

Teach Ag Tuesday: Shared Tips and Tricks for SBAE Teachers

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Introduction/Need for Idea

Increased opportunities to create mentoring experiences and build self-efficacy among SBAE teachers are needed within our discipline (Lamm et al., 2017; McKim & Velez, 2015). The ongoing teacher shortage has been challenging for decades (Eck & Edwards, 2019), yet effective characteristics and longevity in the profession appear to be promising (Eck et al., 2021). Specifically, McKim and Velez (2015) recommend vicarious and social persuasion experiences to build self-efficacy among early career teachers. These experiences facilitate opportunities for early career teachers to observe effective teachers in action and be positively mentored by experienced teachers (McKim & Velez, 2015). Vicarious experiences allow for observers to obtain skills through modeling behavior (Bandura, 1977). They increase career commitment by creating confidence that challenges can be overcome. In addition to observing effectiveness, preservice teachers need positive reinforcement provided through social persuasion experiences.

Social persuasion can be something as simple as hearing “*you can do this*” before you engage in a given task. Developing a mentor system in which early career agriculture teachers are paired with more experienced teachers may increase the amount of positive social persuasion received by early career teachers. (Bandura, 1977, as cited in McKim & Velez, 2015, p. 136).

Organizers of this innovative idea, Teach Ag Tuesday, hope to create experiences where preservice teachers can interact and observe in-service teachers while also gaining mentoring relationships. Many factors influence the success of a mentoring relationship such as personality, community and access, and trust and communication (Jones et al., 2014). Consequently, these relationships can be developed in either a structured format or develop organically (McKim & Velez, 2015). Lamm et al. (2017) found relationship history influenced both the structure and outcome of mentoring relationships. She recommended participants establish mentoring relationships with individuals with whom they do not have previous connections to expand their network with new relationships. Nevertheless, “long-standing SBAE teachers need to mentor aspiring and early-career SBAE teachers on the benefits of their chosen career, providing an enhanced outlook on SBAE as a career choice instead of a short-term job” (Eck et al., 2021, p. 304). These findings and recommendations confirm the need for opportunities that not only build self-efficacy among preservice teachers, but also provide opportunities to build relationships among SBAE teachers.

How it Works

During the fall of 2021, graduate students at Oklahoma State University sought to facilitate monthly sessions, designated on the 3rd Tuesday, aimed at preservice SBAE teachers that would include opportunities to learn from and interact with in-service SBAE teachers throughout the 2021-2022 academic year. In-service SBAE teachers were identified based on their proximity to Oklahoma State University, previous professional development presentations, and differences in teaching styles and content areas taught. Selected teachers were asked to present a lesson of their choice in a format blending classroom teaching and professional development. The format allowed for different teaching styles while providing content knowledge and resources. Tuesdays were chosen for consistency; however, times varied to meet students’ and teachers’ class schedules. During the monthly sessions, preservice teachers interacted with in-service teachers, expanded their content knowledge, obtained resources, and provided feedback for future sessions. Content taught included bee keeping, photography, agricultural mechanics, and wildlife management. In addition to in person attendance, sessions were streamed and recorded via Zoom using a Swivl robot and iPad for those unable to attend. Recordings were uploaded to a OneDrive folder and shared with undergraduate and graduate students.

Results to Date/Implications

Two sessions, held in September and October, were successfully developed, and implemented. The 2 sessions included 4 in-service SBAE teachers and 26 preservice SBAE teachers on the campus of Oklahoma State University. In total, 3 undergraduate freshman, 3 undergraduate sophomores, 9 undergraduate juniors, 10 undergraduate seniors, and 1 graduate student attended the two sessions. Data were collected from participants regarding what they enjoyed, what they gained, and what they hoped to see in the future. Responses indicated students enjoyed the enthusiasm, uniqueness, and content shared by the presenters as well as gained confidence to pursue educational topics about which they are passionate (see table 1). Results support the recommendation of McKim and Velez (2015) that experiences with in-service teachers can in turn build self-efficacy of preservice teachers.

Table 1: Responses from Preservice SBAE Teachers on In-service SBAE Teacher Presentations

ENJOYED	GAINED
“It was a great opportunity to see different teaching styles”	“Find what you’re passionate about and run with it”
“The energy from the teacher, excited to share info”	“Information on how to teach bees to students and how to get started”
“I really enjoyed him sharing a real lesson that he teaches his students”	“Use your resources and reach out to people”
“I really enjoyed hearing the difference in her experiences at multi-teacher and single teacher shop programs”	“I gained knowledge on how to go about getting curriculum even if I don’t know anything about the topic”

Future Plans

We plan to continue implementing *Teach Ag Tuesday* throughout the remainder of the school year. Feedback gathered from the September and October sessions are currently being analyzed and plans are being made using the feedback for January and February sessions. The continual evolution of this innovative and inaugural program will yield a format that is practical for future use. We advise others to explore topics that are needed in their state and work with in-service teachers early to organize and execute the program. Additionally, we intend to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the series on preservice SBAE teachers’ self-efficacy.

Resources

All preservice SBAE teachers were encouraged to attend at no cost. While not necessary, department resources including: Swivl products, Zoom subscriptions, and cloud storage were utilized to livestream and record sessions at no cost (Estimated value \$1500). Presenters were given promotional items from the department as a token of appreciation (Estimated value \$50). The locations for each session were reserved through university scheduling. Snacks and refreshments provided were donated from Chick-fil-a and the Collegiate FFA Chapter (Estimated value \$100). Anticipated future resources will include supplies needed for livestock management and career development event training. Organizers will continue to seek avenues to provide a low-cost experience that is free for participants.

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