

ADMINISTRATOR AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SUMMER AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

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In vocational education, where preparation for employment is a prime consideration, one must consider both knowledge accumulation and skill development through "doing" experiences. The philosophy of agricultural education supports Morton's (1978) claim that "learning by doing" is considered essential to learning. In agricultural education, summer is one of the best times to involve students in agricultural skill activities. Heavily accelerated production efforts, as well as increased activity in associated service and supply businesses during the summer months provide timely opportunities for education and skill development. Agricultural education knowledge and skill development, therefore, should not be restricted to the standard nine-month school year; both should continue throughout the entire year, including summer months (Camp, 1986). Summer instructional programs have been the topic in the Agricultural Education Magazine of many discussions/articles throughout the past years in agricultural education. Research findings have supported the value of summer instructional programs in agricultural education and their importance to the local and national economies in the past (Brannon, 1989; Camp, 1986). Current economic conditions and resulting pressure from these conditions on schools, coupled with the educational reform movement and corresponding static or declining enrollments, have forced school administrators to look for ways to economize within the school operating budgets. One place many administrators have investigated for possible budget reductions has been the "hands-on" vocational education programs, including agricultural education. Many agricultural education teachers, teacher educators, and administrators are well aware of the importance of comprehensive agricultural education programs and are concerned about subsequent budgetary and enrollment reductions.

It would be valuable to have a research study which compared the attitudes and perceptions of two nationwide groups. It would serve 1) to identify the perceived ideal agricultural education summer program activities in times of economic constraint and emphasis on academic versus vocational achievement and , 2) to determine the amount of time study participants would assign to the major summer program activity categories during this time of economic constraint and academic emphasis. In addition, this research could have value in identifying a philosophically ideal summer activities program and allow a comparison to individual groups' perception of an ideal summer activities program by 1) ranking the priority levels of each group, 2) identifying the indicators of a quality agricultural education summer activities program, and 3) determining possible areas of agreement and disagreement among the groups. Quality indicators would be determined by each group's ranking of "High Importance" to the agricultural education summer program activities.

This study examined many potential activities of the agricultural education summer program to determine which might be priority items for all groups studied. Blezek (1977) indicated that if agricultural education teachers would use the research available to them, they would have an excellent guide in developing appropriate summer program activities. Agricultural teachers who examine this study (and similar resources) before planning their summer program activities, taking into account the time and perceptual importance of each activity, should have little problem being accountable for their extended contract time. The review of literature covered several areas related to summer agriculture education programs. Numerous articles and studies addressed perceptions of teachers, administrators, state supervisors, and others concerning appropriate activities for the summer program (Arrington 1984, Camp 1986, Cepica 1977, Cepica 1979, Gardner 1961, Hilton 1981, Warfield 1966, Witt 1982). Agreement was highest with regard to one activity: supervision of occupational experience programs. This was almost always rated as the number one activity in importance and/or time spent by the agricultural education teacher. Other activities that were usually ranked high were program planning, professional improvement, and FFA.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to ascertain philosophically ideal agricultural education summer program activities as perceived by teacher educators and state supervisors nationwide. A secondary purpose was to ascertain whether there were differences in perceptions toward agricultural education summer program activities among selected groups impacting agricultural education programs in the

state of Oregon as compared to the ideal summer activities program for the nation. The following objectives were investigated as part of this study.

1. Identify components and quality indicators of the agricultural education summer program perceived to be important by study participants; separate teacher educator and state supervisor participants' composite scores and utilize these as the ideal components and quality indicators prioritization for agricultural education summer programs.
2. Compare components and quality indicators of the agricultural education summer program, as perceived by each group in the study, with the ideal components and quality indicators for agricultural education summer programs nationwide.
3. Identify perceptions regarding the number of days which are currently and should ideally be allocated to components of the agricultural education summer program by each group studied.
4. Compare current and ideal time allocations by each group with perceptions of the ideal agricultural education summer program day allocation, as identified by teacher educators and state supervisors.

Methods and Procedures

Instrument: A plan was developed through which data pertinent to identifying and validating the summer program activities could be obtained. Eight groups were identified who were associated with agricultural education and who influenced the way agricultural education summer program activities were organized. The groups were: (1) superintendents, (2) regional coordinators, (3) vocational directors, (4) principals, (5) teacher educators, (6) state supervisors, (7) advisory committee chairpersons, and (8) agricultural education teachers. The input from the two nationwide groups, teacher educators and state supervisors, was used to identify the activities that were included and the number of days that were allocated to each of the eight major categories of summer program activities. This philosophically established the ideal summer activities program used for comparison with perceptions of the other groups. These two groups were identified as influencing most greatly the composition of summer program activities. Teacher educators impact agricultural education teachers through the training process by influencing early development of summer program activities as well as students how formulate impressions of summer program activities. State supervisors are responsible for seeing that agricultural education programs in their respective states are meeting program standards including those of the summer program activities. State supervisors are responsible for seeing that the agricultural education programs are meeting federal and state identified criteria for funding. A questionnaire was developed using A Vocational Agriculture Teacher's Guide To Planning Summer Programs (Kotrlík, 1985; Camp, 1986) and the Policies and Procedures Handbook for Oregon Vocational Agriculture Programs (Oades & Deeds, 1978).

Selection of Scale: A summated rating scale was utilized to provide an index for placing each of the summer program activities in rank order. The responses indicated the level of importance respondents attached to each of the activities. The descriptors (No Importance, Moderate Importance, and High Importance) were attached to the seven-point scale.

Testing of Items: The questionnaire included the following eight major categories of agricultural education summer program activities: 1) agricultural organizations and associations, 2) departmental administration, 3) FFA, 4) instructional improvement, 5) professional growth, 6) resource improvement, 7) supervised agricultural experience (SAE), and 8) teaching/ recruitment. Thirty-eight specific summer program activities within the eight major categories were identified and were included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was field tested using a panel of experts consisting of a randomly selected group of agricultural education teachers, western region state supervisors, and teacher educators in the western region of American Association Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AATEA) who were not part of the study's sample. The questionnaire was then field tested for clarity of statements, directions, and intent by a randomly selected group of 12 administrators and 12 agriculture teachers whose schools had an agricultural education program but who were not part of the study sample. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach Coefficient Alpha) was used to determine reliability of the instrument; internal consistency was $r = .949$. The alpha level for statistical testing in this study was set at .05 level for all tests.

Selection of Sample: A sample size was calculated based upon statistical methods identified by Cohen (1969). A panel of current teacher educators used the 1988-89 directory of AATEA to identify all agricultural educators whose major responsibility was teaching agricultural education courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. These individuals became the teacher education population for this component of the study. State supervisors were identified for participation in the study using a 1988-89 directory of state supervisors as published by the U.S. Department of Education. A random selection of Oregon participants was made from among those having an agricultural education program within the school in the state of Oregon. All groups were randomly selected from populations who had not already been used to validate the study instrument. All populations excluded members who had not completed one full year in their current position. The composite response rate was 84.6 percent, which included 358 out of 423 returned questionnaires; five questionnaires were incomplete or unusable. Individual response rates included: teacher educators $n = 123$ (91.9%), state supervisors $n = 54$ (88.9%), vocational agriculture teachers $n = 72$ (94.4%), regional coordinators $n = 17$ (94.1%), principals $n = 46$ (80.4%), superintendents $n = 56$ (69.6%), advisory committee chairpersons $n = 34$ (67.6%), and vocational directors $n = 21$ (66.7%).

Collection of Data: Questionnaires and cover letters were mailed to each participant. A second questionnaire and letter was mailed to nonrespondents three weeks after the first mailing. A random selection of 20 percent of nonrespondents received telephone contact three weeks after the second mailing. First mailing, second mailing, and telephone contact responses were tested to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between respondents and non-respondents. No differences were found.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percents, standard deviations, and means) were used to describe the perceptions of summer program activities in the eight categories. Differences in perceptions between the groups were determined by using Multifactor Analysis of Variance, LSD and Scheffe, at the .05 alpha level.

Findings

Objectives 1 & 2: Those agricultural education summer program components to be used as the ideal quality indicators according to teacher educators and state supervisors were identified by a ranking of high importance are reported in Table 1. Attending annual summer update conference and

Table 1
Ideal Summer Program Activities Rank Order of Importance as Perceived by Teacher Educators (TE) and State Supervisors (SS)

Activity	Rank	Mean	SD	% Rating Item Important		
				TE $n = 113$	SS $n = 48$	
Attend annual summer update conference	1.5	6.2	1.3	.10	90.3	87.5
Supervise agricultural students' home projects (SAE)	1.5	6.2	1.4	.11	89.4	91.7
Visit prospective agricultural students and parents	3.5	6.0	1.4	.11	79.6	85.4
Supervise agricultural cooperative work experience (CWE)	3.5	6.0	1.5	.12	86.7	85.5
Provide individualized instruction to students	5.0	5.9	1.4	.11	79.6	70.8
Vacation/Family	6.0	5.8	1.5	.12	78.7	77.1
Maintain communications with school administration	8.0	5.7	1.4	.11	73.5	66.7
Supervise land lab/greenhouse used by students	8.0	5.7	1.5	.12	76.0	83.3
Develop future SAE/CWE sources	8.0	5.7	1.4	.11	72.6	75.0
Plan and supervise FFA activities	10.0	5.6	1.3	.10	65.5	75.1

supervising agricultural students' home projects (SAE) tied in their ranking. Teacher educators and state supervisors appear to observe agricultural education summer program activities similar to one another. Means of the state supervisors were weighted so they would be equal in statistical value to the means of the teacher educators.

Agricultural education teacher vacation is not part of the extended contract for teachers but appears here because study participants felt it was important for teachers to plan vacations with their families around their extended contract activities.

Table 2 summarizes the means, standard deviations and mean rankings of the 16 summer program activities rated as high importance to all study groups. Supervision of agricultural students' home projects (SAE) was not statistically different among any of the groups studied. Agricultural education teachers perceived attending annual summer update conference statistically similar to the perceptions of teacher educators and state supervisors but statistically different than principals and superintendents. Agricultural education teachers placed high importance on attending county fair/ state fair/ judging contests as did superintendents and principals while teacher educators and state supervisors were statistically different in their perception.

Quality indicators of summer activities identified by Oregon participating groups that were statistically different from the ideal quality indicators identified by a national panel of teacher educators and state supervisors were:

1. Attend annual summer update conference.
2. Visit prospective agricultural students and parents.
3. Supervise agricultural cooperative work experience students (CWE).
4. Vacation/Family.
5. Maintain communication with school administration.
6. Develop future SAE/CWE sources.

Those quality indicators to which all study participants agreed:

1. Supervise agricultural education students' home projects (SAE).
2. Provide individualized instruction to students.
3. Supervise land lab/greenhouse used by students.
4. Plan and supervise FFA activities.

Objectives 3 & 4: The number of days perceived by study participants to be currently allocated to the summer activities program ranged from 22.1 days to 46.5 days found in Table 3. The average number of days currently being allocated, as identified by the teacher educators' and state supervisors' composite scores, was found to be 39.0. Perceptions of the number of days currently being allocated to FFA was found to have the most variation among the eight categories as identified in the comparison of Table 3. As identified by teacher educators and state supervisors nationwide, the ideal number of days that should be allocated to summer program activities was 50.1. This compares with the perception of current day allocation by these two groups of 39.0 days as found in Table 3. All groups indicated similar increases from current allocation to ideal allocation. Oregon groups allocating less than the number of days allocated in the ideal summer program (50.1 days) were: (1) advisory committee chairpersons (39.5 days), (2) superintendents (42.3 days), (3) principals (36.7 days). All other groups reported allocation of days in excess of the number identified in the ideal summer program (50.1 days). Regional coordinators reported 50.8 days; vocational directors, 51.2 days; and agricultural education teachers, 50.2 days.

Implications and Recommendations

Because the primary reason for extending the contract of the agricultural education teacher is the supervision and/or instruction of students, it is important for teachers to maximize the time spent with students and the time spent on activities that are unique to the summer program activities. If this is done, the agricultural education teacher should be able to justify a summer program activities. No other reasons alone justify a summer program, unless the entire school operates in that manner.

It is important for agricultural education teachers to maximize the time spent on activities that are unique to the agricultural education summer program. Time spent on activities for which other teachers are responsible was rated very low in importance.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Rankings of Summer Program Activities Rates as High Importance

Activity		TE	SS	RC	VD	Groups AC	SU	PR	TEA
Attend Annual Summer Update Conference	M	6.2	6.2	6.3	5.4	5.1	5.1	5.5	6.1
	SD	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.6	1.6	1.2	1.2
	R	1	1	4	13	7	5	4	4
Supervise Agricultural Students' Home Projects (SAE)	M	6.1	6.2	6.1	5.9	5.4	6.0	5.8	6.1
	SD	1.4	1.3	1.2	0.9	1.4	1.1	1.3	1.2
	R	2	2	6	4	3	2	3	3
Visit Prospective Agricultural Students and Parents	M	5.9	6.1	5.5	5.9	4.2	4.5	4.9	5.2
	SD	1.4	1.3	1.6	0.8	2.1	1.7	1.5	1.4
	R	5	3	12	1	23	14	9	10
Supervise Agricultural Co-op work Experience Students (CWE)	M	6.0	5.9	6.4	5.6	5.0	5.1	4.5	5.5
	SD	1.5	1.5	0.7	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.5
	R	3	5	2	8	9	4	18	7
Provide Individualized Instruction to Students	M	6.0	5.7	6.3	5.8	4.2	4.7	5.1	5.0
	SD	1.4	1.4	0.9	0.9	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.5
	R	4	9	3	5	24	12	7	17
Maintain Communications With School Administration	M	5.7	5.7	5.0	5.6	4.4	5.1	4.8	5.5
	SD	1.4	1.4	1.7	0.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.2
	R	7	10	25	9	16	6	12	6
Supervise Land Lab/Greenhouse Facility Used by Students	M	5.6	5.8	5.4	5.9	5.2	4.9	4.7	5.1
	SD	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.8	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.7
	R	9	7	13	2	6	7	15	12
Plan and Supervise FFA Activities	M	5.5	5.8	6.0	5.2	5.9	6.1	6.0	6.2
	SD	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.7	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0
	R	11	6	7	14	1	1	2	2
Attend County Fair/State Fair/Judging Contests	M	4.7	5.0	5.8	5.8	5.2	6.0	6.2	6.2
	SD	1.7	1.7	1.3	1.1	1.8	1.3	1.0	1.1
	R	27	17	10	6	5	3	1	1
Conduct Chapter Officer Retreat, Leadership Camp	M	5.2	5.3	6.1	5.4	5.4	4.3	5.3	5.6
	SD	1.5	1.4	0.9	1.1	1.1	2.0	1.3	1.4
	R	17	13	5	12	4	22	5	5
Revise and Improve Curriculum	M	4.9	4.9	6.4	5.2	4.9	4.6	5.0	5.2
	SD	1.6	1.8	0.8	1.4	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.2
	R	24	20	1	16	11	13	8	11
Develop Agricultural Curriculum	M	4.8	4.6	5.8	4.7	5.0	4.8	4.9	4.9
	SD	1.5	1.8	1.0	1.9	1.7	1.4	1.5	1.4
	R	26	25	9	22	10	9	10	18
Student Recordkeeping	M	5.0	5.5	5.1	5.9	4.4	4.3	4.7	4.8
	SD	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.1	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.5
	R	19	11	22	3	17	20	16	20
Maintain and Renovate Facilities	M	4.3	4.0	5.1	5.6	3.5	4.5	4.2	5.0
	SD	1.8	1.8	1.3	0.9	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.3
	R	33	31	20	10	33	15	25	16
Establish New Agricultural Resource Contacts	M	5.0	2.1	6.0	5.1	3.3	4.4	4.6	4.7
	SD	1.4	1.5	1.1	1.2	4.9	1.5	1.5	1.5
	R	18	15	8	18	36	18	17	23
Meet/work with Advisory Committee	M	4.9	5.1	5.7	4.4	4.4	3.6	4.2	4.0
	SD	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.9	1.8	1.6
	R	25	16	11	24	18	31	27	31

Note. TE = Teacher Educator, SS = State Supervisor, VD = Vocational Director, AC = Advisory Committee Chairperson, PR = Principal, SU = Superintendent, TEA = Agricultural Education Teacher.
M = Group Means, SD = Standard Deviation, R = Group Rank of Activity.

Table 3
Means of the Number of Days Currently Being Allocated and Which Ideally Should be Allocated to the Eight Major Categories of Agricultural Education Summer Program Activities

Activity	TE & SS	TE	SS	RC	VD	AC	SU	PR	TEA	M	SD
Agricultural Organizations and Associations											
Current	2.8	3.1	2.4	3.7	2.5	1.7	3.2	2.8	2.3	2.7	0.6
Ideal	3.5	3.6	3.3	4.2	5.1	3.2	3.7	3.1	3.3	3.6	0.7
Department Administration											
Current	4.8	5.5	3.8	3.5	2.5	2.2	2.1	1.8	2.5	2.8	1.2
Ideal	4.8	4.9	4.5	3.2	5.3	4.7	3.8	2.8	3.9	4.1	0.9
FFA											
Current	7.2	7.1	7.4	13.3	6.5	6.7	12.4	11.4	11.9	9.2	2.9
Ideal	7.1	6.7	8.1	11.1	10.3	9.9	10.2	11.3	13.4	9.9	2.0
Instructional Improvement											
Current	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.2	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	3.2	1.2
Ideal	4.8	4.8	4.9	5.9	6.1	3.9	4.3	3.0	4.7	4.6	4.0
Professional Growth											
Current	4.3	4.4	4.1	3.1	2.3	2.1	2.7	2.7	3.6	3.0	0.8
Ideal	5.9	6.5	4.4	4.5	3.4	3.2	4.1	3.0	5.2	4.2	1.2
Resource Improvement											
Current	3.4	3.8	2.4	5.3	2.8	1.4	1.8	1.6	1.7	2.4	1.4
Ideal	4.2	4.3	4.0	6.6	4.2	3.0	4.2	2.6	4.1	4.0	1.2
SAE											
Current	8.7	8.7	8.6	9.6	7.8	6.5	8.4	8.0	8.8	8.3	0.9
Ideal	13.0	13.0	12.9	10.3	10.5	8.1	8.5	11.7	10.2	2.1	
Teaching/Recruitment											
Current	3.3	3.1	3.9	3.3	4.1	1.7	1.9	1.5	1.4	2.4	1.1
Ideal	6.8	6.7	7.0	5.0	6.4	3.6	4.0	2.4	4.0	4.6	1.7
Totals											
Current	39.0	40.3	37.0	46.5	32.6	24.5	35.0	22.1	34.5	33.4	8.3
Ideal	50.1	50.5	49.1	50.8	51.2	39.5	42.3	36.7	50.2	45.8	6.1

TE = Teacher Educator, SS = State Supervisor, VD = Vocational Director, AC = Advisory Committee Chairperson, PR = Principal, SU = Superintendent, TEA = Agricultural Education Teacher, M = Group Means, SD = Standard Deviation.

A greater emphasis on communication between the groups may need to occur if agricultural education teachers are to develop a highly effective summer program going into the 1990s. Activities that are directed toward communication between these groups should be implemented. The many differences that existed in this study point out the need for better planning, communication, and implementation for agricultural education summer programs in order to serve the students during the summer.

Agricultural education teachers need to direct summer time to time training and supervising students in agricultural skills and competencies in SAE. They must also develop a comprehensive program of visiting prospective agricultural students and parents to ensure enrollments in the future. Regional coordinators and secondary administrators need to be presented the results of this study at their statewide meeting in order to: 1) develop the conceptual ideal for an agricultural education summer program of activities and 2) facilitate communication among school administrators, regional coordinators, and agricultural education teachers. Regional coordinators should be encouraged to offer assistance to vocational directors in their conceptual development of an ideal agricultural education summer program.

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