



What is the Perceived Ability of Ag Teachers to Achieve Positive Work-Life Integration During the School Year?



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INTRODUCTION

- Research has shown school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers often struggle with achieving positive work-life integration during the school year.
- Osborne (1992), while discussing SBAE, stated “the stress, heavy workload, and constant pressure to be better has resulted in a profession that literally devours its young” (p.3).
- Given the national shortage of SBAE teachers, a great deal of attention has been on the topic of work-life integration (Clemons et al., 2021; Hopkins et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2011; Solomonson et al., 2022; Sorensen et al., 2016; Traini et al., 2019; Traini et al., 2020).
- The concept known as “spillover” was used as the theoretical framework for our study (Wilensky, 1960).

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

- The purpose of this study was to investigate SBAE teachers’ ability to achieve positive work-life integration during the school year.
- Specific objectives of the study were to:
 - Describe the hours spent on SBAE work activities outside of contract time.
 - Determine if differences existed in hours spent on specific SBAE activities among various demographic groups.
 - Explain the perceived ability of a SBAE teacher to achieve positive work-life integration.

METHODOLOGY

- Our descriptive study used an electronic questionnaire administered to all 519 current SBAE teachers in Illinois via Qualtrics. Questions were chosen from a valid & reliable instrument (Murry et al., 2011). We yielded a response rate of 31.79% ($n = 165$).
- Data were analyzed using SPSS. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and t-tests were used to analyze data.

FINDINGS

- Participants reported working an average of 56.4 hours per week during the school year, and of those, 16.4 hours outside of their contract time.

Table 1

Average Number of Hours Per Week Agriculture Teachers Spend Outside of Contract Time on Work Activities (n = 165)

Variable	M	SD
FFA Activities	5.33	3.80
Classroom and Lab Preparation/ Lesson Planning	4.34	3.53
Operation and Maintenance of Facilities	2.04	2.12
Reports and Paperwork	1.82	2.42
SAE Activities	1.31	1.88
Meetings	1.26	1.85
Other	.26	1.24

- No significant differences existed in hours spent on work activities when examining sex and those with children living at home. Two significant differences existed when examining marital status. Those married reported working 15.29 hours per week outside of contract time, while those not married 19.13 hours per week, $t(163) = 2.28, p = .02$. Those not married also reported working significantly more ($M = 5.63$) on classroom preparation and lesson planning than those married ($M = 3.83$), $t(163) = 3.00, p = .00$.
- 59.4% of participants reported they can usually achieve a positive work-life integration, but it was difficult at times. 29.1% indicated it is always difficult to have a positive work-life integration, while 2.4% said it was completely impossible. 9.1% felt they could always achieve a positive work-life integration.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Illinois SBAE teachers are devoting significant time each week for work activities (56.4 hours). This is consistent with existing literature suggesting SBAE teachers devote 55-57 hours per week to their jobs (Cooper & Nelson, 1981; Murray et al., 2011).
- More than half of the hours worked each week outside of contract time are devoted to FFA activities, and preparation and planning for instruction.
- Further study should examine the nature of the FFA activities that require so much beyond contract time. Research should also look at ways to aid teachers in planning and preparation for classroom and laboratory instruction.

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