

# FACTORS ENCOURAGING KANSAS VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS TO REMAIN IN TEACHING

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## *Introduction*

The number of vocational agriculture teachers leaving teaching has been identified as one facet of the ongoing teacher shortage in agricultural education. Retainment of these teachers for an extended period of time would aid in increasing the supply of vocational agriculture teachers thereby helping to lessen the teacher shortage. Factors which encourage vocational agriculture teachers to remain in teaching would, therefore, be vitally important to the agricultural education profession.

This study was undertaken to determine why Kansas vocational agriculture teachers remain in teaching. Specifically, answers were sought to the following questions: 1) What are the factors which encourage vocational agriculture teachers to remain in teaching? 2) Do teachers who plan to leave teaching perceive these factors differently than those who plan to remain in teaching? 3) Does tenure of vocational agriculture teachers affect how these teachers perceive these factors as encouraging them to stay in teaching?

## *Methodology*

Included in this study were 80 Kansas vocational agriculture teachers (42.5 percent of all Kansas vocational agriculture teachers). These teachers completed a questionnaire consisting of 41 factors relating to their teaching positions. They were requested to rate each factor on a scale of zero to five (five being the highest) as to the extent that the factor encouraged them to remain in teaching. The factors were compared to selected demographic variables which included intent to teach the following year, tenure, vocational agriculture background, and locations of the teaching position.

## *Major Findings*

### Factors Which Encourage Teachers to Remain in Teaching

The factors which teachers planning to remain in teaching rated highest are reported in Table 1. These factors were related to the categories of people in general, students, and the

teaching situation. Those factors relating to people (numbers one, three, and five) were three of the five with the highest ratings. Findings here would seem to indicate teachers receive a lot of enjoyment from working with people, especially rural people. Three factors (numbers six, eight, and nine) were student related factors. This may indicate teachers are receptive to intrinsic rewards and possibly more influenced by these rewards than people in other occupations. The remainder of the ten higher rated factors (numbers two, four, seven and ten) were all related to the teaching situation. This finding may indicate that teaching itself holds many opportunities and rewards for those who pursue it as a career.

Table 1

FACTORS RATED HIGHEST BY TEACHERS REMAINING IN TEACHING

Factors	Mean Rating <sup>a</sup>	S.D.
1. I enjoy working with rural people.	4.28	.46
2. I enjoy being close to work associated with the farm.	4.24	.57
3. I enjoy working with young people.	4.22	.60
4. I enjoy the chance to work outdoors.	4.20	.67
5. I enjoy working with other vocational agriculture teachers.	4.12	.81
6. Helping students to mature and learn is satisfying to me as a teacher.	4.11	.62
7. I enjoy the variety of subject matter taught in vocational agriculture.	4.11	.76
8. Teaching gives me a feeling of accomplishment and success.	4.08	.77
9. I enjoy being able to guide and counsel students.	4.04	.62
10. I enjoy working on FFA activities.	3.97	.91

<sup>a</sup>Scale used in calculating means:

5 = most encouragement to remain in teaching.

0 = least encouragement to remain in teaching.

Factors Which Discourage Teachers  
from Remaining in Teaching

Factors which were rated lowest by teachers planning to leave teaching are shown in Table 2. These factors dealt with a variety of areas. Two of the six factors with the lowest ratings were related to student respect and discipline. Two were related to salary and fringe benefits and one each to teacher workload and school facilities. This may indicate that the lack of intrinsic factors may discourage teachers from remaining in a position, especially if extrinsic rewards are not relatively high.

Table 2

FACTORS RATED LOWEST BY TEACHERS LEAVING TEACHING

Factors	Mean Rating <sup>a</sup>	S.D.
1. Most students in my school respect teachers.	.78	.97
2. I receive adequate compensation for the extra hours and evenings I work.	1.13	1.13
3. I believe the fringe benefits of my job are similar to those of other professionals with equal training and years of service.	1.24	1.59
4. The help I receive from student aides makes my job less demanding.	1.49	1.39
5. Adequate equipment and tools for effective instruction are available for the vocational agriculture department in my school.	1.53	1.79
6. Discipline problems in my school are insignificant.	1.67	1.92

<sup>a</sup>Scale used in calculating means:

5 = most encouragement to remain in teaching.

0 = least encouragement to remain in teaching.

Difference Between Teachers  
Remaining and Leaving

The mean ratings for teachers planning to remain in teaching and teachers planning to leave teaching were compared on each factor. A significant difference at the .05 level between the mean ratings of the two groups of teachers was found on four factors, which are presented in Table 3. Three of these four factors were student related. This may tend to indicate that students are the main factor which either encourage teachers to remain in teaching or discourage teachers from teaching.

Encouragement Factors and  
Teacher Tenure

Correlations were explored between the 41 encouragement factors and tenure of teachers planning to remain in teaching. Fourteen of these factors were determined to be significant. Positive correlations indicated that as tenure increased, teachers tended to rate these factors higher. The higher correlated factors were: 1) I enjoy being able to guide and counsel students (.33); 2) the professional education training I received was adequate for my teaching (.32); 3) opportunities for advancement are important to me (-.31); and 4) helping students to mature and learn is satisfying to me as a teacher (.29). Correlations for the other ten significant factors were less than .29.

Table 3

ENCOURAGEMENT FACTORS WITH SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE  
MEAN VALUES OF TEACHERS REMAINING IN TEACHING AND  
TEACHERS LEAVING TEACHING

Factors	Mean Values	
	Teachers Remaining	Teachers Leaving
1. Helping students to mature and learn is satisfying to me as a teacher.	4.11	3.38
2. I like living in the community of the size and type in which I teach.	4.08	3.34
3. Most students in my school respect teachers.	3.00	.78
4. The achievements of my students in FFA competition more than compensate me for the extra hours I spend training them.	3.27	2.20

Three factors were found to have significant correlations with teachers planning to leave teaching. All of these correlations were negative, indicating that as tenure for these teachers increased, teachers tended to rate these factors lower. The factors were: 1) opportunities for advancement are important to me (-.92); 2) the achievements of my students in FFA competition more than compensate me for the extra hours I spend training them (-.68); and 3) adequate financial support for the vocational agriculture department is provided by my school (-.68).

### *Recommendations*

1. Encouragement factors rated highest by vocational agriculture teachers should be emphasized and promoted by teacher educator staffs and professional organizations. Experienced teachers should be reminded periodically of the satisfaction and enjoyment possible in teaching. Potential recruits into agricultural education should be made aware of benefits of teaching such as working with young and rural people, the chance to work outdoors, variety, and flexibility in the work.
2. Several factors which were given average ratings by vocational agriculture teachers should be given more emphasis during the students pre-professional semester. Areas include additional work in public relations, student motivation, student behavior and discipline, and understanding vocational funding and salary schedules.
3. Steps should be taken to increase salaries and fringe benefits for vocational agriculture teachers. Teacher workload such as long hours, evening responsibilities, and paperwork should be diminished whenever possible. Maximum loads with defined limits should be established in those areas.
4. The amount of technical training received by vocational agriculture teachers should be increased. Possibilities here include an undergraduate curriculum change to allow for more credit hours of technical agriculture and the establishment of inservice short courses in the technical agriculture field.
5. Secondary school administrators should be made fully aware of the existing vocational agriculture teacher shortage. Those schools which experience relatively high rates of teacher turnover should be encouraged to support and adequately equip the vocational agriculture department in their school.
6. Since one-fourth of the respondents had no experience as a high school student in vocational agriculture, all qualified secondary students should be recruited as potential agricultural education students.

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