

"Final Report for the 2007 Teacher Retention Study"

Submitted by:
Dr. Andrew J. Baker
Associate Professor
Agricultural Education
Western Illinois University
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This study was conducted to create a longitudinal dataset to be utilized to highlight or predict trends within the beginning agriculture teachers in Illinois. Similar data was collected in the 2005-2006 academic year. Data was collected from the "Program Development for Entry Level Teachers in Agricultural Education" course (AgEd 500). The course began with 19 participants and ended with 14 participants by year's end. Four students dropped the course, one for medical reasons. One participant lacked sufficient data at the different collection intervals to be included into the study, so the dataset was finalized with 14 usable participants.

This study was able to collect demographic data that was not collected last year. One such variable was gender. Of the 14 participants, seven were male and seven were female for the perfect division. The study was also able to distribute an identification number for each participant to track the variation over time. The study collected data from the participants in August, October, January, March, and April of the 2006-2007 school year. The study collected perceptual data on the same 14 variables utilized in the 2005-2006 project.

Participants were asked to assess their confidence levels on the following variables at the different time intervals:

- 1) Instructional preparation
- 2) Classroom management
- 3) Time management
- 4) Knowledge of subject matter
- 5) Classroom methodologies
- 6) FFA activities
- 7) Developing SAE's
- 8) Acceptance in the school
- 9) Acceptance in section
- 10) Acceptance in community
- 11) Confidence in signing a contract for the 2007-2008 academic year
- 12) Relationship with students
- 13) Administrative support
- 14) Safety

The first seven variables outline items within the agricultural education model, which illustrate three overlapping circles, which include classroom instruction, SAE activities, and FFA activities. The other seven variables outline items associated with environmental situations within agriculture programs, like acceptance in the community, section, and school.

The variable that received the highest confidence rating again for this study was their ability to sign a contract for the 2007-2008 academic year. The variable that received the lowest confidence rating again for this study was their ability to develop SAE's. Once again, the top four variables dealt with environmental situations surrounding the agriculture program. Time management, developing SAE's, and managing FFA activities hold some of the lowest confidence levels with this group. Administrative support also continues to be a variable that is sought after among beginning teachers. This year's group appears to be more confident in their actions than last year's group. This difference could simply be a more stable environment among teacher training institutions or the quality of placement centers that were used with this group. This year's group also appeared to be less stable in their confidence levels throughout the year when compared to last year's group. The variables are ranked from highest to lowest:

Rankings in the 2005-2006 study

- 1) Confidence in a 2006-2007 contract
- 2) Relationship with students
- 3) Acceptance in community
- 4) Acceptance in school
- 5) Instructional preparation
- 6) Knowledge of subject matter
- 7) Acceptance in section
- 8) Classroom methodologies
- 9) Administrative support
- 10) Safety
- 11) Time management
- 12) Classroom management
- 13) FFA activities
- 14) Developing SAE's

Rankings in the 2006-2007 study

- 1) Confidence in a 2006-2007 contract
- 2) Acceptance in section
- 3) Safety
- 4) Acceptance in school
- 5) Knowledge of subject matter
- 6) Classroom management
- 7) Relationship with students
- 8) Classroom methodologies
- 9) Acceptance in community
- 10) Instructional preparation
- 11) FFA activities
- 12) Time management
- 13) Administrative support
- 14) Developing SAE's

The following tables illustrate the variable mean differentials between academic years and differentials throughout the academic year between groups.

Variable Mean Differentials During the 2005-2006 Academic Year

Variable	October	December	February	March
Instructional preparation	7.22	7.74	8.05	8.45
Classroom management	7.26	7.52	7.36	7.84
Time management	7.26	7.37	7.68	8.07
Knowledge subject matter	7.26	7.59	8.14	8.45
Classroom methods	7.44	7.67	7.77	8.29
FFA activities	7.00	7.26	7.27	7.87
Developing SAE's	5.78	6.07	6.23	6.94
Acceptance in school	7.78	7.89	7.98	7.84
Acceptance in section	7.41	7.96	8.05	7.87
Acceptance in community	8.37	8.30	7.36	7.74
2006-2007 contract	7.78	8.11	8.32	9.23
Relationship with students	8.48	8.48	7.68	8.52
Administrative support	7.41	8.11	7.73	7.58
Safety	7.11	7.59	7.45	8.36
Totals	7.39	7.67	7.65	8.08

Variable Mean Differentials During the 2006-2007 Academic Year

Variable	August	October	January	March	April
Instructional preparation	7.06	8.07	8.00	8.53	8.46
Classroom management	7.88	8.33	8.33	8.66	8.46
Time management	6.94	7.80	7.80	8.27	8.08
Knowledge subject matter	7.41	8.67	8.67	8.53	8.77
Classroom methods	7.82	8.07	8.07	8.60	8.54
FFA activities	7.35	7.80	7.80	7.87	8.23
Developing SAE's	6.76	7.13	6.87	7.53	7.46
Acceptance in school	8.32	8.97	8.33	8.20	8.31
Acceptance in section	8.12	9.40	8.60	9.00	8.92
Acceptance in community	7.82	8.60	8.07	8.30	8.15
2006-2007 contract	8.56	9.07	9.20	9.40	8.77
Relationship with students	6.77	8.40	8.47	8.73	8.77
Administrative support	8.29	7.27	7.40	7.53	7.69
Safety	8.88	8.40	8.60	8.73	8.69
Totals	7.71	8.28	8.16	8.42	8.38

The study did find a strong correlation between completing the AgEd 500 course and signing a 2007-2008 contract. The students that did not complete the course had a high correlation in not signing a 2007-2008 contract. Maybe that is why this variable had such a high confidence level in this study as well as last year's study. The study was also able to discover that females (8.45 overall mean) were more confident among the 14 variables than their male counterparts (7.87 overall mean). The highest overall confidence rating among participants was a male with a 9.47 overall mean and the highest overall confidence rating for a female was a 9.31. The lowest overall confidence rating among the participants was a male with a 6.09 overall mean and the lowest confidence rating for a female was a 7.43.

This study is instilling confidence in the Moir Model that indicates that beginning teachers start the year with the most confidence ready to accept their new found environment in the education field. They then drop off and then begin to build up confidence as the school year progresses. However, most of the variables analyzed in this study began at a lower confidence level and continued to rise as the school year progressed, which is a positive indicator that they are gaining confidence. For instance, the lowest confidence level for "relationship with students" is in August. Beginning teachers may be less confident in themselves until they get into the classroom with their students. This is truly indicated in the variable "knowledge in subject matter", which starts low and increases over time. Trends are beginning to take shape when comparing the two different groups. Developing SAE's, time management, managing FFA activities, and administrative support continue to be areas of need among beginning teachers. It is the hope of the researcher to continue support for this type of research to aid in the development of the AgEd 500 course as well as outline areas for inservice for future generations of beginning agriculture teachers.