

A 10-Year Comparison of Stayers, Movers, and Leavers in Kansas SBAE

KaCee James
Department of Communications and Agricultural Education
Kansas State University
317 Umberger Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
785-532-5804
kaceet@ksu.edu

Brandie Disberger, PhD.
Department of Communications and Agricultural Education
Kansas State University
316 Umberger Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
785-532-1175
bdis@ksu.edu

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Introduction & Literature Review

Teacher attrition continues to impact school-based agricultural education (SBAE). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) analyzed teachers who stayed, moved, or left their teaching positions in each state (NCES, 2022). This study inspired us to evaluate the stayers, movers, and leavers in Kansas SBAE to identify trends in teacher retention and attrition with a different lens. Teacher mobility is a priority issue that affects teachers with less experience and who work in highly vulnerable contexts (Palma-Vasquez et al., 2022). In SBAE, Haddad et al. (2019) found that SBAE teachers move for “family, time, administrative support, community support and pay” (p. 255). Many of these teacher mobility factors align with teacher reasons for attrition (Doan et al., 2023; Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Conversely, researchers find that teachers stay in their positions due to the stability of their teaching assignment and the comfortability of the staff (Elfers et al., 2006). In 2020, Moser & McKim found SBAE teachers commit to their careers due to school connectivity and connections with other SBAE teachers.

Research Questions:

1. What were the rates of Kansas SBAE teachers staying, moving and leaving the profession annually from 2013-2023?
2. What were the year-to-year changes in the rates of stayers, movers, and leavers among SBAE teachers in Kansas?
3. How did stayers, movers, and leavers of SBAE teachers in Kansas compare to teachers of all grades and disciplines in Kansas and nationwide?

Conceptual Framework

We investigated the pattern of movement of teachers and analyzed the retention and attrition of the stayers and leavers in Kansas SBAE using Ingersoll’s (2003) “The Revolving Door”. To investigate teacher mobility, we relied on the Theory of Planned behavior (Ajzen, 2020). This theory posits that one’s beliefs fit into three categories – behavioral (expected outcomes), normative (influence of societal norms), and control (factors affecting control over outcomes). The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2020) informs this research by explaining how SBAE teachers' decisions to stay, move, or leave are influenced by their beliefs about expected outcomes, societal norms, and perceived control over their career paths.

Methodology

Researchers utilized document analysis to analyze and pose questions (Bowen, 2009). Annual contact information from the Kansas FFA Association’s list of teachers from 2013 to 2023 was used to identify stayers, movers, and leavers by comparing one school year to the next. Data was triangulated by comparing movers and leavers to historical vacancy documents.

Researchers calculate the annual and overall frequencies and percentages of stayers, movers, and leavers, using Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions for consistency. Spreadsheets were used to

track these groups year-to-year, identifying teacher movement and retention trends. As defined by the NCES study (2022), stayers remained in the same school, movers continued teaching SBAE at a different school, and leavers exited SBAE teaching in Kansas. These data were then compared to retention rates of public-school teachers at both the state and national levels to provide broader context.

Results

The first research question examined the rates of Kansas SBAE stayers, movers, and leavers from 2013 to 2023. The highest rates of stayers occurred in 2015 (86.5%) and 2019-2020 (87.6%), while 2015-2016 also saw the lowest rates of movers with (1.9%). In contrast, the 2022-2023 school year saw the lowest rate of teachers remaining in their school for the upcoming year (74.6%), the second highest rate of movers (8.6%) and the highest rate of leavers (16.8%). The highest mover rate (9.6%) occurred in 2014-2015.

For the second research question, we analyzed year-to-year changes among Kansas SBAE teachers. Stayers averaged 82.1% annually but declined to 78% in 2021-2022 and 74.6% in 2022-2023. Movers were generally low but varied, ranging from 1.9% after 2015-2016 to 9.6% after 2014-2015, with an average of 5.6%. Leaver rates, averaging 12.4%, mirrored stayers, with higher stayer rates corresponding to lower leaver rates.

The final research question compared Kansas SBAE teacher mobility rates with Kansas and U.S. public school teachers for 2021-2022. Kansas SBAE teachers had lower stayer rates (78.0%) than Kansas (80.8%) and U.S. public school teachers (84.1%). Movers were similar, with 7.6% of Kansas SBAE teachers moving compared to 7.0% in Kansas and 7.9% in the U.S. However, Kansas SBAE had higher leaver rates (14.4%) than Kansas (12.2%) and U.S. teachers (7.9%).

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

This study found that Kansas SBAE teachers had less favorable retention rates compared to public school teachers in Kansas and the U.S. Over ten years, Kansas SBAE retention averaged 82.1%, lower than the 84.1% national average in 2021-2022 (NCES, 2022). Attrition was notably higher, with 12.4% of Kansas SBAE teachers leaving the profession compared to 7.9% of U.S. public school teachers (NCES, 2022), highlighting a retention challenge in SBAE. While teacher movement does not affect overall supply, it disrupts schools by requiring adjustments and weakening essential bonds (Ingersoll, 2001). Causes of teacher movement and attrition—such as lack of support, low salaries, and burnout (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018)—underscore the need for targeted interventions.

Mentorship programs for novice and alternatively certified teachers, professional development, and stronger administrative support could help address these challenges and improve SBAE teacher retention. Additionally, schools and policymakers should consider incentive structures, such as increased salaries or loan forgiveness, to encourage SBAE teachers to remain in the profession. Future research should explore the long-term impact of professional support systems on SBAE teacher retention and assess whether specific interventions, like structured mentorship or work-life balance initiatives, reduce teacher mobility and attrition.

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