

**A Comparison of FFA Activities Reported by Principals and Teachers in Secondary
Agricultural Education Programs**

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Introduction/Conceptual Framework

Students have numerous opportunities to participate in FFA with guidance from the agricultural education teacher. There is limited modern research on which FFA activities are currently practiced in agricultural education programs. Student FFA opportunities include participation in Career Development Events (CDEs), Leadership Development Events (LDEs), Speaking Development Events (SDEs), FFA scholarships, FFA degrees, FFA proficiencies, and FFA star awards to name a few (National FFA Organization, 2018). FFA activities require commitment from the school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teacher with clear communication and support of school administrators. Knowledge of current FFA activities at schools is needed to better support practitioners in the industry and to better prepare future SBAE teachers to lead successful programs and careers, which is a current question under the American Association for Agricultural Education's Research Priority Three (Roberts et al., 2016).

The concept this study was based on is that for principals to make good decisions about the agricultural education program; the principals need to have information about that program (Martin et al., 1986). According to Rush et al. (1984) and Martin et al. (1986), principals may not know what agricultural education teachers do related to FFA activities because of limited contact with the teacher. Given this information, the purpose of this study was to compare agricultural education program FFA activities currently in practice at secondary schools, as reported by high school principals and SBAE teachers. Activities reported by teachers compared to principals may be an indicator of communication between both parties and could identify communication areas that need improvement.

Methods

The instrument used in this study concerning FFA activities in secondary agriculture programs used a cross-sectional, descriptive survey design (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The population of this study was both high school principals and SBAE teachers in [State] who work at a high school with an FFA chapter. A sample size of ($n = 285$) principals and ($n = 285$) teachers was used. Simple, random sampling was used based on a list of all FFA chapters in [State] to select 285 schools for teacher and principal contacts. A panel of three experts at [University] in agricultural teacher education were consulted to establish instrument validity. Data for the study were collected using a Qualtrics online questionnaire. Responses were solicited through email using Dillman's tailored design method with five points of contact (Dillman et al., 2014). Participants were asked a series of 20 questions to determine if their programs participated in selected FFA activities determined through a review of FFA literature. A pilot test with ($N = 32$) principals and teachers was conducted a priori to establish an instrument reliability of ($\alpha = 0.80$). A total of ($n = 76$, 26.67%) principals and ($n = 86$, 30.18%) SBAE teachers responded. With response rates below 85%, early and late responders were compared to control for nonresponse error, with no statistically significant differences found (Lindner et al., 2001).

Findings

The item with the highest responses by principals was attending district FFA meetings or conventions ($f = 75$, 98.68%). Having chapter FFA officers and participating in CDEs were reported most frequently ($f = 86$, 100%) by teachers Table 1 displays the difference

in the percentage of principals and teachers reporting FFA activities depicted with $\Delta\%$ along with the full list of frequencies and percentages for each activity.

Table 1

Agricultural Education Program FFA Activities Reported by Principals and Teachers

FFA Activity	Principals		Teachers		$\Delta\%$
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	%
District Meetings/Conventions	75	98.68	85	98.84	-0.16
Local FFA Meetings	74	97.37	83	96.51	0.86
Chapter FFA Officers	74	97.37	86	100.00	-2.63
Area Meetings/Conventions	71	93.42	85	98.84	-5.42
CDE Participation	70	92.11	86	100.00	-7.89
State Meetings/Conventions	69	90.79	85	98.84	-8.05
LDE Participation	69	90.79	84	97.67	-6.88
FFA Scholarships	68	89.47	69	80.23	9.24
FFA Chapter Social Media	66	86.84	72	83.72	3.12
SDE Participation	65	85.53	70	81.40	4.13
Local FFA Banquet	65	85.53	82	95.35	-9.82
FFA Degrees	64	84.21	85	98.84	-0.79
District, Area, State Officers	63	82.89	64	74.42	8.47
FFA Star Awards	57	75.00	43	50.00	25.00
FFA Proficiency Awards	55	72.37	47	54.65	17.72
FFA Chapter Awards Program	54	71.05	41	47.67	23.38
Development of a POA	52	68.42	69	80.23	-11.81
National Meetings/Conventions	38	50.00	24	27.91	22.09
FFA Talent Competition	35	46.05	42	48.84	-2.79
Agriscience Fair Participation	31	40.79	20	23.26	17.53

Note. Principals ($n = 76$); Teachers ($n = 86$). $\Delta\% = \text{Teacher \%} - \text{Principal \%}$.

Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, there are some inconsistencies between the percentage of SBAE teachers and principals reporting participation in FFA events. Chapter officers, CDEs, LDEs, district, area, and state conventions, and local meetings were reported the most by both groups. Participating in FFA star awards, national chapter awards, and attending the national convention was reported more often by principals than teachers. Do principals think these activities are taking place when, in reality, they are not? Differences in reported activities between principals and teachers could be attributed to a lack of awareness with principals due to weak communication, as was found by Rush et al. (1984) and Martin et al. (1986). SBAE teachers should provide reminders for why FFA participation is essential and keep principals aware of their FFA chapter activities. Inviting principals to events is a great way to show the benefits of the organization. Effective communication efforts between both parties must continue to maintain support for participation in FFA activities. Further research investigating effective communication techniques between the agricultural education teacher and the principal should be conducted so other educators can learn from those who are successful in this area.

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