



# Fighting the First-Year Blues One Postcard at a Time



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## Introduction/Need for Innovation

- Research indicates teachers show more symptoms of psychological and physical stress compared to other occupational groups (Reichl et al., 2014).
- Additionally, research related to social support (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983) provides insight to address growing concerns surrounding recruitment and retention within the SBAE profession (Eck & Edwards, 2019).
- Efforts are needed to increase positive events as supported by Anderson and Iwanicki's (1984) findings that teacher motivation has a significant influence on burnout.
- Social connections, as cited by Stephens et al. (2011), provide desired feelings of belongingness in personal and professional lives.
- The need for this innovation was grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and specifically in the need for love and belonging (McLeod, 2018).
- Love and belongingness needs refer to a person's need for interpersonal relationships, feeling connected, and being part of a group (McLeod, 2018).

## Resources Needed

- 2 postcard designs, created in Adobe InDesign
- \$53 for printing 100 postcards (2 designs)
- \$10 for mailing labels
- Preservice SBAE teachers to write encouraging messages
- First-year SBAE teacher addresses
- \$70 in postage

## How it Works

During the 2021-2022 school year, students at Oklahoma State University sought to positively impact morale of SBAE teachers by writing and mailing handwritten notes to the teachers. Encouraging messages were written on two different postcards designed by OSU agricultural education graduate students.

- First-year SBAE teachers (n=43) were identified.
- Teachers' workplace mailing addresses were obtained through The Oklahoma Career and Technical Education office.
- Preservice SBAE teachers enrolled in AGED3103 wrote encouraging messages on each postcard. The first postcard was mailed in September 2021, and the second postcard was mailed in February 2022.



## Future Plans

- Continue in upcoming years.
- Feedback suggests the postcards make a positive impact which aligns with research recommendations.
- Responses also encourage expanding the reach of the project to all SBAE teachers in Oklahoma.
- Feedback gathered from teachers who received postcards helps to support the purpose behind the idea.
- Feedback shows teachers appreciate feeling seen, appreciated, and supported.

## Response to Innovation

