

## **Administrative Support of Arizona School Based Agricultural Education Programs: An Exemplary Case Study Analysis**

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### **Introduction:**

The United States is facing a teacher attrition issue. This issue is exacerbated within the agricultural educator community due to additional duties beyond what is expected of a typical classroom teacher, compensation for those duties, and lack of administrative support. Despite adjacent research on teacher attrition, there remains a gap in knowledge about specific and effective administrative supports that can be provided to retain agricultural educators. The purpose of this multi-case study was to identify successful cases of administrator-agricultural educator relationships and describe how these administrators support Arizona agricultural educators with intracurricular programming as a part of the three-component model of School Based Agricultural Education (SBAE).

### **Key Findings:**

- 1. Administrator structure is the machine, agricultural educator communication is the oil.** Administrators created communicative structures for agricultural educator use, and agricultural educators drove communication to their administrators whenever it was needed. Key examples of these structures promoted administrative availability to agricultural educators and openness within their interactions. Relationships grounded in

trust were a necessary foundation for this machine of collaboration.

- 2. Greater vision and priority alignment between all parties yields stronger support.** Principals, CTE directors, and agricultural educators alike each had differing priorities because of their respective positions, but they also had many opportunities for overlap and vision alignment. When these three individuals collaborated and aligned their vision for the SBAE program, support for the program was strengthened. Administrators and agricultural educators needed to be open and receptive to the others' views for effective collaboration to take root. Operating within this shared vision also built trust over time.
- 3. Administrators engage with programs across a continuum of involvement.** Administrators interacted with SBAE programs across a continuum of involvement including awareness, presence, understanding, participation, and advocacy (see figure). Administrative support became stronger as they progressed along the continuum of involvement, and progression required a relationship founded in trust.
- 4. Administrators empower agricultural educators to be the stewards of their program.** Administrators universally trusted agricultural educators to be experts in SBAE program management. Administrators either conferred with or deferred to the agricultural educators in SBAE matters. Granting this autonomy to agricultural educators required trust and relationships, which developed over time.



### Recommendations for Administrators

- Make yourself open and available to your agricultural educators through strategies such as regular walkthroughs, open-door policies, and an informal availability to communicate with them.
- Seek understanding and ask clarifying questions about SBAE events as they arise.
- Facilitate agricultural educator ideas wherever possible.
- Collaborate with your agricultural educators to determine the most appropriate support you can provide.

### Recommendations for Agricultural Educators

- Drive communication to your administrators. Take advantage of the communicative structures your administrators have created.
- Be mindful of administrator school vision, and how the SBAE program can fit within that vision.
- Notify your administrators of SBAE successes and events to build their awareness of the program.
- Invite administrators to events to inform their understanding of the SBAE program.

### *Continuum of Administrator Involvement in SBAE programs*

