

**Activities that Should Be and Are Included in
Summer Programs of Vocational Agriculture
in the United States**

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The summer months of the vocational agriculture teacher have legislatively and traditionally been months of supervision, teaching, and learning. Since the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, vocational agriculture teachers have been employed for a longer period of time than other teachers for the purpose of conducting summer programs.

Much has been written about quality summer programs. Recent research studies by Arrington (1984), Cepica (1979a, 1979b), Hilton (1981) and Witt (1982) attempted to determine appropriate activities for the summer program. Present journal articles by Cepica (1979c), Cepica and Stockton (1980), Ermis (1979), Grey (1979), Harris (1980), Holmes (1979), Horner (1979), Miller (1983), Stewart (1979), and Vaughn and Vaughn (1979) addressed priorities for quality summer programs. Cepica (1979c), Ermis (1979), and Harris (1980) also addressed the problems existing in summer programs and what teachers can do to remedy these problems. However, no study has addressed the differences that may exist between what vocational agriculture teacher's believe should be done during the summer and what they actually do. This study was conducted in an attempt to answer this question.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine the summer activities in the vocational agriculture program that should be and are being conducted in the U.S. The objectives for the study were:

1. Gather demographic information concerning vocational agriculture teachers and programs in the United States,
2. Identify the activities that vocational agriculture teachers believe should be a part of all summer programs in vocational agriculture and the percentage of time that should be spent on these activities;

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3. Identify the activities that vocational agriculture teachers actually participated in during the summer of 1983 and the amount of time expended on each activity; and

4. Compare the time that vocational agriculture teachers believe should be spent with the time that was actually spent on the identified activities during the summer of 1983.

Procedures

A survey of all 50 state directors of vocational agriculture programs provided the following information: types and numbers of secondary programs, number of teachers, method for determining and length of teacher's contract, and types of summer activities held at the state level. These data were used as an aid in designing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was field tested with 10 vocational agriculture teachers. Their completed questionnaires were reviewed and modifications were made to the questionnaire. Two versions of the questionnaire were developed and field tested--one used in April to survey the teachers concerning what they believed they should do during the summer months and the other used by the teachers in actually recording what they did during the summer. The only difference between the two was that the first one also sought selected demographic data.

The population of vocational agriculture teachers in the United States was the basis for a return sample size of 173 using Cochran's sample size formula (Snedecor & Cochran, 1980, pp. 441-442). Because the researchers anticipated that as few as 40-50% of the teachers in the sample would agree to take the considerable time necessary to participate in the study, a systematic random sample of 400 was selected to insure that a minimum response of 173 was secured. Two letters with return postcards and a telephone follow-up were used in asking for help with the study. Of 400 requests for help with the summer long project, 227 (56.8%) agreed to help with the study and returned the initial questionnaire. Four (1.0%) were returned as undeliverable, 122 were unable to help for various reasons (on 9 month contract, on leave during summer, retiring, etc.) and 47 could not be contacted after three tries. This amounted to a total of 349 out of the original 400 in the sample who either agreed to help with the study or could not help, an 87.3% response rate.

In mid-May, seven bi-weekly summary sheets (the second instrument developed) with a letter of instructions and seven return envelopes were mailed to all teachers who had agreed to help with the study. Two letters were used to follow-up those teachers who did not turn in their summary sheets on schedule. A telephone call was made to those who had failed to respond by the end of the summer and they were asked to summarize their entire summer on one sheet only (instead of six or seven). The one sheet summaries were compared to those with multiple sheets to determine if any differences

existed. No differences were detected. A total of 209 teachers (52.3%) of 400 in the sample; 92.1% of the 227 who agreed to help) returned both the initial questionnaire and the seven summary sheets. Although a higher level of participation would have resulted in more generalizable data, the number of participants is reasonable when the amount of time required of the participants is considered.

Data Analysis

The data were tabulated and summarized. No significant differences existed between the variances of the two sets of data (activities that should be and were performed). Pooled variance t-tests were used to determine if differences existed between the amount of time that was actually spent. Pearson Product Moment Correlations were calculated between selected demographic variables and the differences in the amount of time that the teachers believed should be spent and the time that was actually allocated to each activity. The alpha level was set at .05.

Results

When teachers were asked how they should spend their time, teachers assigned the largest block of time to visiting students with SOE programs (20%) and operating a school farm/greenhouse or other instructional laboratory (7.8%). When asked what they actually did, teachers reported that they spent the largest block of time visiting student SOE programs (16.2% of their time) and attending university summer school (11.6%). These data are presented in Table 1.

The data in Table 1 also indicate there were significant differences on 20 activities between what the teachers said should be done and what they said they actually did during the summer of 1983. Only the data from those teachers who said they should perform an activity were used in the statistical comparisons.

Teachers spent significantly more time than they said they should on the following activities: shows, fairs and sales, meetings with administrators, paperwork, state FFA convention, operating the school farm, greenhouse or other instructional laboratory, performing school maintenance, vacation, attending summer teachers' conference, and advising 4-H clubs.

Teachers spent significantly less time than they indicated they should on the following activities: field days and/or trips without students, visiting students with SOE programs, visiting cooperative program students, visiting incoming freshmen, recruiting new students, arranging for student employment sites, collecting samples for classroom study, meeting with advisory committee, FFA chapter meetings, and FFA chapter recreation and socials.

Table 1

Summer Employment Activities That Should Be and Were Performed

Activity	Should be performed		Were performed		t
	Freq.	% ^a	Freq.	% ^a	
Paperwork (reports/records)	169	3.7	172	6.9	-5.36***
Visit students w/SOEP's	168	23.3	163	16.2	5.29***
Update curriculum	157	5.3	131	5.0	1.55
State teacher's conference	156	4.3	108	8.0	-2.21*
Maintain vo-ag equipment/facilities	149	5.8	149	6.8	-1.37
FFA chapter meetings	147	2.3	97	1.7	6.52***
Order supplies and equipment	145	2.8	137	3.7	-1.72
Shows, fairs and/or sales	144	6.0	102	11.2	-2.07*
Visit incoming freshmen	134	4.9	76	3.3	4.45***
Vacation (personal)	130	11.6	141	16.1	-3.17***
Public relations	129	3.3	105	3.3	1.01
FFA state convention	120	4.6	95	9.6	-3.15***
FFA leadership camp	120	4.2	62	8.0	.35
Inventory facilities	136	2.8	116	4.0	-0.97
Meet with advisory council	113	1.7	47	1.3	6.67***
Field trips with students	108	3.6	77	5.6	.69
Follow-up former students	108	2.7	87	2.3	2.50*
Contests	99	4.0	60	6.1	-.05
Community service	99	3.4	91	6.1	-1.57
Operate farm/greenhouse/laboratory	96	7.8	109	10.8	-3.20***
Visit co-op students	96	6.6	58	4.3	5.60***
Field trips without students	95	3.4	67	3.1	2.84***
Meetings with administrators	95	1.9	101	2.3	-1.48
Collect samples for class	91	2.9	59	2.1	4.68***
Recruit new students	90	2.9	47	1.6	5.27***
FFA recreation/socials	87	2.0	34	2.9	3.12***
Visit adult students	82	5.8	91	4.2	1.54
Arrange student employment sites	80	3.1	41	3.1	2.49*
Open facilities to community	59	3.6	55	4.8	-0.89
University summer school	54	4.0	23	11.6	-0.68
Conduct adult classes/meetings	40	3.2	33	6.4	-0.93
Attend non-credit workshops	35	2.7	75	6.6	-0.82
Attend regional NVATA meeting	35	2.7	11	8.5	0.49
FFA alumni meetings	28	1.5	15	1.4	1.60
School maintenance (non vo-ag)	24	4.7	66	3.2	-2.07*
Advise 4-H club	17	1.5	31	2.0	-2.99***
Washington leadership conference	16	7.1	8	3.8	1.10
Other	17	4.2	75	4.9	-4.53***

^a The "freq." column indicates teachers who indicated that this activity was or should be performed. The "%" column indicates the percent of the summer that teachers reported should be or was spent on this activity

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Several statistically significant correlations were found between the demographic variables and the differences in the amount of time that the teachers believed should be spent and the time that was actually allocated to each activity. The variables used in this analysis were age, degree held, number of years teaching experience, length of teaching contract, number of vocational agriculture teachers in the school, number of adult students taught, number of hours worked during the summer outside of teaching, and number of days that the teacher worked during the summer months. However, none of the correlations possessed practical significance. The highest correlation found was $r = .25$ with the next highest being $r = .18$.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Significant differences existed between what teachers thought they should do during the summer and what they actually did. In addition, teachers reported several activities such as general school maintenance that may not contribute to the vocational agriculture program.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should continue to allocate a major portion of their summer to student contact and, where possible, redirect time currently being spent in non-student contact activities to student contact activities. This time should include SOEP supervision, group and individual instruction, continuity of FFA chapter activities (both leadership and social), and visits with new and prospective students.
2. Time spent by the vocational agriculture teacher on paper work, departmental maintenance and other non-student contact activities should be minimized. If these activities are, in fact, a part of the vocational agriculture teacher's job during the summer months, some examples of ways to minimize the non-student contact time might include: (a) have students (juniors and seniors) take inventory and perform equipment and shop maintenance prior to year end and (b) use time management techniques. For example, efficient management of paper work (handle it only once instead of delaying it) will save time.
3. The teacher should endeavor to spend time with all students during the summer, not only officers or those having large SOE programs. The other students may need even more help than the examples cited.

4. The open ended responses received indicate that many teachers in the sample do not properly plan their summer activities. These teachers should develop a daily plan for the summer and share it with their principal before the end of the school year. Each week, an updated plan for the coming week should be posted on the vocational agriculture classroom/shop door. This plan should include a schedule of the teacher's in-school and out of school time allocations. These steps would allow the teacher to make better use of the summer period.

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