

A Year in the Life of a 12-Month SBAE Teacher

Logan M. Dale

Dr. Emily O. Manuel

Louisiana State University

225 J.C. Miller Hall

Louisiana State University

Baton Rouge, LA 70803

(601-520-1362)

ldale4@lsu.edu

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Introduction

According to the American Association for Agricultural Educators (AAAE) (2017), there have been many challenges that face school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teacher preparation programs, especially regarding dispositions (American Association for Agricultural Educators [AAAE], 2017; Claflin et al., 2024). Student teachers may address their dispositions as their mentors provide feedback (Eck et al., 2021; Saltis et al., 2021). Student teacher preparation develops a complex relationship between the cooperating teachers, preservice teachers, and university faculty (Paulsen et al, 2016; Slick, 1997). The student teacher block, which is the preparation period prior to student teaching at some universities, can range from days to weeks (Price et al., 2023). Further, a preservice teacher can change their point of view about teaching based off student teaching and capstone courses (Moore et al., 2023). Therefore, the student teaching block can play a significant role in preparing a preservice teacher for their student teaching experience.

In the state of Louisiana, preservice teachers are required to complete a year-long teacher residency program, which includes a combination of observation hours and student teaching experiences in their host program. In most cases, this requires student teachers to spend two semesters full-time at their student teaching center. Student teaching block courses in university teacher preparation programs are expected to use this period to address subjects regarding expectations throughout student residency, as well as reviewing and refreshing students on basic teaching methods (Department of AEEE, 2024). In previous years, Louisiana State University's preservice teachers completed a multi-week student teaching block at the beginning of the semester of their residency. In 2024, Louisiana State University's SBAE teacher preparation program implemented the year-long student teaching requirements in a unique way by requiring participation in summer agricultural education programming with the guidance of their cooperating teacher, as well as a semester long training block prior to student teaching residency. In prior years, the student teaching block enrollees did not experience a full year of SBAE programming which left a potential gap in their understanding of summer requirements as they started their first full-time teaching assignment. According to Louisiana Bulletin 741 (2025),

All agriculture teachers employed by an LEA shall teach a 12-month program for a 12-month budget period and shall be paid a salary at the same monthly rate as provided in the minimum salary schedule contained in R.S. 17:421.3. The agriculture program shall include, but not be limited to recognized co-curricular activities, to be supervised by agriculture teachers during the summer months such as those offered by the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) Organization or other appropriate organizations that provide summer occupational experiences, leadership programs, statewide judging contests, and youth conventions. (p. 98)

To address the specific needs of SBAE student teachers, year-long student teaching was implemented through immersive experiences under the guidance of a mentor teacher.

How It Works

The first phase of this program included the development of a class for the student teaching training block, as well as a list of expectations for student teachers. State, university, and national

SBAE standards were integrated into this syllabus and program. The goal was to expand the preservice teachers' knowledge in managing each of the three components of a total agricultural education program, classroom, FFA, and SAE. Student teachers were matched with a student teaching placement in the Spring of 2024. They were expected to meet summer and fall hour requirements with their assigned cooperating teacher. Using the summer and fall hours, the students were exposed to the year-long expectations of SBAE teachers and built relationships with their mentor teacher over a longer period of time. Some of these experiences included the Louisiana FFA Convention, FFA summer leadership camp, Louisiana agriculture teachers' conference, and first week of the new school year. After observing the first week of school for the Fall 2024 semester, student teachers returned to the university to complete their remaining coursework including AEEE 4200 block course. In this course, students completed microteachings, participated in class discussions in all areas of the three-circle model, and gained experience with The Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET) online record keeping system to manage FFA activities and SAEs. In the spring of 2025 student teachers completed their teaching residency at their assigned center as in previous years.

Results to Date

In the pilot year, various faculty members facilitated this class, and students were exposed to advanced teaching methods, FFA, and SAEs. After learning about each of these teaching methods, the student teachers then applied microteaching lessons in their host schools which emphasized these specific methods. At the end of the fall AEEE 4200, the graduate teaching assistant reflected with the student teachers. The students discussed their motivation as well as their fears entering student teaching and placed concern in particular AFNR pathways they could address with their cooperating teachers. Throughout the school year they were able to experience all FFA events and SAE supervision with their cooperating center. The pilot cohort of this class is now completing their student teacher residency. They gained firsthand experience with summer SBAE teacher requirements, ensuring they are prepared to attend these events independently after securing their teaching positions as 12-month SBAE teachers.

Future Plans

This class will continue in the Fall of 2025 and the second class of preservice teachers have already received their student teaching placements. The block course will undergo revisions prior to the fall semester. We plan to evaluate this program and the progress of the student teachers as a result of this new program. The strengths and weaknesses of each cohort of preservice teachers as well as cooperating teachers will need to be considered when developing this program for future cohorts.

Resources Needed

The resources needed throughout this program will vary based on different teacher preparation programs and state requirements, however, a knowledge of the students' needs is crucial. Another resource needed for this program is cooperating teachers who are willing to host preservice teachers for an entire year. Students need to be aware of their travel and expectations throughout this specific term. In this specific program, a graduate assistant was used to reflect upon all aspects and points of view that each faculty member brought throughout the semester to provide consistency.

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