

# A COMPARISON OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE BEFORE AND AFTER A 14-WEEK FIELD EXPERIENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

- Student teaching is one of the most critical components in the development of future agriculture teachers (Deeds et al., 1991)
- The student teaching experience should be constructive as well as advantageous

## METHODOLOGY

- 35 items were categorized under the following five core elements:
  - Classroom and laboratory instruction
  - Student leadership development (FFA Activities)
  - Cooperating teacher/student teacher relationships
  - School and community relationships/resources
  - Supervised agricultural experience programs
- Students rated their perceived level of importance as: 1 (no importance), 2 (low importance), 3 (medium importance), 4 (much importance), and 5 (high importance)

## FINDINGS

Element	Pre-test		Post-test		% Diff
	<i>M<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>SD<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>M<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>SD<sup>p</sup></i>	
<b><u>Classroom and Laboratory Instruction</u></b>					
A discipline management plan is used in a structured environment	4.53	.77	4.47	0.70	-1.2
Creative teaching methods as a basis for daily instruction	4.32	.82	4.68	0.58	7.2
<b><u>Student Leadership Development (FFA Activities)</u></b>					
Opportunities for student teacher to judge/monitor district/state CDEs	3.47	1.02	3.79	0.71	6.4
<b><u>School and Community Relationships/Resources</u></b>					
Recognized integrity of cooperating teacher	4.68	.48	4.42	0.69	-5.2
Availability of facilities	4.58	.51	4.63	0.60	1.0
<b><u>Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs</u></b>					
All students have an SAE requirement, with accurate record books	3.95	.78	3.37	0.76	-11.6
Diversity within the students' SAEs	3.84	.83	3.47	0.84	-7.4
Student participation in advanced awards and degrees on all levels	3.42	1.07	3.68	0.75	5.2

## PURPOSE

- Determine preservice teachers' perceptions of important elements before the student teaching experience
- Determine preservice teachers' perceptions of important elements after the student teaching experience
- Determine if there was a change in the student teachers' perceptions of the important elements

## CONCLUSIONS

- The preservice teachers perceived the most important element of the student teaching experience was the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship, which is congruent with findings of Harlin et al. (2002) and Young and Edwards (2006).
- The element of the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationships is the only element that went unchanged. All others contained items that changed positively or negatively.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For practice | Teacher educators might consider (1) placing a higher emphasis on the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationships (2) providing additional opportunities for preservice teachers to judge or monitor CDEs, and (3) placing students in cooperating centers with diverse facilities.

For research | Research could be conducted to further explore the role of the cooperating teacher and the important aspects of the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship.