



Building Muscle: Identifying Resiliency Needs of Beginning Agriculture Teachers

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Introduction

- Researchers have indicated that teachers with higher levels of resilience have more cognitive and physical energy to manage their responsibilities. (Thieman et al., 2014)
- Resiliency can lead to enhanced teacher effectiveness, improved job satisfaction, and the flexibility to adjust to changing conditions. (Bobek, 2002)
- Hoopes (2017) identified seven resilience muscles that individuals can utilize to maintain or regain productivity in the midst of challenging circumstances and disruptive change.
- Researchers have asserted that resilience is not a fixed trait, and can be improved. (Hoopes & Kelly, 2004)

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore beginning agriculture teachers' perceived areas of concern about their resilience from which induction program leaders can provide resilience building programming.

Theoretical Framework

- Henderson and Milstein's (2003) theory of resilience, and Hoopes' (2017) concept of resilience muscles guided this study.
- Hoopes described seven areas (*muscles*) that can be used by resilient individuals to maintain or regain productivity, motivation, commitment, and well-being in challenging situations.
- Connor (1993) noted that resilient individuals are able to see the opportunity in changing situations, and therefore, tend to be more successful.
- As it relates to the present study, building resilience through induction programming, Easterly and Myers (2018) noted a link between professional development and resilience.

References

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Methods

- The participants for this study were first-year (7) agriculture teachers in New Mexico enrolled in the Beginning Agriscience Teacher Support (BATS) program.
- BATS is an induction program for beginning teachers in a collaborative agreement between New Mexico State University and Eastern New Mexico University funded by a USDA-Higher Education Challenge Grant.
- During the initial BATS workshop, the participants were provided instruction regarding resilience, characteristics of resilient teachers, and strategies to build resilience.
- At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants engaged in semi-structured interviews with program leaders regarding their resilience *muscles*.
- The interviews were recorded and transcribed by BATS program leaders.
- Transcripts were qualitatively coded for resilience key words and then categorized into the respective resilience *muscle*.

Results

- All resilience muscles were identified as areas where improvement was needed.
- Creativity and Experimenting ($f = 5$) were the most common *muscles* needing improvement.
- The participants were least concerned about their Confidence and Structure ($f = 2$) *muscles*.

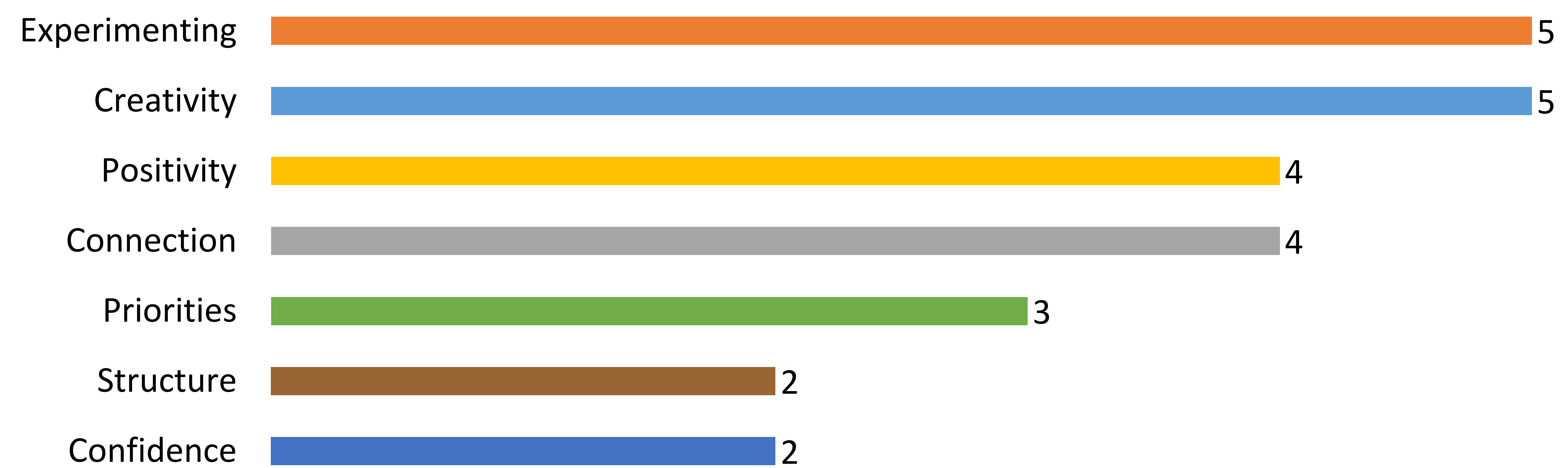


Figure 1. Resilience Muscle Improvement Areas (N = 7)

Conclusions/Recommendations

- The participants were the most resilient in creating structure out of chaos and confidence in their abilities to navigate challenges.
- The participants had concerns regarding their abilities to manage and accept challenges along with finding creative solutions to solve them.
- It is recommended that researchers continue to identify effective resiliency-building strategies that can be embedded in preservice teacher education program.
- Instruction in resiliency-building strategies should also be provided to experienced teachers through in-service programming.
- All teachers should continually monitor their resilience and employ reflection as a tool to identify their strengths and weaknesses that may be maintained and improved.