

**AgSnacc: Using Podcasts for a Taste of Career Exploration**

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### **Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea**

School-based agricultural education (SBAE) includes career development as a programmatic component through extra- and co-curricular lenses (Association for Career & Technical Education, 2021; California Department of Education (CDE), 2017; The National FFA Organization, 2021), which includes career exploration (CDE, 2021). Exploration serves as a mechanism to broaden knowledge of potential careers and more deeply investigate available careers (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Within California, career exploration is encouraged through completion of coursework in specified career pathways combined with work-based learning experiences (CDE, 2007). During the transition to virtual learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, California SBAE leaders worked to provide alternative methods to incorporate career exploration into classrooms; thus, the AgSnacc was born as a collaborative effort of a state workforce development funded grant project and the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) Brock Center for Agricultural Communication (Brock Center).

Podcasts have become so popular as a mode of education – both in formal and informal settings – that ‘education’ categories are a notably common sub-group on podcast aggregators (Drew, 2017). Part of the value of podcasts for educational purposes combines the ease of production with a sense of informality and intimate listening through headphones, which most often leads users to listen from beginning to end (Drew, 2017). Podcasting offers “a chance to connect with others in different and distant places around the globe, to hear remarkable personal stories at entirely self-chosen times, and to gain new insights” (Swiatek, 2018, p. 173). Podcast features “are of particular benefit when applied to education, particularly at a time when online learning is becoming increasingly popular” (Drew, 2017, p. 202). A synthesis of podcast education literature showed students perceive podcasts as beneficial tools that provide autonomy in the learning environment and teachers noted improved student behavior (Kay, 2012).

Research on podcasting as a communication medium has documented notable differences from other audio media such as radio and audiobooks (Berry, 2016; Bonini, 2015). Podcasting’s ease of production offers special value for educators who can be unconstrained by the infrastructure and gatekeepers involved in more traditional manners of audio publication. Llinares et al. (2018) noted “the processes of production and the creation of content affords new freedoms with regard to the communication of knowledge” (p. 2).

### **How It Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps**

Creating AgSnacc involved four phases: planning, recording, production, and distribution. Planning involved generating the format for the podcast. Via conversations with SBAE teachers, the project director determined that 20–30-minute interviews were most appropriate. From there, a list of generic career exploration questions was developed, which were then shared with SBAE teachers and preservice teachers for further refinement.

Phase two, recording, involved soliciting and recording interviews. A spreadsheet was used to identify potential participants in careers. Participants were invited via email using Calendly, and its Zoom integration, for scheduling sessions. Prior to interviewing, participants signed release agreements distributed via Adobe Sign. Interviews were recorded in Zoom and generated audio transcripts were emailed to participants for review.

In production, the Brock Center edited interviews for sound quality and added pre-recorded introduction and outro pieces. Cal Poly teacher candidates prepared curriculum activities to accompany the podcasts for classroom integration. The episodes, transcripts, and

lesson materials were placed on a website (link to be included with poster) which linked podcast sessions to streaming services (e.g., Spotify). The website also included information for scheduling additional career exploration interviews.

Distribution was carried out via email and social media. The official project was distributed to the California agricultural education listserv. A partnership with the North Coast Agriculture Partners, also focusing on career exploration, was leveraged to include the link to the AgSnacc website. Social media sites for both the state teaching association and the Brock Center were also used as mechanisms to disseminate the podcast series.

### **Results to Date/Implications**

Between October of 2020 and February of 2021, 24 individual podcast sessions were recorded and 16 have been fully produced and published to the AgSnacc website. Upon website launch, items were shared via the California agricultural education listserv and the state association and Brock Center Instagram pages. Initial feedback from SBAE teachers has been positive, noting the inclusion of activities to help implement the curriculum into the SBAE classroom immediately. Additional teacher comments will be included with the final poster.

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

Future plans include final production of all recordings and the addition of more career exploration interviews to add to the podcast library. Also, to expand podcast access for diverse students, the project leadership would like to include podcast transcripts in different languages for students designated as English Learners; the first translation series being in Spanish. Also related to distribution, the project was initially designed with one state in mind. The podcast creators also wish to promote the series at a national level. This would also include the recording of additional episodes representing careers from across the country. The Brock Center would also like to continue to work on crafting marketing and search engine organization (SEO) related strategies to expand the searchability of the podcast on Google, increasing overall web presence. As a final element of future planning, the Brock Center would like to conduct analysis of the project to assess website traffic and podcast listenership.

For others planning on implementing a similar podcast project for high school implementation, the inclusion of classroom activities is important. Providing teachers tools for immediate implementation has increased usefulness of the episodes. Additionally, tracking the types of careers and backgrounds of potential interviewees will make for a more diverse library of episodes. Concerning podcast production, while the initial purchase of professional equipment can be expensive, it provides a professional product that enhances the listener experience.

### **Costs/Resources Needed**

AgSnacc was a special projected funded by a state workforce development grant. Fixed costs paid for by the grant included recording equipment (\$350), curriculum development stipends (2 at \$150 each for a total of \$300), the cost of website set up and 3 years of podcast hosting (\$2,000), which totaled \$2,650. Variable costs included production of episodes estimated at \$150 per episode, for a total of \$2,400 to produce 16 podcasts paid to Brock Center. The grand total paid for by the grant was \$5,050. Brock Center used Adobe Audition, part of the Creative Cloud suite, to produce the podcasts, which is available to educators and students at \$19.99 per month. Additional costs incurred by the Brock Center included the purchase of the podcast hosting site (Podbean) to obtain the RSS feed, which charges \$9.99 per month.

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