



# THE GOLDEN SLATE

The official newsletter of the California  
Agricultural Teachers' Association

## The Power of Collaboration

*By Vernon Clark, Foothill High School*

Teaching agriculture is no easy task. Whether you're a young teacher just starting out or a veteran with years of experience, this profession comes with unique challenges. From managing livestock and maintaining FFA programs to ensuring students grasp agricultural concepts in the classroom, the workload can feel overwhelming. One lesson I've learned through my teaching career is the importance of reaching out for help—especially to other agriculture teachers. It's one of the best ways to stay motivated, energized, and effective in our roles.

When I was a new teacher, I struggled with teaching my students how to manage livestock for the Kern County Fair. The demands of balancing classroom instruction while preparing students to raise and care for animals felt overwhelming. I wanted my students to succeed and represent our program well, but I didn't have all the answers. I had to confront my fear of asking for help. I reached out to experts I trusted—other agriculture teachers who had more experience and knowledge in this area. They gave me advice, answered my questions, and even showed me techniques I could bring back to my students. It was humbling, but it transformed how I approached my teaching.

Asking for help turned out to be a strength, not a weakness. I realized that as we learn, we also gain a fresh perspective on how to help others learn. The insights I gained from my mentors not only helped me improve as a teacher but also allowed me to share that knowledge with others down the line. Now, I can share the same advice and strategies that once helped me. This mindset creates a continuous cycle of learning and teaching that strengthens the entire agriculture community.

Our profession is unique in that we are all striving toward the same goal: to help our students grow, both in and out of the classroom. That goal binds us together, and collaboration is one of our greatest tools. It can be scary to reach out for help—especially if you're worried about looking inexperienced or vulnerable—but I promise you, it's worth it. Every teacher has their own strengths, and when we tap into each other's expertise, it only makes us better.

So whether you're teaching students to manage livestock for the county fair or struggling to coach a CDE team, don't hesitate to ask for help. Our association is filled with agriculture teachers who are ready and willing to support you. In the end, we all benefit when we work together to give our students the best education possible.

CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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