

**Teacher Summer Employment and the Activity  
Level of an FFA Chapter**

**Larry R. Arrington**  
**Assistant Professor**

**Agricultural and Extension  
Education  
University of Florida**

Youth organizations are a vitalizing force in vocational education programs. Students who participate in Future Farmers of America activities are provided with opportunities to further develop their interests and abilities in their chosen occupation of agriculture/agribusiness. In addition, students participate in experiences designed to cultivate leadership, cooperation, and citizenship abilities. Traditionally, the vocational agriculture program with its interrelated FFA activities have been conducted on a year-round basis. In recent years, however, the conduct of a summer program has been less universal.

In Florida, as in several other states, there has been a gradual decline in the number of teachers employed on a twelve month teaching contract permitting the conduct of a summer program. Approximately one-half of the teachers were employed on some type of contract that was less than twelve months.

**Purposes of the Study**

The research problem of this study (Arrington, 1981) was to determine whether the extent to which vocational agriculture teachers were employed on a twelve month basis was related to FFA chapter activity level. The following hypothesis directed the research:

There is a positive relationship between length of vocational agriculture teacher employment and the FFA chapter activity level.

There are many variables associated with FFA chapter activity level. For this ex post facto study, eight alternative (rival) independent variables were identified through a review of literature and examined in relationship to the hypothesis. These variables were:

1. Length of teaching experience,
2. Percentage of students living in rural areas,
3. Teacher perception of release time available for FFA activities,
4. Teacher perception of travel money available,
5. Number of supervisory home visits per student,

6. Teacher having a part-time job,
7. Extent to which teacher had vocational agriculture in high school, and
8. Teacher assistance with fairs.

## Procedures

### Population Investigated

The population for the study consisted of all senior high school vocational agriculture programs in central Florida (Region III). Region III is comprised of eleven counties where the primary agricultural industries are ornamental horticulture, citrus and vegetable production, and livestock production. Because of the relatively small size of the target population (32 schools), a census was used for data collection.

### Instrumentation

The questionnaire used in the study was adapted from an instrument developed by Swanson (1979). It was used to measure the activity level of FFA chapters, providing a single FFA activity score for each school. In addition, this questionnaire gathered information on the following independent variables: percentage of students living in a rural area, teacher perception of release time and travel money available, teacher having a part-time job, extent to which the teacher had vocational agriculture in high school, and teacher assistance with fairs. The instrument was field tested to determine validity. Field testing of the questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of .84.

A second source of data was the Florida Agribusiness and Natural Resources Education Personnel Data and Schedule Form. This form was used to collect data regarding two variables: length of teaching contract and number of years teaching experience.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires were mailed to teachers in each of the 32 programs and three follow-up contacts were made. Twenty-eight (88%) responded and 26 (81%) returned usable questionnaires. The primary source of non-usable questionnaires was first year teachers.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data pertaining to the schools in the study. Inferential statistics were not used in this study because it dealt with the entire population of schools. However, to determine if relationships existed for the population, Pearson product moment correlation coefficients and stepwise multiple

regression analysis were used as descriptive statistics. For Pearson product moment correlation coefficients, it was decided that all coefficients above .30 would be considered significant. For the regression analysis, the decision rule was the variables producing a change in  $R^2$  of .10 or greater would be considered significant. This level was chosen because of .10 change in  $R^2$  was the approximate amount required for a .05 level of significance if using a sample instead of a population.

## Findings

### Characteristics of Schools

Data on the alternative (independent) variables for teachers in multiple teacher departments were averaged to obtain information for each school. In every school where there was more than one teacher, all teachers were employed on the same type of teaching contract. Of the 26 schools included in the study, 12 (46.2%) were 10-month programs, 4 (15.4%) were 11-month programs, and 10 (38.4%) were 12-month programs.

One-half of the schools in the study represented an average of from 1-5 years of teaching experience. Seventy percent of the 12-month schools and 50% of the 10-month schools were in this category.

In 75% of the 11-month schools and 33.3% of the 10-month schools the teachers had not taken high school vocational agriculture. None of the 12-month schools were in this category. Less than one-fourth (23.1%) of the schools were serving a student population where over 75% of the students were from a rural area. The same number (23.1%) were serving a student population where less than 11% of the students come from a rural area.

Over three-fourths of the schools were represented by teachers who assisted with fairs. The majority (57.7%) of the schools did not have a teacher who was working in a part-time job.

In five schools (19.2%) the teachers had not visited a supervised occupational experience program in the previous year. In four schools (15.4%) the teachers had averaged over three visits per student. When compared to length of program, over 90% of the 10-month schools had averaged two or less visits per student. Sixty percent of the 12-month schools averaged over two visits per student.

### Relationship Between FFA Chapter Activity Level and the Major Independent Variables

FFA chapter activity scores for the schools ranged from 14 to 132. The mean score was 57.08

**Table 1**

*Length of Teaching Contract by FFA Chapter Activity Score*

Length of contract	FFA Chapter Activity Score							
	0-30.9		31.0-51.5		51.6-73.0		73.1-132	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
10-month contract	83.3	(5)	57.1	(4)	33.3	(2)	14.3	(1)
11-month contract	16.7	(1)	28.6	(2)	16.7	(1)	0.0	(0)
12-month contract	0.0	(0)	14.3	(1)	50.0	(3)	85.7	(6)
Total	100.0	(6)	100.0	(7)	100.0	(6)	100.0	(7)

Note: Total number of observations = 26; FFA chapter activity scores grouped by quartile range;  $r = .54$ .

Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were computed between all possible pairs of variables using schools as the unit of analysis. Findings revealed a positive relationship ( $r = .54$ ) between FFA chapter activity level and length of program. Data in Table 1 reveal that 83.3% of the programs with FFA activity scores in the lowest quartile range were 10-month programs. Conversely, 85.7% of the programs with FFA chapter activity scores in the highest quartile range were 12-month programs. None of the 12-month programs had FFA chapter activity scores in the lowest quartile range. Using the decision rule that all correlation coefficients of .30 or greater will be considered significant, the hypothesis of a positive relationship between length of teacher employment and FFA chapter activity level was supported.

Data presented in Table 2 illustrate that there were also positive relationship between FFA chapter activity level and the following independent variables:

1. Teachers having high school vocational agriculture ( $r = .33$ ),
2. Percentage of students from a rural area ( $r = .48$ ),
3. Teachers assisting with fairs ( $r = .49$ ), and
4. Number of supervisory home visits ( $r = .48$ ).

**Table 2**

*Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients for the Major Variables  
(n=26)*

	FFA activity	Teacher contract	Teaching experience	Vo-ag	Percent rural	Fairs	Part-time job	Leave time	Travel money
Teacher contract	.538								
Teaching experience	.080	.021							
Vo-ag	.329	.198	-.170						
Percent rural	.482	.386	.137	.313					
Fairs	.493	.415	.350	.409	.582				
Part-time job	-.105	-.263	-.073	.022	-.211	-.372			
Leave time	.281	.068	.187	.061	.162	.087	.020		
Travel money	-.004	-.194	.162	.048	.089	.070	.162	.277	
SOEP visits	.478	.570	.297	.308	.273	.531	.019	.118	-.051

Stepwise multiple regression was used to enter each independent variable into the multiple regression equation as a separate step with FFA chapter activity as the dependent variable. Using the decision rule that each variable will be significant if it produces a change in  $R^2$  of .10, none of the independent variables were significant in explaining FFA chapter activity level.

Therefore, the multiple regression analysis revealed that length of teacher employment was not uniquely explaining variance in FFA chapter activity level. The reason for this can be found in Table 2. Table 2 illustrates that the five independent variables that were significantly correlated with FFA chapter activity level were also inter-related. Thus, while there was a strong relationship between length of teacher employment and FFA chapter activity level, the ability of length of employment to explain FFA chapter activity level was not unique.

### Implications and Recommendations

As more and more pressure is placed on budgets for public education, the profession will be called upon to justify the necessity and effectiveness of summer programs. A more active youth organization is one component of the total program that is related to year-round programs. Others should be investigated in an attempt to establish whether or not a summer program is cost effective.

### References

- Arrington, L. R. (1981). *Relationship of the length of vocational agriculture teacher contract to supervised occupational experience program scope and FFA chapter activity level*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University.
- Swanson, J. B. (1979). *Leadership behavior of advisors and Future Farmers of America chapter effectiveness*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia.