

# Identifying the Concerns of Early, Mid, and Late Career

## Agriculture Teachers in Illinois

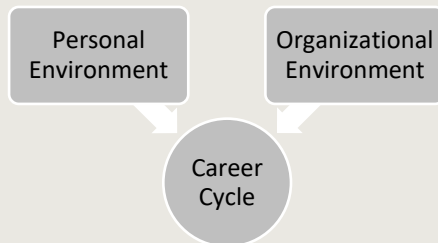
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### Introduction

Knowledge of teacher concerns helps improve professional development and teacher education. When not addressed, concerns can lead to lower teacher retention and recruitment.

### Theoretical Framework

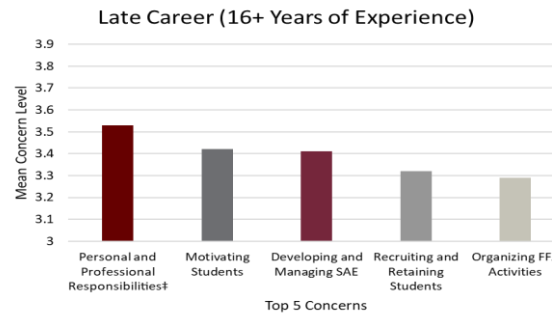
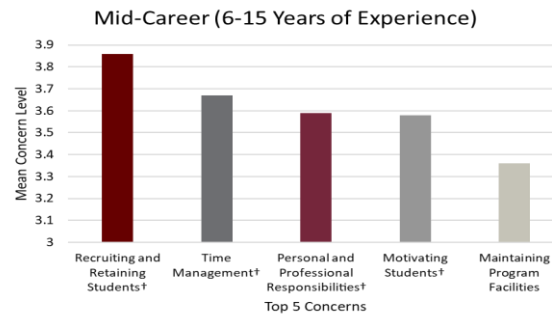
The theoretical framework for this study is the Teacher Career Cycle (Fessler and Christensen, 1992). This theory identifies 8 career stages that are influenced by the personal and organizational environment and explains that teachers may not necessarily move to each stage in order. The stages include: Pre-service, Induction, Competency Building, Enthusiastic & Growing, Career Frustration, Career Stability, Career Wind-Down, and Career Exit.



### Methodology

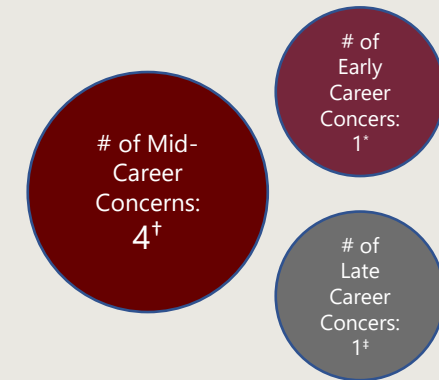
The population consisted of all Illinois Agriculture Teachers (N=432) with a sample of n = 156. An instrument with a Likert-type scale of 20 areas of concern was administered with 1 being *not concerned* and 5 being *extremely concerned*. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results were split into Early (1-5 years), Mid (6-15 years), and Late (16+ years) experience groups. Concerns above a mean of 3.5 were considered significant.

**Illinois Agriculture Teachers are concerned with motivating students, recruiting and retaining students, balancing personal and professional responsibilities, and time management.**



### Results

The Early Career group had 1 significant concern, the Mid-Career group had 4, and the Late career had 1. Two groups (Early and Mid-Career) shared one significant concern: motivating students.



### Conclusion

Teachers in the Mid-Career group are most likely in the Career Frustration or Enthusiastic and Growing stages which could lead to more concerns. The low mean concerns in the Early Career group is consistent with the literature that concerns of teachers start small and grow over time. Teachers in the Late Career group are more likely to have influences from the personal environment which is consistent with their top

### Recommendation

It is recommended that state stakeholders should provide professional development on the four identified topics of concern. It is also recommended that stakeholders continue to offer professional development specific to experience groups.