

A COMPARISON OF THE SUMMER PROGRAMS OF OKLAHOMA
VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS AND
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF
SELECTED ASPECTS OF THE
SUMMER PROGRAM

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The summer program of vocational agriculture is an integral phase of the total agricultural education program. Year-round instruction provides for a continuation of learning beyond the confines of the formal school year. There is a need for instruction during the summer months because of the increased agricultural activity. Also, many supervised occupational experience programs are continuous programs which do not terminate with the school year. The teacher of vocational agriculture should be on hand to assist in directing individual programs of students and aiding established farmers and ranchers in planning and solving agricultural problems. The summer may be used to supplement and increase leadership abilities and agricultural knowledge through field days, contests, livestock shows, conventions, and various other group activities. However, it is alarming to find that less than one-third of the states in our nation have 100 percent of their vocational agriculture teachers employed on a twelve-month basis.

The Study

Purpose. The purpose of this study was to examine those segments which are basic to the summer program of vocational agriculture as viewed by Oklahoma vocational agriculture teachers and to determine differences between various Oklahoma vocational agriculture summer programs. Additionally, the opinions of administrators concerning selected portions of the summer activities were evaluated with reference to those summer programs which were judged to be superior.

Individuals have different ideas concerning the basic components which make up a desirable summer program of vocational agriculture. This study gives an indication as to the value of the various activities as perceived by vocational agriculture teachers who are assumed to be conducting desirable summer programs.

Objectives. In order to accomplish the purpose of the study, the following objectives were listed:

1. To identify the basic components included in the summer programs of vocational agriculture in Oklahoma.
2. To compare the extent of activity included in summer programs of those teachers identified as having superior summer programs to those of other teachers.
3. To determine teacher perceptions of the value of selected activities engaged in during the summer.
4. To determine teacher perceptions of the relative importance of groups of activities which are assumed to be an important part of the vocational agriculture summer program.
5. To secure administrators' opinions concerning selected portions of the summer programs of those teachers identified as having superior summer programs.

Methodology. In the collection of data, the population of teachers of vocational agriculture was divided into two groups according to the quality of the summer programs conducted in order to determine differences between summer vocational agriculture programs in Oklahoma. To do this, each vocational agriculture teacher was presented a list of the teachers in his professional improvement (PI) group. On the checklist he was asked to indicate the top 25 percent of the teachers within his PI group who, according to his opinion, were presently conducting the most desirable summer program in vocational agriculture. The district supervisors were also asked to check the top 25 percent of the teachers within each PI group in his district on the same basis. As a control, the average ranking in the upper quartile as provided by the teachers was compared with the list provided by the supervisors. Those teachers receiving an upper quartile rating by both their colleagues and their district supervisor were considered an anonymous "select" group for the purpose of this study. The remainder of the teachers were placed in the "others" group.

A total of 346 questionnaires were administered to teachers present at 22 PI meetings held in the State in May and June of 1976. Of the 417 teachers of vocational agriculture employed in Oklahoma at the time, 83 percent participated in the survey. Through the selection process, 61 of the 417 teachers were identified as conducting superior programs. In only one instance was more than one teacher in a multiple teacher department selected to participate in the select group. The selection technique provided a stratified sample across the State uniformly representing each district.

To collect related information, those superintendents of the teachers in the select group were mailed a questionnaire in August, 1976, relating to the second part of the study. Of the 60 questionnaires mailed, 54, or 90 percent, were returned.

In order to gather information concerning the summer activities of vocational agriculture teachers, a closed or restricted questionnaire was developed. Information in quarterly reports and the Summer Program of Work Report provided a basis for determining basic components included in the summer programs of vocational agriculture. Information obtained from the 31-item teacher questionnaire provided a means to identify activities, determine activity within activities, and determine the relative importance of groups of activities. The mean, range, rank order, number, and percentage were used to describe the data collected. Chi-square analysis was employed to test differences between the select group and the responses of other teachers. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was used to relate the responses of teachers in the two groups to the ranking of major activities in the summer program. The questionnaire to secure administrator opinions included a five-point Likert scale. Average group ratings were computed for each item, as follows:

- 1.5 and less = great importance or emphasis
- 1.51 - 2.5 = much importance or emphasis
- 2.51 - 3.5 = some importance or emphasis
- 3.51 - 4.5 = little importance or emphasis
- 4.51 or above = no importance or emphasis

Major Findings

A list of activities, as determined by information in quarterly reports and the Summer Program of Work Report submitted to the State Department of Vocational-Technical Education, was included in the teacher questionnaire to determine the relative importance of groups of activities which were found to be most significant in the vocational agriculture summer program. A Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation coefficient of .843 suggested much similarity between perceptions of the select group and those of other teachers; therefore, attention should be drawn to the total group when reviewing Table I. "Select group" and "others group" means and rank-orders are shown in Table I.

Oklahoma vocational agriculture teachers perceived working with all-day students and prospective students as their two highest priorities during the summer. This was followed by work with the FFA and young and adult farmers. Work with the local school administrator fell fifth on the cumulative list of priorities of the teachers. In relation to working with local school administrators and in another portion of the instrument, teachers were

Table I

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AS TO IMPORTANCE OF
SELECTED ACTIVITIES IN THE SUMMER PROGRAM
(Rank Order by Group)

Major Activity	Distribution by Response Group*					
	Total Group		Select Group		Others Group	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Work with all-day students	1.71	1	1.58	1	1.74	1
Work with prospective students	3.37	2	3.28	2	3.39	2
FFA activities	4.75	3	4.07	3	4.88	3
Work with young and adult farmers	5.41	4	5.28	4	5.52	5
Work with local administration	5.48	5	5.98	7	5.30	4
Teaching aids and materials	6.00	6	5.89	6	6.07	7
Professional improvement	6.13	7	6.41	8	6.03	6
Promotional and goodwill activities	6.25	8	5.75	5	6.35	8
Records and reports	7.79	9	8.64	10	7.62	9
Work with other agricultural agencies	8.09	10	8.09	9	8.09	10

*Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation for Select Group and Others Group Responses = .843

questioned with regard to the amount of administrator involvement in planning the summer program. Most teachers (90.01 percent) felt their administrators were only slightly involved. When asked about informing their superintendents as to their activities, 54 percent of the teachers provided their superintendents with an itinerary of their summer activities other than a copy of their summer plans report. In addition, it was determined that considerable time was spent at the vo-ag facilities during most days of the week. However, only one-half of the teachers kept regularly scheduled office hours.

In completing the list of priorities during the summer, the teachers cumulatively ranked teaching aids and materials and professional improvement sixth and seventh, respectively. These were followed by promotional and goodwill activities, records, and reports, and work with other agricultural agencies.

The latter five activities as a group were more highly regarded by administrators, as is shown in Table II. Summer program

activities were grouped according to selected areas of special concern to the administrator. The list was adapted from the teacher questionnaire and from suggestions of concern by district and state supervisory personnel and high school superintendents during a conference held at the State Department of Vocational-Technical Education.

Table II

PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATORS AS TO EMPHASIS
NOW BEING PLACED AND EMPHASIS
WHICH SHOULD BE PLACED ON SELECTED
AREAS OF THE SUMMER PROGRAM

Selected Areas	Emphasis Now Being Placed		Emphasis Which Should Be Placed	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Professional improvement, teaching aids, work with other agencies, records and reports, promotional activities	2.26	1	1.74	1
Scheduled time at vo-ag building, including filing itinerary	3.07	5	2.00	2
Active FFA organization with planned activities	2.67	3	2.16	3
Work with all-day and prospective students	2.69	4	2.20	4
Administrator involvement with planning summer program	3.39	6	2.28	5
Work with young and adult farmers	2.48	2	2.31	6

In terms of current emphasis, the administrators ranked work with all-day and prospective students fourth on a six item priority list for the summer program. Administrators also felt that young and adult farmer work was more important, as indicated by a number two rank of emphasis now being placed. In terms of "should be" emphasis, administrators felt that less emphasis should be placed on the young and adult farmer program on a priority basis, although mean values indicated the adult program still should have much emphasis attached to it (mean value = 2.31 from Table II; real limits are 1.51 to 2.5 = much importance or emphasis). It

was established that administrators generally choose to place the most responsibility of planning the vocational agriculture programs with the teacher of vocational agriculture (ranked 5 on emphasis which should be placed), but they want to be informed as to the teacher's activities (ranked 2 in priority which should be placed).

Differences revealed in this study concerning the teacher test groups were particularly noted in areas of summer program involving high visibility and contact with mass audiences. A list of these activities and differences is shown in Table III, which is a summary of a more comprehensive evaluation of each of the 24 items listed. Each item was a question requiring a choice of one of five answers provided. Chi-square analysis was used to test differences between the select group of teachers and the responses of other teachers. Of the 24 statistical tests computed, eight, or 32 percent, showed a significant difference between the select group and other teachers.

Although it is impossible to provide the 24 tables constructed for each of the items in this article, it should be pointed out that in each case where a significant difference was revealed at the .05 level, actual frequencies showed more activity (more meetings, more field days, more time expended, more newspaper publicity, more contacts, etc.) by the select group of teachers (those who were determined to be conducting superior summer programs). This is indicated by an "X" placed in the "significant difference--select group more active" column. Noteworthy differences were as follows:

1. The teachers in the select group tended to give greater assistance to prospective students in selecting projects (starting or expanding their project programs).
2. The teachers in the select group scheduled more summer FFA meetings as well as young and adult farmer meetings.
3. The teachers in the select group attended more field days and judging contests during the summer and were more inclined to include both FFA members and young and adult farmer groups.
4. The teachers in the select group expended more time working with local school administrators as well as community agricultural agencies in planning their programs.
5. The teachers in the select group were more active in obtaining newspaper publicity.

Table III

A SUMMARY OF COMPARISONS OF SELECT AND OTHER TEACHERS
AS TO DIFFERENCES IN DEVELOPING AND CARRYING
OUT SUMMER PROGRAMS
OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE
(Based on Chi-square analysis)

Activity	Comparison Factor*		
	Significant Difference		No
	Select Group More Active	Others Group More Active	Significant Difference
Percentage all-day students contacted			X
Percentage prospective students contacted			X
Times all-day students visited			X
All-day students selecting projects			X
Prospective students selecting projects	X		
Assistance at livestock shows			X
Number of FFA summer meetings	X		
Number of young and adult farmers visited			X
Number of visits to farmers			X
Importance of major activities			X
Young and adult farmer summer meetings	X		
Attending field days or judging contests	X		
Field days/judging contests-- persons involved	X		
Professional improvement-- vo-ag meetings			X
Professional improvement-- other meetings			X
Administrator involvement-- planning program			X
Time expended working with administration	X		
Filing itinerary/superintendent			X
Importance of summer program			X
Hours per week at vo-ag building			X
Days per week at vo-ag building			X
Number of newspaper articles during summer	X		
Number of contacts made in planning program	X		

*Chi-square level of significance = .05

Conclusions and Recommendations

The vocational agriculture teachers of Oklahoma agreed on the relative importance of the groups of activities. The two groups of teachers (select and others) reacted similarly to many of the basic components included in the summer program. However, in all cases when differences were revealed, the select group excelled other teachers as to the amount of activities in those areas. Of the administrators studied, their perceptions of the summer program did not always concur with the cumulative opinion of the teachers on a priority basis. A primary exception was the importance of the summer program, where their opinions were more congruent.

Of foremost importance, closer communication between the teachers of vocational agriculture and their administrators should be encouraged. The majority of the administrators and teachers agreed on the importance of summer programs (93 percent of the teachers and 80 percent of the administrators regarded the summer program of vocational agriculture as being highly important to the total program of vocational agriculture in Oklahoma). Teachers should exercise care that established priorities within the program are understood and accepted by their administrators. In keeping their administrators informed as to summer activity, regular itineraries should be submitted. In order to better serve the school and community, all teachers of vocational agriculture should attempt to establish, within reason, regular office hours or hours at the vocational agriculture facility whereby they may be easily contacted during the summer. All teachers should be particularly aware of and concerned with activities which encounter high visibility and reach mass audiences in order to strengthen the summer program of vocational agriculture.

Bibliography

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