

Attention, Future Ag Teachers

Remember these three things to build a career in agricultural education.

— By Lauren Denton

In honor of National Teach Ag Day on Sept. 21, the National FFA Organization celebrates agriculture teachers and FFA advisors nationwide — not simply for their dedication, but also for raising the next generation of educators.

Is teaching agriculture in your future? Josh Davenport, a 20-year veteran in his 11th year at South Panola High School in Batesville, Miss., shares three important characteristics for anyone who hopes to lead their own classroom.

1. Consider your education.

Choose an agricultural degree program that provides a wide range of courses. “You never know what you might teach,” Davenport says. “It could be animals, ag mechanics, horticulture, food science or intro to ag. You can’t always say, ‘This is what I want to teach.’ You have to start somewhere.”

Beyond agriculture courses, Davenport says computer and management classes could be

beneficial. “As an FFA advisor, you’re basically managing everything from fundraising to staying on schedule with contests. You need to be organized in all facets.” Spreadsheets, time management and interpersonal skills can help with that.

2. Invest in the students.

“Teaching is not just an 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. job, especially for ag teachers,” Davenport notes. “Be prepared to put the time in and go the extra mile.” Due to the hands-on nature of agricultural learning experiences and FFA activities, expect many one-on-one opportunities. With that, ag teachers play a key role in helping students “find their niche” and preparing them for “life in general,” Davenport says.

Part of that occurs through how you manage your classroom: Set clear expectations, hold students accountable and be consistent. They get a sense that the work doesn’t stop just because they’re away, he says, which teaches them ownership of their projects and results that follow.

3. Be innovative.

“Be willing to change and step outside of the box and go with the trends to maximize the success of your program,” says Davenport, noting how community awareness and involvement have grown since he created a Facebook page for the South Panola FFA Chapter.

Want more pointers in your pursuit of becoming an agriculture teacher? Consult the National Council for Agricultural Education at TheCouncil.FFA.org.

South Panola FFA advisor Josh Davenport (far right) has been teaching agriculture for 20 years. There’s much more to the job than teaching ag, he says.

