

Describing the Inclusiveness of Students with Disabilities in Iowa School-based Agricultural Education Programs

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Abstract

Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students with disabilities within school-based agricultural education (SBAE) is important to ensure students receive opportunities. This study explored the experiences that SBAE teachers associated with providing special education and related services for students with disabilities in all aspects of SBAE programs (i.e., classroom instruction, FFA membership, and Supervised Agricultural Experience [SAE] programs). Nine SBAE teachers from various career phases participated in semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Three main themes emerged from the interviews: communication, inclusiveness for a complete program, and transfer of responsibility for provided services. Future research should take a deeper look into the issue of providing free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in SBAE programs. Additionally, future research needs to occur on each component (classroom, SAE, and FFA) of SBAE to ensure students with disabilities are being included to the fullest potential or what resources could be provided to assist educators.

Keywords: disabilities; inclusiveness

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Introduction

Special education and the inclusion of students with disabilities are not new subjects in today's education system. Since 1975, the mainstreaming of students with disabilities has specified students should be educated in the least restrictive setting (Treder et al., 2000). Students with disabilities have individual characteristics, which have the propensity to present challenges during learning. The educational needs of students with disabilities greatly vary, thus an individualized educational program, which can include educational modifications and accommodations, is needed to ensure the success of each student (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1995). A modification is considered a change in what a student with disabilities is "taught or expected to learn (content and performance expectations are changed)" (Pogrund, 2018, p. 299). Accommodations are considered services and supports which alter the way in which students with disabilities learn (Pogrund, 2018). Students with accommodations are still learning the same material as their classmates, just in a different way. For example, shortening exam questions would be one way to accommodate students. Modifications and accommodations are made on an individual basis, and are obligatory when appropriate, based on various federal laws (Pogrund, 2018).

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Specifically, Federal laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004; IDEA) and civil rights statutes, such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) mandate the inclusion of students with disabilities in learning environments with their peers who do not have disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Act states, “each public agency must ensure that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are nondisabled” (34 C.F.R. § 300.114). While Murdick et al., (2002) pointed out the least restricted environment (LRE) is predicated on the assumption that “the preferred placement for students with disabilities is the regular classroom” (p. 24), certain district court cases (e.g., *Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education*, 1989; *MR v. Lincolnwood Board of Education*, 1994) have ruled the general education environment is not appropriate in some instances (Boyle & Weishaar, 2001; Murdick et al., 2002). Over the course of time and due to the vagueness of the LRE, the specific requirement varies according to the student’s personal needs, which has caused educators to struggle to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the LRE to students with disabilities (Rozalski et al., 2010).

With the current philosophical educational stance of inclusion and mainstreaming as well as the IDEA mandating LRE, students with disabilities are being included in more secondary education courses (Yell, 2012). Special education services apply to core classes, as well as to Career and Technical Education (CTE; e.g., School-based Agricultural Educators). In fact, previous educational researchers have indicated the placement of students with disabilities in CTE courses is commonplace (Haber & Sutherland, 2008; Levesque, 2003). Levesque (2003) reported 24.6% of non-disabled students were enrolled in CTE courses, as compared to 37.5% of students with disabilities who were enrolled in CTE courses.

A myriad of benefits for students with disabilities have been identified regarding their involvement in CTE courses and associated extracurricular activities. Benefits such as the opportunity to participate in hands-on, real-life application activities, workforce preparation, higher employment rates, and higher earnings have been reported for students with disabilities (Casale-Giannola, 2011; Haber & Sutherland, 2008; Harvey, 2001; Wonacott, 2001). As an extension of the benefits provided by enrollment in CTE courses, students with disabilities involvement with extracurricular events has been associated with a myriad of benefits such as enhanced student achievement, school completion, psychological adjustment, increased involvement in social and community activities (Mahoney et al., 2006; Simeonsson et al., 2001). While the benefits of extracurricular programs have been widely supported, previous literature has indicated that students with disabilities involvement in extracurricular activities is limited (Cadwallader, 2003; Kleinert et al., 2007).

Based on the high enrollment of students with disabilities in CTE coursework, CTE teachers must understand their important role in facilitating the learning process for the students with individualized needs (Wonacott, 2001). Casale-Giannola (2011) pointed out that CTE educators have various areas of weakness when it comes to working with students with disabilities such as their lack of understanding of special education laws (e.g., IDEA). To remedy this issue, Wonacott (2001) suggested that CTE educators must participate in conversations with administration and special education teams.

Serving students with disabilities in school-based agricultural education (SBAE), a context of CTE has been an area of focus for many years (Elbert & Bagget, 2003; Johnson et al., 2012; Kessell et al., 2006a, 2006b). Current SBAE teachers are increasing their awareness of students with disabilities, as well as their desire to provide quality education for diverse learners (Hoerst & Whittington, 2009). Aschenbrener et al. (2010) sought to assess the perceptions of early-career teachers’ ability to teach students with disabilities. Results indicated administrative support contributed the most to success in working with students with disabilities, while in-service activities contributed the least. Previous research in agricultural education has indicated SBAE teachers need training associated with teaching students with disabilities (Duncan et al., 2006; Garton & Chung, 1997; Haynes & Stripling, 2014; Joerger, 2002; Smalley et al. 2019; Sorensen et al., 2014). While these studies have signified the need for SBAE teacher training related to working with

students with disabilities, it is important to take a more granular look at the issue and explore how teachers are integrating students with disabilities in each aspect of SBAE programs.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, our study was guided by the three-circle model of Agricultural Education (Phipps et al., 2008), which represents the three main components of Agricultural Education Programs; classroom/laboratory instruction, student participation in the National FFA Organization, and engagement with Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs (Phipps et al., 2008; Talbert et al., 2014). In consideration of comprehensive Agricultural Education Programs (Phipps et al., 2008), students in Agricultural Education, disabled or non-disabled, are provided learning experiences through classroom/laboratory instruction, FFA, and SAEs.

The classroom/laboratory instruction component of Agricultural Education is comprised of various classes which represent the different contexts and sub-contexts within the discipline. Talbert et al. (2014) noted the “instructional program should provide learning experiences that prepare students for the entry point into agricultural jobs in the community” (p. 58).

Another component of a comprehensive Agricultural Education program is FFA. The National FFA Organization is a co-curricular student organization that provides leadership and career preparation opportunities for SBAE students; (Phipps et al., 2008; Talbert et al., 2014). Talbert et al. (2014) stated “for well-rounded instructional program, FFA is needed to provide experiences in teamwork, leadership, cooperation, conflict resolution, management, and interpersonal communications” (p. 59). Moreover, Talbert et al. (2014) noted that students’ involvement in the FFA provides them experiences which allow them to grow cognitively, physically, and socially. While the involvement in FFA activities has the propensity to offer many benefits to students with disabilities, Johnson et al. (2012) found that FFA activities were more limited for these students.

Aside from opportunities associated with FFA membership, SAE programs are “the experiential learning component of the program, which includes the application of concepts and principles learned in the classroom to planned, real-life settings” (Talbert et al., 2014, p. 368). SAE for All teacher guide positions SAE as an experiential learning activity that focuses on connecting career planning with a significant focus on employability and leadership skills (The National Council for Agricultural Education, 2017). According to Talbert et al. (2014), SAE programs include the “application of concepts and principles learned in the classroom to planned, real-life settings under the supervision of the agriculture teacher” (p. 368).

The National Council for Agricultural Education (2017) outlines the two main types of SAE programs which include Foundational and Immersion SAE programs (placement/internship, ownership/entrepreneurship, research, school-based enterprise, and service-learning). The Foundational SAE component would be considered a required area for every SBAE course. The foundational areas focus on career exploration and planning, employability skills, financial planning and management, workplace safety, and agricultural literacy (National Council for Agricultural Education, 2017). SAE projects in any area ideally would provide skill development and potential future employment in a particular area of agriculture (Phipps et al., 2008). Regarding the inclusion of students in SAE programs, Johnson et al. (2012) found that SBAE teachers believe students with disabilities receive many benefits from being involved in SAE programs, but many teachers expressed the inclusion of students in these programs was very difficult.

Our study was undergirded by the concept of inclusion—which aligns with the legal requirement which states that students with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). While the passage of the IDEA (2004) has assisted in building a more inclusive school experience for students with disabilities, the impacts of IDEA have failed to extend to all school-related activities such as

extracurricular programs (Vinoski et al., 2016). Based on the benefits of mainstreaming students with disabilities in academic environments, and the potential benefits associated with student involvement in extracurricular events (e.g., FFA), we sought to explore the experiences of SBAE teachers associated with the inclusion of students with disabilities in the various instructional components of SBAE programs.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the SBAE teachers' experiences associated with the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in the various aspects of SBAE programs.

The following research questions guided our study.

1. How do SBAE teachers describe their experiences when working with students with disabilities in their SBAE programs (i.e., classroom instruction, FFA membership, SAE)?
2. What additional support do SBAE teachers provide for students with disabilities in all three components of the SBAE program (i.e., classroom instruction, FFA membership, and SAE)?
3. What support do SBAE teachers receive from members of the IEP team (e.g., parents / guardians, special education teachers, administrators, etc.) to effectively implement special education and related services?

This research study aligned with Research Priority 4 of the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) National Research Agenda (NRA): Meaningful, Engaged Learning in All Environments (Edgar et al., 2016). This study, which sought to determine how SBAE teachers provided inclusive environments in all aspects of their SBAE programs, closely linked to Edgar et al.'s (2016) second research priority question, "[h]ow can delivery of educational programs in agriculture continually evolve to meet the needs and interests of students?" (p. 39).

Methods

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval for this study, a purposive sample of Iowa SBAE teachers was selected for this case study based on maximum variation sampling. According to Creswell (2013), the maximum variation approach "maximizes differences at the beginning of the study" and "increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives—an ideal in qualitative research" (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). To achieve maximum variation in the purposive sample of SBAE teachers, we selected teachers with different levels of teaching experience—a variable that has been indicated to have a positive relationship with student achievement (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). The stratification of teaching experience, as part of the participant selection criteria, was operationalized in Huberman's (1989) stages of teachers' careers. Specifically, researchers stratified teachers based on teaching experience into the following three groups: (1) early career teachers with between one and six years of experience, (2) mid-career teachers with 7 to 18 years of experience, and (3) late-career teachers with 19 or more years of experience.

This case study included a total of nine SBAE teachers. Researchers assigned pseudonyms to each SBAE teacher to protect their identities. Five of the teachers were male and four were female. All teachers were asked to share the percentage of students they worked with who had a reported/documented disability. Based on the teaching career stages predicated by Huberman (1989), two teachers were considered to be early career teachers, five were mid-career teachers, and two were late-career teachers. The group of teachers had an average of 12.88 ($SD = 14.48$) years of teaching experience. *Ms. Johnson* and *Ms. Tucker* were early career teachers. Ms. Johnson had taught for two years in a rural district and indicated she had less than 15% of her students had documented disabilities. Ms. Tucker had three years of teaching experience in a suburban district and noted less than 10% of her students had some sort of disability. *Ms. Harris*, *Mr. Cohen*, and *Ms. Adams* were mid-career teachers who all had seven years of teaching experience in a rural school setting. Concerning the number of students they worked with who had a disability, Ms. Harris had worked with seven students which was less than 4% of her students; Mr. Cohen

noted 15% of his students had a disability, and Ms. Adams said 40% of her students had a disability. **Mr. Thomas**, a mid-career teacher with eight years of experience, reported having a total of 1% of students with disabilities and taught in a suburban district. Another mid-career teacher, **Mr. Williams**, had 15 years of teaching experience and indicated he had about 10% of his students this year with a disability. The final two teachers, **Mr. Miller** and **Mr. Hamilton** were late-career teachers. Mr. Miller from a rural district had a total of 35 years in education and reported having around 20% of his students with disabilities in his classes each year. Mr. Hamilton from a suburban district indicated in his 40 years of teaching experience he had less than 2% of his students in his SBAE program with disabilities.

Data Collection

Researchers derived the contact information (i.e., name, school, affiliation, and email addresses) of each teacher from the publicly available teacher directory. We then sent teachers a recruitment email, which included information about the study, instructions for participating in the study, and a copy of the interview protocol. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions regarding students with disabilities and the support provided for inclusion in a traditional agricultural education classroom. The interview process was comprised of two interactions with each individual. The following six interview questions along with probing questions guided the initial interviews (see Table 1). All interviews were conducted via phone and recorded.

Table 1

Interview Items Used During SBAE Teacher Interviews

Interview Items	
1.	Describe your past experience associated with working with students with disabilities.
2.	Describe your SBAE program and how much instructional time is spent on each aspect of the three-circle model (i.e., classroom instruction, FFA, and SAE programs).
3.	Describe how you incorporate students with disabilities into each component of the three-circle model.
4.	Describe the support you are provided by school administration / special education department for students with disabilities.
5.	Describe your role in the IEP process and the types of modifications and accommodations you have provided / provide for students with disabilities.
6.	Describe previous situations / potential eventualities where a student with disabilities was not permitted to engage in an educational activity.

Researchers conducted a follow-up interview via phone two months after the initial interview. The purpose of the second interview was two-fold: first, this interaction allowed the SBAE teachers to further reflect on the previously mentioned items and provide additional information which was applicable to this study; moreover, the follow-up interview provided a platform to conduct member checking procedures with the teachers. Researchers recorded interviews using a basic audio device that was later used to transcribe the data. We also took handwritten notes (i.e., descriptive and reflective) for each interview.

Data Analysis

After researchers transcribed the interviews, we analyzed the responses and notes using the constant comparative method. The open-coding coding process allowed us to organize the data into major categories of information (Creswell, 2014). We employed various qualitative strategies and procedures (e.g., peer review of data, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and providing rich, thick descriptions) to ensure the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We independently reviewed the interview field notes and interview data to develop notes and code the data. Then, we met as a research team to compare notes which were used to create common themes and identify noteworthy accounts.

We used member checking to ensure the credibility of the findings and interpretations. According to Creswell (2014), member checking can be used to determine the accuracy of findings by “taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to the participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate” (p. 201). In the follow-up interview, we presented the preliminary analysis and theme descriptions to the participants. In alignment with Creswell’s (2013) recommendations for member checking procedures, we asked our participants to provide their views of the preliminary analysis and to indicate if there was any missing information or misinterpretations associated with the presented themes.

We used the method of bracketing to establish confirmability and bolster the trustworthiness of our study (Merriam, 2009). According to Creswell (2013), bracketing requires researchers to put aside their beliefs of the research topic to remove biases. As members of the research team who were actively involved in the coding process of the data we have different and converging experiences associated with working with students with disabilities in a SBAE setting. We are all involved with post-secondary agricultural education teacher preparation in various capacities. Two of us currently serve as agricultural education teacher preparation faculty members who have worked with students with disabilities at the post-secondary level. We also both previously served as SBAE teachers where we worked with students with disabilities in secondary environments. One of us is a graduate student who previously engaged in a SBAE student teaching experience and had the opportunity to teach students with disabilities.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), reliability and validity are established through the methods ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Through triangulation efforts, credibility can be correlated to the level of confidence in the researcher. We utilized analyst triangulation to ensure findings were comprehensive and robust through field notes. To assure the accuracy of notes from teachers and interviews they were cross-referenced. To ascertain transferability, we purposively selected research participants to be sure that our study reflected diversity in the population. Wheeler (2015) stated that diversity is needed to make inferences about the group. Following Wheeler (2015), we established and maintained procedures and benchmarks to assure researchers achieved a high level of dependability.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the SBAE teachers’ experiences associated with the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in the various aspects of SBAE programs. Moreover, this study focused on determining the modifications and accommodations teachers provided for students with disabilities in their SBAE programs and the support provided by administration. It is important to note that teachers used the terms accommodation and modification interchangeably during the interviews. A total of three main themes emerged from the data: (1) need for communication, (2) inclusiveness for a complete program, and (3) transfer of responsibility for provided services. These themes are discussed in detail in this section.

Communication

When the SBAE teachers discussed their experiences working with students with disabilities, they commonly mentioned the importance of communication. The teachers mentioned the importance of communication with students, parents, special education staff members, and administration. Each teacher identified communication as the main priority for the success of students with disabilities. When discussing the importance of communication, Mr. Williams stated, “A high school is like an airport but without the planes. Everyone is going a million ways. And if we do not communicate, no one would ever reach the main goal.” Also, Mr. Williams emphasized the importance of communication with parents and guardians: “Communication is key. Get the family involved.” He also perceived many of his students with disabilities to have parents who were “somewhat disengaged.” Therefore, he felt if he worked closely with the students’ parents, he could encourage the parents to assist in motivating their children to be involved. Mr. Thomas

agreed and reiterated the need to actively engaging parents by saying “we have dialogue in regard to the success of the students, being sure to set attainable goals together.” Mr. Miller described parental involvement as a yes or no answer. He stated, “I have taught many other students with lesser levels of needed accommodations and they are like a traditional student, participating frequently, occasionally, or rarely. In the end, when parents are involved the participation level seems to increase.” Mr. Miller also shared he made a point to meet with parents to review IEP components/revisions, to ensure the success of their children.

The SBAE teachers who were interviewed for this study noted communication with students was very important. Ms. Harris indicated that her constant communication with her students allowed her to develop “modified expectations” for each student. Sharing Ms. Harris’ sentiment, Mr. Miller shared he holds one-on-one conversations at the beginning of the semester to map out the course goals of each student based on their ability level. Ms. Johnson perceived communication and overall care of students to be imperative when serving as a teacher. Ms. Johnson asked, “how are you a good teacher if you do not make modifications for the success of your students?”

To bolster his ability to effectively communicate with and accommodate students with disabilities, Mr. Hamilton created an online website. The site offers papers, activities, and games for additional support. He stated, “this webpage serves as an additional resource and form of communication for students. Using this interactive page, students are actively engaged not only with me as the instructor, but their classmates as well.”

The SBAE teachers mentioned the importance of communication with special education staff members and their administration. Some of the teachers described the IEP document as the first line of communication between them and their special education department. With an exception of Ms. Adams and Ms. Johnson, all other teachers received a copy of their students’ IEPs by the end of the first week of classes. Ms. Harris explained she did not attend IEP Meetings and special education teachers did not come by to explain the IEPs, but she always knew she could ask and they would help with whatever she needed. Congruent to Ms. Harris’ comments, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Thomas all noted their special education instructors served as a great resource. The teachers noted, specifically, the special education instructors could be helpful to answer questions on providing appropriate instructional support for students with disabilities and understanding revisions posted on students’ IEP forms. Mr. Thomas explained, “communication with my special education department is a two-way street.” He perceived it to be his duty to continue the dialogue with his school staff who had expertise in special education. When explaining the importance of communicating with special education staff, Mr. Williams said “I am in constant communication with the IEP instructors to make sure the students with disabilities are successful. It is putting forth a dedicated effort and trying the best for those students. And they will be successful with their modifications.”

Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Williams indicated they tried to attend all of their students’ IEP meetings. They explained these meetings were valuable to understand the students’ needs and build a bridge for communication with students, parents, administration, and special education staff members. Mr. Hamilton noted his special education department faculty members are actively engaged in reviewing all of the materials he uses in class and his digital materials he provides in his online resource. Most of the teachers were satisfied with the support they received from the special education departments at their schools. However, aside from Mr. Williams, the other teachers were not sure if their district had a mandated deadline in which they were supposed to receive all IEP information for students in their classes.

Inclusiveness of complete program

When discussing the inclusion of students with disabilities in their SBAE programs, many of the SBAE teachers provided specific examples of modification and accommodations they made to provide

enriching learning opportunities in all aspects of the SBAE program (i.e., classroom instruction, FFA, and SAE). Of the three parts of SBAE programs, teachers most commonly discussed the facilitation of students with disabilities in their classroom. Mr. Williams indicated he had a student with a visual impairment in his horticulture class. When they go out to the greenhouse, he provides the student with their own plant and tells them “do not be afraid to break this plant apart. Do whatever you need to do to be able to visualize the components I am talking about.” Mr. Williams also acknowledged, however, that he had encountered various concerns when attempting to accommodate students with disabilities in a laboratory-based setting. For example, he had a blind student in a class where they were performing a dissection. He worked with a para-educator to have them make the incisions and let the student feel the parts once they were removed. He felt teachers needed to remember that “learning occurs through all of the body’s senses. Too often in education, we think learning is done through sight and sound. Touch, smell, and taste (if appropriate) is for all students even.”

Mr. Miller described the accommodations he made for a student with a spatial orientation disability. He would give the student “typed copy of notes, complete exams/quizzes in the resource room, and extra time to complete homework assignments.” Like Mr. Miller, Ms. Harris noted she would pair her lower-achieving students with more advanced students and try to grade her students with disabilities on the skills they were able to perform. Mr. Hamilton reported he had an elevator installed in their shop to allow students with physical disabilities to have full access to shop activities.

Three of the SBAE teachers (Ms. Johnson, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Hamilton) noted they made modifications for all students in their classrooms if they had a student with an IEP in their class. Ms. Johnson said she makes the educational adjustments for all students because she never wants a student to feel singled out because of their disability.

Along with the inclusion of students with disabilities in SBAE classrooms, the teachers described how they provided opportunities for students to participate in various aspects of the National FFA Organization. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Williams described experiences they had when working with students with disabilities who wanted to engage in FFA speaking contests. Mr. Thomas described an instance where he worked with a student to develop a prepared public speech. The student wanted to work on developing his speaking skills but did not feel comfortable competing in the FFA contest. To accommodate this student, he organized a group to listen to the student’s speech. He noted the student “stepped out of his comfort zone. He still improved his speaking skills, wore his FFA jacket, and demonstrated his ability to speak in front of a group of people. I call that a success.” Mr. Williams noted some of his students with learning disabilities seem to shy away from public speaking. To accommodate these students, he has the students present one-on-one with him, a SPED teacher, or another student.

Mr. Miller provided an example of one of his students with cerebral palsy who was involved with the FFA parliamentary procedure team. Instead of standing to address the chairperson, the student remained seated. Mr. Miller considered this to be a simple modification that allowed the student to participate in the event. Mr. Williams provided a similar example where he had a legally blind student on the autism spectrum who expressed having aspirations of serving as an FFA officer for their local chapter. He worked with her on the officer application packet and she was elected as the chapter Sentinel. Mr. Williams was very proud of her hard work and expressed “she did really well.”

The SBAE teachers also provided examples of modifications/accommodations they made for students who participated in SAE programs. In fact, all of the SBAE teachers who provided input in this study indicated they required all of their students to engage in SAE programs. Mr. Thomas said he helps students find SAE projects closely related to their interests. For example, he had a student who was severely autistic who participated in the morning coffee program at the high school. In coordination with the student’s parents, Mr. Thomas helped the student set up a coffee shop in town to serve as his required SAE

project. He indicated the student now imports beans from Colombia and plans to make this his career after graduating from high school.

Mr. Miller mentioned a student who struggled with disabilities that impaired his balance and depth perception. He said the student had a strong desire to farm, which prompted Mr. Miller to talk with the student's parents about possibly developing a production-based SAE project where he could experience farming practices. The project resulted in the student getting to ride along with family members as they farmed 40 acres of corn and soybeans. Mr. Miller said "He never said anything, but his brother and parents told me how much he loved driving. They loved that he received class credit for working (or simulating working) in the real world."

Mr. Williams reported he tries to find on-campus SAE opportunities for his students with disabilities to engage in. He assigns each of these students a greenhouse task, which they have to perform throughout the semester. By "using the greenhouse as a learning tool," Mr. Williams stated, "students improve their time management, budget management, and overall responsibility." Mr. Williams added he never turns students down when they have a desire to be involved in his SBAE program. He holds "modified expectations" for his students with disabilities and strives to build a relationship with them to ensure their success.

Transferring of Responsibility for Provided Services

A theme that commonly emerged in many of the interviews with SBAE teachers was the transfer of responsibility as it related to determining the responsible party for providing services to students with disabilities. The aforementioned "passing of the buck" references how teachers personally feel and how or where they perceive their schools avoiding certain responsibilities related to special education. Of the nine teachers interviewed, six teachers indicated they did not make modifications or accommodations for students with disabilities unless the student personally asked.

Mr. Cohen stated, "I do not make adjustments for my students because in the workforce adjustments will not be made for them. If students feel they are unable to complete the assigned task they must ask the paraprofessionals for support." Mr. Cohen expressed frustration with the lack of support he receives from his administration associated with providing services to his students with disabilities. However, he indicated some of his students have paraprofessionals who provide the modifications and accommodations, but he felt it was the students' responsibility to request the support. Aligning with Mr. Cohen's statement, Ms. Tucker said, "It is the responsibility of the special education support team to assist students with disabilities in my classroom."

Mr. Williams and Mr. Hamilton provided many examples illustrating how they go above and beyond the mandated IEPs to help their students (e.g., developing a website to provide additional support for students with disabilities). However, both of these teachers noted their schools appointed a special education support person to assist each child with an IEP in their classes. Mr. Williams and Mr. Hamilton perceived the strong support from their schools' special education departments took some of the burdens off of them to in assisting them as an educator to properly implement students' IEPs. For example, Mr. Williams, a mid-career teacher (Huberman, 1989) who had taught at his current school for the past 12 years, stated it's the "school's responsibility to provide a support person for students with severe disabilities in his classroom."

Ms. Johnson explained she does all she can to help her students, but she does not have a supportive special education department. This lack of support forces her to rely on assistance from parents and guardians. She stated, "without a supportive and active special education department, the parent responsibility increases."

Concerning having problems with her school administration shifting responsibility, Ms. Adams noted her administrators are not willing to offer any support for students with disabilities outside of school. She explained she had a student with a hearing impairment who was on a career development event (CDE) team and was planning on competing at an FFA competition. When she asked for an interpreter to assist the student at the competition, her administration said “if [Student] wants to participate in FFA events, the FFA chapter is responsible for paying for an interpreter.” Ms. Adams was in strong disagreement with this decision and believed the burden of providing this special education service was “on the shoulders of the administration as FFA is co-curricular, not extra-curricular.”

During the interviews, we asked the SBAE teachers if they had any background knowledge of the special education mandates that guided the education of students with disabilities. The teachers seemed to struggle with concepts related to FAPE, as well as how the mandates impacted their responsibility in educating students with disabilities.

Conclusions / Recommendations / Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences SBAE teachers associated with the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in school-based agricultural education programs. Based on the experiences of nine SBAE teachers, three themes were identified for the need of the inclusions of students with disabilities: (1) importance of communication (2) inclusiveness for a complete program, and (3) transfer of responsibility for providing service. The study presented the uniqueness of working with special education students. The intent was not to generalize the results to all special education students, but rather to the perceptions of the participants. It is important to note caution should be taken if generalizing the results to all students with disabilities participating in SBAE. The results this study presented support the notion that education is individualized and that the modifications and accommodations provided by students' IEPs are dependent on the students' educational needs.

The SBAE teachers interviewed in this study commonly discussed the importance of communication with parents, special education teachers, students, and administration when providing educational experiences for students with disabilities. The development and implementation of IEPs for students with disabilities require effective communication and collaboration among the required and discretionary participants of the IEP team (e.g., parents, special education teacher, general education teacher, educational agency representative, interpreter of the instructional implications and evaluation results, and student) (34 C.F.R. § 300.321). According to Yell (2012), the IEP procedures serve to “help ensure that teams of individuals collaborate to create an individualized and meaningful IEP that provides a FAPE” (p. 239). The teachers' notion that parental involvement is critical in the development and implementation of IEPs is in line with the regulations of IDEA. Specifically, IDEA specifies schools must “take steps to ensure that one or both of the parents of a child with a disability are present at each IEP team meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate” (34 C.F.R. § 300.322). SBAE teachers should be active in attending a student's IEP team meeting to provide information about the student's progress and opportunities for the student. This is a great time to share and connect all aspects of a complete agricultural education program with a focus on the classroom, SAE, and FFA.

The majority of the SBAE teachers discussed the importance of communication with special education teachers at their schools to understand how to properly implement IEPs. However, two teachers stated they were not given access to their students' IEPs and other teachers mentioned they did not review the IEPs of their students. Yell (2012) posited the release of IEP to general education teachers is required and is not a violation of FERPA Mandates. Moreover, Yell noted that “teachers working with a student who has an IEP are entitled to review the information contained in the document. Schools have an affirmative duty to inform these teachers of any requirements in the IEP” (p. 262). Based on the important role general education teachers play in providing special education and related services, the teachers should request access to review the IEPs of each of their students. We concluded some of the issues teachers faced

with communication were through no fault of their own; rather, the SBAE teachers were following institutional norms within their districts.

The SBAE teachers indicated students with disabilities were involved in all three aspects of their SBAE program at some capacity (i.e., classroom / laboratory instruction, FFA, and SAE). Of the three components, the SBAE teachers noted they spent the most time and effort planning and providing special education and related services for students with disabilities in classroom and laboratory settings. The high rates of students with disabilities who enroll in career and technical education (CTE) courses have become commonplace over the past decades (Haber & Sutherland, 2008; Wagner et al., 2016). In fact, Wagner et al.'s (2016) National Longitudinal study reported 96% of students with learning disabilities took at least one secondary-level CTE course. In the context of SBAE, learning environments and activities commonly occur outside the confines of the traditional classroom (e.g., working with livestock at a school farm, working in an agricultural mechanics laboratory, traveling and competing in FFA contest, etc.), which bolsters the need to ensure student safety and avoid eventualities which could lead to teacher liability (Hainline et al., 2019; Kessell et al., 2005). SBAE teachers who have students with disabilities have a unique opportunity within their classrooms to assist in developing their skills through an SAE. The skill development of these students could take place in a variety of learning environments which could assist these students in developing lifelong skills. Therefore, it is pertinent SBAE teachers are actively involved in IEP meetings and associated procedures to provide insight on all aspects of the SBAE program, including discussion of possible limitations for students with disabilities based on the uniqueness of SBAE courses and FFA activities. This dialogue between SBAE teachers and other members of the IEP team could serve to place students in appropriate SBAE coursework based on the students' needs.

Moreover, the SBAE teachers should discuss the three aspects of SBAE programs with the IEP team and explain the obligatory nature of SAE projects for all students enrolled in SBAE courses. They should also address expectations related to students' involvement in FFA. SBAE teachers need to inform administration and the IEP team of the co-curricular nature of FFA, the benefits of FFA membership for students with disabilities (LaVerge et al., 2011), and how participation in the co-curricular organization complements the regular SBAE curriculum ([Iowa] DOE, 2018). IDEA mandates schools provide supplementary aids and services that align with students' IEPs for "nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in the manner necessary to afford children with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities" (34 C.F.R. §§ 300.42, 300.107, 300.320). With a full understanding of all three parts of the SBAE program, IEP teams will be able to make meaningful decisions on issues related to LRE and ensure the school is providing the student with a FAPE.

Special education-related litigation has drastically increased over the past forty years (Karaxha & Zirkel, 2014; Leonard, 2007; Walsh et al., 2014; Yell, 2012). With the growth of special education litigation, there is a need for teachers to have a working knowledge of education law to ensure students with disabilities are provided a FAPE. However, previous research has noted in-service teachers have little to no knowledge of educational law (Brookshire, 2002; Imber, 2008; Paul, 2001; Schimmel & Militello, 2007). Casale-Giannola (2011) reported CTE teachers have a dismal understanding of special education laws. Moreover, Casale-Giannola signified the need to enhance CTE teachers' understanding of special education law due to their required accountability based on federal mandates (e.g., IDEA and NCLB). We recommend teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development entities provide rigorous special education-related law training for CTE teachers. Yell (2012) stated that "laws are in a constant state of development and refinement; therefore, we need to be able to locate the necessary information to keep abreast of these changes." (p. v). Based on the perpetual change of educational law, the special education law trainings should provide teachers with up-to-date information associated with special education laws and teach them how to access the federal regulations themselves. Within early field-based experience programs, undergraduate students should have exposure to students with disabilities. This may include mentoring the teacher sharing experiences or participating in an IEP meeting, working/assisting a student who has an IEP, or differentiate a lesson to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Teacher educators

need to place importance on this in preparing undergraduate students and in working with cooperating teachers while students are student teaching.

Future research should take a deeper look into the issue of providing FAPE for students with disabilities in SBAE programs. These studies should seek to determine special education teachers' and administrators' perceptions and experiences with students with disabilities placed in SBAE settings. This inquiry will provide a broader lens of others who provide special education and related services for students in SBAE programs. Based on the important role parents play in the IEP development and implementation process, parents and guardians of students with disabilities in SBAE programs should be interviewed to better understand their students' educational needs and how SBAE programs can provide training for their students to prepare them for life after high school. Future research needs to occur on each component (classroom, SAE, and FFA) of SBAE to ensure students with disabilities are being included to the fullest potential or what resources could be provided to assist educators.

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