

**A Needs Assessment of South Carolina School-Based  
Agricultural Educators' Archival Skills**

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## Introduction

Conducting a needs assessment of in-service teachers is essential to increase their professional capacity and further improve teacher preparation programs (NCATE, 2010). In school-based agricultural education (SBAE) specifically, teachers have a variety of roles and responsibilities (Eck et al., 2019; Terry & Briers, 2010), but one that has not been specifically considered is their ability to keep historic records of their SBAE program using archival skills. Archival skills become increasingly important as the National FFA Organization (2022) closes in on its 100-year anniversary, which will occur in 2028. The National FFA (2022) is structured on three levels, including local FFA chapters, state FFA associations, and the national organization. On a national level, an archive is held at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Library, which “contains correspondence, minutes, newsletter, publications, reports, audio cassettes, video cassettes, and photographs” (IUPUI, 2019, para. 2) dating back to 1916. Unfortunately, state and local archives vary state to state and program by program. Therefore, it is essential to determine the current level of archives and archival ability, especially at the local level. The purpose of this study was to determine South Carolina SBAE teachers' awareness and aptitude of archival skills related to FFA chapter artifacts. Four research objectives guided this study: (1) Identify SBAE teacher's current proficiency level of archival skills, (2) Identify SBAE teachers' interest level related to archival skills, (3) Describe SBAE teachers' training needs for archiving FFA/SBAE program artifacts using mean weighted discrepancy scores (MWDS), and (4) Identify historical artifacts held by South Carolina SBAE programs.

## Theoretical Frame

This study was framed in the self-efficacy theory, as the theory focuses on an individual's confidence in achieving a specific task or skill (Bandura, 1977). A teachers' training and level of experience can impact their self-efficacy, as Bandura (1977) identified four types of experiences serving as predictors, with the greatest being mastery experiences. Unfortunately, many teachers, especially those early career teachers, rely heavily on vicarious experiences. Specifically, this study aimed to evaluate the self-efficacy of SBAE teachers related to their archival skills for their SBAE program and FFA chapter.

## Methodology

This descriptive research study (Privitera, 2017) aimed to reach South Carolina SBAE teachers ( $N = 154$ ). Seventy-seven (50 % of the population) SBAE teachers participated in the study. Participants were 40% male ( $n = 31$ ), ranging from 21 to 64 years of age, including first year teachers through those with more than 30 years of experience, and the majority (62%) held a master's degree. The researchers utilized Qualtrics to distribute the researcher-developed survey instrument using QR codes at the South Carolina FFA tractor driving career development event. This methodology to collect data implemented a time and place sampling method (Oliver & Hinkle, 1982) as the state event brings the majority of SBAE teachers together in one place. The instrument was designed to assess SBAE teachers' proficiency and importance of 18 archival skills on a five-point Likert scale of agreement (i.e., 1 = least proficient/important, 5 = most proficient/important) following the Borich Needs Assessment Model (Borich, 1980). The second component of the instrument asked teacher to report on their current local FFA archives. Ultimately, the research team aimed to identify the discrepancy between teachers' self-perceived proficiency and interest in FFA/SBAE program archival skills. The resulting discrepancy scores with the greatest positive rank identifies the highest priority for professional development

(Borich, 1980), leading to purposeful professional development opportunities for SBAE teachers in South Carolina.

### **Results/Findings**

The first objective aimed to describe South Carolina SBAE teacher's current proficiency level of archival skills, which ranged in mean scores from a low of 1.73 for *storing negatives and slides* to a high of 2.27 for *storing, displaying, and sharing artifacts* on a five-point Likert-type scale of agreement. All 18 archival skills fell within the less than proficient category of the five-point scale, as the mean scores were all 2.27 or below. The second objective focused on SBAE teachers' interest or desired skill level related to these archival skills, which ranged from a low mean score of 2.98 for *storing negatives and slides* to a high mean score of 3.92 for *digitizing collections*. South Carolina SBAE teachers identified an interest in reaching a proficient level for all 18 archival skills based on mean scores. The third objective described South Carolina SBAE teachers' training needs for archiving FFA/SBAE program artifacts using MWDS. The MWDS ranged from a low (least important) of 3.68 for *assessing archival value of artifacts* to the greatest MWDS (most important) of 6.62 for *digitizing collections*. The next four priority areas were *preserving digital collections* (MWDS = 6.30), *storing, displaying, and sharing artifacts* (MWDS = 6.25), *selecting proper file formats for digitizing collections* (MWDS = 5.99), and *preserving photographs* (MWDS = 5.93). The final objective aimed to identify historical artifacts currently held by South Carolina SBAE programs. The most common artifact held was significant FFA jackets (51%), followed by printed photographs and chapter paraphernalia (both at 45%), then banquet programs (30%), and FFA chapter meeting minutes (22%). Less than nine percent of participants identified having archival items such as film slides, photograph negatives, or audio/video tapes of FFA chapter activities.

### **Conclusions**

Overarchingly, participants felt a lack of proficiency in archival skills related to their FFA chapter and SBAE program but had a desire to improve such skills. This interest in improvement was reflected in the MWDS, which helped to prioritize the top five areas of need (i.e., digitizing collections, preserving digital collections, storing, displaying, and sharing artifacts, selecting proper file formats for digitizing collections, and preserving photographs). Although South Carolina SBAE teachers identified an interest in archival skills moving forward, the limited amount of current chapter artifacts is concerning, as just over half of the participants have historic FFA jackets and only 45% have printed photographs or chapter paraphernalia.

### **Implications/Recommendations**

Although this study focused on SBAE teachers in South Carolina, the need for archival skills across the country is essential for SBAE teachers, even more so as we near the 100th anniversary of the National FFA organization. SBAE teacher preparation faculty and state staff should reflect upon the findings of this study and consider how their teachers and state is positioned to document the history of SBAE and FFA in a given state. Additionally, faculty should consider how these skills could be integrated into teacher preparation coursework to help prepare SBAE teacher aspirants to take over an existing program that has a rich history or begin a new program while documenting the process for the future.

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