

Administrator Experience: Closing the Gap between School-Based Agricultural Education and Administration

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Introduction & Need for Innovation

The success of school-based agricultural education (SBAE) depends on administration, which is influenced by principal perceptions (Smith & Myers, 2012). Teacher satisfaction and retention is linked to administrator understanding (Rice, LaVergne, & Gartin, 2011). Solomonson (2017) recommended the development of a program for administrators to showcase impact of agricultural education and FFA. The *Administrator Experience* was created as an event for administrators of schools with SBAE programs, held concurrently with the State FFA Leadership Conference. The *Administrator Experience* serves as an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between SBAE and program administration on a local and state level.

How It Works

Planning: The planning director solicited topics from members of the SBAE profession, created recruitment materials, and handled all room scheduling and conference logistics.

Recruitment: The recruitment for the event was done via the California program listserv.

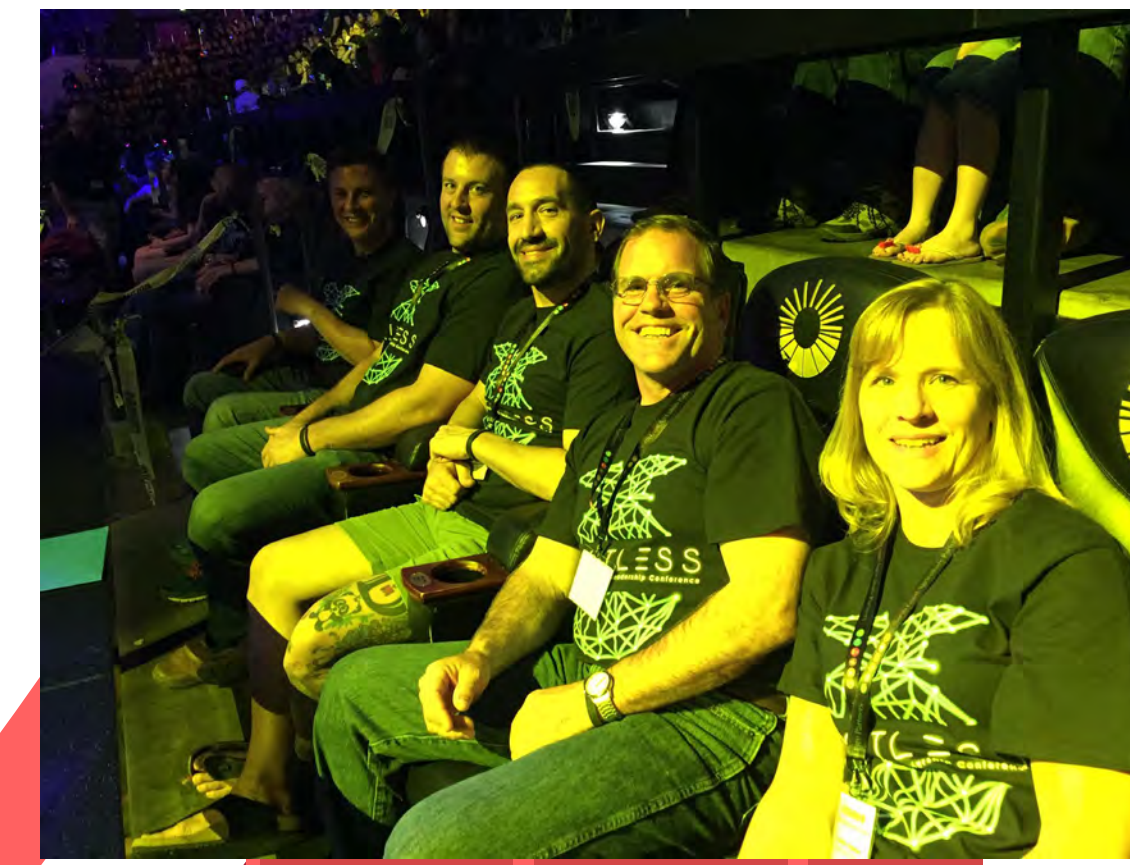
Implementation: The conference began mid-day on a Friday during the State FFA Leadership Conference and ended the following day at noon. Below is the conference schedule for 2019.

| Day 1 | |
|--------------|---|
| 8:30 – 9:00 | Check In and Registration |
| 9:00 | Welcome |
| 9:15 | Remarks, State FFA Advisor |
| 9:30 | Review of Conference |
| 10:00 | Keynote Speaker, Topic-California Agriculture |
| 11:00 | Break |
| 11:15 | Supporting your Agriculture Teachers |
| 11:45 | Lunch |
| 12:30 | Meet for Opening Session |
| 1:00 – 3:30 | FFA Opening Session |
| 4:00 – 5:00 | Teach Ag Campaign |
| 8:00 – 10:30 | FFA Second General Session |
| Day 2 | |
| 7:00 | Breakfast with FFA Alumni |
| 8:00 | Judges Meeting Orientation |
| 8:30 | Award Judging |
| 1:00 | Lunch and Debriefing |
| 2:00 – 3:00 | Administrators: FFA Foundation Reception |
| 2:00 – 3:00 | Counselors: Pathways Workshop |
| 3:30 – 6:00 | FFA Conference Third General Session |

Evaluation: Evaluation was performed in the form of an email survey soliciting feedback from participants.



Participants found relevancy in judging student proficiency award interviews (left) and also had the opportunity to attend FFA State Conference Sessions (right).



"I never really thought about how much ag is part of our everyday lives and we need to recruit people to work in that field."

"Supporting Ag teachers is important and understanding all that they do."

Results to Date

- A pilot event, offered to administrators from the North Coast region during 2017 had 14 participants.
- During the 2018 and 2019 years, the statewide event served 43 administrators per year.
- 2019 *Administrator Experience* evaluations ($N = 24$) rated the experience favorably ($M = 4.58$, $SD = .50$) when 1 = not favorable and 5 = very favorable.
- There is room to improve in terms of relevancy as, when prompted, the *Mode* was 4 ($M = 4.2$, $SD = .58$) when 1 = not relevant and 5 = very relevant.
- A component of the *Administrator Experience* consistently marked "very relevant" was judging proficiency interviews.
- Conference impacts also included general increase in knowledge of agriculture as an industry.

References

Rice, J. E., LaVergne, D. D., & Gartin, S. A. (2011). Agricultural teacher perceptions of school components as motivational factors to continue teaching and demotivational factors to discontinue teaching. *Journal of Career and Technical Education*, 26(2), 105-115. doi:10.21061/jcte.v26i2.529

Smith, A. G., & Myers, B. E. (2012). Perceptions of Florida secondary school principals toward agricultural education. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 53(3), 154-165. doi:10.5032/jae.2012.03154

Solomonson, J. (2017). *Determining why agricultural educators are leaving the profession and how to increase the retention rate* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7225&context=etd>

Costs & Resources Needed

Costs: For the 2019 conference (43 administrators) the total cost was \$6,450 (covered by registration fees at \$150/participant).

Additional Resources: Audio visual equipment, guest speakers, and meeting rooms (all provided by State FFA Conference concurrently in session).

Considerations: This project was facilitated by the program director of a statewide professional development contract serving SBAE in California. The director's costs were absorbed by this contract.

Although the program director offered to cover hotel rooms for participants, no one took advantage of the offer.



Conference participants had the opportunity to visit with FFA alumni and new teachers during the two-day event in both formal sessions and more relaxed networking settings.

Future Plans & Advice to Others

Future Plans: California will continue to offer the *Administrator Experience* as a complement to its State FFA Leadership Conference. Facilitating the interaction of administrators, students, and teachers from SBAE programs has served as a powerful mechanism for garnering support of local programs, agriculture, and agricultural education statewide.

Advice: Other states should capitalize on what is already offered at existing State FFA Leadership Conferences. Engaging administrators in positive, immersive opportunities where they can be active participants rather than bystanders is necessary.