

Agricultural Education
Advisory Committee
Manual

Agricultural Education
High School Leadership Division
California Department of Education

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Introduction

The use of advisory committees is well established in the public school system. These committees were conceived in the beginning to implement the development and improvement of educational programs. This manual is written for those planning to form new advisory committees, wishing to improve those already in existence, and for newly appointed members. Advisory committees will play a vital role in agriculture programs in the future.

This manual will help prevent unnecessary errors in the development of advisory committees. These guidelines have proven successful, and may be added to and modified for local and present conditions.

Even though mandated, advisory committees are useless unless they are properly developed with practical working groups. They must be based on the needs of the people and industry for which they serve. Advisory committees are established systems for using lay persons to assist professional educators.

With the increased need for rapid change in this technological age, there is a growing appreciation of the help provided by industry representatives serving on local advisory committees. Agriculture is a complex, highly scientific, and technological industry. Employment opportunities in agriculture are constantly changing. New technologies are continually being developed and incorporated into agricultural and educational industries.

Students must be trained for today's jobs as well as new opportunities that become available. There will be an increased need for agriculturists trained in specialized technical occupations. Advisory committees help teachers of agriculture stay abreast of these changing employment trends and opportunities. Increased interest in agriculture programs that include internships, work-study, and other types of on-the-job training will require close coordination with agricultural industry representatives.

Increased attention needs to be given to the education of at risk, disadvantaged, and other special needs individuals. Advisory committees can provide valuable assistance that is necessary for the success of these interrelated programs.

We must remember that lay advisory groups have no administrative or legislative authority. They can not establish policy or take the place of the administration or the board of education. Their function is to provide understanding between the school and the community it serves. Advisory committees provide balanced judgment to local problems and help give continuity and support to programs.

The purpose of this manual is to provide information for Agricultural Education coordinators, school administrators, boards of trustees, teachers of agriculture, and advisory committee members. Included is information on the formation, functions, duties, and operation of advisory committees. An outline format is being used to make the information easier to find and use.

Finally, a sample of opening session instructions, a sample agenda, and a sample set of minutes are offered for the benefit of those unfamiliar with these procedures.

Forming an Advisory Committee

Much of the success of an advisory committee is determined by the manner in which it is formed. Based on the experiences of many communities throughout the country, the following steps are suggested:

1. Determine and Verify the Need

- 1.1 There must be a feeling of need and understanding of opportunity if an advisory committee is to succeed.
- 1.2 If with its help, the advisory committee can make the (department, division, district) better, it serves a usable function.
- 1.3 It can provide continuity of a quality program should teachers or administrative changes take place.
- 1.4 It is important that the school administration, agricultural education staff, parents, and other patrons of the school thoroughly understand the character and purpose of the committee.

2. Nomination of Committee Members

- 2.1 Once approval of the formation of an advisory committee by the board members is received, nominations should be made jointly by the principal or superintendent, the head of the agriculture department, and the chairperson of the school board.
- 2.2 Each should have an equal voice in the selections.
- 2.3 Avoid nomination of friends, as they may be less candid and honest in their advice.
- 2.4 The advisory committee should be truly representative of the district.
Members:
 - 2.4.1 Should be successful agriculturists and/or individual/s engaged in a significant related occupation.
 - 2.4.2 Must have recent, successful, firsthand, and practical experience in the field of agriculture
 - 2.4.3 Should exhibit substantial interest in the agriculture program.
 - 2.4.4 Should be representative of different important agricultural commodities, parts of district, age groups, farm organizations, & ethnic or religious groups.

- 2.4.5 Should be sought as public-spirited individuals who understand a specialized area and are willing to contribute their knowledge and advice as a member of a cooperative, constructive group.
- 2.4.6 From the general school staff and/or the board should only be used when special circumstances warrant their appointment.
- 2.4.7 Should *not* have frequent dealings with the department in order to minimize conflict of interest problems.
- 2.4.8 Should include representatives of the service areas of agriculture.
- 2.4.9 Should recognize the time required and express a willingness to serve on the committee.

3. How Many Committee Members?

- 3.1 No fixed number will satisfy all situations.
- 3.2 The group needs to be large enough to be representative of the district and to provide a quorum if several members are absent.
- 3.3 Should not be so large that it is unwieldy or difficult to call together.
- 3.4 Seven to eleven persons are suggested with nine being a workable medium.
- 3.5 Present only the number of names previously decided upon by the local governing board for confirmation. (When more names are presented personalities become involved yielding undesirable results.)

4. How are Committee Members Notified of their selection?

- 4.1 Notification is usually done in writing, by the principal or superintendent, on behalf of the school board.
- 4.2 The letter should:
 - 4.2.1 Indicate that the Ag teacher is supportive.
 - 4.2.2 Indicate that the committee serves in an advisory capacity to him or her, the department, the principal, and to the school board.
 - 4.2.3 Include a request that the member indicate whether he or she will accept.
 - 4.2.4 Urge speed of acceptance to gain an orderly efficient start.

5. Understanding of Responsibility

- 5.1 Of greatest importance is that the committee is *only* advisory in character.
- 5.2 The advice is to the teacher, school administrator, or school board as appropriate to accept or reject.
- 5.3 It has no administrative or policy forming power.
- 5.4 It will make suggestions on policy and procedure, but the *source of its influence is in the voluntary acceptance of this advice* by the proper governing authority.

Experience has shown where all of the steps up to this point have been properly taken, a high percentage of acceptances may be expected.

Functions and Duties of Advisory Committees

1. Help to determine what type of Agricultural Education program is offered.
2. Assist the teacher(s) in finding suitable work stations (internships, work-study, cooperative learning, partnerships) for students in both production agriculture and agri-industry occupations.
3. Help the instructor establish curriculum that has a hands-on, technological approach.
4. Help attract and encourage qualified/capable students into the Agricultural Education Tech Prep program.
5. Help in recruiting and providing opportunities for special-needs students.
6. Help to evaluate the effectiveness of the Ag. Education program. Guidelines for evaluation should be developed cooperatively with the advisory committee, administration, school board, and the Agricultural Education Unit of the California Department of Education.
7. Help gain support for legislation and appropriations.
8. Help the teacher(s) develop a list of capable resource persons for use as speakers, and/or judges for both in-school and out-of-school tests and contests.
9. Help obtain sponsors for appropriating funds for awards, scholarships, or needed equipment and supplies that are useful in carrying out classroom activities and F.F.A. or other youth programs.
10. Help unify the activities of the Agricultural Education program with those of other groups and agencies interested in agriculture.
11. Assist the teacher in determining skills needed for particular jobs at entry, technical and professional levels so that he/she may be included in the instructional program.

12. When appropriate, serve as resource person to instructor visiting work place learning sites of students and participating in classroom instruction or demonstrations and accompanying or hosting field trips.
13. Study and make recommendations on problems presented to it by the school board on which further information is needed.
14. Provide the teacher with technical assistance and keep him/her aware of new developments in the agricultural industry.
15. Provide current resources to develop and maintain an Ag library of visual aids, magazines, and books concerning agriculture and agricultural occupations.
16. Serve as speakers at civic clubs, open houses, and career days to tell the story of school-industry cooperation.
17. Identify current standards for new equipment.
18. Assist in procuring opportunities to upgrade the teacher's technical skills and knowledge.

Operation of Advisory Committee

It is important that correct procedures and rules be established and clearly understood by committee members, school administrative staffs, and the board of education. These rules should be decided upon by the committee with assistance from the school. All correspondence should be sent to administrators and advisory committee members. Items to be considered are:

1. Number of meetings

- 1.1 Must meet regularly and often enough to carry out their assignment.
- 1.2 Monthly or bi-monthly meetings are usually the most desirable.
- 1.3 Minimum number is two per year.
- 1.4 Practical number is between three and eight per year.
- 1.5 Necessity should always determine the exact number.
- 1.6 Often the most valuable advice comes from busy individuals.
- 1.7 Better to have fewer well planned, well attended meetings.

2. Selection of Officers

- 2.1 Generally a chairperson, vice chairperson, and recorder are sufficient.
- 2.2 Chairperson should be a lay person elected by the committee.
- 2.3 It is usually best that the agriculture teacher serves as recorder and general consultant.

3. Length of Service by Committee Members

- 3.1 Three-year terms are recommended.
- 3.2 At formation meeting members draw for one, two, or three year terms to provide for continuity of membership.
- 3.3 Individual preferences in length of service need to be considered.
- 3.4 Limitation should be placed on reappointments.
- 3.5 Nominees should be submitted to board of trustees for approval.

4. Length and Place of Meetings

- 4.1 For efficient and effective use of time, the agenda for each meeting must be well planned.
- 4.2 Ample meeting notice of 10 days to 2 weeks is recommended.
- 4.3 Copy of agenda, minutes from previous meeting, and any reading material requiring action should be sent in advance of meeting date.
- 4.4 Two-hour meetings, held at a time and date chosen by the committee, are recommended.
- 4.5 The meeting place should provide a conference table in a quiet environment.
- 4.6 Usually the agricultural department of the school provides the best meeting site, allowing members to become familiar with facilities of the department.

5. Filling Committee Vacancies

- 5.1 Vacancies which occur because of term completion or other reasons should be filled by nomination from the advisory committee, teacher, superintendent, department head, or principal, and approved by the board of education.
- 5.2 The committee may be asked for suggestions.
- 5.3 A committee *should not* be permitted to choose its own replacements.
 - 5.3.1 This would be self perpetuating.
 - 5.3.2 May become unrepresentative and unduly independent of the school administration.
- 5.4 Rules of procedure should indicate that if a committee member misses meetings repeatedly without reason, the position be declared vacant by the chairperson, and the school board so notified.

6. Distribution of Minutes: All committee members, the career education director, the principal, school board president and the regional supervisor.

7. Making Decisions: Currently many organizations operate by consensus approval of agenda items. When consensus cannot be reached or decorum is in question, refer to Robert's Rules of Order.

Opening Session Instructions for Agricultural Education Advisory Committees

Instructions to Your New Advisory Committee

1. You constitute an advisory committee for the (your school district).
2. I welcome you on behalf of the board and administration.
3. You are agents of and appointed by the (your school's board of trustees).
4. While you are not a policy making body, you are advisory to (your department), and through channels, to the principal, superintendent, and board. We need your expertise in this area.
5. The (your district) is interested in the best possible Agricultural Education program. We need to know what is ideal for this program from the standpoint of the community. Bear in mind that what we eventually can do, while we want the ideal if possible, must be compatible with available funds and state rules and regulations.
6. You will be a working committee and students & school staff expects to benefit from your work.
7. We need help to:
 - 7.1 Review existing programs, courses of study, facilities, equipment.
 - 7.2 Propose new programs and/or courses when needed based on solid data for this community.
 - 7.3 Evaluate existing programs and proposed new programs.
 - 7.4 Revise existing programs, suggest changes or deletions, and develop educational specifications for the programs. (For use in building the program and planning for equipment and facilities.)
 - 7.5 Help develop building plans, review architects plans, etc., where new buildings are being proposed.
 - 7.6 Help point out changes needed for the future in your area of interest - Keep the program up to date.
 - 7.7 Help in placement and in evaluating performance of our Agricultural Education students at (your school or college).
8. You will be a "helping group" (as well as advisory) to the instructor, as the program is implemented and progresses.

9. This committee serves at the pleasure of the school board and may be dissolved at any time by board action.

Getting Started:

1. Review present course offerings and majors -- catalogs, studies, data, classrooms, labs, and other facilities.
2. Conduct studies, if needed, to get community data on which to base your decisions.
3. Decide areas to study or review (both geographic and educational areas) and determine how to do this (formal study, informal, follow-up studies).
4. Your findings and decisions will be in the committee minutes which will be distributed to the instructors, administration, and the board.

Here's What You Need To Do To Get Started:

1. Elect a chairperson.
2. The recorder will be an instructor, or department chairperson, and he or she will also be a resource person for you to help interpret educational language and concepts, provide materials, and be the liaison person with the administration.
3. Determine rotation (1-2- or 3 years?). You will also decide length and term and who serves what term. (Subsequent appointments will be 3 years each.)
4. Decide if more than one committee is needed. Large departments may have subcommittees.
5. Announce that any member who can not continue serving for any reason, should notify the chairperson so that a replacement appointment can be made.

Note: Be sure to start and end on time!

**WE NEED YOUR HELP. WE APPRECIATE YOUR WILLINGNESS TO GIVE IT AND
BE OF SERVICE TO YOUR SCHOOL.**

Appendix A

(SAMPLE)

Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

TO: List committee members here
FROM: Chairperson
DATE: Date agenda is published
RE: Next Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE: Date of next meeting

TIME: Time of next meeting

PLACE: Place where meeting is being held

AGENDA

1. Review and approve minutes of the previous meeting.
2. Call for additional agenda items to be added to this meeting's agenda.
3. Committee and progress reports.
4. Consideration of recommendations for a new class or activity.
5. Review of revised course of study.
6. Report and review of F.F.A. and/or other youth organization activities.
7. Set date, time, and place for next meeting.
8. Adjournment.

Appendix B

(SAMPLE)
Set of Minutes

Advisory Committee Meeting
January 21, 2004

The meeting was called to order by chairperson, Joe Smith at 3:00 p.m., January 21, 2004, in room 122 at Your High School.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read, amended, by changing the word shall to should in topic #8, and approved.

The call for additional agenda items was made.

Mr. X reported that the Field Day Committee met on January 14, 2004. It was decided that the best day for the annual field day is May 5th. It was moved, seconded, and passed that our annual field day will be held on May 5, 2004.

Mrs. Y reported on ticket sales of the coming Parent and Student Banquet. So far, 310 tickets have been sold. This is already 20 more than last year's attendance.

It was moved and seconded that a class on small gas engines be added to the Ornamental Horticulture curriculum. After a lengthy discussion, this was referred to a committee of five made up of Mrs. A, Mrs. B, Mr. C, Mr. D, and Mr. E. They are to report to the advisory committee on March 15th. Mrs. A will be the chairperson.

Mr. Z reported on the suggested revision for the Basic Plant Science class. Added topics being considered are: weeds, pathogens, and insects. Pruning practices will likely be deleted as a specific class in pruning is being considered for next Fall.

F.F.A. President, Bill G. reported on this year's calendar of events of the chapter. He was commended by the Chair for his leadership and hard work.

The next meeting is scheduled for 3:00 p.m., February 15th, in room 122 at Your High School.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. by chairperson Joe Smith.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Q, Recorder