

Cultivating the Next Generation of Educators Through an Online Ag Ed CDE

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

The ongoing shortage of agriculture teachers has been of great concern to numerous stakeholders. Since 1965, the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) has supported research collecting data of the supply and demand of agriculture teachers across the country (Smith et al., 2021). More recently, the National Association of Agricultural Educators (2023) initiated the National Teach Ag Campaign, to promote careers in school-based agricultural education and recognize the importance of agriculture teachers in schools and communities.

The continual demand for agriculture teachers in North Carolina and the influence of career development events on career interests and readiness (Lundry et al., 2015) was also recognized by FFA members. This led to chapter delegates at the 2019 North Carolina FFA Convention proposing, discussing, and passing a motion to create and implement an Agricultural Education CDE event. The recommendation was then sent to the North Carolina FFA Board of Directors. At the board meeting, it was decided that an event would be developed and administered for high school juniors and seniors.

How it Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

In order to offer the Agricultural Education CDE, an event superintendent was identified. The superintendent determined the delivery of the event would closely align with course content in an undergraduate course, Administration and Supervision of Student Organizations. Therefore, the CDE was created as an online event so that undergraduate students could assist with the delivery. Using the Agricultural Education CDE event guidelines from several states, as well as components of the edTPA, the event superintendent and an undergraduate student developed a North Carolina specific event. The competition involved a three-part submission modeled after common responsibilities of agricultural educators to generate student interest and skill in this career area. The contest required students to be familiar with concepts in agricultural education, common teaching strategies, and their own personal teaching philosophy.

The first of these requirements was a detailed lesson plan outlining what would be conducted during a 15–20 minute lesson based on the North Carolina Agricultural Education Curriculum. To aid students in developing this lesson plan, a template was provided on the North Carolina FFA Event Guidelines listing the different sections of a lesson plan and a recommended structure. The second element was a recorded demonstration of the lesson. This video submission had to be continuous and unedited with the inclusion of students for participation and questioning.

After this, participants completed a written reflection about the successes, challenges, and future improvements of their lesson. The written lesson plan, teaching video, and reflection were submitted virtually and evaluated by the rubrics provided in the North Carolina FFA Event Guidelines. The five participants with the highest total score advanced to the final round consisting of a virtual interview. Students were evaluated based on their response to questions, their poise and presence, and their demonstrated passion for agricultural education.

Results to Date/Implications

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the event was delayed until the spring of 2022. There were 12 FFA members that participated the first year through the virtual submission of a Google Drive folder containing their lesson plan, recorded demonstration, and written reflection. This was followed by the finalist interviews which were conducted through Zoom with a panel of three judges, consisting of a teacher educator and two undergraduate agricultural education students. The students who placed in the top three were recognized on stage at the North Carolina FFA State Convention in June of 2022.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

After the review of submissions by undergraduate students, a reflection was conducted to develop a best practices guide for participants. Recommendations included suggested group sizes of 4-10 students to demonstrate questioning and student interaction, practice recordings to determine the best placement of camera and sound quality, and a list of specific components to be clearly identified in the submitted lesson plan. It was also suggested to continue involving preservice agricultural education students in the facilitation of the event, either as part of a course or through a student organization. After evaluating the lesson plans and teaching videos submitted for the CDE, the undergraduate students commented that it provided them with a new perspective about the importance of lesson planning and its contribution to impactful teaching. To further develop the event, the creation of informational videos and offering help sessions could be done to promote participation.

Costs/Resources Needed

Approximately 10 hours of time was invested in the creation of the event guidelines. The North Carolina FFA staff provided support for the event registration and submission process. The initial evaluation of materials and determination of the top five contestants included 18 undergraduate students and required five hours of class time. An additional two hours was needed to conduct the final zoom interviews. In order to recognize the top three contestants with plaques on stage at the State FFA Convention, a \$500 sponsorship was secured through the North Carolina FFA Foundation.

References

- Lundry, J., Ramsey, J. W., Edwards, M. C., & Robinson, J. S. (1995). Benefits of career development events as perceived by school-based agricultural education teachers. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 36(1), 43-57. [https://doi: 10.5032/jae.2015.01043](https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2015.01043)
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