

Kansas agricultural education teacher priority differences among
early-, mid-, and late-career teachers and among traditionally and
alternatively certified teachers.

by

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Abstract

Mentoring programs have been and continue to be used heavily for beginning Agricultural Education Teachers in assisting them through the ups and downs of teaching. However, it is becoming increasingly important to continue mentorships for teachers past their beginning years as there are still challenging aspects to the career. Due to little knowledge of mentorship programs for mid- and late- career ag teachers it is imperative to understand their needs and priorities of their professional and personal lives. The purpose of this study was to determine the priorities of early-, mid- and late-career Kansas Ag Teachers as well as those who are traditionally and alternatively certified. Forty Kansas Agriculture Teachers completed and turned in an agriculture teacher priorities instrument. Teachers within one to five years of teaching are considered early career teachers, their most important and high importance priorities were teaching local daily classes, local FFA activities, CDEs, family life, and designated family time of one-and-a-half days. While mid-career teachers in years six to fifteen place their most important and high importance priorities in daily lessons, local and above FFA activities, and being good neighbors. As for late-career teachers in years sixteen plus their most and high importance priorities included daily lessons, local FFA activities, participating in professional development, developing course outlines and calendars, family life, and designated family time of one-and-a-half days. Overall, daily classes, local FFA activities, family life, and dedicating one-and-a-half days to family time was determined the most important or a high importance priority for all career stages of teachers. Traditionally certified teachers determine daily lessons, local and above FFA activities, CDEs, and family time as their most important and high importance priorities. While most important and high importance priorities of alternatively certified teachers were daily lessons, professional development, family time, designating one-

and-a-half days to family time, and having a second job or employment. Data shows that traditionally and alternatively certified teachers agreed daily classes, personal leisure time, family time, dedicating one-and-a-half days of family time, and having a second means of income or employment were the most important or high importance priority items. This information will assist in developing and altering mentoring programs and professional development opportunities for teachers in various stages and on different paths of certification within their professional career.

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Introduction

Background

It is known there is a teacher shortage nationwide, especially in the field of Agricultural Education according to the National Agricultural Education Supply & Demand Study (Foster et al., 2021). In Kansas, the first five years of an agriculture teacher's career are crucial to the future of the profession. As in those five years the trend is teachers decided to either leave or continue in the profession for years to come (Hughes et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Johnson et al. (1998), they found that 1st and 2nd-year agriculture teachers had similar responses to experienced agriculture teachers in that the use of time is related to why teachers leave the profession.

While data has been collected on experienced teachers in various fields in relation to their priorities, more data must be collected on the same topic but centered around early-career teachers. If mentoring programs gain access to this information, they might be able to adapt and/or provide assistance in areas that early-career teachers designate as their priorities within those beginning years. The mentoring programs could also advise early-career teachers in ways their priorities might be better used within those initial years. Overall, the goal is to increase teacher retention, decrease program shutdowns and agricultural education teacher vacancies.

Statement of Problem

Agricultural Education Teachers tend to leave in the first five years of their teaching career (Hughes et al., 2020). Due to this constant turnover rate, many programs are forced to close, be filled with a substitute, or a less than fully licensed teacher. By determining priorities among early-career and alternative certified agriculture education teachers in Kansas

specifically, mentoring programs can cater their teaching to the group's needs. Therefore, better-equipping teachers with the skills and tools to be successful according to their priorities in their first five years of teaching will hopefully encourage them to remain in the profession. The implications of this study will allow current mentoring programs to be altered with this newly collected data to better fit the needs of Kansas Agriculture Teachers as well as develop and create mentoring programs for mid- and late-career teachers and alternatively certified teachers. This in turn should theoretically lead to an increase in agriculture teacher retention rates thus leading to a decrease in program vacancies.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the priority differences and similarities among early, mid-, and late-career Kansas Agricultural Education middle school and high school teachers. Additionally, it will determine the priority differences and similarities between traditional and alternatively certified Kansas Agricultural Education middle school and high school teachers. After collecting and analyzing this data, mentoring programs can be altered to best fit the needs of current and future agricultural educators. This will then better equip teachers with the tools and knowledge to help them succeed more in and out of the classroom resulting in fewer issues leading to a change in profession therefore increasing teacher retention.

Research Objectives

1. To determine priority differences and similarities of early, mid-, and late-career middle school and high school agricultural education teachers in Kansas.

2. To determine priority differences and similarities between traditional and alternative middle school and high school-certified agricultural education teachers in Kansas.
3. To identify top priorities in early-, mid-, and late-career middle school and high school agricultural education teachers in Kansas.
4. To identify top priorities in traditionally and alternative middle school and high school-certified agricultural education teachers in Kansas.

Operational Definition of Terms

1. Agricultural Education Teacher: A middle school and high school teacher who educates students about agriculture, food, and natural resources in Kansas (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2025).
2. Priority: A preferential rating towards something. One that allocates rights to goods and services usually in limited supply (Merriam-Webster, 2025).
3. Traditionally Certified Teachers: Any teacher who has completed a bachelor's degree in a field of education, completed a state-approved teacher preparation program, and has passed the state's designated standard tests for educators and content area Licensures.
4. Alternatively Certified Teachers: Any teacher who is teaching in a school setting who has not utilized the traditionally certified pathway. Some examples might include transition to teaching, para pathway program, industry professional, and other related methods.
5. Early Career Teachers: A teacher in years one to five of their teaching career.
6. Mid Career Teachers: A teacher in years six to fifteen of their teaching career.
7. Late Career Teachers: A teacher with sixteen or more years of teaching experience.

Limitations and Assumptions

One limitation of this study is the sample availability. While there are criteria determining who can participate in the study, it is limited by those who are available for the study. This study was conducted at a Kansas Agricultural Education Winter Symposium Conference in January of 2025. It can be assumed that not all agriculture teachers in Kansas were in attendance at this event. Additionally, there were other workshops happening at the same time resulting in teachers attending a different workshop.

It can be assumed that all participants who fit the criteria teach agriculture courses that are approved by the Kansas State Department of Education. In addition, it can be assumed that teaching agriculture is their primary source of employment. The teachers within the study have their own defined priorities and understanding of their time.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this is to review the literature that has helped guide and frame this study. The topics that will be covered include the following: priorities, certification of teachers, retention rates in agriculture teachers, and the instrument's background.

Certification of Teachers

During the 2022-2023 school year of the 37,885 teachers in Kansas, it was estimated that the minimum number of teachers not completely certified for their teaching assignments was 1,578 teachers (Tan et al., 2024). From that information, it can be assumed the remaining schools hired teachers who earned a state issued teaching license. In a study comparing traditional and alternative certified teachers, evidence suggests an increase in organized support programs (mentoring programs) for new teachers is likely to reduce the rate of turnover (Redding & Smith, 2016). However, they also said traditional certified teachers are less likely to leave the profession compared to alternative certified teachers. This information is valid in exploring further research as about 18% of teachers enter the profession as alternative certified teachers according to National Center for Education Statistics (2022). Moreover, according to Jang & Horn (2017), “traditional teacher preparation consistently yields better instructional knowledge, self-efficacy, and teacher retention than alternative preparation.” Evidence has been found that alternatively certified teachers feel less prepared than teachers who are traditionally certified within their first year of teaching (Redding & Smith, 2016). This information adds to the importance of mentoring programs for all beginning teachers, but largely for alternatively certified teachers.

Teacher Retention Rates

Furthering the importance and need of certified teachers; “in 2021, teacher shortages made headlines in every single state” (Church & Simmering, 2022, p.2). Additionally, there was an increase of teacher vacancies at a rate of 62% between the fall of 2020 and 2021. Moreover, Church and Simmering (2022) also reported that 54% of parents in a study discouraged their children from becoming teachers - again negatively impacting the incoming professionals. In data collected by McPherson (2023), up until the year 2026 in Kansas there is expected to be an average of 420 annual job openings for middle school teachers and 740 average annual openings for secondary school teachers.

Priorities

To quote Banks (2012), “Understanding personal priorities and goals associated with the specific dimensions of our life is integral to the development of sustainable scholarly trajectories (p.354).” While teachers have many tasks and items that demand their attention, they must be prioritized in some form. According to Rabinowitz, priorities are determined by ordering things from high importance to low in relation to one another. Priorities may adjust with changes to the community or with changes to one’s concerns and knowledge (Rabinowitz,). Evans (1996) says that teachers’ priorities are a reflection of their exposure to training, the school’s climate, and/or the school’s administrative focus. McIntyre et al., (2019) also suggested that teacher priorities are likely to vary with the gain of classroom expertise. In a study comparing expert teachers’ gaze proportions against novice teachers, the experts focused more on the prioritization of students, while novice teachers prioritized non-instructional classroom components (McIntyre et al., 2019).

Understanding the priorities of teachers is vitally important to their retention. Banks (2012) says that assisting faculty in determining the balance of professional and non-work-related goals contributes to the retention of staff. Determining this balance may shift over the teacher's career time, however through mentoring teachers, they can gain guidance to achieve a balance appropriate for them. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) stated, "Mentoring is the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools" (p. 683).

Overall, there are several items that demand agricultural educators' attention. Those educators must then prioritize those items based on what they think is best. However, it is to be noted that school administration, culture, and vision often drive those priorities. While there are now multiple pathways to gaining teacher certification, mentoring programs show significant differences in ensuring the two categories of teachers feel prepared for the classroom (Redding & Smith, 2016). Kansas continues to struggle to fill open teaching positions (Tan et al., 2024), it is as important as ever that mentoring programs adjust to the priorities of teachers for them to find success and develop professional development programs centered around teacher priorities. Theoretically, these changes and alterations will further increase teacher retention rates.

Methodology

Institutional Review Board

Kansas State University policy and federal regulations require approval of all research studies related to human subjects before researchers can begin conducting their experiments. The Kansas State University Office of University Research Services and the IRB reviewed this method to ensure the protection of human subjects involved with biomedical and behavioral research and approved the research project. Approval of the research was given.

Research Design

For this predominantly quantitative research design, the priority instrument (Ulmer et al., 2009) was distributed to 41 Kansas Agricultural Education teachers who were present at the AgEd Winter Symposium Priorities workshop which was presented by researcher Emma Lehmann and Dr. Ulmer. After the instrument was completed, attendees were asked to complete the following demographic questions. Once questions were answered participants were allowed to turn in their responses with signed consent forms allowing use of their data in this research.

Population and Sample

The population of this study included all Kansas Agricultural Education teachers and Kansas Agricultural Education Student Interns which totals approximately 281 individuals. Of that 265 are teachers with 16 individuals being student teachers. It is important to note that both

traditional certified and alternative certified teachers are counted in the 265 population. Of this, 41 teachers and/or interns completed the instrument with 40 individuals allowing their responses to be used for this study. Covering the state of Kansas, there was a 14.23% participation rate. Of those in attendance for the data collection process, there was a response rate of 97.56%

Instrumental Design

This instrument used for this study was created to assess the priority levels of Agricultural Education Teachers pertaining to their professional and personal life. Originally, it was created by Lockwood (1976) and was then modified by Goode and Steward (1981). In keeping up-to-date with the Agricultural Education Program changes to reflect more accurate terminology the instrument was altered again by Goode and Steward (2007). A panel of experts ($n=5$) reviewed the instrument for face and content validity. Goode and Steward (1981) established the reliability of the instrument with a test-retest reliability coefficient of .94. With only minor changes to the instrument, such as *Vocational Agriculture* being changed to *Agricultural Education*, it was determined that the original reliability remained applicable. The instrument consists of 32 items related to the personal and professional life of agricultural education teachers in Kansas as shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3. Each activity has a 0-4 rating scale, with 0 serving as no priority, 1 being the least amount of priority, and 4 equaling the highest priority. The instrument was presented to teachers at the 2025 Agricultural Education Winter Symposium Conference via paper with a demographic questionnaire following. Demographic information was not tested for validity and/or reliability as it was simply used to divide certain data sets into categories.

Figure 1.1 Priorities of Kansas Agricultural Educators Instrument

Rate the following items by their importance to you. A rating of no (0) markers indicates a very low importance, a rating of 4 markers indicates a very high importance. Using 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 markers indicates your rating in degree of importance for each item.	least important use no markers				most important use all markers
	0	1	2	3	4
1. Teaching local daily classes is important. I will devote enough time to preparation that I am satisfied with my teaching.					
2. Field trips are a valuable educational tool. I will plan, organize, and conduct them as often as they can be useful.					
3. FFA local activities are important. I will devote enough time to have an active chapter with valuable local activities.					
4. FFA activities past the local level are important. I will work to involve the local chapter and individual FFA members in FFA contests, conferences, etc., above the local level.					
5. Career Development Event teams are important. I will devote the time necessary to train and educate them to ensure that they are competitive with other schools in the area, district, and state.					
6. The FFA Alumni Association is important. I will work with the local Alumni chapter.					
7. Helping students to exhibit livestock, crops, and farm mechanics projects at fairs and shows is important. I will devote the necessary time to help FFA members produce/build, prepare for exhibit, and exhibit them.					
8. The advisory council for the local ag ed department is important. I will help arrange for meetings, keep them informed, and consider their suggestions.					
9. Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) are important. I will devote enough time to them (including visits) that I am satisfied with the quality of the programs.					
10. The instruction value of SAE records is important. I will plan time during class and visits to ensure their accuracy.					
11. Visits to potential students in ag ed are important. I will schedule and conduct visits to entering students before school starts.					
12. Duties assigned by the local school administrators are important. I will work more than the minimal time needed as class sponsor, at hall duty, etc.					
13. Keeping up to date on paperwork required by the local school administration is important. I will keep current on my grade book, lesson plans, local reports, etc.					
14. Keeping up to date on paperwork required above the local level is important. I will send reports to KSDE and other agencies early or on time.					
15. An effective public relations program is necessary. I will spend time on newspaper articles, displays, social media, visits, etc.					

Figure 1.2 Priorities of Kansas Agricultural Educators Instrument

16. Professional organizations inside Career and Technical Education are important. I will participate in the activities of K-ACTE, KAAE, ACTE, and NAAE.					
17. Professional organizations outside of Career and Technical Education are important. I will participate in the activities of KNEA, NEA, etc.					
18. Professional development is important. I will attend in-service classes, workshops, and/or summer classes.					
19. Keeping up to date about agriculture is important. I will read farm magazines, read recent releases from commercial companies, attend field days, etc.					
20. Coordination of the ag ed program with other agencies is important. I will schedule conferences and coordinate my activities with the extension service, private companies, pork and beef producer groups, other school activities, etc.					
21. The department's course of study, course outlines, and teaching calendars help ensure a well-balanced program which meets student needs. I will devote time prior to each school year to develop and/or revise them.					
22. Being a willing helper is important. I will repair things for others in the school, ride pep buses, drive bus routes, fill in for sick teachers—even if I have to sacrifice something in my family life or program to do so.					
23. Neatness and organization are important. I will keep the classroom, office, shop, filing system, etc., neat and organized at all times.					
24. Being a good neighbor is important. I will always have time to visit with anyone about any idea, problem, suggestion, etc.					
25. School activities of all kinds are important. I will support, participate in (coaching), and attend, school plays, programs, sports, dances, etc.					
26. Public service work is important. I will participate in organizations such as Rotary, Farm Bureau, Boy Scouts, etc.					
27. Church activities are important. I will be more active than just attending services once per week.					
28. Having a nice home is important. I will spend the time necessary to keep an attractive lawn, garden, house, and car.					
29. Leisure time is important and useful. I will "get away" occasionally at my choice of golf, fishing, hunting, shop work, etc.					
30. My family life is important. I will insist on finding some time nearly every day to do something together.					
31. Because my family life is important, I will reserve a day and a half most weekends to be spent in family activities.					
32. A second area of interest (for personal monetary profit) is an essential part of maintaining my income, interest, and enthusiasm for my job and daily life. I will play the stock market or board of trade, have a farming or livestock business, or have some other part time job.					

Figure 2.1 *Demographic Questionnaire*

33. What is your age? _____
34. How many years have you taught? _____
35. Including you, how many ag teachers are in your department? _____
36. How many years have you taught high school? _____
37. What is your highest level of education? a. Bachelors b. Masters c. Specialist d. Doctoral
38. What process did you use to earn your agriculture teaching license/certificate? a. Currently working on license b. Traditional preservice program c. Alternative program d. Certified in a different field and tested into agriculture
39. What is your sex? a. Female b. Male c. Non-Binary d. Prefer not say
40. Do you have children living at home? a. Never had b. Now have c. Used to have
41. List the academic areas you are certified to teach. _____ _____ _____ _____

Validity and Reliability

According to Bradford (2016), Creswell (2012) defines validity as the level at which a response exposes the intended interpretation of the question's purpose. Additionally, Creswell (2012) stated that validity is measured to confirm an instrument's test interpretation is the same as its proposed use, (Bradford 2016). The reliability of the 32-priority item instrument was established by Goode and Stewart (1981) with a test-retest reliability coefficient of .94. While the validity was determined intact by a panel of experts in ($n=5$). The demographic questions were not tested as they were simply helping separate responses into categories of early-, mid-, late-career, and alternatively and traditionally certified agricultural teachers.

Data Collection

Data collection took place at the 2025 Kansas Agricultural Education Winter Symposium in January. During the workshop 41 agricultural educators and interns attended. Of those, 40 individuals signed the provided consent form allowing their given data to be used for research purposes.

A paper priorities instrument that contained the 32 items was dispersed to all attendees. Additionally, 64 candy markers were given to those in attendance along with a writing utensil. Individuals were read the instructions by the researchers providing clarification on any questions asked. The scale of the instrument is 0-4, with 0 serving as no priority, 1 meaning little priority, and 4 meaning most important priority. The more markers placed by a listed activity the higher level of priority indicated. Individuals were instructed to use only and all 64 markers, without cutting them in half. Once individuals placed all markers they were told to use their writing utensil and place an “X” in the box of highest priority for each item. For example, if an individual placed 3 candy markers next to an item they would put an “X” in the 3-box. If the item had no priority they would put an “X” in the 0-box.

Following the instrument demographic questions were listed to provide distinctions when assessing the various subgroups of the population. Individuals were asked to complete the questions. Finally, if individuals agreed to provide their data they signed the consent form and turned in their documents.

Results

Selected Characteristics

Following the Priority Instrument was a paper copy of the Demographic Questionnaire (Figure 3) which was used to categorize responses into various categories. Moreover, the demographic information was used to determine frequencies and percentages for gender, number of years in the profession, agriculture teachers in program, highest degree obtained, age, certification method, and living situations. There were also characteristic descriptors that listed what courses and certifications the teachers taught and/or had obtained.

The respondents varied widely in how many years they had been in the classroom; however, the majority of respondents had been in the classroom either 0-5 years ($n = 24$), while teachers in years 6-15 consisted of nine respondents and six respondents had 16+ years of teaching. A majority of respondents ($n = 28$) reported their highest degree obtained as a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, most teachers came from a one-teacher program ($n = 21$). The majority of respondents (80.0%; $n = 32$) reported they were traditionally certified in agricultural science.

According to the Kansas FFA (2024) Annual Report, of the 269 Kansas Ag Teachers who completed it 44.98% ($n=121$) are male agricultural education teachers with 55.02% ($n=148$) being females. Of the 269, 55.02% ($n=148$) hold the highest degree of a Bachelors, with 39.03% ($n=105$) having the highest degree of a masters, (Kansas FFA, 2024). Finally, of the 269 teachers 72.86% ($n=196$) said they were traditionally certified while 27.14% ($n=73$) said they were alternatively certified (Kansas FFA, 2024). In knowing this information, the data collected can

be comparative to the Kansas Agricultural Education population. Complete demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Teacher Demographics (n = 40)*

Demographic Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Female	25	62.50
Male	15	37.50
Number of Years as an Agricultural Science Teacher		
0-5 years	24	60.00
6-10 years	8	20.00
11-15 years	2	5.00
16-20 years	3	7.50
More than 20 years	2	5.00
Not Reported	1	2.50
Highest Degree Obtained		
Bachelor Degree	28	70.00
Master Degree	12	30.00
Specialist Degree	0	0.00
Doctoral Degree	0	0.00
Age		
20-25	20	50.00
26-30	8	20.00
31-35	3	7.50
36-40	1	2.50
41-45	3	7.50
46-50	2	5.00
More than 50	3	7.50
Teaching Certification Method		
Traditionally Certified in Agricultural Science	32	80.00
Alternatively Certified	7	17.50
Certified in a different field and tested into Agriculture	0	0.00
Currently Working on License	1	2.50
Ag Teachers in Department (including respondent)		
0 Teachers	1	2.50
1 Teacher	21	52.50
1.5 Teachers	1	2.50
2 Teachers	15	37.50
3 Teachers	1	2.50
Not Reported	1	2.50

Objective 1 Results

The purpose of research objective one was to describe the similarities and differences of early-, mid-, and late-career agricultural education teachers regarding personal and work life tasks in Kansas. Table 2 depicts the results for each category of teachers. To best understand the data Level 4 = Most Importance, Level 3 = High Importance, Level 2 = Moderate Importance, Level 1 = Minimal Importance, Level 0 = No Importance.

Table 2. Early-, Mid-, and Late-Career Ag Teacher Priority Differences and Similarities (n = 39)

Priority Items	<i>Early (n=24)</i>	<i>Mid (n=9)</i>	<i>Late(n=6)</i>
Q1: Teaching local daily classes			
Level 4 and 3	21	6	6
Level 2 and 1	3	3	0
Level 0	0	0	0
Q2: Field Trips			
Level 4 and 3	8	3	2
Level 2 and 1	15	6	3
Level 0	1	0	1
Q3: FFA local activities			
Level 4 and 3	15	6	5
Level 2 and 1	8	3	1
Level 0	0	0	0
Q4: FFA activities past the local level			
Level 4 and 3	12	8	2
Level 2 and 1	9	1	3
Level 0	2	0	1
Q5: Career Development Events			
Level 4 and 3	16	5	1
Level 2 and 1	7	4	4
Level 0	1	0	1
Q6: Local FFA Alumni Association			
Level 4 and 3	3	1	2
Level 2 and 1	8	6	2
Level 0	12	2	2
Q7: Students exhibiting projects at Fairs			
Level 4 and 3	5	1	2
Level 2 and 1	13	8	4
Level 0	5	0	0

Priority Items	<i>Early (n=24)</i>	<i>Mid (n=9)</i>	<i>Late(n=6)</i>
Q8: Advisory Council for local program			
Level 4 and 3	0	0	2
Level 2 and 1	21	9	2
Level 0	3	0	1
Q9: Supervised Agricultural Experiences			
Level 4 and 3	4	1	0
Level 2 and 1	18	8	3
Level 0	2	0	3
Q10: Supervised Agricultural Experience Records			
Level 4 and 3	2	0	0
Level 2 and 1	19	9	4
Level 0	3	0	2
Q11: Visits to potential students in AgEd			
Level 4 and 3	2	1	1
Level 2 and 1	14	4	2
Level 0	7	4	3
Q12: Extra duties assigned by school administration			
Level 4 and 3	1	1	1
Level 2 and 1	18	6	4
Level 0	4	2	1
Q13: Keeping up to date on local level paperwork			
Level 4 and 3	8	2	3
Level 2 and 1	14	7	3
Level 0	1	0	0
Q14: Keeping up to date on paperwork above local level			
Level 4 and 3	4	1	2
Level 2 and 1	17	7	4
Level 0	3	1	0
Q15: Public Relations Program			
Level 4 and 3	3	0	1
Level 2 and 1	19	8	4
Level 0	1	1	1
Q16: Inside Career & Technical Education Organizations			
Level 4 and 3	6	1	3
Level 2 and 1	18	8	1
Level 0	0	0	2
Q17: Outside Career & Technical Education Organizations			
Level 4 and 3	0	1	0
Level 2 and 1	13	4	2
Level 0	10	4	4
Q18: Professional Development Participation			
Level 4 and 3	10	3	4
Level 2 and 1	14	5	2
Level 0	0	1	0

Priority Items	<i>Early (n=24)</i>	<i>Mid (n=9)</i>	<i>Late(n=6)</i>
Q19: Keeping up to date about agriculture	8	3	3
Level 4 and 3	15	5	3
Level 2 and 1	1	1	0
Level 0			
Q20: Coordination of AgEd program with other agencies	2	0	3
Level 4 and 3	17	9	2
Level 2 and 1	5	0	1
Level 0			
Q21: Developing course outlines and calendars	9	1	4
Level 4 and 3	10	8	2
Level 2 and 1	4	0	0
Level 0			
Q22: Willing Helper-sick teacher fill-in, repairs, drive bus	2	5	1
Level 4 and 3	15	4	4
Level 2 and 1	7	0	1
Level 0			
Q23: Classroom and Filing Neatness and Organization	10	0	1
Level 4 and 3	13	7	5
Level 2 and 1	0	2	0
Level 0			
Q24: Being a good neighbor	4	7	3
Level 4 and 3	15	2	3
Level 2 and 1	5	0	0
Level 0			
Q25: Support and help with extra curricular activities	6	4	1
Level 4 and 3	16	5	4
Level 2 and 1	1	0	1
Level 0			
Q26: Public Service	2	4	0
Level 4 and 3	13	4	5
Level 2 and 1	8	1	1
Level 0			
Q27: Church Activities	9	4	1
Level 4 and 3	6	3	4
Level 2 and 1	8	2	1
Level 0			
Q28: Having a nice home	10	2	3
Level 4 and 3	12	6	2
Level 2 and 1	0	1	1
Level 0			
Q29: Personal leisure time	11	5	1
Level 4 and 3	12	4	3
Level 2 and 1	1	0	2
Level 0			

Priority Items	<i>Early (n=24)</i>	<i>Mid (n=9)</i>	<i>Late(n=6)</i>
Q30: Family Life	18	6	4
Level 4 and 3	6	2	2
Level 2 and 1	0	1	0
Level 0			
Q31: 1 ½ days for family activities	16	5	4
Level 4 and 3	7	2	1
Level 2 and 1	0	1	1
Level 0			
Q32: Second job/employment	13	2	3
Level 4 and 3	7	5	1
Level 2 and 1	3	1	2
Level 0			

Note: 4=Most Important, 3=High Importance, 2=Moderate Importance, 1=Least Important, 0=No Importance

Across all teaching career levels each group agreed on a level 4 or 3 of importance on daily classes, local FFA activities, family life, and dedicating one-and-a-half days to family time. All teaching career levels agreed on a level 2 or 1 of importance on the following items: field trips, projects as fairs, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) records, extra duties assigned by school administration, paperwork on and above the local level, public relations, keeping up to date about agriculture, supporting extra-curricular activities, and public service.

The early- and mid-career teachers agreed that FFA activities past the local level and Career Development Events (CDEs) were a level 4 or 3 of importance while the late-career teachers listed the items as level 2 or 1 of importance. Moreover, the two groups had response rates of level 2 or 1 of importance on their advisory council, SAE projects, Career and Technical Education (CTE) organizations within the Ag teaching profession, partnerships with agencies, and the creation of course outlines and calendars. Of these, late-career teachers place a level of 4 or 3 importance on Ag teaching CTE organizations, partnerships with agencies, and development of course outlines and calendars. Early- and late-career teachers agreed with placing a Level 2 or

1 on being a willing helper also, both groups had some level of importances listed regarding organization and neatness.

Collectively, 38 of the 39 respondents agreed to placing importance ranging from level 4 to 1 on professional development, while 14 of the 39 said they place no importance on visits to potential ag students. All mid- and late-career teachers placed a level of 4 to 1 on being a good neighbor while only 19 of the 24 early-career teachers did. Regarding personal leisure time 36 of the 39 respondents place a level of 4 to 1 of importance while 31 of the 37 respondents said having a second form of monetary income was a level 4 to 1 of importance. Of the 31 respondents, 18 ranked it as a level 4 or 3 priority.

Objective 2 Results

The purpose of research objective two was to describe the similarities and differences of traditionally and alternatively certified agriculture education teachers. Table 3 depicts the results for each category of teachers. To best understand the data Level 4 = Most Importance, Level 3 = High Importance, Level 2 = Moderate Importance, Level 1 = Minimal Importance, Level 0 = No Importance.

Table 3. *Priority differences of traditionally and alternatively certified teachers (n = 40)*

Priority Items	<i>Traditionally Certified (n=32)</i>	<i>Alternatively Certified (n=7)</i>	<i>Working on Certification (n=1)</i>
Q1: Teaching local daily classes			
Level 4 and 3	28	5	1
Level 2 and 1	4	2	0
Level 0	0	0	0
Q2: Field Trips			
Level 4 and 3	13	1	0
Level 2 and 1	17	6	1
Level 0	1	0	0

Priority Items	<i>Traditionally Certified (n=32)</i>	<i>Alternatively Certified (n=7)</i>	<i>Working on Certification (n=1)</i>
Q3: FFA local activities			
Level 4 and 3	22	4	0
Level 2 and 1	9	3	1
Level 0	0	0	0
Q4: FFA activities past the local level			
Level 4 and 3	21	2	0
Level 2 and 1	9	4	0
Level 0	1	1	1
Q5: Career Development Events			
Level 4 and 3	20	3	0
Level 2 and 1	10	4	1
Level 0	1	0	0
Q6: Local FFA Alumni Association			
Level 4 and 3	5	1	0
Level 2 and 1	14	2	1
Level 0	12	4	0
Q7: Students exhibiting projects at Fairs			
Level 4 and 3	7	2	0
Level 2 and 1	20	4	1
Level 0	4	1	0
Q8: Advisory Council for local program			
Level 4 and 3	0	2	0
Level 2 and 1	27	5	1
Level 0	4	0	0
Q9: Supervised Agricultural Experiences			
Level 4 and 3	3	2	0
Level 2 and 1	25	4	1
Level 0	4	1	0
Q10: Supervised Agricultural Experience Records			
Level 4 and 3	2	0	0
Level 2 and 1	27	5	1
Level 0	3	2	0
Q11: Visits to potential students in AgEd			
Level 4 and 3	2	2	0
Level 2 and 1	17	3	1
Level 0	12	2	0
Q12: Extra duties assigned by school administration			
Level 4 and 3	1	1	1
Level 2 and 1	26	3	0
Level 0	4	3	0

Priority Items	<i>Traditionally Certified (n=32)</i>	<i>Alternatively Certified (n=7)</i>	<i>Working on Certification (n=1)</i>
Q13: Keeping up to date on local level paperwork			
Level 4 and 3	9	3	1
Level 2 and 1	22	3	0
Level 0	1	0	0
Q14: Keeping up to date on paperwork above local level			
Level 4 and 3	6	1	0
Level 2 and 1	21	6	1
Level 0	4	0	0
Q15: Public Relations Program			
Level 4 and 3	2	2	0
Level 2 and 1	27	4	1
Level 0	2	1	0
Q16: Inside Career & Technical Education Organizations			
Level 4 and 3	8	2	0
Level 2 and 1	23	4	1
Level 0	1	1	0
Q17: Outside Career & Technical Education Organizations			
Level 4 and 3	1	0	0
Level 2 and 1	15	4	1
Level 0	15	3	0
Q18: Professional Development Participation			
Level 4 and 3	11	5	1
Level 2 and 1	21	1	0
Level 0	0	1	0
Q19: Keeping up to date about agriculture			
Level 4 and 3	10	4	0
Level 2 and 1	20	3	1
Level 0	2	0	0
Q20: Coordination of AgEd program with other agencies			
Level 4 and 3	1	3	1
Level 2 and 1	25	4	0
Level 0	5	0	0
Q21: Developing course outlines and calendars			
Level 4 and 3	11	3	0
Level 2 and 1	16	4	1
Level 0	4	0	0
Q22: Willing Helper-sick teacher fill-in, repairs, drive bus			
Level 4 and 3	8	0	0
Level 2 and 1	19	4	1
Level 0	5	3	0

Priority Items	<i>Traditionally Certified (n=32)</i>	<i>Alternatively Certified (n=7)</i>	<i>Working on Certification (n=1)</i>
Q23: Classroom and Filing Neatness and Organization			
Level 4 and 3	9	2	0
Level 2 and 1	21	4	1
Level 0	1	1	0
Q24: Being a good neighbor			
Level 4 and 3	12	2	0
Level 2 and 1	15	5	1
Level 0	5	0	0
Q25: Support and help with extra-curricular activities			
Level 4 and 3	10	1	0
Level 2 and 1	20	5	1
Level 0	1	1	0
Q26: Public Service			
Level 4 and 3	5	1	0
Level 2 and 1	18	4	1
Level 0	8	2	0
Q27: Church Activities			
Level 4 and 3	12	2	1
Level 2 and 1	10	3	0
Level 0	9	2	0
Q28: Having a nice home			
Level 4 and 3	12	2	1
Level 2 and 1	17	4	0
Level 0	1	1	0
Q29: Personal leisure time			
Level 4 and 3	16	1	1
Level 2 and 1	14	5	0
Level 0	2	1	0
Q30: Family Life			
Level 4 and 3	21	6	1
Level 2 and 1	10	1	0
Level 0	1	0	0
Q31: 1 ½ days for family activities			
Level 4 and 3	19	6	1
Level 2 and 1	9	1	0
Level 0	2	0	0
Q32: Second job/employment			
Level 4 and 3	13	5	1
Level 2 and 1	12	1	0
Level 0	5	1	0

Note: 4=Most Important, 3=High Importance, 2=Moderate Importance, 1=Least Important, 0=No Importance

Across all certification categories each group agreed with having a level 4 or 3 of importance on daily classes, family time, one-and-a-half days of family time, and having a 2nd means of income or employment - although 12 traditional respondents list this item as a level 2 or 1. All teaching career levels agreed on a level 2 or 1 of importance on the following items: field trips, projects at fairs, working with the Advisory Council, SAE and records, visiting potential students, public relations, CTE organizations in AgEd, developing course outlines and calendars, being a willing helper, maintaining a neat and organized classroom and filing system, being a good neighbor, supporting extra-curricular activities, and public service.

Alternatively certified and the respondent currently working on their certification agreed in placing a level of 2 or 1 priority on CDEs while 20 of the 32 traditionally certified teachers placed a level of 3 or 4 priority on the item. Alternatively certified and the individual working on their certification agreed that professional development was a priority level of 3 or 4 while 21 traditionally certified teachers said it was a level 2 or 1 priority. Additionally, 21 traditionally certified and currently working on certification respondents said staying up to date on agriculture was a level 2 or 1 priority while 4 of the 7 alternatively certified teachers said it was a level 3 or 4 priority. Regarding the church priority 13 traditionally certified and working on certification respondents said it was a level 4 or 3 item, as 13 traditionally and alternatively certified teachers said it was a lower priority at level 2 or 1.

Objective 3 and 4 Results

Regarding objective three, overall top priorities (level 4 or 3) of early career teachers consisted of teaching local daily classes, local FFA activities, CDEs, Family life, and designated

family time. Notable responses the priorities of level 2 or 1 were field trips, working with the advisory council, SAEs and records, extra duties assigned by administration, paperwork, public relations, CTE organizations within AgEd, agriculture information, partnerships with agencies, being a willing helper, a good neighbor, and supporting extracurricular activities.

As for mid-career teachers a majority of their top (level 4 and 3) priorities consist of daily lessons, local and above FFA activities, and being good neighbors. Notable responses of priority level 2 or 1 were field trips, local FFA Alumni Association, projects at fairs, Advisory Council, SAEs and records, extra duties assigned by administration, paperwork, public relations, and CTE organizations within AgEd.

Evaluating late-career teachers, their top priorities (level 3 or 4) consisted of daily lessons, local FFA activities, participating in professional development, developing course outlines and calendars, family life, and designated family time. Notable responses of priority levels 2 or 1 were CDEs, projects at fairs, SAE records, extra duties assigned by administration, paperwork, public relations, being a helper, having a neat and organized classroom and filing system, supporting extracurricular activities, public service, and church.

Answering objective four the top priorities (level 4 or 3) of traditionally certified teachers are related to daily lessons, local and above FFA activities, CDEs, and family time. Notable responses in the level 2 or 1 priorities of these teachers consist of exhibiting projects at fair, working with the Advisory Council, SAE and records, extra duties assigned by administrators, paperwork at the local and above levels, public relations, CTE organizations within AgEd, professional development, staying up to date on agriculture, partnerships with agencies, maintaining neat and organized classrooms and filing systems, and supporting extra-curricular

activities. Additionally, 12 traditionally certified teachers said they had no priority regarding working with the local FFA Alumni and visiting potential agricultural students. Moreover, 15 traditionally certified teachers listed CTE organizations outside of AgEd as a Level 0 priority.

The top priorities (level 3 or 4) of alternatively certified teachers were daily lessons, professional development, family time, designating one-and-a-half days to family time, and having a second job or employment. Notable priority levels of 2 or 1 consisted of field trips, working with their Advisory Council, SAEs and records, paperwork above the local level, being a good neighbor, supporting extracurricular activities, and personal time.

While there is only one respondent working on their certification their top (level 4 or 3) priorities are still notable; they are comprised of daily lessons, extra duties assigned by administration, paperwork on the local level, professional development, partnership with agencies, church, having a nice home, personal time, family time, one-and-a-half days of family time per week, and having a second job or employment. All other items are listed as a priority level of 2 or 1, however FFA activities past the local level were listed as a level 0 priority.

Summary, Conclusion, and Implications

According to the provided information and data 60.0% respondents have taught agriculture for zero to five years, 20.0% have taught six to 10 years, 5.0% have taught 11-15 years, 7.5% have taught 16-20 years, 5.0% have taught 21-25 years, with 2.5% not reporting their years of teaching. Sorting these into the three teaching stages; 60.0% ($n=24$) respondents who had 0-5 years of teaching experience were categorized into the early-career teacher category, 22.5% ($n=9$) respondents fell into the mid-career, and 15.0% ($n=6$) respondents were in the late-career category. Regarding gender, females were far larger than the male population with females at 62.5% and males at 37.5%. This matches the current trend of more female ag teaching serving in the profession in relation to male ag teachers. Data also showed that 52.5% ($n=21$) respondents work in a single teacher program, 2.5% responded they are in a one-and-a-half teacher-program, while 37.5% ($n=15$) are in two-teacher programs, 2.5% are in three-teacher programs, with 2.5% having 0 teachers in their program, and finally 2.5% not reporting data. Additionally, a majority of the population, 70.0% ($n=28$) reported their highest degree earned was a Bachelors; 30.0% ($n=12$) reported their highest degree was a Masters.

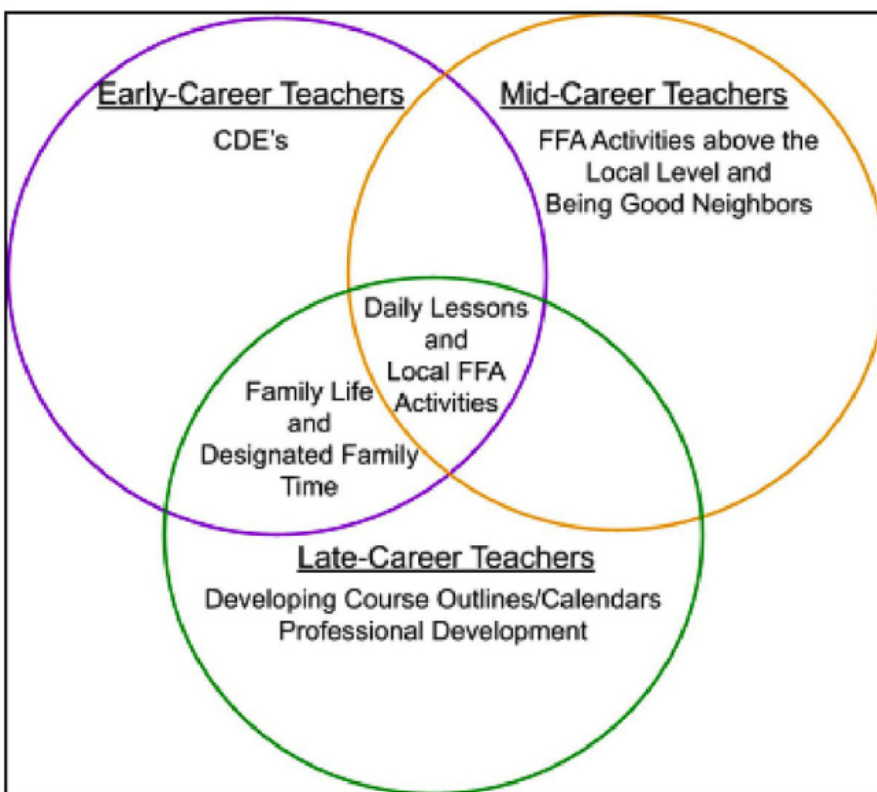
Data also showed that a majority of early career teachers ($n=24$) find the following items as the most important priority (level 4) or as a high priority (level 3): teaching local daily classes ($n=21$, 87.5%); FFA local activities ($n=15$, 62.5%); FFA activities past the local level ($n=12$, 50.0%); CDEs ($n=16$, 66.7%); family life ($n=18$, 75.0%), spending one-and-a-half days of family time ($n=16$, 66.7%), and having a second job or means of employment ($n=13$, 54.2%).

Comparing mid-career teachers ($n=9$) a majority of them stated that the following items were a level 4 or 3 of priority importance: teaching local daily classes ($n=6$, 66.7%); local FFA activities ($n=6$, 66.7%); FFA activities past the local level ($n=8$, 88.9%); CDEs ($n=5$, 55.6%);

being a willing helper ($n=5$, 55.6%); being a good neighbor ($n=7$, 77.8%); personal leisure time ($n=5$, 55.6%); family life ($n=6$, 66.7%); and spending one-and-a-half days of family time ($n=5$, 55.6%).

As for late-career teachers ($n=6$) a majority reported that levels of most importance and high importance (level 4 or 3) priorities included teaching local daily classes ($n=6$, 100.0%); local FFA activities ($n=5$, 83.3%); inside CTE organizations ($n=3$, 50.0%); professional development ($n=4$, 66.7%); keeping up to date about agriculture ($n=3$, 50.0%); coordinating with agencies ($n=3$, 50.0%); developing course outlines ($n=4$, 66.7%); being a good neighbor ($n=3$, 50.0%); having a nice home ($n=3$, 50.0%); family life ($n=4$, 66.7%); spending one-and-a-half days with family ($n=4$, 66.7%); and having a second job or means of employment ($n=3$, 50.0%).

Figure 3.1 *Top Priorities of Early-, Mid-, and Late-Career Teachers.*

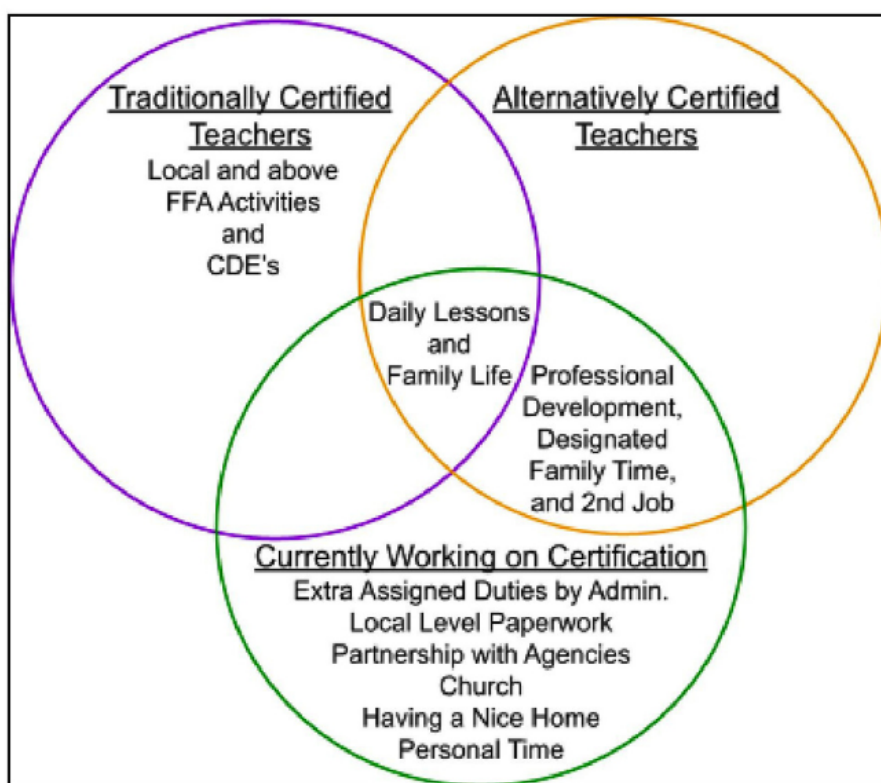


Evaluating the most important (level 4) and high importance (level 3) priorities in traditionally certified teachers ($n=32$) that list the following: teaching local daily classes ($n=28$, 87.5%); local FFA activities ($n=22$, 68.8%); FFA activities past the local level ($n=21$, 65.6%), CDEs ($n=20$, 62.5%); personal leisure time ($n=16$, 50.0%); family life ($n=21$, 65.6%); and spending one-and-a-half days with family ($n=19$, 59.4%).

Data shows that alternatively certified teachers ($n=7$) assigned level 4 or 3 priority to teaching daily lessons ($n=5$, 71.4%); local FFA activities ($n=4$, 57.1%); professional development ($n=5$, 71.4%); keeping up to date about agriculture ($n=4$, 57.1%); family life ($n=6$, 85.7%); spending one-and-a-half days with family ($n=6$, 85.7%); and having a second job or means of employment ($n=5$, 71.4%).

As for the data pertaining to teachers currently working on their license there is only one response, therefore it should be made known that this is not a clear representation of teachers within this category. With that being said, 100% of respondents in this category placed the following priorities in a level 4 or 3: teaching daily lessons, extra duties assigned by school administration, keeping up to date on agriculture, professional development, coordination with agencies, church activities, having a nice home, person leisure time, family life, spending one-and-a-half days with family, and having a second job or means of employment.

Figure 4.1 *Top Priorities of Traditionally and Alternatively, Certified Teachers and Currently Working on Certification Teachers.*



Overall, the trend in the reported data shows early career teachers placing a level of 4 or 3 priority on seven items and a level of 2 or 1 priority on 23 items. Whereas mid-career teachers place nine items in a level 4 or 3 category and 19 items in a level 2 or 1. Furthering this trend, late-career teachers place a level 4 or 3 priority on 12 items and a level 2 or 1 priority on 15 items. This shows an increase in level 4 and 3 items as teachers advance in their career and a decrease in level 2 or 1 priorities. It can be inferred that as teachers gain experience they focus less on doing everything, and instead place a higher priority emphasis on selected items.

Mentoring programs aiming to assist traditionally certified teachers should focus on teaching daily lessons, local and beyond FFA activities, CDEs, and how to allot personal and family time while also spending some mentoring time on the rest of the priority items. Programs

working with alternatively certified teachers should apply heavy focus to areas regarding teaching daily lessons, local FFA activities, professional development, keeping up to date with agricultural issues, and balancing family time and a second job or means of employment. Again, as the data shows some mentoring time should be allocated to the rest of the priority items. Finally, it is hard to state what programs working with teachers in the process of being certified should focus on as there is only one response to the data. However, with the provided information this program should consider focusing on areas such as teaching daily lessons, extra duties assigned by administrators, local level paperwork, professional development, coordination with other agencies, and balancing personal activities and time, family time, and a second job or means of employment.

Recommendations

According to the Beginning Educators Support Team (BEST) for Agricultural Education Teachers one of their objectives is to provide new teachers with information that will help them in managing a variety of aspects within their career and agriculture program (Kansas FFA, 2024). From the reported data, mentoring programs, like the BEST program, need to place a high amount of focus on daily lessons, FFA activities, CDE's, and how to allocate time for family. Due to high response rates though, topics such as field trips, projects at fairs, advisory council, SAE's and records, potential students visits, extra duties assigned by administration, paperwork, public relations, CTE organizations, professional development, agriculture issues, collaboration with agencies, course outlines, being a willing helper and a good neighbor, organized classrooms and filing systems, extracurricular activities, public service, and personal time should also be discussed as they respondents did place some level of priority on these items. It can be inferred that early-career teachers try to place some level of priority on all items/tasks so covering all areas of agricultural education is necessary for the development of these teachers.

Professional development programs such as Kansas Association of Agricultural Educators (KAAE) have a mission statement to help guide, support, and foster agricultural educators in all areas of their professional career (Kansas FFA, 2024). However, these programs should be heavily focusing on daily lessons, FFA activities, CDEs, being a willing helper and good neighbor, and allotting personal and family time should be designed for the mid-career teachers. Focus still needs to be placed on field trips, FFA Alumni Associations, projects at fairs, Advisory Councils, SAEs and record, extra duties by administrations, paperwork, public relations, inside CTE organizations, professional development, agriculture issues, other agencies,

course outline development, organization of classroom and filing system, and balancing a second job.

While late-career teachers may not need mentoring programs, they do value and want professional development opportunities. Professional development for late-career teachers need to focus on daily lessons, local FFA activities, inside AgEd CTE organizations, other professional development aspects, agriculture issues, coordination with other agencies, developing course outlines, being a good neighbor, and allocating time to have a nice home, be with family, and maintain a second job or means of employment.

To have a more detailed and stronger data set, similar studies need to be conducted consisting of all Kansas agricultural education teachers and track them as they become more seasoned in their career. In providing a more unified agricultural education mentoring community nation-wide this study should be conducted in more states to help alter and modify programs such as the National Association of Agricultural Educators and Regional Agricultural Education Conferences.

Additionally, agricultural education programs at universities need to modify this study and administer it to their students at the beginning of the semester before student teaching. Then their final classes could be designed and modified in a way to better prepare students for student teaching and for their future teaching careers. In a recent study (Hepburn et al., 2021), early career teachers (ECTs) oftentimes feel unprepared, lack certainty, feel confused, and have self-doubt; this unsurprisingly leads to ECTs being more susceptible to work stress. By agricultural education teacher programs knowing certifying teacher priorities this could potentially lower ECTs stress which would optimistically result in an increase of teacher retention.

An assessment relating to how teachers determine their priorities should be conducted. Understanding the thought process behind one's decision allows for a better comprehension of teachers' reasoning for their priorities. It is recommended that a qualitative and quantitative study be conducted to determine the process of how priorities are determined within agriculture education teachers. Additionally, a study should also be conducted in comparing how female vs. male agriculture teachers prioritize things differently, as more male teachers leave the profession in comparison to female teachers (Parker, 2015). It is suggested to complete qualitative research on determining what a second job consists of in regard to Agricultural Educators and more specifically how does it affect their priorities.

Kimpston & Stockton (1979) state that by placing needs in a priority order it can serve as a method for determining what should be given attention and time first. As a result, a needs assessment and priority assessment should be conducted together to identify any correlation between the two for Agricultural Education Teachers.

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Appendix

Appendix Figure A.1. Kansas AgEd Mid-Winter Symposium Workshop Information

2025 Mid-Winter Schedule		
Hotel and Conference Center Information		
Embassy Suites by Hilton Kansas City Olathe 10401 South Ridgeview Road Olathe, KS 66061 913-353-9280		
Thursday, January 16		
7:00am-7:00pm	Registration	Pre-Function
7:00am-7:00pm	Ideas Unlimited Display	Pre-Function
7:00am-7:00 pm	Sponsor Tables	Pre-Function
9:00am-Noon	BEST Program	Salon C
9:00am-11:00am	Milk Quality and Products CDE This session aims for participants to learn all about the Milk Quality and Products CDE. Participants will learn about the CDE as well as have the opportunity to view samples and learn how to prepare teams. Presented by Jeff Gillespie (Anderson County) and Brandon Callaway (Girard). There is a \$20 charge to attend this workshop!	Salon A
9:00am-11:00am	KAAE Exec	Executive Conference Room
1:00pm-5:00pm	Collaboration Room This is an option to allow you to work with other ag teachers, work on applications and awards, or share ideas!	Restaurant Reception
1:00-2:50	Finding Your Priority and Assessing Your Effort As an AgEd Professional we have many irons in the fire. Let's take a moment to think about your life and professional priorities through a fun interactive activity then assess what you really allocate to said priorities. Dr. Ulmer (KSU) and Emma Lehmann (Neodesha) are excited to use your insight in helping you and other ag teachers focus more on priorities moving into the future.	Salon A

Operational Definition of Terms

1. **Agricultural Education Teacher:** A middle school and high school teacher who educates students about agriculture, food, and natural resources in Kansas (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2025).
2. **Priority:** A preferential rating towards something. One that allocates rights to goods and services usually in limited supply (Merriam-Webster, 2025).
3. **Traditionally Certified Teachers:** Any teacher who has completed a bachelor's degree in a field of education, completed a state-approved teacher preparation program, and has passed the state's designated standard tests for educators and content area Licensures.
4. **Alternatively Certified Teachers:** Any teacher who is teaching in a school setting who has not utilized the traditionally certified pathway. Some examples might include transition to teaching, para pathway program, industry professional, and other related methods.
5. **Early Career Teachers:** A teacher in years one to five of their teaching career.
6. **Mid Career Teachers:** A teacher in years six to fifteen of their teaching career.
7. **Late Career Teachers:** A teacher with sixteen or more years of teaching experience.