

**Vo Ag Education is Often "Off Site"**  
**The Importance of Making Industry Contacts by Vo Ag**  
**Teachers**  
**Timothy C. Visel, Coordinator - August 2003**

It is extremely important that vocational educators meet frequently with potential employers and industry professionals. The Supervised Occupational Experience/employment component is crucial to vocational agriculture education. Educators need to be current with industry practices and employment needs so that changes can be made in their courses and they keep up to date with industry trends.

It is important to remember that Vocational Agriculture Education is a Career Exploration Program. The sequence of courses and annual SOE programs allows students to Explore Career Areas within an Aquaculture or Agriculture theme. Students perform industry applications in industry situations with industry level equipment. It is only school construction program that allows for the purchase of industry equipment in the State.

In 1992 the Vo Ag system was heavily criticized concerning the lack of educator/industry contacts. This criticism reaffirmed the importance of a 12 month program, meaningful SOE programs, the extended school day, and up to date industry applications in Vo Ag course work.

Between 1993 and 1995 a "Vo Ag Study Committee" was set up by the Connecticut General Assembly. The committee interviewed businesses, former Vo Ag graduates, Superintendents who had Vo Ag programs and districts that had sent students to attend Vo Ag Centers. Key to the report findings was the importance of the 12 month program and Vo Ag educators who kept in touch with industry/research by way of visits. Some but not all of the benefits your industry contacts include -

- Community Relations, letting people know about us who may also know of students who would be interested in our program.
- Locating businesses who will distribute recruitment materials for us (applications, brochures, etc).
- Finding or determining the opportunities for SOE employment and or SOE experiences for students.
- Identifying future potential members for the Consulting and Advisory Committee

- Determine interest in Adult Education programs and short course workshops
- General program assistance, donations of goods or services, guest speakers, etc.
- Opportunities for field trips and career exploration activities.