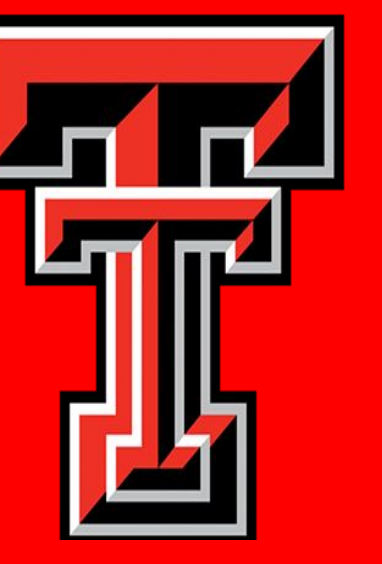


# Factors That Positively Affect Agricultural Educator Longevity and Retention in Kentucky



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## Introduction

- CooperGibson Research (2018) reported that there is an overall shortage of qualified educators.
- Agricultural educators specifically had a national average attrition rate of 4.3% ( Smith et al., 2018), which overall is below the national average of 16% across all educators (Gray et al., 2015).
- Kentucky in the 2017-2018 year had an attrition rate of 7% , while the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) Region IV attrition rate was 4.7% ( NAAE, 2018). Unlike other states in the region Kentucky has five institutions that certify agricultural educators.
- The purpose of this study was to uncover the motivators why veteran agricultural educators in Kentucky pursued a career in the profession, chose to remain in the profession, and obstacles they commonly had to overcome.

## Theoretical Framework

- The Hierarchy of Needs as described by Maslow (2000 ) was used in order to understand the needs an agricultural educator has to have met in order to reach self-actualization in their profession.
- Darling-Hammond et al. concluded that the top areas that attribute to educator retention regardless of discipline are as follows: salaries ; preparation and entry cost ; hiring and personnel management ; support and induction of new teachers ; working conditions, school leadership, professional collaborations ( 2016).
- On average 19 - 30% of new teachers cited leaving the profession within five years of employment to enter the private sector ( Carver-Thomas & Darling- Hammond, 2017)
- An investigation to understand where the disconnect occurs between the top retention factors and reaching self-actualization in agricultural educators at the secondary level could be used to improve the percentage of stayers (NAAE, 2018)

## Methodology

- A three round, Delphi study was conducted (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), in order to reach consensus
- All secondary agricultural educators with a minimum of five years experience in the state of Kentucky at the time of administration (N=240) were invited via email to participate with a portion of instructors (n=53) agreeing to participate
- Participants were emailed each round over the course of three consecutive weeks, having a window from Monday morning until Friday evening to complete their response.
- In Round I participants were asked to give their full responses to the following three questions: “What are the primary reasons you became an agricultural educator?”; “Why have you decided to stay in agricultural education for five or more years?”; “What are some of the barriers you have overcome that may have caused you to leave the profession?”
- Analytical Induction (AI) was used by the investigator after Round I to thematically categorize responses into sub-categories under each question (Katz, 2001 ).
- Round II and Round III consisted of ranking responses in order of the biggest influence on them to least.
- Round III found consensus among all nine total sub-categories

## Results

Table 1

Round III Consensus of Q1: ““What are the primary reasons you decided to become an agricultural teacher?” (n=24)

Sub-Category	Statement	% of respondents ranking 1st
1	I grew up on a family farm and understood the importance of showing the world what it is that agriculturalists do.	44
2	I love the agricultural industry.	29.17
3	I worked with 4-H and/or FFA youth team(s) and wanted to stay involved in youth development and teaching life skills to students.	32

Table 2

Round III Consensus of Q2: “Why have you decided to stay in the agricultural education profession for five or more years?” (n=24)

Sub-category	Statement	% of respondents ranking 1st
1	I find most days enjoyable in the job.	54.17
2	I enjoy the relationships I build with students in their FFA careers and SAE’s, allowing me to help them build themselves up more than a regular teacher.	50
3	Agricultural educators in this state receiving an extended employment compensation.	54.55

Table 3

Round III Consensus of Q3: “What are some of the barriers that you have encountered during your teaching career that you have had to overcome that may have caused you to leave the profession?” (n=24)

Sub-category	Statement	% of respondents ranking 1st
1	Lack of students valuing their educations.	29.17
2	Time management between being a teacher, advisor, spouse, parent, and/or any other roles which we fill.	30.43
3	The lack of respect for education in modern society and the negative attitudes towards teachers.	28.57
3	Politicians or other groups attacking our pension, health insurance, other benefits.	28.57

## Conclusions

- Influence to become an Ag Teacher comes more from Pre-Collegiate Experience**
  - 75% cited their Ag Teacher
  - Only 4 respondents cited Collegiate Ag Professor
- Most Prevalent Reasons cited for becoming an Agricultural Teacher**
  - Stepping stone for becoming an administrator/guidance counselor
  - Wanting to stay involved in youth development
  - Having a love for agriculture
  - Transition to owning a farm
- Intrinsic Motivation to fill Self-Actualization**
  - Referencing a passion for the subject area
  - Referencing a feeling of self-fulfillment by empowering the youth to make a difference
  - Citing the need to educate the world about agriculture
- Motivated by Compensation:**
  - 10% Transitioning to a higher paid step in career chain
  - 75% respondents cited 12-month contract

## Recommendations

- Recommendations for future studies include:
  - Comparison between States
  - Examine specific career groups
  - Further explore motivations among and within groups
  - Study other CTE branches for comparison
- Use of data collected in order to formulate professional development for current teachers to help address challenges commonly cited as being factors which made individuals consider leaving the profession
- Share information with teacher preparation programs

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