

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS

VAAE

WINTER IN-SERVICE



**INNOVATING AGRICULTURAL
EDUCATION IN EVERY SEASON**

January 17-18, 2025
Culpeper, Virginia

2024-2025 VAAE OFFICER TEAM

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Liberty High School

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Jacob Lewis
Fort Defiance High School

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Appomattox County High School

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Carroll County High School

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VACTE REPRESENTATIVE

Brian Fisher
Strasburg High School
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SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17th

12:00-1:00 PM – Registration

1:00-2:00 PM – Welcome/Introduction Session

2:00-3:30 PM – SAE for All Recap and Break Out Sessions

3:40-5:00 PM – Workshops

- Pathways to Teacher Licensure in Virginia, Dr. Natalie Ferand (Virginia Tech)
- Smart Strategies: Leveraging AI for Efficient Lesson Planning in Agricultural Education, Melessa Suder (Eastern View)
- Integrating Employability Skills Into Agricultural Courses, Dr. Eric Kaufman (Virginia Tech)
- Middle School Idea Share, Dani Hodges (Appomattox Middle)
- Food Science CDE, Sherry Heishman (Central)
- Beef Quality Assurance (BQA), Katherine Carter (Virginia Tech)

5:10-6:30 PM – Workshops

- Bridging the Skills Gap: Digital Badges for Employability in Agriculture, Dr. Eric Kaufman (Virginia Tech)
- Forestry CDE Preparation: Reading Topographic Maps, John Welsh (J. Frank Hillyard)
- PALS Programming for Elementary Schools, Kaitlyn Sonifrank (Riverheads)
- Cooking Up Venison, Jacob Lewis (Fort Defiance)
- Milk Quality CDE, Chrissy Whitacre (Sherando)
- Oral Reasons Made Simple, Katherine Carter, Hunter Liles, and Salem Sifford (Virginia Tech)

6:40-8:00 PM Dinner, Prepared by CTEC Culinary Arts Students
Remarks from Eric Fitzgerald, Blue Ridge Community College



SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18th

6:00-8:15 AM Breakfast at Hotel

7:30-8:30 AM Conference Registration and Networking Time

8:30-9:30 AM - Roundtable Discussions

9:35-11:35 AM - Workshops (*Make-It-Take-Its*)

- Simple Welding Project (*Culpeper County High*), Candace Carrier (Virginia Tech)
- Alternative Fundraising with Food, Russell Jennings (Fluvanna)
- The Scoop on Poop!, Karen Bickett (ACE Center at Hermitage)
- No More Boring Safety Tests!, Ted DeLano (CTEC)
- Small Engines, Jeff Wilt (FFA Alumni and State Event Coordinator)

11:40-12:30 PM - Workshops

- Food Science and the Senses, Dr. Hannah Scherer (Virginia Tech)
- National FFA Teacher Ambassadors, Dakota Stroud (Signal Knob) & Elizabeth Eastep (Louisa County)
- Combining Floral Design and Coding Kits in the Classroom, Mandy Curry (Millbrook)
- Utilizing CO2 Lasers in the Classroom and FFA, Elizabeth Duncan (Appomattox)
- Introduction to the Veterinary Science CDE, Ed McCann (Appomattox)

12:35-1:30 PM - Lunch, Prepared by CTEC Culinary Arts



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

(IN ORDER OF SCHEDULE)

Friday, 3:40-5:00 PM

Pathways to Licensure in Virginia - Dr. Natalie Ferand, Virginia Tech - This workshop will explain the three paths to teacher licensure in VA (undergrad, MS, and alternative), as well as program options (even beyond VT) for each pathway. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Smart Strategies: Leveraging AI for Efficient Lesson Planning in Agricultural Education - Melessa Suder, Eastern View - Feeling overwhelmed by the competencies for your classes? Struggling to manage multiple daily preps or balance your teaching duties with your responsibilities as an FFA Advisor? Whatever challenges you're facing, this workshop is here to help. Learn how to use AI effectively to create lesson plans, instructional materials, and worksheets tailored to specific competencies—saving you time and easing your workload. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#) *Note: Teachers are encouraged to bring laptops for this workshop.*

Integrating Employability Skills Into Agricultural Courses - Dr. Eric Kaufman, Virginia Tech - Workshop objectives are to improve agricultural courses by (1) providing a simple, effective improvement process tool—Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA), (2) reviewing PDSA examples that integrate agriculture and employability skills, and (3) practicing the PDSA model. Participants can practice the PDSA process with their own courses. Interactive activities include (1) reviewing examples done by other agriculture educators, (2) sharing ideas on how to blend employability skills into existing courses, (3) drafting an actual PDSA plan, and (4) discussing how this approach might transfer to other agricultural teaching experiences. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Middle School Idea Share - Dani Hodges, Appomattox Middle - Collaborate with other middle school teachers from across the state in this dynamic session of idea-sharing and encouragement. [Target Student Level: Middle School](#)

Food Science CDE - Sherry Heishman and Students from Central High School - Learn all aspects of the Food Science CDE from the teacher/coach's perspective as well as students who participated on the national level. Activities will be hands-on just like the contest! All practicums and the team product development will be explained and resources will be shared. Activities can easily be used in the classroom at any age level. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) - Katherine Carter, Virginia Tech - This session will provide participants with the VA BQA HS Credential Training required for certification to deliver BQA HS Credential to Virginia students enrolled in applicable agriculture education classes. This session will also provide a recap of the National BQA Training that is required in tandem with the VA BQA HS Credential Training. Topics will include details of both programs, an overview of the student testing procedure through SafetyFirst, expectations of instructors, and end with the instructor evaluation required for VA BQA HS Credential Certification. Attendees will be expected to have completed and passed the National BQA Online Certification prior to attending this session - details will be forwarded to all registered participants prior to the conference. As a reminder, recertification for all BQA instructors is required every three years. For questions or additional information, please contact Katherine Carter at carterke@vt.edu. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Friday, 5:10-6:30 PM

Bridging the Skills Gap: Digital Badges for Employability in Agriculture - Dr. Eric Kaufman, Virginia Tech - The Agriculture Workforce Training for Collaborative Leadership (AWT4CL) project has created a digital learning badge system to help students develop and claim the durable skills needed for dynamic careers in agriculture. The AWT4CL digital learning badges are based on APLU employability skill areas: communication, decision-making, professionalism, and leadership. These areas, broken down into specific badges, develop essential skills that prepare learners for personal and professional success. Each badge in the series requires learners to meet specific learning outcomes through practical application and reflection. Each badge is earned through a two-part module involving both an interactive activity and a written reflection. The module is flexible, allowing instructors to adjust specific activities to meet the needs of their course or program while upholding the core badge objectives. In this workshop, participants will learn how to adopt badges into their courses and take home the resources to make it happen. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#) *Note: Teachers are encouraged to bring laptops for this workshop.*

Forestry CDE Preparation: Reading Topographic Maps - John Welsh, J. Frank Hillyard - This workshop will provide basic topographic map instruction for teachers new to coaching the Forestry CDE. Teachers will receive instruction on map interpretation, a list of map questions commonly asked in forestry contests, and suggested resources for developing map activities in their home programs. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#) *Note: Teachers are encouraged to bring laptops for this workshop.*

PALS Programming for Elementary Schools - Kaitlyn Sonifrank, Riverheads - Have you ever had a hard time finding or implementing activities for Food for America or PALS programming, then this workshop is for you! Let's chat about different hands on crafts, activities, and more to engage even the youngest of learners! [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Cooking Up Venison - Jacob Lewis, Fort Defiance - Venison Feast during FFA Week has been a long-standing tradition at Fort Defiance High School. Learn how this student-led project has become such a success, as well as the ins and outs of feast management. [Target Student Level: High School](#)



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Milk Quality and Products CDE Preparation - Chrissy Whitacre, Sherando - Come learn the components of the Milk Quality and Products CDE while gaining some hands-on experience with each activity. Already have a team and know the contest? Then come share some of your tips/ideas for how to practice for the event. Leave with some helpful resources to prepare your team. Bring water and be ready to taste test! [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Oral Reasons Made Simple - Katherine Carter, Hunter Liles, and Salem Sifford, Virginia Tech - Do you struggle to understand what's what in the world of Oral Reasons for Youth Animal Science Judging Contests? Not sure what the correct format is or how to find relevant terms? Join us to learn more about helping your students set up their notebooks, develop the appropriate format, and source relevant terms. Participants will have the opportunity to place a class of non-animal items, take notes, and practice giving reasons to help you better prepare your students for life on the contest floor. Learn the differences between oral reason format and expectations for the various species and competitions, and hear from Salem Sifford, Virginia Tech Intercollegiate Livestock Judging and Dairy Judging Teams Member, and High Individual Overall at the 2021 National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest as she shares tips for educating youth that have no judging experience or background. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Saturday, 9:35-11:35 AM

Simple Welding Project - Candace Carrier, Virginia Tech - Join us as we use horseshoes to create a simple welded project. Plans for the make-and-take project, as well as several additional metal projects, will be shared. Basic welding knowledge will be helpful, but it is not mandatory. (Limited to first 20 attendees) [Target Student Level: High School](#)
Address: Culpeper County High School, 14240 Achievement Drive, Culpeper, VA 22701

Alternative Fundraising with Food - Russell Jennings, Fluvanna - Looking for new fundraising ideas for your chapter? In this hands-on workshop, you will learn how to make funnel cakes, deep-fried Oreos, pork rinds, and apple butter. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

The Scoop on Poop! - Karen Bickett, ACE Center at Hermitage - Focusing on small animals, you will learn what is normal vs. abnormal, parasites that may be affecting a pet, how we diagnose these, and even make your own edible poop! The kids love this (even high school students). [Target Student Level: High School](#)

No More Boring Safety Tests! - Ted DeLano, Culpeper Technical Education Center - Shop safety and performance tests don't have to be boring! In this woodworking workshop, we'll look at how to do a quick project that demonstrates all the shop tools quickly. This is good for beginners or those who need some ideas for lab management. [Target Student Level: High School](#)



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Small Engines - Jeff Wilt, FFA Alumni and State Event Coordinator - In this hands-on workshop, participants will get an overview of the practical components of the Small Engines CDE, including various engine malfunctions, diagnosis, and repair. Teachers will also learn best practices for implementing the Small Engines CDE for classroom instruction and local contests. [Target Student Level: High School](#)

Saturday, 11:40-12:30 PM

Food Science and the Senses - Dr. Hannah Scherer, Virginia Tech - What makes food more desirable to eat? Let's get students excited about career opportunities in Food Science. In this workshop, we will use our senses to evaluate some of our students' favorite snacks and learn how to help them see the science and learn about the world of food. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

National FFA Teacher Ambassadors - Dakota Stroud, Signal Knob & Elizabeth Eastep, Louisa County - Come join Virginia's National Teacher Ambassadors for FFA and learn about various educational resources and experiences offered by the National FFA Organization. Ambassadors will also be sharing the process of becoming a National Teacher Ambassador for FFA and the impact made on Agricultural Education and FFA. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Combining Floral Design and Coding Kits in the Classroom - Mandy Curry, Millbrook - Looking for a way to add innovative and engaging technology into your classroom that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving? Learn how to use coding kits to turn student-designed Rose Bowl Parade floats into animated works of art. From adding movement, lights and sound to floats and streamlining classroom presentations into a televised recording of your parade, learn to take a standard classroom project to the next level. [Target Student Level: High School](#)

Utilizing CO2 Lasers in the Classroom & FFA - Elizabeth Duncan, Appomattox - Interested in how a Glowforge or similar laser can be utilized in your program? See how to use one for instruction, projects, and creating custom awards. Examples of cost-saving banquet awards, holiday projects, and classroom activities will be shared. [Target Student Level: Middle School, High School](#)

Intro to the Veterinary Science CDE - Ed McCann, Appomattox - The Veterinary Science CDE is one of the most popular CDE events. Join us as we review the new contest format and review helpful coaching techniques. We will review several practicums and coaching strategies that can be used with teams or students in class. All registered participants will receive a sample contest that follows the new workflow format. [Target Student Level: High School](#)



***"We are agriculture teachers
by choice and not by chance."***



NOTES

VAAE/VIRGINIA FFA SAVE THE DATES

- State Convention - June 9-12, 2025 (Blacksburg)
- FFA Camp - July 7-11, 2025 (Graves Mountain Lodge)
- VAAE Summer Conference/Early Career Conference - July 14-17, 2025 (Wytheville)



WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
1:00-3:30 PM	Welcome Session, SAE for All	
3:40-5:00 PM	Pathways to Teacher Licensure in Virginia	
	Smart Strategies: Leveraging AI for Efficient Lesson Planning in Agricultural Education	
	Integrating Employability Skills Into Agricultural Courses	
	Middle School Idea Share	
	Food Science CDE Workshop	
	Beef Quality Assurance (BQA)	
5:10-6:30 PM	Bridging the Skills Gap: Digital Badges for Employability in Agriculture	
	Forestry CDE Preparation: Reading Topographic Maps	
	PALS Programming for Elementary Schools	
	Cooking Up Venison	
	Milk Quality and Products CDE Preparation	
	Oral Reasons Made Easy	
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8:30-9:30 AM	Roundtable Discussions	
9:35-12:20 PM	Simple Welding Project (at Culpeper County High School)	
9:35-11:35 AM	Alternative Fundraising with Food	
	The Scoop on Poop!	
	No More Boring Safety Tests!	
	Small Engines	
11:40-12:30 PM	Food Science and the Senses	
	National FFA Teacher Ambassadors	
	Combining Floral Design and Coding Kits in the Classroom	
	Utilizing CO2 Lasers in the Classroom & FFA	
	Intro to the Veterinary Science CDE	
12:35-1:30 PM	Lunch	



