers**

T. Grady Roberts, University of Florida  
James E. Dyer, University of Florida

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to develop a consensus listing of those characteristics that comprise an effective agriculture teacher. With this knowledge teacher educators should be able to design a teacher preparation program to develop these characteristics in their graduates. The Delphi method was utilized to achieve the purpose of this study. The 36 members of the expert panel consisted of agriculture teachers, county level administrators, state FFA supervisory staff, and university faculty in agriculture education. The panel identified 40 characteristics of an effective agriculture teacher. These characteristics were categorized into the areas of instruction, FFA, SAE, community relations, marketing, professionalism/professional growth, program planning/management, and personal qualities. The category that contained the largest number characteristics was “instruction”. This likely verifies the continued belief that for teachers to be effective, they must first master those characteristics that guide instruction – that is, teaching methods/techniques. The characteristics identified in the personal qualities category that are requisite for effective teachers warrant examination and possible remediation by current teacher education programs.

## Introduction/Theoretical Framework

All teacher education programs attempt to prepare aspiring students to become effective agriculture teachers. However, there is little agreement between teacher educators about the specific coursework and experiences required to prepare teachers to be effective (McLean & Camp, 2000).

Young (1990) identified the following characteristics as being those of an effective teacher: the ability to plan and execute lessons, monitor student learning and behavior, conduct interesting and focused lessons based on a variety of methods, and maintain rapport with students and peers. Those who were classified as at-risk exhibited inconsistent management, experienced discipline problems, were unfocused, used unstructured lessons, preferred highly structured teaching, maintained distance between themselves and students, and maintained a passive rather than an active stance as classroom teachers. Suydam (1983) indicated that effective teachers let pupils know they are concerned about their achievement; offer encouragement; involve students through questions and discussion; minimize waste time, allowing few distractions and interruptions; establish and follow simple, consistent rules; monitor pupils' behavior carefully; move around the classroom; and give clear directions. Richardson and Arundell (1989) noted that an effective teacher gives a variety of examples, properly plans lessons, is knowledgeable of subject matter, and knowledgeable of student learning.

According to McClain and Horner (1988), certain personality types are more successful as teachers with the most effective teachers being those with personality types that are not strongly and clearly defined – that is, not extremes on the Myers-Briggs scales. Those teachers at the extremes would have difficulty adapting to the variety of teaching experiences and students. Agriculture teachers were not located at the extremes. McClain and Horner also noted that the majority of agriculture teachers are introverted, sensing, thinking, and use judgment in making decisions. The authors also reported that effective agriculture teachers were rated especially high by their supervisors in using a variety of resources and materials, their ability to work with individuals, working with small and large groups, their ability to provide transferable learning experiences, and their ability to provide group communication experiences for learners.

Miller, Kahler, and Rheault (1989) identified five performance areas as being common with effective agriculture teachers: productive teaching behaviors (which includes designing life-like situations and activities); organized, structured class management; positive interpersonal relationships; professional responsibilities (which includes completing duties in a timely manner); and personal characteristics (which includes displaying personality traits such as humor and patience). Larsen (1992) and Miller et al. (1989) identified classroom management and classroom organization as influencing the effectiveness of agriculture teachers. Likewise, student motivation (Foster & Finley, 1995; Larsen, 1992; Miller et al., 1989; Newcomb, Warmbrod, & McCracken, 1993), the ability to identify student needs (Lockaby & Vaughn, 1999), and recognition of students for their achievements (Lockaby & Vaughn, 1999; Luft & Thompson, 1995; Miller et al., 1989) were also identified as characteristics of effective teachers.

According to Luft and Thompson (1995), students identified an effective agriculture teacher as having the following characteristics: showing enthusiasm for teaching, serving as good role models for students, being committed to helping students learn, showing their commitment to teaching by belonging to professional teacher organizations, enjoying teaching, being self confident and poised, being prompt and on time, and being neatly dressed and well groomed. Foster and Finley (1995) reported that effective agriculture teachers were individually strong in human relation and personal attitudes, adept at conflict resolution, highly motivated, committed to personal feelings, utilized good public relation skills, accepted by co-workers, demonstrated leadership and cooperation, possessed good human relation skills, and demonstrated good professional etiquette.

Whereas much research exists on the components of effective classroom instruction (Richardson & Arundell, 1989; Suydam, 1983; Young, 2000), additional research explores elements of effective instruction unique to agricultural education (Foster & Finley, 1995; Luft & Thompson, 1995; Miller, Kahler, & Rheault, 1989). However, missing from the literature base are the characteristics of effective agriculture teachers in terms of their responsibilities in conducting a total agricultural education program (beyond instruction, FFA, and SAE). If these characteristics were known, teacher educators could structure preservice teacher education programs to better prepare effective agriculture teachers.

The responsibility of preparing future effective agriculture teachers resides with teacher educators at universities with agricultural education programs. They develop coursework and design programs to effectively achieve this outcome. In doing so, teacher educators must often rely on personal experiences since there is limited research-based information on the characteristics of effective agriculture teachers in the total school program (Miller, Kahler, & Rheault, 1989). With this knowledge teacher educators can better prepare preservice students to become effective agriculture teachers.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop a consensus listing of those characteristics that comprise an effective agriculture teacher. With this knowledge teacher educators should be able to design a teacher preparation program to develop these characteristics in their graduates. The main objective of this study was to identify the characteristics of an effective agriculture teacher using an expert panel of agriculture teachers, county level administrators, state FFA supervisory staff, and university faculty in agriculture education. A second objective of this study was to categorize the characteristics of effective agriculture teachers.

### Methods/Procedures

This statewide study used a modified Delphi technique to identify those characteristics deemed to be common among effective teachers. According to Stufflebeam, McCormick, Binkerhoff, and Nelson (1985), the Delphi technique is effective in obtaining consensus among a purposively selected group of experts. Delp, Thesen, Motiwlla and Seshadri (1977) described the Delphi technique as a group process used to solicit, collate, and direct expert responses toward reaching consensus. Helmer (1966) described the Delphi technique as a method of

securing and refining group opinions and substituting computed consensus for an agreed-upon majority opinion.

The expert panel consisted of two university teacher educators, two state FFA supervisory staff members, four county level administrators, and 28 agriculture teachers ( $n=36$ ). Dalkey (1969) stated that the reliability was greater than .80 when Delphi group size was larger than 13. Teacher educators and state FFA supervisory staff were selected based upon their positional expertise. The teachers selected for the panel included individuals who were National Board Certified, teacher association officers, National Agriscience Teacher Finalist, advisors of chapters awarded the National Chapter Award, state FFA Association Board members, and student teaching internship supervisors.

The study used a series of three mailed questionnaires. Moore (1987) noted that mailed questionnaires are typical in the Delphi technique. The first round asked the open-ended question, "What are the characteristics of an effective agriculture teacher?" This question was used to generate an array of response categories that were used to produce items for a second round questionnaire. Responses were categorized into a list of 33 characteristics.

In the second round, panel members were asked to rate each of the 33 characteristics identified in the first round using a five point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree), and to revise the list of characteristics to more accurately reflect their opinions. From the results of the second round and comments listed by respondents, a third round was developed that separated and expanded the list of characteristics to 42 items.

The third round sought to arrive at consensus. During this round panel members were presented individual and group results from the second round and asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with each of the 42 statements. The researchers set the agreement level a priori at 80%. All items which did not receive agreement from 80% of the panel respondents were removed from the list of characteristics. As noted by McCampbell and Stewart (1992), most Delphi studies reach consensus at the third round. Consensus was achieved on 40 of the characteristics at this level so no further rounds were deemed necessary.

### Analysis of Data

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data collected using Likert-type scales were treated as interval data and reported as means and standard deviations for classification purposes. Nominal data were reported using frequencies and percentages.

### Results

The first objective of this study sought to identify the characteristics of an effective agriculture teacher. To accomplish this objective a Delphi technique of obtaining group consensus was used. The first round of the study used a questionnaire with an open-ended question to produce of a wide array of response categories. The response rate for the first round was 83%. Thirty-three characteristics were identified in this round. Table 1 contains

characteristics of effective agriculture teachers identified in the first round. All respondents identified “encourages, counsels, and cares for students” as a characteristic of an effective teacher.

Table 1

*Round One: Categories of Characteristics of Effective Agriculture Teachers (n=30)*

Characteristic	Responses
Encourages, counsels, and cares for students	30
Has a sound knowledge of FFA, actively advises the FFA chapter, and effectively prepares students for CDEs	23
Knowledge of subject matter	22
Effectively determines students needs, plans for instruction, evaluates students, and recognizes achievements	19
Well Organized & Excellent time management skills (good planner)	17
Uses a variety of teaching techniques and has knowledge of teaching & learning Theory	17
Good community relations	17
Puts in extra hours (dedicated)	15
Has a sound knowledge of SAE, actively supervises SAEs, and encourages students to have SAEs	14
Works well with other teachers and administrators	13
Is involved in professional organizations, displays positive, professional image (sets the example) & demonstrates leadership	11
Good Communication and people skills	10
Desire for professional improvement (life long learner)	9
Effectively manages finances, grants, and special projects	8
Effectively manages, maintains, and improves labs	8
Honest, Moral, & Ethical	8
Effectively manages student behavior	7
Enjoys teaching and has positive attitude towards teaching profession	7
Enthusiastic	7
Works well with parents	6
Motivates students	6
Motivated, self-confident, resourceful, and open minded	5
Love of Agriculture (passionate for subject matter)	5
Can work on many tasks at one time (flexible) and is a Jack of all trades	4
Creative	4
Incorporates total school curriculum in to the ag. program	4
Is innovative in using technology in the classroom	4
Works well with alumni and advisory groups	3
Understanding, supportive spouse & family	2
Can develop and implement a public relation program	1
Effectively recruits new students	1
Continually manages, operates and evaluates program	1
Takes actions to prevent burnout	1

Thirty-one of the 36 panel members responded in round two for a response rate of 86%. In this round respondents were asked to rate the 33 characteristics identified in the first round on a Likert-type scale and to make changes in the statements as necessary. Results of round two are displayed in Table 2. It was decided a priori that all items with means equal to or greater than 4.0 would be retained for round three. All 33 items from this round were retained for round three.

Table 2

*Round Two: Level of Agreement with Characteristics of Effective Ag. Teachers (n=31)*

Characteristic	M	SD
Encourages, counsels, and cares for students	4.81	.40
Enjoys teaching and exhibits a positive attitude towards the teaching profession	4.74	.44
Is honest, moral, & ethical	4.74	.44
Has a sound knowledge of FFA, actively advises the FFA chapter, and effectively prepares students for CDEs and other FFA activities	4.71	.53
Has a love of agriculture (passionate for subject matter)	4.71	.53
Motivates Students	4.71	.53
Is capable of solving problems and handling many different tasks at the same time	4.71	.53
Puts in extra hours; is dedicated to doing a good job	4.68	.48
Is enthusiastic	4.65	.49
Establishes and maintains good community relations	4.65	.61
Is motivated, self-confident, resourceful, and open-minded	4.65	.55
Effectively manages, operates and evaluates the agriculture program on a continuous basis	4.61	.62
Effectively manages student behavior; maintains discipline in class	4.61	.56
Maintains an effective public relations program	4.61	.67
Works well with others; Has good communication skills	4.58	.56
Uses a variety of teaching techniques; is knowledgeable of teaching & learning theory	4.58	.67
Effectively recruits new students	4.58	.67
Has a sound knowledge of SAE, actively supervises SAEs, and encourages students to have SAEs	4.55	.57
Works well with parents	4.52	.63
Has excellent knowledge of the subject matter	4.48	.72
Works well with other teachers and administrators in his/her school	4.48	.68
Effectively determines students needs, plans for instruction, evaluates students, and recognizes achievements	4.45	.72
Is creative	4.42	.72
Is innovative; uses technology in the classroom; adapts well to change	4.42	.62
Incorporates science and other areas of the school curriculum into the agriculture program	4.42	.81
Improves himself/herself professionally by seeking opportunities for continued learning	4.39	.72

Table 2 (continued)

*Round Two: Level of Agreement with Characteristics of Effective Ag. Teachers (n=31)*

Characteristic	M	SD
Effectively manages, maintains, and improves laboratories	4.39	.67
Has an understanding and supportive spouse/family	4.39	1.02
Is involved in professional organizations, displays a positive/professional image, and demonstrates leadership in the profession	4.29	.94
Is well organized; has excellent time management skills	4.26	.86
Works well with alumni and advisory groups	4.19	.75
Takes actions to prevent burnout and to re-energize himself/herself	4.16	.86
Effectively manages finances, grants, and special projects	4.03	.98

*Note.* 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Comments on several of the returned questionnaires indicated that some of the characteristics in round two were too broad and in need of revision. Therefore, in round three panel members were sent a revised list containing 42 characteristics. Panel members were asked to provide a dichotomous indication of whether they agreed or disagreed with each of the characteristics as a requirement for an agriculture teacher to be effective. Panel members were also asked to provide comments if they disagreed with the characteristic, or if the characteristic could be further explained to reach consensus. Thirty-one of the 36 panel members responded in this round for an 86% response rate.

Table 3 contains data for round three. Panel members identified 40 characteristics in this round that an effective agriculture teacher should possess. The level of consensus was established a priori at 80%. All respondents agreed that an effective agriculture teacher cares for students; effectively plans for instruction; effectively evaluates student achievement; is honest, moral, and ethical; has a sound knowledge of FFA, actively advises the FFA chapter, and effectively prepares students for CDEs and other FFA activities; communicates well with others; and effectively manages, maintains, and improves laboratories.

Table 3

*Round Three: Level of Agreement with Characteristics of an Effective Ag. Teacher (n=31)*

Characteristic	Agree %
Cares for students	100.00
Effectively plans for instruction	100.00
Effectively evaluates student achievement	100.00
Is honest, moral, and ethical	100.00
Has a sound knowledge of FFA, actively advises the FFA chapter, and effectively prepares students for CDEs and other FFA activities	100.00
Communicates well with others	100.00
Effectively manages, maintains, and improves laboratories	100.00
Effectively recognizes achievements	96.67
Effectively motivates students	96.67

Table 3 (continued)

<i>Round Three: Level of Agreement with Characteristics of an Effective Ag. Teacher (n=31)</i>	
Characteristic	Agree %
Has a love of agriculture (passionate for subject matter)	96.67
Effectively manages student behavior; maintains discipline in class	96.67
Works well with other teachers and administrators in his/her school	96.67
Works well with parents	96.67
Effectively manages, operates and evaluates the Ag program on a continuous basis	96.67
Is motivated	93.55
Is resourceful	93.55
Has a sound SAE knowledge, actively supervises and encourages SAE projects	93.55
Puts in extra hours; is dedicated to doing a good job	93.55
Displays a positive/professional image	93.55
Encourages, counsels, and advises students	90.32
Effectively determines students needs	90.32
Enjoys teaching and exhibits a positive attitude towards the teaching profession	90.32
Uses a variety of teaching techniques	90.32
Incorporates science and other areas of the school curriculum into the Ag program	90.32
Has excellent knowledge of the subject matter	90.32
Improves professionally by seeking opportunities for continued learning	90.32
Establishes and maintains good community relations	90.32
Effectively manages finances, grants, and special projects	90.32
Is innovative; uses technology in the classroom; adapts well to change	90.00
Is capable of solving problems and handling many different tasks at the same time	90.00
Is enthusiastic	87.10
Maintains an effective public relations program	87.10
Is self-confident	86.67
Is knowledgeable of teaching & learning theory	83.33
Takes actions to prevent burnout and to re-energize himself/herself	83.33
Effectively recruits new students	80.65
Is well organized; has excellent time management skills	80.65
Has an understanding and supportive spouse/family	80.65
Works well with alumni and advisory groups	80.65
Is open-minded	80.00
Is creative	77.42
Is involved in professional organizations and demonstrates leadership in the profession	56.67

The second objective of the study sought to categorize the characteristics of effective teachers into a working model. In this model eight categories are identified as essential for agriculture teacher effectiveness. As indicated in Table 4, characteristics identified in round three were categorized into instruction, FFA, SAE, community relations, marketing, professionalism/professional growth, program planning/management, and personal qualities.

Table 4

*Categorized Characteristics of an Effective Agriculture Teacher*

Category	Characteristic
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively plans for instruction</li> <li>Effectively evaluates student achievement</li> <li>Communicates well with others</li> <li>Effectively recognizes achievements</li> <li>Effectively motivates students</li> <li>Has a love of agriculture (passionate for subject matter)</li> <li>Effectively manages student behavior; maintains discipline in class</li> <li>Encourages, counsels, and advises students</li> <li>Effectively determines students needs</li> <li>Uses a variety of teaching techniques</li> <li>Incorporates science and other areas of the school curriculum into the agriculture program</li> <li>Has excellent knowledge of the subject matter</li> <li>Is innovative; uses technology in the classroom; adapts well to change</li> <li>Is capable of solving problems and handling many different tasks at the same time</li> <li>Is knowledgeable of teaching &amp; learning theory</li> </ul>
FFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a sound knowledge of FFA, actively advises the FFA chapter, and effectively prepares Students for CDEs and other FFA activities</li> </ul>
SAE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a sound SAE knowledge, actively supervises and encourages SAE projects</li> </ul>
Community Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works well with parents</li> <li>Establishes and maintains good community relations</li> <li>Works well with alumni and advisory groups</li> </ul>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works well with other teachers and administrators in his/her school</li> <li>Maintains an effective public relations program</li> <li>Effectively recruits new students</li> </ul>
Professionalism/ Professional Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puts in extra hours; is dedicated to doing a good job</li> <li>Displays a positive/professional image</li> <li>Enjoys teaching and exhibits a positive attitude towards the teaching profession</li> <li>Improves professionally by seeking opportunities for continued learning</li> <li>Takes actions to prevent burnout and to re-energize himself/herself</li> </ul>
Program Planning/ Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively manages, maintains, and improves laboratories</li> <li>Effectively manages, operates and evaluates the agriculture program on a continuous basis</li> <li>Effectively manages finances, grants, and special projects</li> </ul>
Personal Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cares for students</li> <li>Is motivated</li> <li>Is enthusiastic</li> <li>Is self-confident</li> </ul>

Table 4 (continued)

<i>Categorized Characteristics of an Effective Agriculture Teacher</i>	
Category	Characteristic
Personal Qualities (cont.)	Has an understanding and supportive spouse/family Is honest, moral, and ethical Is open-minded Is well organized; has excellent time management skills Is resourceful

### Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The Delphi method used in this study identified 40 characteristics of effective agriculture teachers that are categorized into instruction, FFA, SAE, building community partnerships, marketing, professional growth/professionalism, program planning, and personal qualities. In a study of teacher education programs, McLean & Camp (2000) reported that most of the teacher education programs they surveyed have curricula that address seven of the eight identified categories. Additionally, their study showed that none of the surveyed teacher education programs specifically contained subject matter aimed at developing the personal qualities identified.

Arguably, the characteristics identified in this study are all teachable. It is recommended that agriculture teacher education programs in states with similar populations evaluate their current curricula to ensure that these characteristics are included. The characteristics listed in this study can serve as a formula for developing effective agriculture teachers.

The assertion that effective agriculture teachers possess certain personal qualities is supported by Luft and Thompson (1995), Miller et al. (1989), and Phipps and Osborne (1988). According to the results of this research, if we are to produce effective teachers, the personal qualities identified in this study must either exist prior to the time students enter teacher education programs, or be developed. It is recommended that additional coursework that focuses on the development of these personal qualities be provided for preservice teachers.

Interestingly, the greatest number of characteristics were identified within the area of instruction. This likely verifies the continued belief that for teachers to be effective, they must first master those characteristics that guide instruction – that is, teaching methods/techniques.

Creating effective agriculture teachers is imperative for the long-term sustainability of agricultural education programs. Ineffective teachers are likely to become dissatisfied with teaching as a career and seek other employment opportunities (Bennett, Iverson, Rohs, Langone, & Edwards, 2002). Likewise, if ineffective teachers remain in the classroom, anecdotal evidence suggests that programs close and that countless students will not have an opportunity for education in agriculture.

Student teaching is a very important part of the preservice teaching program. It is recommended that these 40 characteristics also be applied to selecting cooperating teachers.

According to Edwards and Briers (2001), the characteristics of the cooperating teacher are important for the development of preservice teachers. Selecting effective teachers to serve as cooperating teachers should aid teacher education programs in developing effective teachers.

#### References

- Bennett, P.N., Iverson, M.J., Rohs, F.R., Langone, C.A., & Edwards, M.C. (2002). *Job satisfaction of agriculture teachers in Georgia and selected variables indicating their risk of leaving the teaching profession*. Paper presented at the Southern Agricultural Education Research Conference, Orlando, Fl.
- Dalkey, N.C. (1969). *The Delphi method: An experimental study of group opinion*. Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation.
- Delp, P., Thesen, A., Motiwalla, J., & Seshadri, N. (1977). *Delphi: System tools for project planning*. Columbus: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University.
- Edwards, M.C. & Briers, G.E. (2001). Cooperating teachers' perceptions of important elements of the student teaching experience: A focus group approach with quantitative follow-up. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 40*(3), 30-41.
- Foster, B.B. & Finley, E. (1995). *The relationship of teacher knowledge and personal development of human relation skills in agricultural education*. Paper presented at the Southern Agricultural Education Research Meeting. Wilmington, NC.
- Helmer, O. (1966). *Social technology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Larsen, C. (1992). Teaching effectiveness: A principal's view. *The Agricultural Education Magazine, 65*(3), 12-13.
- Lockaby, J. & Vaughn, P. (1999). Teaching values in agricultural education. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 40*(1), 74-81.
- Luft, V.D. & Thompson, G.W. (1995). Factoring contributing to the effectiveness of agricultural education teachers: What students say. *The Agricultural Education Magazine, 68*(3), 23-24.
- McC Campbell, W. H. & Stewart, B. R. (1992). Career ladder programs for vocational education: Desirable characteristics. *Journal of Vocational Education Research, 17*(1), 53-68.
- McClain, C. & Horner, J. (1988). *Vocational agriculture teacher personality and effective teaching: Is there a relationship?* Central States Annual Research Conference in Agriculture Education Proceedings. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 290 868).

- McLean, R.C. & Camp, W.G. (2000). An examination of selected preservice agricultural teacher education programs in the United States. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 41(2), 25-35.
- Miller, W.W., Kahler, A.A., & Rheault, K. (1989). Profile of the effective vocational agriculture teacher. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 30(2), 33-40.
- Moore, C.M. (1987). *Group techniques for idea building*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Newcomb, L.H., McCracken, J.D., & Warmbrod, J.R. (1993). *Methods of Teaching agriculture* (2nd ed.). Danville, IL: The Interstate.
- Phipps, L.J. & Osborne, E.W. (1988). *Handbook on agricultural education in public schools* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Danville, IL: The Interstate.
- Richardson, A.G. & Arundell, A. (1989). *Characteristics of the effective teacher as perceived by pupils and teachers: A Caribbean case study*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 311 013).
- Stufflebeam, D.L., McCormick, C.H., Binkerhoff, R.O., & Nelson, C.O. (1985). *Conducting educational needs assessments*. Boston: Kluwer Nijhoff Publishing.
- Suydam, M. (1983). Teaching effectiveness. *Arithmetic Teacher*, 31(2), 3.
- Young, M. (1990). Characteristics of high potential and at-risk teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*. 11(4), 35-39.

## Characteristics of Effective Agriculture Teachers

A Critique  
William G. Camp  
Virginia Tech

Based on the title of the paper and the abstract, I expected to see a traditional “trait” study in which personality traits are identified and related to some other variable, typically effectiveness in some form. Trait theory and research into the relationship between personal traits and effectiveness in various arenas formed much of the early basis for research in leadership and management styles. In general most researchers have found that identifying traits of effective persons is relatively easy but inculcating those traits into others is more problematic. But as I read further, it became clear that the researchers went well beyond simple personality traits. Indeed, they identified a broad range of characteristics that make up a successful agriculture teacher: personality traits (e.g., *honest, moral, and ethical*), professional competencies (e.g., *sound SAE knowledge*), technical competencies (e.g., *knowledge of subject matter*), professional practice (e.g., *variety of teaching techniques*), and even environmental (e.g., *supportive spouse/family*). To the extent that we can instill any of those characteristics into our aspiring and practicing teachers through coursework or other forms of structured experiences, we will be doing the profession a great service.

The rationale for the study is well conceived. The design and research methods are appropriate. The paper is well written and, in general, the conclusions and recommendations flow logically from the findings. The topic of the study is an important one and the researchers should be commended for studying an area that has not been adequately examined in our profession in the past.

Some questions to consider:

1. The characteristics identified by the study are very wide-ranging. The researchers grouped 42 characteristics into eight categories. Many are very concrete and represent tangible behaviors, but many seem vague and represent intangible characteristics. How do we teach students to exhibit the more intangible characteristics?
2. The researchers recommend that we identify cooperating teachers who exhibit the characteristics that they identified. I would contend that no such person exists; yet I agree that we should seek to approximate the teacher described as closely as possible. Assuming that the characteristics identified are quantifiable and observable, where do we find a cooperating teacher who looks like that?
3. One of the common criticisms of our teacher education programs is that we expect the teacher to be all things to all people, yet still maintain sanity, a home life, and identity as an individual. There must be priorities. Which of these can we relegate to “low priority?” Which characteristics are “not negotiable?”