DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 351 CE 063 109

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TITLE Summer Agricultural Program Activities.
PUB DATE Dec 92
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the American Vocational Association Convention (St. Louis, MO, December 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; *Agricultural Education; Educational Research; Faculty Development; Higher Education; Secondary Education; *State Supervisors; Student Organizations; Student Recruitment; *Summer Programs; *Supervised Occupational Experience (Agriculture); Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Educators; Teacher Student Relationship; *Vocational Education; Vocational Education Teachers

ABSTRACT

Teacher educators and state supervisors were surveyed to determine their perceptions of philosophically ideal agricultural education summer program activities. A random sample of teacher educators was selected from the directory of the American Association for Agricultural Education, and a random sample of state supervisors was selected from a directory published by the U.S. Department of Education. The response rate was 90.9 percent (161 of 177). Individual response rates to mailed questionnaires were 123 teacher educators (91.9 percent) and 54 state supervisors (88.9 percent). A summated rating scale was used to provide an index for placing each summer program activity in rank order. The questionnaire included eight major categories of activities: agricultural organizations and associations, departmental administration, Future Farmers of America, instructional improvement, professional growth, resource improvement, supervised agricultural experience, and teaching/recruitment. Thirty-eight specific activities were identified and included in the questionnaire. According to the findings, attending annual summer update conferences and supervising agricultural students' home projects were tied as most important. The ideal number of days that should be allocated to the summer program activities was 50.1. The current number of allocated days was 39. (YLB)

SUMMER AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

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Introduction

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 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 (Camp, 1986, Brannon, 1989). 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.

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. The following objectives were investigated as part of this study:

1. Identify the perceived ideal agricultural education summer program activities in times of economic constraint and emphasis on academic versus vocational achievement.
2. Determine how many days study participants would assign to the major summer program activity categories during this time of economic constraint and academic emphasis.

Methods

Instrument: A questionnaire was developed using "A Vocational Agriculture Teacher's Guide To Planning Summer Programs" (Kotrlik, 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, thus ensuring similar interpretations of the scale by all respondents. Ideal quality indicators would be determined by each group's ranking of "High Importance" to the agricultural education summer program activities.

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. 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 random sample from the population was determined by statistical methods identified by Cohen (1969). A panel of current teacher educators used the directory of AAAE to identify all agricultural educators whose major responsibilities were teaching agricultural education courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. These individuals became the population for this component of the study. State supervisors were identified for participation in the study using a directory of state supervisors as published by the U.S. Department of Education. All samples were randomly selected from a population 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 positions. The composite response rate was 90.9 %, which included 161 out of 177 returned questionnaires. Individual response rates included: teacher educators n=123 (91.9 %), state supervisors n=54 (88.9 %).

Collection of Data: Questionnaires and cover letters were mailed to each participant. A second questionnaire and letter was mailed to non-respondents three weeks after the first mailing. A random selection of 20 percent of non-respondents received telephone contact three weeks after the second mailing.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics 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.

Results & Conclusions

Objective 1: Those agricultural education summer program components to be used as the ideal quality indicators according to teacher educators and state supervisors that were identified by a ranking of "high importance" are reported in Table 1. Attending annual summer update conferences and supervising agricultural students' home projects (SAE) tied in their ranking. Teacher educators and state supervisors appear to observe agricultural education summer program activities as 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.

Table 1
IDEAL SUMMER PROGRAM ACTIVITIES RANK ORDER OF IMPORTANCE AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHER EDUCATORS (TE) AND STATE SUPERVISORS (SS)

Activity	Rank	Mean	SD	SE	% Rating Item Importance n=113	% Rating Item Importance 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	5.9	1.4	.11	79.6	70.8
Vacation/Family	6	5.8	1.5	.12	78.7	77.1
Maintain communications with school administration	8	5.7	1.4	.11	73.5	66.7
Supervise land lab/greenhouse used by students	8	5.7	1.5	.12	76.0	83.3
Develop future SAE/CWE sources	8	5.7	1.4	.11	72.6	75.0
Plan & supervise FFA activities	10	5.6	1.3	.10	65.5	75.1

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. Supervision of agricultural students' home projects (SAE) was not statistical different among any of the study grooups. Maintaining communication between and among school administration was identified as an important aspect by these study groups.

Objective 2: The number of days perceived by study participants to be allocated to the current summer activities program ranged from 37.0 days to 40.3 days found in Table 2.

Table 2
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	Grand Mean	TE Mean	SS Mean	TE SD	SS SD	TE SE	SS SE
Agricultural Organizations and Associations							
Current	2.8	3.1	2.4	3.0	2.1	0.2	0.3
Ideal	3.5	3.6	3.3	4.1	2.2	0.4	0.3
Department Administration							
Current	4.8	5.5	3.8	7.0	3.3	0.6	0.4
Ideal	4.8	4.9	4.5	3.5	3.8	0.3	0.5
FFA							
Current	7.2	7.1	7.4	5.3	5.5	0.5	0.8
Ideal	7.1	6.7	8.1	3.4	5.1	0.3	0.7
Instructional Improvement							
Current	4.5	4.6	4.4	5.3	5.1	0.5	0.7
Ideal	4.8	4.8	4.9	3.9	4.7	0.4	0.6
Professional Growth							
Current	4.3	4.4	4.1	3.6	3.8	0.3	0.5
Ideal	5.9	6.5	4.4	5.6	2.8	0.5	0.4
Resource Improvement							
Current	3.4	3.8	2.4	6.7	2.5	0.6	0.3
Ideal	4.2	4.3	4.0	4.3	4.4	0.4	0.6
SAE							
Current	8.7	8.7	8.6	7.5	7.7	0.7	1.1
Ideal	13.0	13.0	12.9	7.3	8.2	0.7	1.1
Teaching/Recruitment							
Current	3.3	3.1	3.9	2.7	4.6	0.3	0.6
Ideal	6.8	6.7	7.0	6.0	5.6	0.6	0.8
Totals							
Current	39.0	40.3	37.0				
Ideal	50.1	50.5	49.1				

The 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 SAE was found to have the most variation among the eight categories as identified in the comparison of current and ideal days. As identified by teacher educators and state supervisors nationwide, the ideal number of days that should be allocated to the summer program activities was 50.1. Perceptions of the number of days currently being allocated to department administration was found to have the most variation among the eight categories. Perceptions of the number of days which should ideally be allocated to professional growth was found to have the most variation among the eight categories. All groups indicated increases from current allocation to ideal allocation of days for summer program activities.

Conclusions/Implications

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.

1. It is important for agricultural educators 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.
2. An ideal summer agricultural program should be allocated 50 days and emphasize more closely, the summer program activities as identified by teacher educators and state supervisors.
3. A greater emphasis on communication between agricultural educators and school administration may need to occur if agricultural programs are to develop a highly effective summer program for the future. 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.
4. Agricultural educators need to develop a comprehensive program of visiting prospective agricultural students and parents to ensure enrollments in the future.

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