

Examining Barriers to Implementing Supervised Agricultural Experiences and Work-Based Learning in Urban Agriscience Programs in Ohio: A Case Study

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INTRODUCTION

- Agricultural education prepares students for careers in the agricultural industry through a three-circle model that integrates classroom instruction, leadership development, and experiential learning opportunities such as Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs) and work-based learning (WBL).
- While these components are essential for developing technical skills and career readiness, access to SAEs and WBL is not equitable across educational settings.
- Historically rooted in rural communities, agricultural education programs in urban areas often face systemic and contextual barriers, including limited resources, reduced access to industry partnerships, and lower levels of community support (Phipps et al., 2008; McBride et al., 2023).
- As urban programs continue to expand, understanding these barriers is critical to improving access and ensuring all students benefit from experiential learning opportunities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- This study is grounded in a constructivist framework, which views learning as an active, context-dependent process shaped by individuals' experiences and environments.
- Within this framework, experiential learning plays a central role, particularly through SAEs and WBL, which allow students to apply classroom knowledge in authentic settings.
- Additionally, professional development is positioned as a key mechanism for supporting educators, particularly when it is collaborative, context-specific, and focused on practical application (Cooper et al., 2020).
- This framework guides the exploration of how urban agriscience educators navigate barriers and implement experiential learning opportunities within their unique contexts.

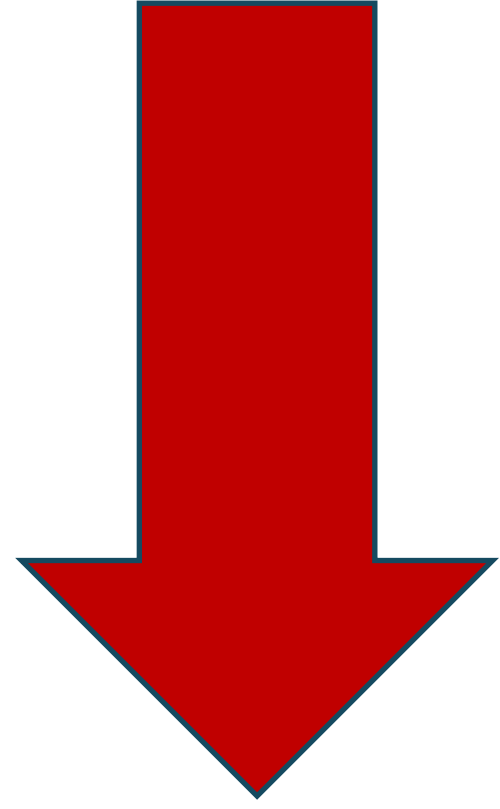
METHODS

- This study employed a qualitative multiple case study design to explore the perceived challenges urban agriscience educators face in implementing SAEs and WBL.
- Participants included three agriscience teachers from urban school districts in Ohio, selected through purposive sampling based on their experience with experiential learning programs.
- Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field notes, and document analysis to ensure triangulation and depth of understanding. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, recorded, and transcribed for analysis.
- Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding responses, identifying patterns, and organizing themes related to barriers and implementation strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Three primary themes emerged from the data identifying factors that impacted the implementation of SAE and WBL in urban agriculture programs in Ohio:

1. program logistics,
2. program misconceptions, and
3. program support.



Theme	Description	Key Barriers / Examples
Program Logistics	Structural and resource-related challenges that limit access to experiential learning opportunities.	- Transportation limitations - Scheduling conflicts for courses - Restricted instructional time - Limited resources for off-campus learning
Program Misconceptions	Misunderstandings about agricultural education that reduce engagement and stakeholder support.	- Perception of agriculture as only traditional farming - Lack of awareness of science-based and diverse career pathways - Limited understanding among students, parents, and school personnel
Program Support	The influence of leadership and partnerships on program sustainability and implementation.	- Inconsistent administrative support - Frequent leadership turnover - Difficulty maintaining partnerships - Limited advocacy for program needs

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- The findings of this study reinforce existing literature that urban agriscience educators face unique systemic and contextual barriers when implementing SAEs and WBL.
- These challenges are not solely logistical but are also influenced by perceptions, institutional structures, and levels of support within schools and communities. However, the study also highlighted the resilience and adaptability of educators, who are actively developing creative solutions to overcome these barriers.
- By reimagining experiential learning opportunities within urban contexts, educators can continue to provide meaningful, hands-on experiences that support student growth and career readiness.
- To expand access to SAEs and WBL in urban settings, there is a need for targeted professional development that equips educators with strategies for navigating resource limitations and building partnerships.
- Additionally, increasing awareness among urban administrators, counselors, and stakeholders about the value of agricultural education is critical to improving program support and student participation. Strengthening advisory committees and community partnerships can also enhance access to experiential learning opportunities.
- Ultimately, equity-focused efforts are necessary to ensure that all students, regardless of geographic location, have access to high-quality agricultural education experiences.

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