

A DAY ON THE FARM: A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN A MIDDLE SCHOOL SBAE PROGRAM AND PRE-SERVICE SBAE TEACHERS



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Introduction

- Middle school education is increasingly focused on college and career readiness, with early exposure helping expand students' awareness of opportunities and supporting social mobility.
- Active participation in career exploration makes these efforts more effective, prompting universities to engage younger students through interactive recruitment.
- SBAE programs are growing in California middle schools, creating a need for more educators trained for this age group.
- Targeted preparation is needed to build interest in teaching middle school students.
- Experiential learning—like a "Day on the Farm" collaboration between California State University, Chico and Palermo Middle School, can boost pre-service teachers' confidence and interest in middle school SBAE teaching.



Methodology

The "Day on the Farm" event was created through collaboration between Chico State and Palermo Middle School to provide farm tours, career exploration, and teaching experience.

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The event aimed to engage middle school students in agricultural career pathways while giving SBAE pre-service teachers hands-on instructional practice.

Pre-service teachers delivered farm tours and interactive mini-lessons on topics like animal ID, grape production, soil testing, tools, and equipment.

Career exploration was integrated throughout tours and activities, highlighting diverse agricultural opportunities.

The project was grounded in experiential learning theory, incorporating preparation, hands-on experience, and reflection for both middle school students and pre-service teachers.



Agenda

- 8:00–9:10 am: Chico State SBAE pre-service teachers arrive for setup; Palermo Middle School students arrive and are divided into groups
- 9:15–10:05 am: Group A participates in farm tours while Group B completes 5 station rotations
- 10:10–10:20 am: Snack break
- 10:25–11:15 am: Groups switch—Group A completes station rotations while Group B participates in farm tours
- 11:20 am–12:00 pm: Student reflections followed by pre-service teacher cleanup and reflection discussion



Future Plans

- Future plans for the "Day on the Farm" event include expanding participation to additional middle school SBAE programs, potentially through multiple sessions, and strengthening alignment with classroom curriculum to enhance experiential learning.
- Additional improvements being considered include increased involvement from Chico State College of Agriculture faculty, enhanced recruitment efforts, and providing lunch for participants with sufficient funding.

Results

In April 2025, 85 Palermo Middle School students and 24 SBAE pre-service teachers participated in the "Day on the Farm," achieving both engagement and teaching objectives, students showed strong enthusiasm for agricultural careers and college pathways, while pre-service teachers gained valuable classroom experience and clarified their interest in middle vs. high school teaching.