

Teacher Perceptions of the Impact and Challenges of Middle School Agricultural Education Experiences in Kansas

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Introduction/Conceptual Framework

- Middle school is the time to get students involved in future career areas and explore types of education, vocational schools and colleges (Anderman & Maehr, 1994).
- Middle school students are at a development stage in which they are excited to learn, curious, and are beginning to become aware of future career decisions they need to make in the near future (Budke & Woodin, 1971).
- Sense of belonging when applied to middle school students as feeling personally respected, included, accepted, and supported by teachers and other adults (Goodenow & Grady, 1992)

Purpose

- The goal of this study was to **identify perceived challenges** agriculture teachers have when teaching a middle school agriculture class in Kansas; and **investigate the potential impact** of middle school agricultural experiences on personal growth and high school agricultural education participation.

Methods

- A survey was sent to all Kansas agriculture teachers ($N = 240$) in 2018.
- 154 teachers completed the survey
 - 64% response rate
- Survey was evaluated by a committee to check for validity, and post-hoc reliability was conducted on the 11 scale items resulting in a Chronbach's alpha of .85.

Teaching middle school agriculture classes can be challenging but have a positive impact on personal growth and high school agricultural education participation.

Recommendations

- Support teachers in developing a curriculum and providing in-service focusing on this age group.
- Future research is to explore additional events to expose middle school students to state-level events in Kansas FFA.
- Teachers to work with their school districts to fit a middle school agriculture course into the curriculum.

References

Anderman, E. M. & Maehr, M. L (1994). Motivation and schooling in the middle grades. *Review of Educational Research*, 64(2), 287-309.
Budke, W. E., & Woodin, R. J. (1971). New approaches to occupational exploration in the middle school. *Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture*, 12(3), 1-8. doi 10.5032/jaatea.1971.03001
Goodenow, C. & Grady, K. E. (1992). The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 62(1), 60-71.

Problems Kansas Agricultural Teachers have when Teaching Middle School Students		
Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Different levels of student interest and involvement	47	18.43
Lack of middle school FFA CDEs offered above the local level	42	16.47
Too full class schedule	33	12.94
Lack of resources and curriculum	31	12.16
Lack of middle school FFA LDEs offered the local level	27	10.59
Recruitment	20	7.84
Insufficient Funding	18	7.06
Insufficient Class Length	10	3.92
Location of middle school	9	3.53
Administration support	7	2.75
Community Support	0	0
Other	11	4.31

Note. Teachers were able to select more than one challenge; therefore the percent total does not equal 100

Top Perceived Areas of Growth in Middle School Students

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Agricultural Awareness	69.67	21.42
Personal Growth	69.20	18.93
Performance in Agriculture Class	67.84	17.08
Career Awareness	66.47	20.11
Leadership	57.63	21.33
Accountability for Agricultural Course Work	56.42	21.17

Perceived Impact of Middle School Agriculture Experiences on High School Agriculture Involvement

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Increased Enrollment in High School Agriculture Class	70.83	24.14
Increased Involvement in FFA CDEs	61.46	21.71
Increased Involvement in FFA LDEs	54.63	23.07
Increased Participation in SAEs	51.72	23.09
Increased "Burn Out"	31.33	23.80

Note. 0 = Not Interested, 100 = Extremely Interested