

AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ILLINOIS SECONDARY  
ADMINISTRATORS TOWARD AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND THEIR  
PREFERENCES FOR A QUALITY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

BY

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THESIS

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the perceptions that Illinois administrators have toward secondary agricultural education and the qualities that make an agricultural education program successful. In most cases, positive perceptions and high support levels were tied closely to the ability of the program to apply core concepts such as math, science, and reading into the curriculum. Community need was also cited as an important factor in administrators' support for agricultural education programs. Those programs with curriculum foci that prepared students in areas of agricultural mechanics, business or production also received strong support. These findings suggest that the major factor affecting administrator support for agricultural education is tied in closely with the ability of the program to aid in increasing student achievement as measured through standardized test scores as well as prepare students for careers in agriculture.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Background**

Agriculture is one of the largest employers in the United States, with more than 22 million people employed in some phase from growing food and fiber to selling agricultural products at the retail level (American Farm Bureau, 2002). The demand for college graduates, particularly minority individuals, in this field continues to exceed the supply (Jones & Bowen, 1998). To sustain agriculture at its current status, recruitment of outstanding individuals must be enhanced (Scott & Lavergne, 2004). For this reason, secondary agricultural education is a vital part of the curriculum in high schools in Illinois. Support for secondary agricultural education at the administrative level is crucial to the success of these programs. Anecdotal data suggests that program support is crucial to the success of secondary agricultural education and plays a major role in recruitment and retention of students into local programs (Chiasson & Burnett, 2001). Especially important is the support of school-based administrators (Kalme & Dyer, 2000). Recent research has shown that the major obstacles to the successful recruitment of students into agriculture programs are those associated with scheduling difficulties, guidance counselor support, competition from other programs and activities, image of agriculture, access to students, administrative support, and teachers having time to recruit (Myers, Dyer, & Breja, 2003). Without these types of administrative support mechanisms, agricultural education program are rendered weak and held at significant disadvantage.

## **Statement of the Problem**

It has been noted that some administrators offer a high level of support while others offer much less support to agricultural education programs at their respective high schools. It is important to explain why agricultural education programs are receiving the amount of support that they are currently receiving from their respective administrations. Likewise, it is important to determine what can be done by the agricultural education programs to increase this administrative support, as well as to provide insight into what administrators look for in successful agricultural education programs; given the fact that local administrators greatly influence their local educational programs with policy and programmatic decisions. A need exists to collect current data that portrays the opinions of educational administrators toward vocational agriculture (Edwards, 2003).

## **Research Question**

As it was previously stated, secondary agricultural education is a vital part of the curriculum in high schools in Illinois. Support for secondary agricultural education at the administrative level is crucial to the success of these programs. The questions that this study is attempting to explore are: Why some administrators offer a high level of support while others offer much less support to agricultural education programs at their respective high schools? In addition, what traits do administrators consider essential agricultural education programs to have in order to be successful?

## **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is three-fold: 1) to describe the degree of administrative support secondary agricultural education programs in the state of Illinois are receiving; 2) to explain why agricultural education programs are receiving the amount of support that

they are currently receiving from their respective administrations; and 3) to determine what can be done by the agricultural education programs to increase this administrative support, as well as answer what administrators look for in successful agricultural education programs. In summary, this study should be able to offer information to educators and administrators alike as to what is required to facilitate a successful agricultural education program that is viewed as successful by all parties involved and is supported to the fullest by those with the most influence in the school districts.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the demographic characteristics of administrators of high schools in Illinois with agricultural education programs in terms of gender, age, job title, agricultural background, years of experience in current position, and enrollment at the high school;
2. To describe administrators' perceptions towards agricultural education;
3. To identify and describe possible reasons for administrators' perceptions towards agricultural education;
4. To describe what qualities administrators look for in an effective and successful agricultural education program;
5. To identify and describe opportunities to improve administrators' perceptions towards agricultural education; and
6. To describe administrators' perceptions towards agriculture curriculum in relation to other curricula offered at high schools with agricultural education programs.

## **Limitations**

A sample of administrators from one state was used for this study. Therefore, drawing conclusions to other administrators is limited and only possible based on the assumptions outlined.

## **Assumptions**

This study was focused on only administrators in Illinois that have a secondary agriculture program. The first assumption is that although secondary administrators differ, they all have the same goal of offering a quality education to their students and seek to support feasible opportunities to improve student achievement. Secondly, it was assumed that the participants are an accurate representation of their field of expertise. Finally, it was assumed that the participants provided honest responses to the questions.

## **Significance of the Problem**

If having a positive perception of agricultural education programs effects the level of support administrators give to these programs, then it is important to identify what characteristics of an agricultural education program indicate success to these administrators. The information gathered in this study will provide high school agriculture teachers information to determine the factors that provide administrators with positive attitudes towards agricultural education and utilize those factors to gain a high level of support.

Agriculture teachers are encouraged to put concerted effort toward developing and implementing contextualized curricula and teaching approaches that show promise for demonstrating agricultural education's value for supporting student learning across the curriculum (Parr, Edwards, & Leising, 2006). Research has indicated that in agricultural education, for many students, agriculture, food, and the environment can be a robust and



authentic contextual vehicle for improving student learning in science and mathematics (Edwards, 2003). Efforts should be made on the part of agriculture teachers to improve the rapport with and support of their local administrators (Jewell, Beavers III, Malpiedi, & Flowers, 1990). In order for this to occur, it is critical for administrators to understand these concepts if they are going to provide agricultural education programs with maximum support.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

### **Current State of Administrator's Perceptions**

The current state of the situation is rather complex. Counselors from a general statewide sample expressed attitudes classified as uncertain as to the value of agricultural education (Dyer & Osborne, 1999). The literature shows that principals viewed agricultural education on a scale between neutral and positive (Kalme & Dyer, 2000). The curriculum and integration of science and other core subjects into agricultural education courses should be a positive aspect of the program to administrators however, it would seem according to the literature, that is not necessarily the case. While science teachers tend to see the value in agri-science courses, many counselors, administrators, and members of the education community who wish to emphasize the college preparatory courses have questioned agricultural education course's value (Thompson, 2000). They also expressed opinions of uncertainty as to whether or not students today are more interested in enrolling in agricultural education courses, or if students who take agricultural education courses tend to be less academically able (Kalme & Dyer, 2000).

Research conducted by Joerger and Boettcher (2000) indicates that the forms of assistance provided by local school district personnel had the highest perceived impact on agricultural education teachers. This clearly illustrates that relationships between teachers and administrators have a direct impact on how teachers respond to their careers and have several very important implications on the future of respective Ag Ed programs.

However, according to the literature, less than half of the agriculture teachers responding to a recent study received much support from administrators in regards to making important decisions about their programs (Grieman, Walker, & Birkenholz, 2005). This leads to the conclusion that there are often barriers to communication between teachers and administrators

(Grieman, Walker, & Birkenholz, 2005). If progress is going to be made towards improving relationships with administrators as well as having agricultural education programs viewed with positive attitudes, communication should be the backbone of facilitating positive changes.

### **Reasons for Administrator's Perceptions**

Kalme & Dyer (2000) reported that individuals with positive perceptions toward a subject or situation tend to evaluate them positively. The key component would then be to determine what type of perceptions administrators have towards agricultural education and why such an perception has been adopted so that it can be affected in a positive way. As applied to this study, if principals are interested in, knowledgeable about, have a positive image of, and are involved in agricultural education programs, they will likely support the program in both words and actions. Consequently, if beliefs are negative; interest, knowledge, image, and activities of support will likely also be limited (Kalme & Dyer, 2000). It has been determined that intentions to participate in an activity or support it could be predicted based on a person's knowledge, observations, or other information held about some issue or event (Jones & Bowen, 1998). Keeping that idea in mind, it is essential that educators are in constant communication and involvement with the respective administrators at their high schools.

According to the literature, there are a number of barriers associated with student enrollment numbers in high school agricultural education courses. Increased high school graduation requirements have put pressure on agriculture programs by limiting opportunities for students to enroll in elective courses (Thompson, 2001). Administrators recognize the importance of students enrolling in courses that meet graduation requirements, but by placing all of the emphasis solely on those courses, they deter prospective students from enrolling in electives such as agriculture.

With respect to guidance counselors, it is of the utmost importance to be able to gauge their attitudes regarding agricultural education. According to recent data, strong relationships were found between counselors' beliefs and students intentions. Thus, counselors play a vital role in educational and career plans of youth (Thompson & Russell, 1993). It is just as important to make a determination on whether or not guidance counselors are lacking in the ability to recognize a quality agricultural education program as well how they view agriculture compared to other courses that are offered. Research has shown that guidance counselors perceive science programs to be of higher quality than agricultural education programs (Dyer & Osborne, 1999). Knowing this indicates that agriculture teachers are doing a poor job of communicating the benefits and possibilities of integrating the core curriculum into agriculture classes.

### **Factors that Contribute to Successful Ag Programs**

Agricultural education programs have changed as American society changes. The role of the agriculture teacher evolves with these changes (Balschweid & Thompson, & Cole, 2000). The evolution of the role includes the expansion of job responsibility, professional development, and academic accountability across several scientific, business, and humanity fields (Delnero & Montgomery, 2001). Course integration is a key component that administrators must be educated on by teachers in order to increase their support (Myers, Breja, & Dyer, 2004). Philosophically, principals can see the value that integrating science in agricultural education programs will benefit student learning (Thompson, 2000). School principals are key decision makers in the curriculum at their high school and are influential in the continuation of the agricultural education program (Thompson, 2001). Moreover, principals agreed that administrator, science teacher, other teacher support, and parental support for agricultural education programs will increase by integrating more science (Thompson, 2000).

The agricultural education program addresses goals in science by teaching units on such topics as soils, cultivation of plant materials, producing livestock, animal genetics, natural resources, plant and animal nutrition, and integrated pest management. Goals in math are addressed in units on agribusiness, entrepreneurship, project planning, construction, plumbing, electricity, surveying, etc., while goals in written composition, language arts, and social studies are targeted in units on parliamentary law, public speaking, leadership, officer duties, agribusiness, etc.(Chiasson & Burnett, 2001). The integration of academic principles into agriculture and natural resources can provide the context necessary for student in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to understand the world they live in (Balschweid, Thompson, & Cole, 2000). It is clear to those that are in agricultural education that the core curriculum is covered in its entirety in agriculture courses, but is it clear to administrators? Emphasizing the importance of incorporating the core curriculum into agriculture education classes is a key component of winning over administrators of all occupations.

According to research, applied science courses such as Biological and Physical Science Applications in Agriculture have a positive influence on counselors (Dyer & Osborne, 1999). If so, these courses also have the potential to become effective public relations tools for agricultural education programs. It is important that teachers continue to stress the benefits of courses such as BSAA and PSAA to all administrators.

Not only does the agriculture curriculum allow for application of science concepts, it also provides a context for applying mathematic concepts in the classroom and laboratory (Burriss, Bednarz, & Frazee, 2008). There is further research to indicate that student achievement in mathematics will increase when students become more engaged using inquiry-based, problem-solving learning strategies, particularly when coupled with highly qualified, caring teachers who

deploy a contextualized curriculum that connects new ideas and skills to students' past knowledge and experience (Shin, Briers, Christiansen, Harlin, Linder & Murphey, 2003). In other words, integrating mathematics concepts into a discipline such as agriculture seems to be the most effective means to teach these important concepts.

### **Opportunities to Improve Administrator's Perceptions**

The future of agricultural education is dependent on the profession being proactive and addressing issues that secondary agricultural education programs will face (Connors, 1998). It can certainly be said that improvement of administrative support is an area in which there is large room for improvement (Kalme & Dyer, 2000).

How can these perceptions be redirected in a more positive manner? Agriculture teachers need to do more to educate their principals about the need for course articulation (Connors, 1998). Teachers should invite administrators to participate in agri-science activities to increase their familiarity with the program, enabling administrators without previous connections to agriculture or the agri-science program to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for agricultural education (Pavelock, Vaughn, & Lance, 2001).

The teachers themselves cannot sit back and expect the administration to take a positive stance on their programs; they must learn to be proactive. It is further recommended that pre-service courses and induction programs for novice teachers include sessions on developing administrator relationships. It appears that strategies to inform and involve administrators in the agricultural education program are needed by novice teachers (Greiman, Walker, & Birkenholz, 2005). Ideas for building community, parental, faculty, counselor, and administrator support for the program continue to be important components of courses and in service workshops for pre-service and beginning teachers (Mundt & Connors, 1999). This enables teachers to get off to a

good start with their administrators from day one, and eventually nurturing these relationships will become second nature. Agriculture teachers should continue to foster the current strong relationship with principals through collaborative activities, course integration, and continued involvement in the total school program (Thobegga & Miller, 2003).

Furthermore, it has been recommended based on research that teachers make a better effort to provide counselors and school administrators with information that sells the value and broad mission of agricultural education (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). It cannot be emphasize enough how important it is that agriculture teachers continue to work to make sure administrators are aware of all of the different benefits and opportunities provided to students via agricultural education.

It only takes a little imagination to think of how to use the social, economic, and scientific bases of agriculture to motivate and illustrate skills and knowledge from all of the academic disciplines (Baily, 1998). It is important for agriculture teachers to continue to develop new ideas regarding ways in which these important concepts can be integrated into their classes. It is important that they share these ideas with their administrators as well, in order keep them informed and feeling the like the agricultural education classroom is a progressive environment (Kalme & Dyer, 2000).

Once teachers have done their part, administrators must find ways to offer their support to these programs (Thompson, 2001). Administrators should find ways to recognize the accomplishments of Agriculture programs and the students enrolled in those programs (Chiasson & Burnett, 2001). Guidance and support should be part of the general supervision that teachers receive (Thobegga & Miller, 2003). Administrators should work with agriculture teachers to facilitate the participation of students in the many activities available through the

agriculture program (Chiasson & Burnett, 2001). If these cyclical relationships continue to be fostered through demonstration, cooperation and communication, agricultural education programs will begin to flourish to a higher degree than ever imagined.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985). This theory is a revision of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action. The theory of planned behavior suggests that individual behavior is driven by behavioral intentions where behavioral intentions are a function of an individual's attitude toward the behavior, the subjective norms surrounding the performance of the behavior, and the individual's perception of the ease with which the behavior can be performed otherwise referred to as behavioral control. Attitude toward the behavior is defined as the individual's positive or negative feelings about performing a behavior. It is determined through an assessment of one's beliefs regarding the consequences arising from a behavior and an evaluation of the desirability of these consequences. Subjective norm is defined as an individual's perception of whether people important to the individual think the behavior should be performed. The contribution of the opinion of any given referent is weighted by the motivation that an individual has to comply with the wishes of that referent. Behavioral control is defined as one's perception of the difficulty of performing a behavior. The theory of planned behavior views the control that people have over their behavior as laying on a continuum from behaviors that are easily performed to those requiring considerable effort and resources. Ajzen (1985) has suggested that the link between behavior and behavioral control outlined in the model should be between behavior and actual behavioral control rather than perceived behavioral control, the difficulty of assessing actual control is a limitation to this model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).



Other studies regarding administrative support for agricultural education include Kalme and Dyer (2000) and Thompson (2001). Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) suggested that intentions to participate in activities could be predicted based upon knowledge, observation, or some other information about an issue. Thompson (2001) purported that individuals with positive attitudes toward a subject or situation tend to evaluate them positively. Therefore, a person's intent to support or become actively involved in an agricultural education program may be predicted by analyzing her or her beliefs about the program (Kalme & Dyer, 2000). As applied to this study, intentions to support the program (in words and actions) will be measured by administrators' interested in, knowledgeable about, and perceptions of the local agricultural education program as well as their previous involvement with said program. Based on the aforementioned literature, it is hypothesized that an administrator that has a positive attitude towards agricultural education will likely support their high school agriculture programs and contribute to the program's efforts.

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

### **Sample Selection**

Participants in this study were selected based on the recommendation of an expert in the field of agricultural education. The expert was asked to help in selection of participants due to their extensive experience working with high school administrators and agriculture teachers through out the state of Illinois. The expert recommended 23 possible participants based on their position as an administrator in the state of Illinois and past involvement with the agricultural education programs at the respective high schools. Past involvement included participating in state or national agricultural education events more than twice per year, measureable financial and/or policy-driven support, or the recent hiring of an agriculture teacher. For the purpose of this study, administrators were limited to principals and superintendents. Participation in this study was strictly voluntary and participants were informed of their rights as a participant. In addition, no compensation was provided to participants.

### **Procedures**

Participants were all interviewed and asked a specific set of questions (see Appendix A). The research was entirely qualitative in nature. The questions were divided into three categories: background, attitudes towards agricultural education, and indicators of a successful agricultural education program to administrators.

In determining the background of participants, each individual was asked to identify their age, job title, specific responsibilities of the job, number of years they had been in the position, and their background in agriculture.

In discussing administrator's attitudes towards agricultural education another specific set of questions were administered. These questions involved asking about administrator's opinions

regarding agriculture in general, whether or not agricultural education was a positive or negative addition to their schools curriculum, whether or not they specifically recommended agriculture courses to students, what changes in the agriculture curriculum would improve their opinions of agricultural education at their school, how the integration of the core studies into the agriculture curriculum would improve their opinions of agricultural education, if the integration of the core curriculum into agricultural education would make them more likely to recommend agriculture courses to students, and if there were certain extra curricular activities associated with agricultural education such as FFA or a level of participation in such activities that would improve their opinions of agricultural education.

The final set of questions involved determining what indicated a successful agricultural education program to administrators. These questions asked what type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program, what curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program, if there was a certain level of participation in extra or intra curricular activities by agriculture students that would indicate a successful program, if there were a number of after school hours put in by the agriculture instructor that would indicate a successful program, if there was a certain amount of student, community, and faculty feedback regarding the program that would indicate success, if there was a certain level of diversity among agriculture students that would indicate success, if there was a certain level of communication between the agriculture instructor and the administration that would indicate a successful program, and any other additional comments regarding a successful program or agricultural education in general.

Each participant was contacted prior to the interview either by phone, email, or both to grant permission and schedule a time for the interview to take place. Consenting participants

met with the researcher over the phone at the specified time. Responses were recorded by hand on a pre-developed template (see Appendix B).

Upon completion of the research process, the notes from each interview were analyzed according to a number of different factors. These factors included age, job position, number of years in the job position, and background in agriculture. Common trends in responses for each of these sub categories were noted as well as major differences.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The process of validating this study followed a combination of protocols established by both Creswell and Miller (2000), and Patton (2002). Face and construct validity were established by having the instrument reviewed and approved by a panel of four. As part of the interview process, multiple types of questions and diverse methods of questioning were utilized in order to triangulate responses and strengthen the credibility of the interviews (Creswell & Miller, 2000). After data was collected, member checking was utilized to assure validity of the responses. This process involved repeating the collected data and interpretations back to the participants so that they could confirm the credibility of the information. Following the initial interview process, participants were asked to check the responses for overall accuracy. This approach allowed the participants the ability to add credibility to this study by having the opportunity to give their responses and reactions to the initial data that was collected (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Other steps taken to insure the validity of the study included the careful reporting of the methodology used in the collection of data in the form of an audit trail (Patton, 2002). Extreme care was taken to provide the precise information involved in collecting data for this study so that the research methods associated with this study can be viewed as consistent measures of the

ability to determine participant's attitudes towards administrative support. Careful reporting of the methodology through detail notes and journals eliminated the possible loss of important information as well (Patton, 2002). Steps taken to control error in this study included selecting participants based on the recommendations of an expert to eliminate sampling bias (Patton, 2002). All participants were asked the very same questions, regardless of any extra conversation that might lead to personal bias, or influencing the way that participants may have answered the questions (Patton, 2002). An additional step that was taken to assure the validity and reliability of this study was to have the raw data and research process reviewed via peer debriefing and review (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

## Chapter Four: Findings

### Research Objective One

Research objective 1 was to describe the demographic characteristics of administrators of high schools in Illinois with agricultural education programs in terms of gender, age, job title, agricultural background, years of experience in current position, and enrollment at the high school. Of the 23 administrators nominated, 10 agreed to participate in the study. With respect to gender, nine administrators were male and one was female. In addition, seven of the participants were principals and three were superintendents.

Participants aged ranged from 36 to 56, with a median age of 40 (IQR = 13.0). Number of year in the current position ranged from 2 to 18 years, with a median number of 6 (IQR = 7.0) years of experience. Enrollments at schools represented by the administrators ranged from 67 to 583 ( $M = 294$ ,  $SD = 148.61$ ).

Administrators were asked to define the responsibilities of their current jobs. Responses given by these administrators indicated that each of them had a significant workload to balance. Administrators indicated that the requirements of their job are diverse in nature and encompassed a wide range of responsibilities. Some of the responses given included:

*“Everything!”*

*“I run the school district in terms of personnel, finances, etc.”*

*“I am in charge of oversight of district operations.”*

*“Every aspect of everything in the building.”*

*“I do just about anything and everything.”*

Administrators interviewed in this study had a wide range of backgrounds in agriculture. Some of these administrators indicated that they had a very strong background in agriculture,

while others suggested that they had been around rural communities for a significant period of time, but no practical background in agriculture. Others were tied to agriculture through family relationships, while others admitted to having a limited background. All participants indicated that they had at least some exposure to agriculture throughout their lifetime. In response to being asked to describe their back ground in agriculture, administrators responded as follows:

*“I grew up on a farm all of my life. I raised livestock and grain. My school district is rural. One hundred percent of the economic impact of my school district is agriculture. I have big time involvement with agriculture.”*

*“I have had very active agriculture programs at all of the schools I have worked at.”*

*“It is limited. Even though I grew up on a 60 acre farm, we cash rented everything to other farmers.”*

*“My in-laws farm, but none other than that.”*

*“I grew up in a small town, but nothing specific.”*

*“My grandparents farmed and I grew up in a rural community.”*

*“I was raised on a farm and was very active in FFA in high school. I taught high school agriculture before becoming principal. My background IS agriculture!”*

## **Research Objective Two**

The second research objective was to determine and describe administrators’ perceptions towards agricultural education. Participants all viewed agriculture as a positive faction of society. When asked if they viewed agriculture as a positive or negative faction of society, the following responses were elicited:

*“I view it as positive, especially in rural communities.”*

*“Very positive. It is extremely important.”*

*“Positive. It impacts everyone one way or another.”*

*“It’s positive. We can’t live without it.”*

*“One of the most important parts of society period. We don’t eat without agriculture.”*

Overall, these same administrators also viewed agricultural education as a positive addition to the curriculum offered at their schools. While all thought agricultural education was positive in their schools, a number of administrators cited proper leadership as a key factor in regards to a valuable agricultural education program. When asked whether they viewed agricultural education as a positive or negative addition currently offered by their schools, administrators replied:

*“Very positive to our school and our farming, agriculturally centered community.”*

*“It depends on the teacher and the curriculum, but it can have value.”*

*“It is one of the most important aspects of our school.”*

*“It is positive if it has the correct leadership.”*

*“It is positive in the sense that it is a huge part of sustaining agriculture in rural communities.”*

*“It is very important in my school district, most kids at this school end up doing something agriculture related.”*

Participants also stated that they place a large amount of emphasis on encouraging students to enroll in agriculture courses at their high schools. Typically, these administrators felt that any type of students could gain important insight that would benefit their futures from agricultural education and therefore saw value in recommending these courses. Additionally, the idea of practical applications of important concepts within the schools was appealing enough to administrators to suggest that they would be likely to recommend agriculture courses to students



in their schools. When asked whether or not administrators recommended agriculture courses to students at their schools, the following responses were provided:

*“Yes, even if the student isn’t involved in agriculture, because you need to know about agriculture in central Illinois.”*

*“Yes, we have recently developed a junior high agriculture program and encouraged students to take part in it in hopes that kids will become more active in high school agriculture.”*

*“Yes, in a rural community, agricultural education is important.”*

*“Strongly recommend.”*

*“I recommend it to the students I feel it would best serve.”*

Furthermore, these participants not only felt it was important to recommend agriculture courses to students, but to also recommend a high level of involvement in agriculture and agricultural education related activities outside of the classroom, albeit not at the sacrifice of a quality curriculum. Administrators acknowledged the bond between a high level of involvement in such activities as those related to FFA with a strong sense of community attachment to the program and school itself. Administrators also saw the value in these activities with regards to helping students develop into productive citizens. When asked about their thoughts regarding agricultural education related activities such as FFA that take place outside of the classroom, they responded with the following:

*“An active FFA is a requirement at this school.”*

*“An active FFA is good, but not at the expense of the curriculum.”*

*“A very active FFA is important. It is part of the identity of this school.”*

*“It is a good way to reach out to the community and help make them feel like they are part of the school.”*

*“The FFA Alumni organization at this school expects a strong FFA chapter and a high level of participation.”*

*“I think highly of the FFA. It is a positive image of this school for our community.”*

### **Research Objective Three**

The third research objective of this study was to identify and describe possible reasons for administrators’ perceptions towards agricultural education. It was noted that these administrators felt that a strong agricultural education program was a vital part of helping to sustain agriculture in rural communities where many of the students go into careers in agriculture. It was noted that participants felt this to be especially true to those communities that were mainly categorized as rural or being a community that derived a majority of the revenue from farming or other agricultural affairs. It was also further indicated that many of these programs have strong ties to community colleges in their respective areas and are an important part of bridging the gap between high school and higher education. Participants felt that even if students did not initially have a high level of interest in agriculture, it was still important for them to take courses that would allow them to better understand one of the key economic resources for the area in which they live in. Additionally, administrators felt that one of the major benefits of agricultural education was its ability to help prepare students for careers beyond high school. Responses that were identified to address this objective included:

*“Ag Mechanics and Horticulture are two classes offered that are important to supporting the livelihood of the community. It is important to offer courses throughout the entire school that are relevant to the community students live in.”*

*“Because this is a farming community, agriculture is as important as any sports team in this school.”*

*“The agricultural education program has strong ties with Lakeland Community College.”*

*“Agriculture is not just sows, cows, and plows. It is important for all students to understand that about agriculture.”*

*“Our school offers dual credit with the local community college. It is important that agriculture continues to articulate with the community college.”*

*“The agriculture program prepares students for possible careers and helps them build important skills.”*

*“A more modern approach to agriculture that is different from in the past is needed to support agricultural education at this school in order to meet the changing demands of agriculture and prepare the students along with those changes.”*

#### **Research Objective Four**

In the fourth research objective, this study attempted to explore the qualities that administrators looked for in an effective and successful agricultural education program.

Enrollment numbers as an indicator of success, it was stated, needed to remain stable.

Administrators felt that some of the more important agriculture classes, such as Introduction to Agriculture, should be near capacity each year. Having to turn students away from these classes or place students on a waiting list would be a great indicator of the success of an agricultural education program. Those programs with junior high agriculture courses should show signs of producing good enrollments for freshman agriculture courses. Administrators indicated their feelings towards the enrollments of agricultural education programs by stating the following:

*“ 75 in agriculture out of 500 students in the school is sustainable.”*

*“Stable numbers. Stability is key.”*

*“No major drop off numbers wise in enrollment.”*

*“All classes should be at 75% capacity.”*

*“Full classes with students on a waiting list to get into agriculture classes.”*

*“Enough students to rationalize offering all of the current agriculture courses.”*

*“20 kids per class.”*

*“A high turnout in freshman Introduction to Agriculture fed from interest established in the junior high Introduction to Agriculture class. Enrollments need to be consistent in all courses.”*

Participants felt that a hands-on focused curriculum was one that indicated success in the agricultural education programs at their respective schools. Programs that offered students the chance to work in a greenhouse or mechanics lab were important because they provided hands on activities and practical application of the important concepts being taught. Furthermore, it was indicated that because agricultural education is an elective and so much of the curriculum is student centered involving hands on activities, it should be fun for students to participate in.

Another important aspect of the agriculture curriculum that was indicative of their success was the ability of the program to address community needs as far as providing a good background for students pursuing careers in agriculture within their hometowns or surrounding areas. A curriculum that is comprehensive in nature is a characteristic that these participants felt was an indicator of a successful agricultural education program. This curriculum should be strong in the core subjects according to these administrators and be aligned with local

community colleges as well as have the ability to prepare students for the ever-changing landscape of the needs of the agriculture profession.

When asked what curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program, administrators specifically stated:

*“It should include basic Intro to Agriculture, Ag Econ or Ag Business, and Horticulture. It should offer a range of career exposures and be applicable to students not normally in agriculture.”*

*“Inspires students to be involved in agriculture after they graduate.”*

*“A hands on curriculum. The mechanical side of agriculture is prominent in this community. How well students are learning and able to apply the curriculum is an indication of success.”*

*“Curriculum aligned with the local community colleges and prepares students for the changing needs in agriculture.”*

*“It needs to be able to teach students why math and reading concepts are important outside of the classroom. Classes that don’t require extensive time with a text book.”*

*“Hands on and fun.”*

*“Hands on and practical. In the greenhouse kids can actually apply what they are learning.”*

The administrators placed a high level of importance on the ability to maximize the involvement of agriculture students in activities outside of the classroom such as those associated with FFA. It was noted that compared to other organizations such as sports teams, FCCLA, etc., the number of students involved in activities related to agriculture should be comparative. It was also noted that there should be a wide range of diverse activities provided for agriculture students

to participate in outside of the normal classroom setting. These activities should also provide the maximum amount of positive exposure to agriculture possible. When asked if there was a certain number of extra curricular activities associated with agricultural education or level of participation in them that would indicate a successful agricultural education program, administrators responded with the following:

*“90% of students from agriculture classes being in FFA and 75% of the students in FFA being active in it indicates success.”*

*“I like to see all FFA activities supported by strong attendance.”*

*“A wide variety of activities with good student support.”*

*“The number of kids in FFA needs to be comparative to the number of kids in FCCLA or on sports teams. It is important to know what kids are doing and take note of the number of kids involved.”*

*“I want our students to participate in all the activities that any other FFA chapter would participate in.”*

*“It is important to maximize the students in FFA. I look for 80 to 85% of the students involved in FFA to be involved in 80 to 85% of the activities.”*

*“A high level of activity is extremely important. Having a high level of participation absolutely indicates success to me.”*

*“It depends on the differences of kids. The program needs to supply students with a wide range of activities with a great deal of positive exposure to the agriculture industry.”*

One of the major differences of opinion between administrators was their views on the number of hours an agriculture instructor needed to put in to make a successful agricultural education program. Some of the participants felt strongly that the instructors needed to put in

significant extra time aside from the normal school day in order to foster a successful agricultural education program. It was stated that in order for an agricultural education program to be successful, teachers should be putting in at least an extra hour per day planning and meeting with students. The willingness of a teacher to put in time before school, after school, and on weekends was cited as a major indication of the ability to build and sustain a successful agricultural education program. When asked if there was a certain number of afterschool hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program, the administrators stated:

*“I need to see teachers staying after school at least 45 minutes to an hour planning and meeting with students. The teachers need to put in time.”*

*“It is important to put in extra time to build the program and generate student interest.”*

*“I think the teacher needs to make themselves available to students outside of the regular school hours to help build positive relationships with students that will help to sustain the program.”*

*“Before school, after school, and on weekends. It takes a lot of hours to build a successful chapter.”*

*“The willingness of the teacher to build the program is important. I would say an extra 3 to 4 hours per week would indicate success.”*

Other participants disagreed with the point that extra hours put in by the teacher indicated a successful program. Because all teachers are different, with some being much more efficient than others, it was stated that time put in by the teacher was not a great indicator of the success of an agricultural education program. The administrators taking this stance stated:

*“Enough time to get the job done and address the needs of their students.”*

*“That is not something that is evaluated.”*

*“Not a certain number of hours. Just as many as it takes to build a successful program.”*

*“You have to put in a lot of hours to be a successful agriculture teacher. There is no certain set number of hours that would indicate success, but there is a lack of hours that would indicate the opposite.”*

*“It depends on how efficient you are. It comes down to the individual teacher.”*

In respect to student, faculty, and community feedback there were specific indicators of success that these participants acknowledged. One of the most important indicators was a reduction in the amount of complaints or negative feedback and a move towards 100% positive feedback from parents, students, and faculty. Another important aspect to feedback was community support and how well members of the community turned out to support the program at banquets and fundraisers. This positive turnout is a great indicator to administrators as to the importance the community places on its agricultural education program. The FFA alumni chapters had an important voice in the community regarding the status of the agricultural education program, and so their feedback was considered a great indicator of success within the program.

It was also noted that the number of students participating in activities associated with the agricultural education program was a form of feedback on behalf of the students that indicated success. When asked if there was a certain amount of student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the agricultural education program that would indicate success, administrators responded in the following ways:

*“Positive student feedback and the ability to apply what they are learning. What the FFA alumni thinks is also very important.”*



*“Ag is important to the school and the community so as long as it stays a priority and I continue to get good verbal feedback that aspect will stay positive.”*

*“We have an annual auction that feeds 800 people in 2 hours and generates a lot of money. 100 kids enrolled annually. Multiple competitive FFA teams winning national competitions.”*

*“I usually only hear the negative side of things, so a lack of complaints is a good indicator to me.”*

*“When we had a meeting to discuss reducing the agriculture program, we had a strong community turnout to voice their opinions. The agriculture program has a huge, strong alumni and tremendous support from the community.”*

*“Everything is positive. I don’t ever hear anything negative. At this school the most popular person in the community is the agriculture teacher.”*

These administrators saw the importance of diversity in the agricultural education setting as yet another important indicator of success. Participants looked for a fairly even ratio of male to female population. They also stated that including students of multiple ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds was an important indicator of success. The ability of the program to appeal to multiple types of students such as rural students and non-rural students was important. The ability of the program to eliminate the stigma surrounding traditional agricultural education programs was also viewed as an important aspect of promoting diversity in the programs at these schools. When asked about their feelings regarding certain levels of diversity within the agricultural education programs as being indicative of success, administrators responded with the following:

*“It is important to have different socio-economic kids in class. Different types of students need to be involved such as jocks and book worms.”*

*“It should be appealing to both male and female and students of differing interests.”*

*“It needs to be for all different types of kids. Not just kids from farms, but kids from town.”*

*“An even ratio of boys and girls. Multiple ethnicities. I don’t really think this is a specific requirement for success though.”*

*“Farm boys alone can’t sustain an agriculture program.”*

*“It is not really something that is looked at because the school is not very diverse overall. The program should be able to appeal to everyone.”*

*“It needs to have the ability to appeal to an individual of any given background that could walk through the doors of this school.”*

*“A diverse set of activities and coursework indicates success.”*

*“The school is 98% Caucasian so diversity is measure on a male to female ratio. It is important to see a good ratio in the classroom.”*

These administrators also indicated that communication between themselves and the agriculture instructor was a very important piece of building a successful agricultural education program at their schools. These administrators expected constant communication with the agriculture teacher regarding expectations of the program, plans and activities, and other relevant information. They favored frequent and very candid conversations regarding the agricultural education program, even if they were to report bad news. They stated the importance of the agriculture instructor informing them one hundred percent of the time regarding all activities associated with the program. This is an area that administrators feel needs to be a focus in

Universities with respect to preparing agriculture instructors for the work place. It was noted that the recent trend of college graduates from state schools in Illinois has been a positive one as far as recent college graduate agriculture instructor's abilities to have frequent, positive communication with their administrators. Instances that participants could recall where emphasis was not placed on communication between teachers and administrators almost always had a negative impact on the program as well as the opinions of administrators regarding not necessarily the program, but the teachers themselves. When asked about the level of communication between themselves and the agriculture teacher, administrators responded with the following remarks:

*"I should never be caught off guard by anything happening in the program."*

*"This is very important. Fortunately, the teacher is good at communication, but even if they were not, I would put in the effort to determine how things are going, one way or another."*

*"I need to know about any activities that are going on and if there are any classroom issues that may be problematic."*

*"I expect that agriculture teacher to provide me with frequent updates, just to let me know what is going on."*

*"Constant communication is important. It is important in establishing expectations. I value very open and very candid communication, even concerning bad news."*

*"It seems that this is an area that agriculture teacher preparation at universities in Illinois is doing a great job of preparing teachers in. New teachers seem to be ready to do a good job of communicating with their administrators. The current teacher here is a great communicator. All communication is positive."*

*“The principal likes to know what is going on. I need to be notified 100% of the time in all agriculture program related activities.”*

### **Research Objective Five**

The fifth research objective was to identify and describe opportunities to improve administrators’ perceptions towards agricultural education. One of the major means of improving administrators’ perceptions towards agricultural education was to move in the direction of a curriculum that was based on the core subjects. Participants stated that they already felt positive about the curriculum at their school, but the continued movement towards integrating these subjecting into agriculture classes would in fact go a long way towards improving their attitudes even more in respect to agricultural education. In respect to improving administrator perceptions towards agricultural education through improvements to the curriculum, administrators stated:

*“A more direct connection to the core curriculum is needed. More direction with math, economics, etc. It is important to build bridges between applying the core subjects to the real world.”*

*“I like to see classes inspire students to become involved in agriculture.”*

*“Adoption of classes in line with the common core. We need to adopt those standards.”*

*“The ability to practically introduce math and reading is something I feel is important.”*

*“The ability for students to take what they learn and apply it in careers or in college.”*

*“Classes that are more practical to real life applications.”*

*“Classes need to keep current with what is going on in agriculture.”*

*“I think it is dictated by the personnel teaching the courses. Some teachers are better than others and the curriculum is determined by the quality of the teacher.”*

The other opportunity to improve administrator attitudes towards agricultural education is in the involvement of students in agriculture related activities outside of the classroom setting, such as FFA. FFA chapters are an important part of tying the school and community together. In this regard, the more active and involved in the community FFA chapters are, the more ability they have to contribute to the positive attitudes of administrators at their schools. In regards to this point, administrators said:

*“FFA is important for a rural community like this.”*

*“I expect to have a strong FFA alumni and strong FFA chapter. They attend both State and National convention every year. High levels of participation are expected. These activities help the students to become better citizens. “*

*“I am very supportive of the FFA because of how important it is to this community.”*

*“A strong level of participation by students and backing by their parents or members of the community is something that is important for me to see.”*

*“If the kids aren’t willing to participate, something needs to change.”*

*“I am very proud of the program and the FFA so expectations are high due to the amount of involvement of the FFA. The program is currently doing as much as it possibly can. The teachers work 12 months a year.”*

*“FFA is part of the identity of this school.”*

*“We would not hire a teacher that did not make having an active FFA program a priority.”*

*“FFA is the “front porch” of our agriculture program. Is what everyone in the community identifies agricultural education at this school with. An active FFA is important, but not at the expense of the curriculum.”*

## **Research Objective Six**

The sixth and final research objective of this study is to determine and describe administrators' perceptions toward agriculture curriculum in relation to other curricula offered at high schools with agricultural education programs. Integrating more of the core subjects into agriculture courses was viewed as a positive addition to the curriculum at these schools. The ability to provide students with practical applications of core subjects was enticing to administrators in this area and they felt that it would be equally enticing to students who may become more engaged with the practical applications of these subjects.

There was little doubt in administrators realizing the benefits of this integration for the students. Participants stated that the addition of these improvements to the curriculum would not improve their already positive opinions of agricultural education, but it would improve their opinions of the specific programs at their respective schools. The consensus was that these improvements would in fact raise their expectations of the programs with respect to how students are able to bridge the gap between the core concepts and their ability to apply them in real world settings. By doing so, participants felt that students would better be able to answer the question, "Why do I need to know this?" Participants felt the major focus of the agriculture curriculum needed to revolve around the ability to utilize hands on activities for learning. No type of education possible can rival that of the opportunity to apply what is being taught in a hands-on setting.

Participants indicated in their responses that the key change they would look for in the curriculum of agriculture courses is more real life applications and hands-on activities. The courses should be relevant to the community for which they are being taught in and address the needs of prospective employers in the area. The participants echoed one another in agreement

with the idea that hands-on activities are much more enjoyable for students and provide them when another effective means of learning important material. It is also worth noting that participants felt that possible changes in the curriculum could be dictated by the personnel and their specific abilities comfort areas.

When asked about implementing the core subjects into the agriculture curriculum at their schools, administrators responded with the following information:

*“It would be more beneficial for the students.”*

*“Any time the core subjects can be integrated, it is a positive for the school.”*

*“Agricultural education provides hands on experiences that other subjects do not in respect to the core subjects. Nothing in the world can beat that experience as a learner.”*

*“I strongly push for this.”*

*“It increases my expectations of the instructors and their abilities to articulate with junior colleges as well as meet the demand for students as agriculture changes.”*

*“Having a real life method for teaching these subjects is important.”*

*“It is an important bridge between the core concepts and how to apply them. It helps students answer the question, “Why do I need to know this?” better.”*

If schools began to do more integrating of the core subjects, participants in this area were more likely to recommend agriculture courses to students at their schools. It was noted that with many subjects, the material needed to be learned from a textbook, where as with agriculture, concepts could be better addressed through real life applications. The ability to address these concepts in such a manner was viewed as the most important aspect of their becoming more likely to recommend agriculture courses to students at their schools. With respect to the question of how much more likely would administrators be to recommend agriculture courses to students

if agriculture courses began to integrate the core subjects, administrators had the following responses:

*“I would. It would be doing a better job of addressing an area that I feel it can and needs to do a better job of addressing.”*

*“It is a positive aspect that definitely helps me to recommend agricultural education to students of all backgrounds.”*

*“I think it is a good thing, but I couldn’t recommend any more because courses are already at full capacity.”*

*“Practical application would be enticing to have students engaged in.”*

*“It just needs to be a hands on application. It is a better way to address those concepts than sitting behind a text book.”*



## **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

Administrators participating in this study showed signs of overall positive support for agricultural education programs. Administrators see agriculture as a positive faction of their school and see the value in it for students. Reasons for this support include the curriculum itself, community and student involvement, and background in agriculture. Common themes identified as indicators of a successful agricultural education program included student enrollment and participation, curriculum, community support and feedback, faculty support and feedback, appropriate work hours put forth by the teacher, diversity within the program, and teacher communication.

In analyzing the information, there were several key trends gleaned from the responses. Trends in the differences of opinion showed up significantly in those administrators who had more experience and over the age of 45 years versus those administrators who were younger and with less experience. It is therefore probable that the combination of age and experience have a profound effect on the opinions of administrators regarding agricultural education. This finding ties in closely with the theoretical framework which states that intentions to participate in activities could be predicted based upon knowledge, observation, or some other information about an issue (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kalme & Dyer, 2000). In other words, those administrators with more experience would have different beliefs than those with less experience based on their knowledge of the program and/or previous observations.

All administrators participating had a positive view of agriculture and a mostly positive view of agricultural education at their schools. Integration of the core subjects into the agriculture curriculum in addition to the ability to apply important concepts practically were both

viewed as positive aspects, although at differing levels of emphasis among administrators with regards to the level of experience previously mentioned.

All administrators reported that they had or would recommend agriculture courses to students in their high schools. They were also equally supportive of agricultural education activities that occurred outside of the classroom setting, such as FFA. Administrators saw a great deal of benefit in student involvement in these activities and organizations and expected a great deal of positive contributions to both the school and the community from them. These views fall in line with Baily (1998) who stated “It only takes a little imagination to think of how to use the social, economic, and scientific bases of agriculture to motivate and illustrate skills and knowledge from all of the academic disciplines.”

Additionally, administrators looked at stability in enrollment numbers as a strong indicator of success in agricultural education programs. The administrators reported that the agriculture teacher must have the ability to recruit and retain students; preventing a drop off in the overall number of students enrolled in agriculture courses. It was also important to these administrators that a high percentage of the students enrolled in agriculture courses become active in the FFA and other agriculture-related activities. The administrators recognized that the addition of more requirements for graduation does deter prospective students from enrolling in elective courses such as agriculture.

However, while the administrators agreed that support from school personnel and parents would increase as more core subject concepts are incorporated into the agriculture curriculum and these courses are approved to meet core subject requirements, they did not all agree complete integration was where the emphasis should be placed. Administrators began to diverge in their opinions according to age and experience on the importance of integrating the core

subjects into the agriculture curriculum at their respective high schools. Novice administrators placed more importance on the integration of the core subjects into the agriculture curriculum while more experienced administrators placed importance on emphasizing the agricultural and community connections.

Novice administrators reported that it was important to utilize agricultural education as a mode of improving standardized test scores for their school districts. If schools with agricultural education programs have a difficult time adjusting their agricultural curriculums, it becomes more difficult to this particular set of administrators to justify supporting those programs. While these administrators see the importance of applying these core concepts through practical activities to help students reinforce their understanding of the themes, the most important part of the agriculture curriculum is that it is addressing the core subjects in some form or another.

Experienced administrators also saw the importance of aligning the curriculum in their high school's agricultural education programs with the core subjects; however, it was more important to them that the curriculum provide students with a hands-on learning environment that strived to meet the needs of local agricultural community, as far as community colleges and employers were concerned. The ability for these programs to provide students with opportunities in the field of agriculture that they would be able to utilize beyond high school was more important than the ability of these programs to integrate the core subjects. These administrators align their beliefs with the position that the integration of academic principles into agriculture and natural resources can provide the context necessary for student in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to understand the world they live in (Balschweid, Thompson, & Cole, 2000).

Similarly, there was divergence among the administrators when it came to defining what constituted desirable diversity in a program; opinions regarding extra hours put in by agriculture

teachers; and the type of feedback from students, faculty, and the community that was the best indicator of success within an agricultural education program. Across the board, it was important to administrators to see a fairly equal male to female ratio enrolled in agriculture courses, but novice administrators placed more importance on socio-economic and racial diversity, while experienced administrators placed more emphasis on academic and extra-curricular diversity. Consistent with the literature, each administrator based their perceptions of diversity in large on the culture of the school in concert with their personal beliefs (Ajzen, 1985).

In regards to extra time, novice administrators did not see a relationship between the number of hours put in by agriculture instructors and the success of the program. These administrators felt that some teachers are much more efficient than others, and that varying amounts of time that were dependent on the specific teachers themselves were needed to sustain a successful agricultural education program. It was more important to these administrators to see the positive results of the agriculture programs themselves as opposed to any extra time put in by the teachers. Conversely, experienced administrators viewed the extra time put forth by agriculture instructors as a strong indicator of the success of the agricultural education program. It was important to these administrators to see positive results in their agricultural education programs; however, it was equally as important to them to see the teachers putting in time before and after school, as well as on weekends.

Although administrators fundamentally agreed that feedback from students, faculty, and the community was important, novice administrators viewed positive feedback as a lack of negative comments and complaints and a surplus of positive reactions from students, faculty and community members, while experienced administrators looked more towards community support at different agricultural education functions such as banquets and fundraisers. In addition, they

also look at student involvement in these activities as another form of feedback that indicates success or a lack there of. This again relates to the Ajzen's (1985) theory of planned behavior based on administrators' beliefs. It ties in closely with the idea of subjective norms, or the individual's perception of how people important to that individual think the behavior should be performed.

With the amount of divergence on preferences by administrators, it is recommended that agriculture teachers to work on fostering strong lines of communication with their administrators. In support of this recommendation, administrators emphasized the need for frequent and candid communication with the agriculture teachers. The administrators reported that they were more likely to support the agricultural education program if they were clear that the program was benefitting the students and in line with the mission of their respective schools. They wanted to be informed regarding the status of the program, the activities of the programs, and any other relevant information. This finding is useful in supporting the argument that it is imperative that agriculture teachers have a discussion with their administration early and often about needs and expectations. This reflects the study by Grieman et al., (2005), which suggests that there are often barriers to communication between teachers and administrators which prevent progress within the programs.

Furthermore, it is recommended that development of curriculum be a point of emphasis with teachers, principals, guidance counselors, school board members, and superintendents working in partnership. Administrators and teachers can adjust curriculum mandates to local conditions, and package them so that they are more credible to other teachers and the community (Kalme & Dyer, 2000). This recommendation takes remarkable effort by the teacher, but it is

crucial when implementing the progressive changes needed to foster strong relationship and build positive attitudes.

In addition, it is recommended that leaders in agricultural education begin to make a concerted effort to bring administrators together to observe, learn, and collaborate about ways of supporting agricultural education and the local programs. Success will necessitate a partnership between teacher educators, state education staff, teachers, and local administrators (Myers, Breja, & Dyer, 2004).

Agriculture inherently reinforces best practices that encourage student achievement. The content is relevant because of its importance to the sustainability of life, it provides application of the core subjects, and it aids in the social and personal development of students. It is imperative that agricultural educators capitalize on these inherent benefits by fostering strong relationship with, not only their administrators, but key players in the school and community. Through collaborative activities, course integration, and continued involvement in school and community events, the program can increase the public's knowledge about agricultural education and improve the public's perceptions and support for the local program (Thobegga & Miller, 2003). Therefore, it is recommended that agricultural education leaders provide both teachers and administrators targeted information that allows them to present key messages to the public about the benefits of agricultural education and the local program.

In addition, it is recommended that agricultural teacher education programs put an emphasis on training pre-service teachers on how to effectively build a successful program. Course integration is a key component of successful agriculture programs (Meyers, Breja, & Dyer, 2004), yet many agriculture teachers are working independent of the core subject teachers. Training on how to initiate collaborations within the school is important.

Based on the findings, administrators overall saw the value of agricultural education in their high schools. However, the levels of support were dependent on a number of factors that included background in agriculture, age, years of experience, the values of the community with which the school resides, the culture of the community and the school, and the diversity that exists within the population of the school and the community. To this end, a strong delineator of preference within this group was the previous experience of the administrator. Novice administrators were more likely to view agricultural education as an opportunity to expand learning of the core subjects and to move away from simply teaching the mostly traditional aspects of agriculture. These administrators focus more on the end results of the success of the agricultural education program as opposed to the nuances of agricultural education that are traditionally used to get the positive results. Conversely, experienced administrators viewed agricultural education as more traditional or vocational in nature and focused on the process. The ability of these programs to provide students with opportunities beyond high school is the most important indicator of success to them. They saw agricultural education as an important component of tying the school and the community in with one another.

With the observed differences in preferences for qualities that determine a successful agricultural education program based on the administrators' professional experiences, it is recommended that periodic assessments of administrators' perceptions and preferences as it relates to agricultural education be conducted and that the findings are reported to the profession and incorporated into teacher training. Finally, there is a need for future research to explore attitudes of administrators of differing backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities in order to determine how those factors impact administrators' attitudes about agricultural education; the attitudes of administrators regarding agricultural education from high schools with varying

enrollment sizes needs to be studied in order to determine how high schools of differing enrollments impact those attitudes; and the attitudes of administrators regarding agricultural education should be explored according to geographic boundaries in order to determine if those attitudes vary according to geography and the natural characteristics that impact those climates and cultures.

In conclusion, the ability to sustain agriculture is important, not only in Illinois, but globally. Agricultural education programs at the high school level are vital to this sustainability. It is important that we determine the best ways to recruit and retain students in agriculture and foster a genuine interest for this field. One of the most important ways we can go about fostering a genuine interest is by providing quality agricultural education programs that are supported by the school and community, starting with the support of the administration. Through research similar to this and proper knowledge dissemination, we can create effective strategies for improving administrators' attitudes towards their agricultural education programs. Teachers must then use these strategies to make improvements to their program so that concrete examples exist of the benefits the agricultural education program provides for the students, school, and community.



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## Appendix A: Survey Instrument

*Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?*

1. What is your age?
2. What is your specific job title?
3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job?
4. How many years have you held this position for?
5. Please describe you background, if any, in agriculture.

*Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?*

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?
2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?
3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?
4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?
5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?
6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?
7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

*Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?*

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
7. Is there a certain amount of communication between the agricultural education instructor and administrators that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

## Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators? *very passion-k about Ag.*

1. What is your age? *55*
2. What is your specific job title? *Superintendent of Schools*
3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? *Run the school district - Personnel, Finance, etc.*
4. How many years have you held this position for? *18*
5. Please describe you background, if any, in agriculture.

*Grew up on a Farm all his life. Rural district - 100% of economic impact of district is Ag, raised livestock grown. Bigtime involvement with Ag currently.*

Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?

*Yes - positive*

2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?

*Yes, very important at Kansas, strong ties to Lakeland college.  
Most kids in district end up doing something Ag related.*

3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?

*Yes, even if they aren't interested in Ag because you need to know about Ag in central Illinois.*

4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?

*Thinks no changes are needed.  
Keep current with what is going on.*

5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?

*Already do that. Ag Ed provides hands on experiences that other subjects do not. Nothing in the world can beat that experience as a learner.*

6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?

*Not necessarily, just needs to be hands on to apply. Better way to address it than sitting behind a text book.*

7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?
- FFA Alumni, Strong FFA Chapter,  
State & National Convention - ~~High~~ High level of participation expected. Become better citizens.

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Stable numbers, stability

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Hands on & Fun

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Not sure → Better question for teacher

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Before school, After school, weekends → lots of hours to build a successful chapter.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Yes, everything positive → too → Positive  
Doesn't ever hear anything negative. Ag is as important as any sport

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful program?

will be given a copy of this form to keep  
All different types of kids → Not just kids Most popular person in community is Ag teacher.  
From farms but also kids from town, milk, food etc. Not just saw, cows, Plows.

Communication?

Ag teacher prep at Illinois universities has teachers ready to do a good job communicating with Administrators. Great communication, communication is all positive

1222

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

- 1. What is your age? 50
- 2. What is your specific job title? Super. Clinton School.
- 3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? oversight of district operations.
- 4. How many years have you held this position for? 8th yr.
- 5. Please describe you background, if any, in agriculture.

Very Active Ag Program at all schools he has worked at.  
Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

- 1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?  
YES, especially in rural communities
- 2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
YES, large part of sustaining Ag in rural communities
- 3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
YES, decided to develop Jr. High Program and encourage kids to become more active in Ag
- 4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
More practical to real life applications → courses relevant to community students live in. Specifically Ag Mech + Hort.
- 5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
YES, Encourage more kids to be involved
- 6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?  
YES, practical application of core sub jects would be enticing + have students engaged



7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

FFA is a big part of Schools & Community → Thinks highly of FFA and is a positive image for community - VERY important to

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

He is very supportive of FFA

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

75 out of 500 students in Ag is sustainable.

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Hands on - Practical → Greenhouse  
Kids can actually apply what they are learning.

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

90% of students in FFA from Ag Program

75% of Ag students in FFA indicates success.

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

The willingness of teacher to build program is important. Extra 3 to 4 hrs per week.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Turn out from community in a reduction meeting.

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful program? You will be given a copy of this form to keep

has huge/strong Alumni/Teacher/Community support in Clinton

Even ratio of boys & girls and

multiple ethnicities but not a requirement for success.

## 7. Communication?

- Constant communication is important.
- Expectations
- Open communication even bad news
- very candid.

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**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

- 1. What is your age? 38
- 2. What is your specific job title? Principal Sr Sr High
- 3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? ~~Control~~ Every Aspect of everything in building
- 4. How many years have you held this position for? 7th year next year
- 5. Please describe you background, if any, in agriculture.

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limited, Grew up on 60 acre Farm - cash rented everything, minor livestock  
Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

- 1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?  
Yes - Positive
- 2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
Yes - Positive
- 3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Yes
- 4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Dictated by personell teaching courses. Some teachers are better than others. Determined by quality of teacher.
- 5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
Yes, that would be more beneficial to students.
- 6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?  
Yes

7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed? *Not really. Can't imagine them doing more. Neutral on question.*

*Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?*

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
  - Full Capacity Classes
  - 20 kids per class and students wanting to get in.
2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
  - Mechanical side of Ag. Prominent in community.
  - How well students are learning and able to apply curriculum
3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
  - Maximize students in FFA → 80-85% Hands on Curriculum
  - FFA Students involved in 60-85% of activities.
4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
  - Yes, need to see teachers after school 45-min to 1 hr Planning & meeting with students. Need to put in time.
5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?
  - Fewer negative comments because usually he only gets the negative.
6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful You will be given a copy of this form to keep
  - Yes, different socio-economic kids in class.
  - Different types of students involved (Zocks, book worms, etc.)
7. Communication
  - Yes, principle likes to know what is going on.
  - Needs to be notified 100% of the time in all Ag program activities

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

- (262)
1. What is your age? 56
  2. What is your specific job title? Principle
  3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? Manage day today activities of the building
  4. How many years have you held this position for? 16
  5. Please describe you background, if any, in agriculture.

Grew up in rural community  
Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?  
Positive
2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
Positive if it has the correct leadership.
3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Yes, in a rural community Ag Ed is important.
4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Classes that are practical are the most important aspect of Ag Ed.
5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
Yes, any time the core subjects are integrated it is positive for school. Good for hands on applications of core subjects.
6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?  
Yes

7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

It would be a good way to reach out to the community and help make them a part of the school. Important to a rural community like this.

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Enough students to rationalize offering all the current classes.

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

One that prepares students for their futures beyond high school. Teaches them useful skills that students can utilize.

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

I want our students to participate in all the activities that any other FFA would participate in. Throughout their life.

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

It is important to put in extra time to build the program but generate student interest. Contests, conventions, everything.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Student enrollment is important, community support is also important.

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful You will be given a copy of this form to keep

Appealing to male & female, students of differing interests.  
- Not a very culturally diverse school.

## 7. Communication

- One of the most important priorities to me. It is important to keep me involved and informed in everything.

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

- 213
1. What is your age? 40
  2. What is your specific job title? Principal
  3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? I do everything - oversee teachers & students at my school.
  4. How many years have you held this position for? 3
  5. Please describe your background, if any, in agriculture.

Grew up on farm, actively involved in Ag  
Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?  
Very positive. Extremely important.
2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
One of the most important aspects of the school.
3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Strongly recommend
4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?

- The curriculum is already good. Prepares students for possible careers, gives them important skills, sets students in a positive direction.
5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
Even if they aren't interested in Ag.  
Having a real life method for teaching those subjects is important. Do a good job of integrating core subjects already.
  6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?

Already do a good job of integrating the core subjects - it is a positive aspect that definitely helps me recommend Ag to students of all backgrounds

7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

Very active FFA is important. It is part of the identity of this school. Involvement in FFA is just as important as any sports program.

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Full classes, students on a waiting list to get into Ag classes.

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

One that teaches students the importance of Ag to the area they live in. Prepares them for jobs as education beyond high school.

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Participate in as much that FFA has to offer as possible. Understand that you can't do everything, but you need to do a lot.

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Not a certain number, just as many hours as it takes to build a successful program and maintain that success.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Teachers all view it as positive, high student enrollment and involvement, since a community pride in the program.

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful You will be given a copy of this form to keep

Needs to appeal to an individual of any possible given background that could walk through the doors of this school. We aren't the most diverse school, but program should appeal to everyone. Ag affects everyone.

7. Communication.

Very important, need to be updated. Fortunately, the teacher is very good at this, but even if they weren't I would put in the effort to determine how things are going one way or another.

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

- 432
1. What is your age? 36
  2. What is your specific job title? Principle
  3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? Everything
  4. How many years have you held this position for? 3rd
  5. Please describe you background, if any, in agriculture.

Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?

Yes - positive

2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?

Depends on the teacher and on the curriculum  
- can have value

3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?

Yes I recommend

4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?

Adopt courses in line with common core

5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?

Attitude won't change → just expectations of instructors

6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?

Already do that, can't recommend any more b/c courses are at capacity  
not an issue at private central



7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

Expect a great deal out of them, we proud of program and very good program so expectations are high due to FFA. Currently doing as much as they can - teachers work 12 mos. year.

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Currently have two kids away because interest is high - All class at 75% capacity.

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Curriculum aligned with local community colleges, preparing students for changing needs in Ag.

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Numbers of kids involved → number involved in FFA vs FCLA vs sports → know what kids are doing.

NO, not something evaluated.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Auction that sends 800 in 2 hrs and generate a lot of money. 100 kids enrolled annually. multiple, competitive FFA teams.

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful program that appeals to all students? You will be given a copy of this form to keep

winning nationals.

-not currently a measuring being used to evaluate

## 7. Communication

-It's important, nothing worse than being caught off guard by bad news.

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**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

1. What is your age? 36
2. What is your specific job title? Principle
3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? Do just about anything and everything.
4. How many years have you held this position for? 2
5. Please describe your background, if any, in agriculture.

324

Grew up in a small town but nothing specific.  
Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?  
Positive, it impacts everyone one way or another.
2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
Positive
3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
I recommend it to those students I feel it would best serve.
4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Ability to apply math and reading. It's already a science driven discipline, but the ability to particularly introduce math & reading.
5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
Yes, I strongly push for this.   
= feels important.
6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?  
Yes, it would address an important need within the school.

7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

A variety of activities and a supportive turn out for all of them by kids. If the kids aren't willing to participate something needs to change.

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Stable enrollments. Numbers need to increase or remain stable.

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

One that can teach students why math and reading concepts are important as practical outside of the classroom. Classes that don't

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

A wide variety of activities with good student support. Need to be doing activities the kids want to participate in. Require extensive time spent with text book.

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Enough time to get the job done and address the needs of their students.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Positive feedback from all is important. Don't want to hear many negative comments.

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful You will be given a copy of this form to keep

Not really something that is looked at because the school is not very diverse overall. The program should be able to appeal to everyone.

## 7. Communication

I need to know about any activities that are going on and if there are any classroom issues that may be problematic. I don't like to be surprised.

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

1. What is your age? 49
2. What is your specific job title? Principal
3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? *179* *Overseeing almost every aspect of the Jr High & High School*
4. How many years have you held this position for? 6
5. Please describe you background, if any, in agriculture.

*Lived in rural communities my whole life where Ag is important*  
Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?  
*Positive*
2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
*Positive*
3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
*Yes*

4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
*Just the ability for students to take what they learn into careers or college.*

5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
*It is important to integrate those subjects into vocational education, so I would say yes.*

6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?

*Yes I would. It would make Ag classes appealing and applicable to wider range of the student body.*

7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

A strong level of participation by students and a backing by their parents or Alumni members for the FFA is something that is

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses? important for me to see

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Stable numbers, no major drop off whatsoever in enrollment.

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

One that helps students build for jobs or other types of educational opportunities.

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Yes, I like to see all FFA activities supported by strong attendance. It is an important indicator to me.

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

I think the teacher needs to make themselves available to students outside of regular school hours to build positive relationships with

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Usually only hear the negative side of things, so a lack of negative feedback is a good thing. Students feel will help sustain the program success.

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful You will be given a copy of this form to keep

Not just male farm kids. It's important to see town kids, girls, kids without a strong ag background being drawn in. Farm boys alone can't sustain a program.

## 7. Communication

Open lines of communication are important in everything we do. I expect the ag teacher to provide me with frequent updates just to let me know what's up.

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

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1. What is your age? 43
2. What is your specific job title? Supv. of Schools
3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? Everything
4. How many years have you held this position for? 24
5. Please describe your background, if any, in agriculture. Rural Community, Grandparents Farmed

Sub-Category: What are administrator's attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative faction of society?  
Positive, can't live without it
2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
Positive → Responsibility of Ag to Integrate Core Curriculum. Needed to support Aged at Leroy. More Modern approach to Aged different from in past.
3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Yes
4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
More direct connection to core curriculum → more direct with math, Econ, etc. Build "bridges" between applying core subjects to real world.
5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
YES - More positive attitude already in place. Bridge between Core Concepts & How to apply them. Teach students "why I need to know this."
6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?  
Yes

7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

Active FFA but Not at expense of Curriculum, still need to build community support. FFA is the "Front Porch" of the Program.

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Smaller School → Enrollment needs to be made consistent, class size is cyclical so evaluation is not on specific number. Intro in Jr. High needs to support Freshman

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Basic Intro, Ag Econ/Business, Horticulture Intro → need Enthusiasm.

Range of Career exposures students not normal in Ag

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Not necessarily - small school → Ebb & Flow changes Depends on differences of kids. Need to provide a wide range of activities

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

No. depends on how efficient you are.

Comes down to the individual teacher.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Student feedback, positive feedback & ability to apply what they are learning. What FFA Alumni thinks is very important.

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful You will be given a copy of this form to keep

98% Caucasian so ~~diversity~~ diversity is male/female so likes to see a good ratio of male to female in classroom.

7. Communication → vital to run. I need to know what is going on around.

critical piece for Ag in today's society is ability to articulate bridges & be able to apply core curriculum through Vocational Education. If you can't impart these areas it is difficult to sustain program.

**Qualitative Protocol (Questions to be asked at time of interview)**

Sub-Category: What is the gender, age, job title, years in job, and agricultural background of administrators?

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1. What is your age? 38
  2. What is your specific job title? Principal
  3. What are the specific responsibilities of your job? oversee all aspects of the school,
  4. How many years have you held this position for? 6 work positively with students and parents to create a great school.
  5. Please describe your background, if any, in agriculture.

Raised on a farm, very active in FFA in h.s., taught h.s. Ag before becoming principal. My background is Ag.

Sub-Category: What are administrators' attitudes towards Agricultural Education, and what can be done to improve these feelings?

1. Do you view Agriculture as a positive or a negative fraction of society?  
One of the most important parts of society period. We don't eat without Ag.
2. Do you view Agricultural Education as a positive or negative addition to the curriculum currently offered by the school you are employed at?  
Very positive to our school and our farming, Ag focused community.
3. Do you recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
I think all students can benefit from our Ag classes. I highly recommend them.
4. What changes in the curriculum offered by Agricultural Education courses at your school would make you more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students attending the school you are employed at?  
Not really any specific changes. I just like to see courses inspire students to become involved in Ag.
5. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you develop a more positive attitude towards Agricultural Education courses?  
Already have a positive attitude, but I think adding those concepts to the curriculum is an important trend that is becoming more necessary.
6. If Agricultural Education courses began to integrate the core studies (Math, Science, Reading) into their curriculum on a more regular basis, would you be more likely to recommend Agricultural Education courses to students at the school in which you are employed?  
Actually yes I would. It would be doing a better job of addressing an area that I feel it can and needs to do a better job of addressing.



7. Are there certain extra-curricular activities (FFA, Community Service, School Fundraisers) that could be associated with the Agricultural Education Program that would help to improve your attitude towards the Agricultural Education program at the school in which you are employed?

An active FFA is a requirement at this school we would not have a teacher who did not make have an active FFA a priority. If that ~~part~~ aspect of Ag started to slip, there could be major issue to deal with.

Sub-Category: What qualities do administrators feel that a successful high school agricultural education program possesses?

1. What type of enrollment numbers would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

All classes full to capacity or almost full. Definitely don't want to see any regression in numbers.

2. What curriculum would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

one that has a strong math, science, and even reading foundation. Teaches students to apply these concepts to the real world. Inspires students to be involved in Ag after they graduate.

3. Is there a certain amount of extra-curricular activities or level of participation that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

High level of activity is extremely important. Having a high level of participation absolutely indicates success to me.

4. Is there a certain number of after school hours put in by the teacher that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

You have to put in a lot of hours to be a good Ag teacher. There are no set hours that would indicate success, but there is a lack of time put in that would show a lack of success.

5. Is there certain student, community, and teacher feedback regarding the program that would indicate a successful agricultural education program?

Ag is import to the school and community so as long as it continues to be a priority and I get good verbal feedback that creates

6. Is there a certain level of diversity among students that would indicate a successful You will be given a copy of this form to keep

Needs to be able to appeal to a wide range of students by offering a wide variety of choices and activities for students. A diverse set of activities and coursework indicates success.

7. Communication

- It is very important. I should never be caught off guard by anything happening in the program. Teachers responsibility to see to this.