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Issue Two  
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Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association

# From *The* Nest

## A Letter From The President

*Diane Herndon*

I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and gearing up for hybrid learning! Your MATA board has been working hard to provide meaningful professional development for our members as we work through new and often challenging times. We will host our last virtual session with Dr. Cleveland regarding Equity, Inclusion and Diversity this week and then our #MATACoffeeBreak the following week to discuss hybrid strategies. Through a partnership with a local alumni affiliate, we were able to apply for and be awarded a grant to provide seven Insta360 cameras to our members. Please take a moment to complete the form if you are interested in using one of these cameras to enhance your lessons, document SAEs and more. We look forward to continuing to find ways to serve our members in these ever changing and challenging times.

Diane Herndon.

*Technology will not replace great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.*

*- George Couros*



# Classroom >>> Maryland FFA Social

By: Holly Knight

Recently I attended a Maryland FFA Social. This was a great opportunity, especially as a freshman in high school and a new member of the FFA team. I was introduced to FFA by my Ag. teacher, Ms. Trewin. I have a strong passion for agriculture and farming so, I thought I would attend as many FFA meetings and socials as I could to gather more information and get my foot in the door. Therefore, I attended the Maryland FFA Social.

Even though I did not know anyone that attended the meeting nor had much of a chance to speak, I enjoyed meeting other passionate FFA members and participants. Because of the ongoing pandemic we met over an online/virtual meeting on Zoom. Although I am sure this was not the ideal/regular FFA meeting, the leaders of the meeting made it worth your time and put much effort into the social. Most students are familiar with the virtual platform anyways, which made it no different than other school classes. During the meeting, many FFA members attended. There were so many participants, we divided out into smaller breakout room groups. Within the groups each leader had a game or activity to share. The groups were timed in order to switch groups to try new activities. Some of the activities included, a scavenger hunt, twenty questions, thumbs up or thumbs down. These were interactive and helped you get to know each other. My personal favorite was the "thumbs up or thumbs down" game. In this game the leaders would take turns asking "would you rather" questions and students would use emojis or thumbs up/thumbs down to vote which they would choose. I felt this was effective because you could see what each person likes and enjoys.

Attending the Maryland FFA Social was a great way to start becoming more involved in FFA. Thanks to the great leaders that pulled together to create a fun, interactive, and enjoyable virtual social for new and experienced FFA members to attend. This was an amazing experience and opportunity especially as a new member and freshman.

## FFA >>> Maryland FFA State Spring Judging and State Convention 2021

### SPRING!

Registrations will be handled through [judgingcard.com](http://judgingcard.com) and will need to be submitted online by March 19th. All team members and individuals must be current FFA members and be registered prior to the events. Once the registrations are in, each advisor will receive the log in information to share with each participant. Students will have to log in to the system and enter their personal email address to be ready to participate. The schedule for Spring Judging is as follows:

-April 19-20<sup>th</sup>: Food Science, Meat Evaluation, Milk Quality/Products

- April 21-22<sup>nd</sup>: Floriculture, Nursery/Landscape, Farm Business Management

April 23-24<sup>th</sup>: Agronomy, Agricultural Mechanics, Vet. Science

Note: Only team members competing the week of April 19-24<sup>th</sup> are eligible for recognition. The following week April 26-May 1<sup>st</sup> is open for individuals that are pre-registered to run through a practice event and will receive their score at the conclusion of the event.

Note: Agriscience Fair participants are to register through the same system and will be notified by MD FFA State Staff for their presentation date and time.

### STATE CONVENTION

Registrations will be handled through Blue Panda for all CDE/LDE's and Chapter Official Delegates by May 1<sup>st</sup>. The competitions will be conducted through Zoom and will follow the scheduled days:

June 7<sup>th</sup>- \*Creed Speaking, \*Jr. Prepared, \*Sr. Prepared

June 8<sup>th</sup>- Employment Skills, \*Jr. Exempt, \*Sr. Exempt.

June 9<sup>th</sup>- Marketing Plan, Agricultural Issues

June 10<sup>th</sup>- Agricultural Sales, Agricultural Communications

June 11<sup>th</sup>- Parliamentary Procedure, Conduct of Chapter Meetings

\* Must qualify in the top 4 at a regional event.

Results for both events will be announced during the Virtual 2021 MD FFA State Convention June 22-25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.





# Aha Moments and Big Take-a-ways from the NAAE Conference.

By: Kelly Bryant

At last year's convention, who could have predicted the 2020 NAAE Convention would be held virtually? Although the word "virtual" may make some of us cringe because we hear it so much, this ag teacher was thrilled at the opportunity to be able to attend the virtual convention. With three school-aged kids at home and a farm business, getting away in December to attend a convention is not in the cards. Last year, I sat by watching the social media posts intently about NAAE in Anaheim, CA. Was I jealous? Heck yes! A fantastic ag conference with experienced and energetic teachers, plus Disneyland. Can it get much better?

After receiving a scholarship from MATA to attend the convention, I jumped online and registered. I printed out all the pre-conference materials so I could thoughtfully plan my virtual experience. I still have my yellow sticky note in my notebook with each day listed and the presentations to attend. December 2 – noon, "Impact of COVID on CTE," 1:30 – "High Quality Business Partnerships," 2:30 – "Photosynthesis and Respiration," 3:30 – "I'll take Learning for 500." And that was just one day of live sessions! There are numerous other pre-recorded sessions available and I have access for an entire year. Have I watched all the prerecorded sessions yet? Nope! Will I? Yes, I plan to watch a couple each month to help me find that special added spark to help me better engage my students. I do not know about you but some days I feel like I am running my own three-ring circus. Ag teachers have become master jugglers at engaging and holding the interest of our students in extremely difficult times.

Are you wondering about my big aha moments? There are three live sessions that stand out as providing me with big aha's. The first came from Nikki Fideldy-Doll, an ag teacher in North Dakota. If you have never met Nikki, you are missing out. She is a firecracker! Seriously, she is a ball of energy and kept me laughing the entire session with her funny quips and expressions. Her presentation was on Interactive Notebooks. Now, notice I did not put the word "digital" in front of interactive notebooks. The North Dakota teachers have been in the classroom this year, unlike many of us, so Nikki has not experimented as much with digital content. None the less, the information shared was outstanding! Nikki had participants make a flip chart by taking paper, cutting it in half, stacking it, and then adding two staples. My papers are in my ag binder so, whenever our teaching world stabilizes, I will be using this to assist students in easily identifying key words. She held up all her different ag classes' binders and all the foldables and interactives contained within the pages. Amazing! She also gave us some resources as we ran out of time. If you are interested in putting a little more pizzazz in your ag notebooks, consider looking into books by Dinah Zike and Katherine McKnight. Another important note, she encouraged those of us in a total virtual framework, to join the FB group "Ag Digital Interactive Notebooks." I can vouch on how great it is. After Nikki's session, I jumped on Facebook, joined the group, and started downloading DIN's that will benefit my ag classes.

"Culturally Responsive Teaching" was a live session I attended the last day of the conference. It started with a rapid word fire activity. For those of you attending Dr. Roger Cleveland's presentations in January and February, this session was closely related. I wrote down five important key take-a-ways from the hour-long session.

1. Develop a knowledge base about cultural diversity.
2. Include cultural diversity content in the classroom.
3. Demonstrate caring and building learning communities.
4. Communicate with diverse students.
5. Respond to diversity in the delivery of instruction.

My goal is to take each of these key points and own them in my own way. By participating in Dr. Cleveland's trainings with MATA, I am tackling my first point of developing a knowledge base. By the end of the school year, I hope to do better on all five key points and continue to learn and grow professional about cultural diversity.

Last, but certainly not least, the presentation on "D is for Delegation" presented by Rachel Sauvola from Wisconsin was excellent. If you do not know Rachel, you should consider reaching out to her, especially if you are a new teacher. Once you meet her, you may smile when you are showing one of the AFNR flipped videos and realize the voice on the other side is that of Ms. Rachel Sauvola. With years of teaching under her belt, Rachel provided guidance and reassurance that parents, other staff, and volunteers are imperative to the success of our ag programs, especially when it comes to FFA and SAE's. She spoke about reaching out to businesses, small and large, and to remember worst case scenario is someone saying no to us. The program Rachel has built in Wisconsin is top notch. She referenced a couple of books that helped her begin seeing the need to ask and look for assistance, instead of always using her family. I know we are all guilty of roping our family and friends into helping us. "The Leader in You" and "Magic Words" are now on my list of books to watch for on Amazon. Living on a teacher's salary, I like buying from the "used but in good shape" books. One last tidbit of knowledge she shared is the LPS on FFA.org. The LPS is the local program success manual and she encouraged participants to not reinvent the wheel.

[https://www.ffa.org/resource\\_tag/local-program-success/](https://www.ffa.org/resource_tag/local-program-success/)

I am grateful to the MATA board for selecting me as a scholarship recipient. The knowledge I gained from the NAAE convention will assist me in remaining positive in our sometimes-chaotic virtual teaching world, while also ag-vocating for our profession, and creating engaging lessons for my students. I am more than happy to share my notes with any members looking for additional information about a particular topic.



# Supervised Agriculture Experiences For ALL!!

## *How one Maryland AG Program perfected the third AG ED Ring.*

In the world of virtual and hybrid learning, navigating how to infuse the SAE for All Model into your course may be a task you have not quite figured out yet. Luckily, this challenge may not be as difficult as you anticipate. By visiting the [www.saeforall.org](http://www.saeforall.org) website, educators have access to activities and models that provide both student and teacher guides to navigate both the Foundational and Immersion SAE projects. Immersion SAE's will look different from student to student, but I am finding that the Foundational SAE can be easily intertwined into virtual lessons.

My courses are taught year long. For me personally, I broke the categories of a Foundational SAE down into four parts by each quarter of the school year: Career Exploration and Planning, Employability Skills for College and Career Readiness, Financial Management and Planning, and Workplace Safety. However, you can change to make it work for a semester course, or even complete as a whole unit.

My students spent the last few days of first quarter on Career Exploration and Planning. This was a perfect way to close the Intro to Agriculture Unit. Students used

both Ag Explorer (<https://agexplorer.com/>) and O\*Net Interest Profiler (<https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>)

to determine their career interests. Second quarter students researched Employability Skills for College and Career Readiness and reflected upon how these skills could be applied to their post-secondary interests. We did this activity fresh off winter break, rather than starting back with heavy content. During third quarter for Personal Financial Management and Planning, the goal is to incorporate this into the animal science unit as students create a management plan for a pet. Fourth quarter will focus on workplace safety, with the hope that we may be back to face-to-face learning and the school barn can be used as a learning tool in terms of safety. After each Foundational SAE activity is finished, students use a rubric to write a journal entry reflection in AET.

The last piece of the Foundation SAE is Agricultural Literacy, which can expand to the Immersion SAE. For my students, this will be a major project during fourth quarter that will also serve as their final exam and include creating their plan for their Immersion SAE's in AET. The purpose of having students do this before the end of the school year is to give them the opportunity to start and be proactive with their SAE's through the summer. The SAE for ALL website I previously mentioned provides all materials for your students to get started with their SAE, but if you are anything like me, I like to put my own twist on things.

If you are interested in any of the activities, I have created to fit the SAE for All model, please reach out and I would be happy to share. Earlier in the fall, I met with new teachers to the ag ed family to provide mentorship as they began navigating this process with their students. No matter is you are a new or "wise" owl, I would be thrilled to share my SAE successes with you. Feel free to reach out to [Erika.Edwards@hcps.org](mailto:Erika.Edwards@hcps.org). And on a final note, as your students begin developing their SAE's remember, regardless of their background or experience, there is an SAE for All!

Erika Edwards  
North Harford High School



# Report: CASE Thrive Conference

By: Aaron Geiman

The Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) facilitated a five-night virtual conference in January 2021, focused on pedagogical and curricular strategies proven to improve learner outcomes when employed through virtual learning platforms. The event included over twenty synchronous and asynchronous sessions, typically spanning online tools and applications to enhance virtual learning, specific technical lessons adapted to virtual learning, virtual notebooks, and on-the-ground strategies for engaging students in synchronous lesson time.

The event was keynoted by Dr. John Spencer of Oregon, an educator, teacher-educator, author, and White House Speaker (2013), who modeled engagement strategies and provided many ideas for increasing learners' participation. Below are several enduring understandings plucked from Dr. Spencer's sessions, that have utility for teachers in multiple contents and contexts.

1. Student engagement in virtual learning settings can be improved with:
  - a. Choice and flexibility in topic(s) and product(s) – for example, when studying soils, allowing students to pick the type of soil upon which they will focus their work, students seem to engage more fully. Additionally, allowing them to choose the artifact that will represent their learning (essay versus poster versus blog versus video versus etc....) increases engagement.
  - b. Empowerment of students to be collaborative – break out rooms, shared documents for asynchronous interaction, emails, texts, conference calls. Embrace strategies to bring students' minds together as they would be if in the room. Remember to vary groupings to enhance perspectives.
  - c. Facilitating student creativity – allow them to think outside the box and to be in a “maker mindset”. Scavenger hunts, blogging, podcasting, etc..... Creative outlets are, for many, a form of self-care as creativity is an outlet for emotional energy.
  - d. Encouraging and rewarding student-originated questions – The act of questioning reflects thinking and engagement at multiple levels (analysis, application, evaluation). This can be facilitated by “Wonder Day” activities, “Curiosity Day”, and actions which allow students to interact with the creativity of peers and to embrace the iterative process engendered by questioning.
  - e. Involving students in the assessment process to establish student ownership of assessment. Use formative tools like goal-tracking bars (think Video Game Health Bars), asynchronous status updates (Google Forms Surveys), peer assessments, and behavioral reflections. Consider letting students be involved in developing summative tools (rubrics, job-sheets, task check-sheets).
  - f. Designing and implementing hands-on learning activities that allow students to get away from the virtual platform to actively learn. Consider materials and equipment availability when designing.
  - g. Remembering that social-emotional health can be a gateway to cognitive functioning and learning. Be sure to conduct activities to stimulate social-emotional wellbeing, and to have an awareness of students' who may not be socially/emotionally ready to learn.
  - h. Remembering to NOT OVERWHELM students with multiple strategies in a short time. Implement strategies slowly and progressively, so that students can master each before a new one is introduced. In time, students will be able to handle multiple strategies simultaneously.

In closing, the broad-sweeping shift to virtual learning presents challenges that are not unprecedented. Virtual learning at the post-secondary level, and in unique circumstances at lower levels, has provided educators and researchers with opportunities to learn about strategies that effectively improve student learning and engagement in virtual contexts. By implementing a few of these strategies, educators can narrow the performance gap and provide learners with education that is commensurate with on-site opportunities.



## Virtual Coffee>>>

MATA members please plan to join us for Virtual Coffee on February 11th at 5:30pm for a discussion on the transition to hybrid. This is an open discussion and a place to share ideas on your plans for implementing hybrid.

Prior to attending, please share on the Jamboard:

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1vEx2WzdT65dLUNGV8YJ-qly6pEsRyd5Gr8bKeFhlh6A/edit?usp=sharing>



WHEN: FEBRUARY 11TH AT 5:30PM  
WHAT: DISCUSSION ON THE TRANSITION TO HYBRID.

## Maryland Summer Conference: Family



In a year where we have all been teaching ourselves new things daily, attending countless professional development opportunities, and gave everything we have to providing meaningful experiences to our students, the MATA Board has decided that what we all need most this summer is a break from those demands. As a result, we have chosen to cancel the traditional three-day conference. Instead, we will be planning a one-day family friendly event! Often the best conversations and ideas at conference come out of the authentic conversations we are all able to have with each other. This event will include a catered lunch and will be designed to provide fun to those of all ages! A date, location, time, and details will be forthcoming. If you would like to participate in the planning of this event, please contact Quinn Martin at [cashequi@wcps.k12.md.us](mailto:cashequi@wcps.k12.md.us). We look forward to getting together this summer!

Thanks!  
Quinn

# Virtual Conference

By: Rachael Coffey

The 2020 NAAE Virtual Convention was my first NAAE convention and while it was obviously different from any previous convention, it was an interesting, educational, and very worthwhile experience. I was fortunate to have the Maryland Agricultural Teachers Association provide the funds and extra-fortunate that my principal allowed me to teach asynchronously that whole week so I could take full advantage of the convention. I highly recommend attending in the future, whether virtual or in-person. I honestly do not know which I would choose, which surprises me because I have been “zoomed” out this year (I am sure you all can relate.)

The online convention platform was extremely easy to navigate and had quick tech help if necessary. The live sessions and meetings were not flawless, but I was overly impressed with the response to any tech issues. The convention provided many opportunities to engage with other educators in live workshops, small groups, and chat rooms. Being able to look at vendor sites and interact with them was also extremely easy and convenient.

The convention provided access to a huge library of live and pre-recorded sessions. While I did not count, I would estimate the number of sessions to be in the hundreds. Far more than I could reasonably view in a week but that was not necessary because the content is available for a whole year! A few of my favorite sessions include: “Impact of COVID19 Pandemic on CTE”, “If You Can’t Say Something Nice, What Do You Say”, and “Shifting Over: How We Let Students Drive Agriscience Inquiry at a Distance”, to name a very few of the 28 sessions I attended or watched.

Having all the sessions at my fingertips was amazing! While a virtual convention does not provide the personal interaction and connections that make conventions so rewarding, I felt the ability to see more than I ever would be able to attend in person was a great opportunity. And you know when you sometimes go to a session and you realize “Oh, this isn’t for me.” but do not want to be rude and get up and leave - that does not happen when it is virtual. Plus, you can watch from the comfort of your own easy chair and comfy clothes.

I would like to thank MATA for encouraging teachers to attend and for providing the funds. Both provided the boost to help me engage in a rewarding professional development opportunity that I would not have otherwise.



# University Thoughts

*Just a few updates and thoughts from our Land Grant and Flagship University, The University of Maryland, with Dr. Melissa Welsh!*



## Plant Science and Architecture Spring Seminar Series

Greetings all,

February 1<sup>st</sup> is the beginning of the spring seminar series in the Plant Science and Landscape Architecture department. I am delighted to host Dr. Dale Layfield of Clemson as our first speaker of the semester. Dr. Layfield is an agricultural educator with a focus on distance learning and technology. He spoke about tools and techniques to make sure your online delivery is accessible to all members of your audience. Check out the entire list of guest speakers for this semester at the following link and check back as some of our speakers permit us to post their recordings to the public for future reference. If speakers spark an interest for you and your students, let me know and I will electronically connect you to extend the learning to your class. <https://psla.umd.edu/news/spring-2021-psla-seminar>

Melissa Leiden Welsh, Ph.D., CFCS, CPFFE

## Maryland FFA Spring Judging Hosted by University of Maryland

Dr. Melissa Welsh will be hosting a zoom meeting on Thursday, February 4th from 4-5 pm for all Ag teachers preparing students for State FFA competitive events in 2021. This meeting will be an overview of the CDE online testing program that we will be using this spring for holding our Maryland FFA CDE/LDE online events. The link is

<https://umd.zoom.us/j/8546923017?pwd=WFloevB5OWd4WnhKeC9JNk5rTW9NQT09>

Please plan to join us.

## Immersive Learning Training Featuring 360 cameras!

Coming soon Dr. Welsh will be hosting three additional trainings on how to utilize a 360 camera in an immersive classroom. Stay tuned for details! In the meantime, be sure to apply to house a 360 camera for your region. Through funding from the Rural Maryland Council and in partnership with the CTC FFA Alumni, Inc. we are able to purchase seven Insta360 Cameras/Accessory kits. The CTC FFA Alumni, Inc. applied for the grant on behalf of MATA. If you are interested in being a "home" for one of these cameras for use with your Ag program, please complete the form <https://forms.gle/zj65gZuLgc2j8J4A>



Did you and your students accomplish something amazing this year such as earn a grant, start a new tradition, or just survive the year share it with the editor so your voice can be heard.

**Kelcey Trewin**

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