ABSTRACT

KINNEY, JUSTINE CAMILLE. An Analysis of North Carolina Lateral Entry Teachers’ Perceived Ability to Lead Quality FFA Programs. (Under the direction of Dr. Wendy Warner.)

Due to the persistent shortage of traditionally certified teachers, an increasing number of lateral entry teachers are being hired to fill vacant positions. Agricultural education has also experienced a comparable growth of lateral entry teachers entering the profession. Some educational professionals have questioned the quality of preparation in alternative certification programs and this level of concern for agricultural educators is increased as they are expected to incorporate the three integral parts of the agricultural education: the curriculum, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and FFA.

The primary purpose of this study was to identify lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability in advising quality FFA Chapters. A descriptive, qualitative case study was conducted to identify lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability in advising a quality FFA Chapters. Four lateral entry individuals who advise FFA chapters in North Carolina were interviewed. These teachers were deemed by a panel of expert to be quality FFA advisors in the State. In addition to interviews, the researcher observed participants advising students during chapter meetings or other FFA activities. Artifacts were also collected in order to detail the activities and opportunities that each participant was providing their students. The collected artifacts included FFA chapter’s Program of Activities, website documents, and pictures of various FFA events.

The participants were not apprehensive about any areas regarding FFA knowledge, traditions and leadership, but rather expressed apprehension about classroom management.
skills. Participants noted that they felt most confident in their leadership abilities as an FFA advisor. However, the majority of the participants stated proficiency awards, Greenhand, Chapter, State, and American Degree applications were too tedious and difficult for the student to complete and the teacher to provide appropriate guidance. All of the participants stated that they want to focus more effort on completing State and American degrees within the next year. The individuals did report that they would like to receive continued support from FFA State Staff and Regional Coordinators as they continue to provide challenging opportunities for their FFA members.
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DEDICATION

To my animals: past, present, and future. Thank you for bringing such joy, loyalty, and love into my life.
BIOGRAPHY

Justine Camille Kinney was born September 4, 1986 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. She grew up in the suburbs shadowed by the stacks of the old Bethlehem Steel Mill. While living in Pennsylvania, Justine was active in school clubs and community service activities. Her favorite activity was spending hours at the barn riding horses and learning how to care for them. It was her passion for animals that led to the desire to work in the agriculture industry. She was selected as a scholar in the prestigious Pennsylvania Governor’s School for Agricultural and Life Sciences program. The program took place at Pennsylvania State University during the summer of her senior year in high school with 40 other students from all over the state in attendance. It was during this program that Justine decided to search for colleges that offered courses in the agricultural sciences.

Justine chose to attend North Carolina State University for the fall 2005 semester. She had the opportunity to study abroad in the summer of 2008 to learn about Northern and the Republic of Ireland’s horse industry. Justine also spent a semester delivering horses as part of an internship program at the University’s Equine Unit. She graduated cum laude in May 2009 with a Bachelors of Science in Animal Science with a minor in Agricultural Business Management.

Right around graduation, Justine was accepted into North Carolina State University’s Agricultural and Extension Education program. While working on her Master’s degree, Justine held an internship position in the College of Agriculture and Life Science Career Services center. Justine also assisted the Agricultural and Extension Education Department faculty over the summer creating materials for various distance education courses. She was a
member of the Omicron Tau Theta Graduate Honors Society.

Prior to graduation, Justine accepted a teaching job at Benson Middle School in Johnston County, North Carolina teaching Career Exploration to 6th grade and Exploring Biotechnology to 7th and 8th grade students.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Around the country, educators are hired to teach agriculture to a diverse group of students. Likewise, the cadre of teachers hired as agricultural educators are becoming more and more diverse as well. School districts are employing an increasing number of lateral entry teachers (or alternatively certified teachers) to fill vacant positions. A lateral entry teacher refers to individuals who received their certifications through other educational means than a traditional undergraduate degree program (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Around the county, “virtually every state has an alternative certification program for teachers” (Robinson, 2010, p. 26). More specifically to agricultural education, several institutions offer degrees for lateral entry individuals and offer courses that directly address preparation, knowledge, and organizational methods for the classroom. For example, North Carolina State University offers the LEAP program, a distance education based certification program in agricultural education. Individuals that hold an industry area degree may apply for the program and work towards their alternative teaching license. According to Gary Moore, professor and coordinator of the North Carolina State Agricultural and Extension Education Graduate program, enrolled individuals will complete education courses and the exact number of needed hours required for state certification in conjunction to teaching in the classroom (Perspectives, 2002). Lateral entry teacher certification programs are “already one of the most hotly debated issues since chalk first met blackboard” (Kwiatkowski, 1999, p. 215) because educators are seeking individuals to fill vacant positions, but they want them to be properly certified and proficient to teach in the classroom.
Especially in a time of increased budget cuts and job shortages in schools, parents have become more aggressive in investigating the educational qualifications and certification background of their child’s teacher. Parents are looking for educators who can enrich their child with a wealth of knowledge, skill, leadership, and confidence to prepare them for future educational and professional success. However, traditionally prepared teachers, or teachers that completed a four-year or five-year teacher education program, are not being certified fast enough. According to the National Education Association (2005), about 2.2 million vacancies are needed to be filled within the next ten years because of more students enrolling in school and an overwhelming number of baby-boomers retiring from the teaching profession. The National Center for Educational Information (2005) estimated that 35,000 teachers are enrolling in alternative teaching programs annually and “more than 250,000 teachers have been certified through alternative programs since the mid-1980’s” (¶ 5). There has been an increased growth of individuals entering the profession in the past decade with about 35,000 alternatively certified teachers finding jobs each year (The National Center of Education, 2005).

While the aforementioned figures represent the entire teaching profession, the agricultural education field has also experienced considerable teacher shortages around the nation. With approximately 10,846 agricultural education positions around the country, research concluded there were 78 more positions than there were teachers available in 2006 (Kantrovich, 2007). Of the total number of teachers hired for these positions, about 785 individuals (or about 69.8%) were considered qualified agricultural teachers (Kantrovich, 2007). According to the National FFA Organization (2009), the biggest challenge facing
the organization and the agricultural education profession was the shortage of teachers qualified to teach the curriculum.

To teach agricultural education, means that a teacher will have to incorporate three integral components into the curriculum: classroom instruction, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and FFA (Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008). Agricultural education educators have the responsibility of teaching a variety of agriculture subjects, overseeing SAE projects at the students’ work locations, advising FFA chapter meetings, training Career Development (CDE) teams, hosting award banquets, planning projects within the community, and organizing a variety of other school enrichment events throughout the year. Through the adoption of Public Law 81-740, Congress granted the National FFA Organization a federal charter in 1950 which formally recognized the importance of the FFA as an integral program within agricultural education. Technical revisions were made to the Charter in 1998 and the Charter was updated to Public Law 105-225 (National FFA Organization, n.d.). With the expectations to integrate all three components in the agricultural education curriculum, agriculture teachers need to be prepared with knowledge, lesson plans and materials for the classroom. In addition, teachers must be prepared for other duties such as advising the FFA chapter and overseeing experiential learning projects, as well as continuing their own professional educations throughout the year (North Carolina State University, 2008). Agriculture teachers have to be confident in meeting the daily demands of the classroom and the added responsibilities specific to FFA and SAE.
Since alternatively certified teachers do not have the same preparation requirements as traditionally certified teachers to earn their teaching credentials, some experts were concerned that the teaching efficacy level was not the same for these two groups of individuals (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; Duncan & Ricketts, 2008; Rocca & Washburn, 2006). More specifically, researchers have expressed concern with the perceived efficacy, leadership abilities, classroom preparedness, and knowledge content difference for teachers holding alternative certifications versus individuals with traditional teaching certifications and licenses. Agricultural education teachers are not exempt from these concerns, which can be exacerbated by the expectations associated with the traditional agricultural education program model. When focusing on the FFA component within the agricultural education curriculum, teachers should have a sound understanding of the National FFA Organization’s mission, motto, traditions, events, degrees, and leadership opportunities. In areas across the county, the FFA has been an important part of communities and the history of many families (National FFA Organization, n.d.). However not all teachers, especially those who did not have the opportunity to participate in the FFA, might be knowledgeable on the depth and magnitude that the FFA offers students, both personally and professionally. These teachers might not also understand the history of the FFA, the events that are offered, and the time it takes to advise an FFA chapter at school. In a study done in Georgia by Murray (2010), it was reported that agricultural educators work well over 45 hours during the week and on average almost 32 days during the summer. More specifically, Georgia teachers claimed that they spent, on average, about nine hours a week focused on FFA events and activities (Murray, 2010). Potential teachers might not be aware
of how much extra time an agricultural educator spends organizing and overseeing events year-round to benefit their students.

In addition to the level of comprehension regarding FFA responsibilities, it is imperative for lateral entry teachers to understand their individual self-efficacy level regarding classroom management, leadership abilities, and effects on student learning. With an increased understanding of lateral entry teachers’ level of self-efficacy specific to advising an FFA chapter, pre-service and in-service training and mentorship relationships can be developed to provide support to specific needs.

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to identify lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability in advising quality FFA Chapters. It is important to understand the backgrounds, abilities, knowledge, and perceptions of lateral entry teachers in order to assist them with the tools needed in building a successful agricultural education program, establishing leadership in the classroom, and advising and overseeing FFA Chapter activities and events. Additionally, there is a need to examine lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability to advise their FFA Chapter and how they create opportunities for students that encompasses FFA knowledge, customs, and traditions. The research questions are:

1) What prior experience do lateral entry teachers have relating to the National FFA Organization?

2) What prior knowledge do lateral entry teachers have relating to the National FFA Organization?
3) In what events do lateral entry teachers’ FFA Chapters participate and what achievements/honors have their Chapters earned?

4) What do lateral entry teachers believe are the FFA areas that they could have been better prepared in prior to advising an FFA chapter?

5) What do lateral entry teachers believe are the FFA areas that they could be better prepared in while advising an FFA chapter?

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were used:

1) CDE (Career Development Events) - Competitive events for students sponsored by the National FFA Organization to develop skills and knowledge within agricultural interest subject area.

2) Efficacy- “The belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 2005, p. 2).

3) Federation- A level of the FFA made up of several FFA chapters within a county or several neighboring counties. Federations are classified as a level above the local Chapter, but a step below the Region.

4) FFA - A youth organization that is an integral component in the Agricultural Education curriculum. This organization was previously known as “Future Farmers of America”.

5) Lateral Entry - Individuals who completed their teaching and/or certification coursework outside of the traditional program.
6) VoCATS (Vocational Competency Achievement Tracking System) – Competency based testing used by Career and Technical Education teachers in North Carolina to analyze student performance.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

There are several assumptions and limitations to be noted. The researcher assumed each individual answered the interview questions in a truthful manner and were able to recall some information prior to being hired as an agricultural education teacher.

The researcher asked the North Carolina Regional Coordinators to choose advisors who successfully led quality FFA programs within their territories. Their judgment and expertise in the field was valued and trusted during the participant selection process.

The individuals in the study were selected because of their quality programs and leadership. With a small number of participants chosen for this study, the results of this study cannot be generalized to depict the entire lateral entry agricultural educator population as a whole.

**Summary**

With the shortages in the teaching profession, lateral entry programs have been used to fill vacancies and offer individuals the chance to enter the classroom even with a degree in another discipline. Because of these programs, education professionals have been concerned that teacher quality has diminished over the past few years due to a teacher’s inexperience and low self-efficacy. Agricultural education professionals have been concerned about this issue and its effect in the classroom. With this in mind, the researcher has set out to analyze teachers’ perceived ability to lead quality FFA programs in the state of North Carolina.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been a wealth of recent research written on lateral entry teachers’ efficacy and leadership in the classroom as compared to those individuals with traditional certifications. The review of literature was conducted using the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). Other research documents were found within the North Carolina State University library and inter-library loan system. The review of literature focuses on research conducted on lateral entry certification and preparedness to teach in the classroom. In addition, the researcher reviewed literature that provided more detail about lateral teachers’ efficacy specific to agricultural education and advisement of FFA Chapters. This review was organized into these areas: (a) Lateral Entry Teacher Certification, (b) Teacher Efficacy, (c) Lateral Entry Teacher Efficacy, and (d) Agricultural Education and FFA Program Quality.

Lateral Entry Teacher Certification

Lateral entry teacher programs (also called Alternatively Certification programs) have been developed in every state in the country and also the District of Columbia as a means to help alleviate the teacher vacancy crisis. Almost one-third of all new teachers were enrolled in alternative certification programs around the country (Blackburn, 2007). There are a variety of certification options for lateral entry teachers and they vary widely by state. The first approach in alternative certification is obtaining a teaching job and then meeting university certification requirements while holding the job. The second approach is to enroll in a licensure program in which all certification requirements are completed within two years through a university setting and internship in a school (Smith, 2003). However, these
programs continue to raise questions and elicit on-going research about the overall quality and preparedness of the teachers completing the degree requirements. The concern on administrators’ minds is how to counteract the teacher shortage, but without sacrificing classroom quality.

Many of the individuals that enroll in lateral entry programs currently hold or have held industry positions unrelated to education and bring a wealth of industry skills and expertise to the classroom. This professional experience may enhance career guidance they give to their students and ultimately increase lateral entry teachers’ confidence when advising students about specific to career experiences (Rocca & Washburn, 2006). Based on a qualitative study of first year, alternatively certified agricultural education teachers in Oklahoma, Robinson (2010) stated lateral entry teachers who held industry positions found their experience outside the classroom aided them in their teaching. The participants’ experiences in industry jobs “enabled them to work better with parents, gain expertise in a particular field of study as it relates to the agricultural education curriculum, and understand the importance of organization and programming” (Robinson, 2010, p. 34). In the same study by Robinson (2010), lateral entry teachers recognized their strengths that helped them in the classroom, but also identified areas needed for improvement, such as time management and classroom discipline. Recognizing areas of strength and areas of improvement may benefit lateral entry teachers when they are preparing lessons and activities and while advising their students because allows for more confidence, better leadership, and overall satisfaction when interacting with their students on a daily basis.
Teachers’ Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy has been defined as “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). A teachers’ sense of positive self-efficacy imprints quality and standards on students, leads to greater effectiveness in the classroom, and assists in the management of day-to-day teaching responsibilities (Bandura, 1993; Gibbs, 2002; Kagan 1992). Thompson (2003) pointed out it is important to understand “self-efficacy is the teachers’ perception of their abilities, not their true measureable abilities” (p. 41). The confidence being exuded is what teachers pass onto their students, regardless of the content or subject being studied. Bandura (1997) asserted “people’s level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true.” (p. 2). While knowledge of the content is imperative to possess in order to teach it to others, it is the confidence the individual holds that can allow them to accomplish their goals. Pajares (2002) believed “how people behave can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing, for these self-efficacy perceptions help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have” (¶ 16). A high self-efficacy becomes especially crucial when teachers are asked to move beyond their comfort and/or expertise level while teaching. The teacher, even while out of their comfort zone, might possess the skills to succeed in the classroom. However, without the confidence in their ability to execute lessons properly, the situation may become unmanageable for them to proceed with their teaching responsibilities.

According to research on the self-efficacy of 10 traditional and 74 alternatively
certified teachers in Texas, it was found that teachers’ self-efficacy can significantly influence students’ achievement in the classroom, regardless of the teacher’s certification background (Thompson, 2003). Gibson & Dembo (1984) surveyed 208 elementary school teachers using a Teacher Efficacy Scale instrument. From the data collected, it was concluded that teachers with high self-efficacy were more effective in the classroom versus those with lower self-efficacy. Teachers who possessed a high self-efficacy had an easier time communicating classroom expectations and providing feedback to students on schoolwork when compared to teachers who struggled with confidence in the classroom (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). In contrast, Thompson (2003) found there were not any significant differences between alternatively and traditionally certified teachers in terms of self-efficacy, perceptions or training, and passing rates.

Regardless of novice teachers’ certification means, Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy (1998) concluded individuals with high self-efficacy experienced less stress and ended their first year with a greater satisfaction for teaching and interacting with students. Huang and Liu (2007) found a positive correlation between teacher self-esteem and teacher self-efficacy. Individuals with both high self-esteem and self-efficacy welcomed support and feedback from others to provide better instruction for their students.

**Lateral Entry Teachers’ Self-Efficacy in Agricultural Education**

Research dictates there are in-service needs for both lateral entry teachers and traditionally certified teachers. More specific to Agricultural Education, Roberts and Dyer (2004) surveyed 142 agriculture teachers in Florida and found that the greatest in-service needs for both categories of teachers included proficiency award application training and
career development event training. The researchers also reported that teachers felt the least need for in-service in the areas of instruction and curriculum development areas. The study concluded both lateral entry and traditionally certified teachers expressed a need for professional development and assistance with program planning management, technical agriculture, FFA and SAE supervision (Roberts & Dyer, 2004).

A study conducted by Duncan and Ricketts (2008) found differences in levels of self-efficacy when comparing 136 traditional and 76 alternatively certified agricultural educators teaching at the middle or high school level. The researchers asked both groups of teachers to indicate their level of self-efficacy for the following areas: technical agriculture content, FFA/leadership development/SAE, teaching and learning, and program management. While technical agriculture content scored the lowest in efficacy levels for both groups, traditional teachers scored higher than alternatively certified teachers in efficacy in: conducting FFA, leadership development, SAE activities, and managing the entire agricultural education program (Duncan & Ricketts, 2008). They concluded that self-efficacy levels between these groups were different because “certified teachers have been exposed to more pedagogical and learning theories and experiences than alternatively certified” (p. 44). Conversely, Rocca and Washburn (2006) did not find any statistical difference in perceived ability between traditionally and alternatively certified teachers in their study, which included 39 alternatively and 27 traditionally certified Florida agriculture teachers in their first five years of teaching. They found that both classes of certified teachers felt that they were effective teachers in the classroom regardless of their certification background. Croom’s (2009) study investigated possible differences in teacher efficacy, rapport with students, leadership in
school, professional reflections, and content area knowledge of 58 agriculture instructors in the southeastern United States with less than five years of teaching experience. The study concluded there were not any significant differences between lateral entry and traditionally certified teachers’ perceived preparedness to enter the classroom or with any of the above factors.

Agricultural Education and FFA Program Quality

Agricultural Education programs are unique due to the integration of three major components into each course: the curriculum, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and FFA. The integration of the three components can influence self-efficacy specific to teaching agriculture. Advising an FFA chapter, understanding and following chapter traditions, and preparing materials to integrate into classroom lessons can be a great task for even the most experienced FFA advisors. Nationally, there are 523,309 FFA members, all of whom look up to an advisor for guidance and leadership (National FFA Organization, 2011). According to the National FFA Organization (2010), the FFA strives to make a “positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agriculture education” (¶ 1). To accomplish this mission, the FFA supports the National Quality Program Standards for Secondary Agricultural Education (The National Council for Agricultural Education, 2009). These standards are provided to ensure students are receiving high quality instruction in agricultural education classes, FFA chapters, and during their SAE projects and supervision. Quality standards that are specific to the FFA include:
• Personal developments (FFA) are integrated throughout the instructional program.
• Year-round instruction is balanced between classroom & laboratory instruction, experiential learning (SAE), and leadership & personal development (FFA).
• All students enrolled in the agricultural education program are members of the FFA.
• All students have a progressive plan for leadership and personal development.
• All students participate in FFA-related programs and activities.
• All students participate in FFA leadership and personal development activities/events above the local level.
• The FFA chapter constitution and/or bylaws are up-to-date and reviewed annually.
• FFA members are involved in the planning and implementation of a Program of Activities (POA).
• The FFA chapter conducts well-planned regularly scheduled chapter meetings.
• The FFA chapter plans and conducts award recognition programs.
• The FFA chapter has a current budget which provides the financial resources to support the POA and maintains accurate financial records.
• Capable and trained officers lead the FFA chapter.

More specifically, the National Quality Program Standards recognizes these characteristics as indicators of an effective FFA advisor:

• Each teacher is state certified to teach agricultural education.
• The agriculture teacher(s) is/are employed year-round to supervise student instruction and manage the agricultural education program.
• The FFA advisor(s) is a/are certified agriculture teacher(s).
• All agriculture teachers in the secondary agricultural education program serve as FFA advisors.
• All agriculture teachers have a professional growth plan.
• Teacher has continued professional growth through college credit courses, participation in professional development and/or other sources of training.
• Teacher is an active member in related state and national professional education associations.
• Teacher cooperates in fostering the professional development of pre-service and beginning teachers.
• Teachers exhibit a positive professional attitude and promote the profession as a career opportunity.
• Teacher contributes to the technical and pedagogical knowledge base of the profession.

It is apparent the FFA offers a multitude of opportunities and achievements for students by encouraging involvement in the organization. However, it is the agriculture teacher that plays a significant role promoting these skills and delivering content to the student. The advisor(s) in the local FFA Chapter interacts with students on an almost daily basis and leads students on their quest for excellence.

When analyzing predictors of FFA chapter excellence among 212 FFA advisors
across North Carolina, Vaughn (2000) found that teachers with more experience in leadership areas had a greater influence on overall quality for the chapter. Extending on this research, Roberts & Dyer (2004) surveyed an expert panel of agricultural teachers, state FFA supervisory staff, university faculty, and county level administrators in Florida. When asked to identify the characteristics of an effective agricultural teacher, the top three responses provided by participants included “encourages, counsels, and cares for students, has a sound knowledge of FFA/ actively advises the FFA Chapter/ effectively prepares students for CDEs, and has knowledge of subject matter” (2004, p. 85). Roberts & Dyer also concluded teachers who possess FFA general knowledge and knowledge of FFA events greatly contribute to an effective overall chapter and agriculture program. In a similar inquiry, Jenkins (2008) used a panel of 36 experts that included high school agriculture teachers, teacher educators, and state instructional staff from throughout the United States to list the quality FFA standards of a chapter advisor. The participants in the panel indicated the chapter advisor should be “dedicated and knowledgeable” and “trained in leadership development” (p. 150). In addition to knowing the subject matter, Stewart (1994) emphasized the importance of showing students the value of the organization and producing enthusiasm as a way to attract individuals to become involved in the events it has to offer. Without the interest for the FFA, teachers would not be able to fully express to their students how certain FFA activities and programs can assist them with their personal and professional goals (Stewart, 1994).

According to the study conducted by Vaughn (1976) specific to 82 vocational agriculture educators in New Mexico, prior background of the FFA advisor does not
contribute to the success of a FFA Chapter. There was not a significant relationship between a teacher’s proficiency level in advising and FFA events and previous membership in the FFA Organization. The researcher stated, “it is apparent that even former FFA members who were extremely active in the FFA will need further instruction concerning the FFA before they can become successful FFA advisors” and also their perceived ability should not fully determine the success of their FFA program (Vaughn, 1976, p. 12).

To address other key factors in FFA program quality, Straquadine (1987) found certain characteristics, such as greater numbers of teachers in the agricultural department, the types of students enrolled in classes, more time spent teaching agricultural subjects, and the financial support the program received were indicators of program quality. However, characteristics such as the teacher’s college major, years since graduation, or level of education were not predictors to program quality (Straquadine, 1987).

Summary

There are many influences that can determine the success of an agricultural education program and an FFA chapter. Research has found that the delivery of the content, the enthusiasm of the advisor, and a high self-efficacy level may be the difference in mediocre and quality instruction in the classroom. The literature suggests there is not any significant correlation between the self-efficacy levels of traditionally certified and alternatively certified teachers across the country. More specifically concerning FFA advisor responsibilities and chapter duties, it was found that prior involvement with or knowledge about the organization could not be considered as an overwhelming factor in the success of the FFA program.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study was to examine lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability in advising their own quality FFA Chapters. Some lateral entry teachers may have agricultural backgrounds that generated an interest to pursue a teaching job in agricultural education. However, some of these individuals may not have ever participated in the FFA, received any prior knowledge of the organization and/or were educated on the importance of the integration of agricultural education, the FFA, and SAE program in the classroom before being hired as an agriculture teacher. The focus of this study was to examine how lateral entry teachers perceive their ability to advise their FFA Chapter and create opportunities for students that encompass FFA knowledge, customs, and traditions. This chapter will present the methodology used throughout the study.

Research Design

A descriptive qualitative research design was used in this study. A case study design, a type of descriptive research, investigates and gathers information of a single individual or a group, and usually includes narratives from the individuals involved (Colorado State University, 2010). According to Merriman (1998), “the uniqueness of a case study lies not so much in the methods employed (although these are important) as in the questions asked and their relationship to the end product” (p. 31). This research was conducted using a comparative case study method because data was collected from several different sources and then analyzed to generalize and interpret the feelings and experience of the participants (Merriman, 1998).
Researcher Subjectivity

When selecting a topic and interviewing individuals for a qualitative study, the researcher must be cognizant of their own background and interests pertaining to the research topic. Including a subjectivity statement in the research study “forces a researcher to consider key questions about the impetus for the study and decisions made concerning theories and methods” (Roulston, 2010, p. 120). The subjectivity of the researcher is detailed below:

Growing up in Eastern Pennsylvania, I lived in a suburban area overlooking the old stacks of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. Even though my hometown was populated with businesses, residential areas, and shopping malls, an abundance of farm land and corn fields could be found just a few miles north, south, and west of the city. My parents would drive me to a summer camp located 15 miles north of my hometown to ride horses. I fell in love with being around the horses and the barn. I loved the sights, the sounds, and even the smells. I knew that no matter what, I would do anything I could to own my very own horse. At that time, I resorted to begging my parents for a large four-legged companion. Once I proved to my parents, around the age of 14, that my love for horses was not just a very extensive fad, we rescued a Thoroughbred mare from the slaughterhouse. To others, “Isabelle” was worth very little, but to me, she was gold. She opened my eyes to hard work, responsibility, and unconditional love. During the growing pains of middle school and high school, I would ride out to the barn immediately after school and find peace feeding “Isabelle” carrots and showering her with love.

Using my love for animals and especially horses as a guide, I knew I wanted to one
day work in a profession that took care of these creatures. During my exploration for potential career paths in high school, I was introduced to the Pennsylvania Governor’s School for the Agricultural Sciences. This summer long program selected about fifty students from all over the state of Pennsylvania and introduced them to college living and specialized classes in the agricultural subject area. I was selected to attend this prestigious program and spent the entire summer with students with the same interests in the agricultural industry. Governor’s School was the first time I was informed about the FFA. My roommate in the program was immensely involved in her FFA chapter and would always share information about the activities she was involved in and the awards she won. Honestly, I let her ramble on and on because I did not understand the purpose nor did I fathom why someone would want to dress in blue and yellow jackets with black skirts and pantyhose to show sheep (which she was extremely fond of). Needless to say, my first introduction to the FFA was not the greatest.

However, when I selected North Carolina State University as my college and Animal Science as my undergraduate major, I began to mingle with more individuals who have had extremely positive experiences from being an FFA member. I started to listen to the opportunities they were exposed to while being an FFA member in high school. I was in awe that some of them were able to show and judge horses under the guidance of their advisor. The FFA did not seem as intimidating anymore.

Right before graduation, I reflected on my accomplishments over the past four years. I delivered horses through an internship program at our Equine Education Unit and then bought one of the most precious babies (“Kadan”) born that year, spend two weeks in Ireland
to study the horse industry with a group of students, assisted my professor with her Introduction to Equine Science class, and became involved in community service projects with the University’s Animal Science Club during the school year. All of these projects somehow involved animals, but something was still missing. I had the desire to work with children, teach them and give them many of the wonderful experiences that I experienced in school. I networked and discussed future plans with a few individuals right before graduation and decided to go back to school for a Master of Science in Agricultural Education at NC State. I wanted to marry my love for animals with my desire to teach children as my new professional pathway.

When it came time to select a research topic, I immediately choose a topic dealing with horses, of course. However, the subject was weak and lacked research quality. I soul searched for a few weeks and then it dawned on me. I will one day be the advisor of an FFA chapter. However, I have absolutely zero experience in the FFA and knowledge about the organization (besides that I have heard from friends). I found it particularly interesting that many students may have had family members who have been members and/or have sponsored the FFA for numerous years. The question I posed was, “how am I going to teach my students about the FFA when they might have family members who have been active in the organization longer than I have been alive?” After the panic subsided, I knew that this idea could leave into a potential thesis topic and allow me to explore my questions about the FFA, gain confidence about my own abilities to advise an FFA Chapter, and also gain advice from other lateral entry teachers throughout my research.

While the researcher may have some subjectivity towards the data collected from the
study because of a background and interests in the topic, several methods of analysis were implemented to insure that the participants’ information and experiences were represented accurately. The research and data analysis methods will be discussed throughout this chapter.

**Epistemology & Theoretical Perspective**

Epistemology for qualitative research “deals with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope, and general basis” (Hamlyn, 1995, p. 242). The theoretical perspective gives the researcher the ability to use knowledge and understand a particular research topic (Crotty, 2003). There are several types of epistemologies appropriate in qualitative research, but for this study, constructivism guides the theoretical framework. Constructivism implies that “meaning is not discovered, but constructed- in this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (Crotty, 2003, p. 9). For this research study, individuals were allowed to share their perspective and experiences during the interview portion of the study. A dialogue of data was constructed between each participant and the researcher in order to capture the unique experiences and opinions of a lateral entry teacher advising an FFA Chapter.

**Sample**

This case study design focused on four lateral entry teachers who advised FFA chapters and have had zero to five years teaching experience in the agricultural education curriculum. These teachers were currently holding agriculture teaching positions around North Carolina. From the 2010-2011 North Carolina Agricultural Education Directory, the North Carolina Agricultural Education Regional Coordinators disclosed a listing of 66 lateral
agricultural teachers’ names. From that list, the researcher asked the North Carolina Agricultural Education Regional Coordinators to select the top four lateral entry teachers that advised (or co-advised) quality FFA chapters within their regions (Western, Central, and Eastern North Carolina). This selection was made based on the opinion of the regional coordinator and without the use of any pre-determined criteria. From the narrowed list of 12 quality FFA chapter advisors/teachers, the researcher contacted individuals via e-mail and then randomly selected four individuals for the study. Three of these participants were female and one was male. A small sample size for this research was chosen because it allowed more flexibility and allowed for the researcher to spend more time in the natural setting with the individual (Dooley, 2007).

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used in this study was an interview guide developed by the researcher in order to understand the participants’ backgrounds and to collect data on their perceptions of their self-efficacy specific to FFA responsibilities. The interview questions were reviewed by the researcher’s graduate committee and other members of the North Carolina State University Agricultural Education Department staff. The instrument also was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committee at North Carolina State University before use in the study.

The interview guide consisted of 11 open-ended questions about educational and professional backgrounds, influencing factors that led to lateral entry certification, prior FFA involvement, FFA Chapter activities, and feelings towards FFA advisor responsibilities. The follow-up interview included six open-ended questions about collegial influences, advice for
other lateral entry teachers, and increased support from FFA supervisors, FFA state staff and/or university teacher educators.

The interview guide was pilot tested in North Carolina. The agricultural teacher that participated during the pilot study was asked to answer all of the questions on the initial interview questions list as well as those listed on the follow-up question list. After the pilot study was completed, the participant assured the researcher that the questions were clear and were not misleading. The researcher reviewed the audio tape and decided that “Chapter Meetings” and “Greenhand, Chapter, State, and/or American Degree” accomplishments should be added on the first interview (under the question that asks the individual to describe specific activities of their FFA chapter).

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected during two face-to-face interviews between the researcher and the participants. In addition to interviews, the researcher observed Participant One and Participant Three’s CDE Dairy Judging practices, Participant Two’s FFA chapter meeting, and Participant Four’s community service fundraiser. The researcher also collected pertinent artifacts to detail the activities and opportunities that each participant was providing their students. The collected artifacts included FFA chapter’s Program of Activities, website documents, and pictures of various FFA events.

The researcher traveled to each participant’s school for two interviews, averaging 30-40 minutes each. The participants were asked to answer the questions truthfully and to the best of their knowledge. They were assured, through a signed consent with the researcher, that their opinions and statements would be protected to the fullest extent of the law. The
researcher asked each individual the interview questions found on the instrument, but also added additional probing questions for greater elaboration. Both interviews were audio recorded (with consent from the individual), stored privately, and transcribed word-for-word for data analysis.

Either after the first interview or during the follow-up interview, the researcher observed the participant as they advised their students during a FFA chapter meeting or another FFA chapter event. The researcher took notes and recorded the interaction between the teacher and the students during this activity. The observations (four total) each lasted about an hour. Observations were conducted in order for the researcher to gain a view of the participants’ real behavior when working with their students. According to Bogdewic (1999), by conducting observations, the differences between what is verbally said and what is physically accomplished can be very different than relying solely on survey instruments and interviews that will not allow a researcher to witness the participants’ true behavior. Observations also help researchers build (or build upon) the framework for their study and to help comprehend the data that has been collected (Patton, 2002).

The researcher collected artifacts from the teachers’ classrooms for analysis. Artifacts included photos related to FFA events, scrapbook pages, chapter website documents, Program of Activities, and recruitment materials. Artifacts are important to qualitative research designed studies because they “exist independent of a research agenda, they are nonreactive, that is, unaffected by the research process” (Merriam, 1998, p. 126). By collecting artifacts from the participants, these documents and photographs offered more insight and concrete proof to what was detailed in the participant interviews.
Analysis of Data

To ensure consistency, the researcher transcribed each interview (eight total) verbatim. The words and conversations, once flowing conversations, were now written as fixed text for analyzing and examining (Kvale, 1996). The information from these transcripts, once undergone member checks, were open-coded and compared to each other to gather trends from the research. By finding patterns in the coding data, the researcher was able to formulate conclusions and identify characteristics specific to the information (Dooley, 2007).

Validity & Reliability

The researcher, to ensure internal validity, completed member checks by e-mailing each individual their own interviews from both sessions to verify accurate information (Merriam, 1995). According to Guba & Lincoln (1982) it is important for qualitative researchers to find consistency in their work and also in the information that has been gathered. The researchers also cited that to maintain credibility during qualitative research methods, triangulation, peer debriefing and member checking are some important strategies to apply during the data analysis phase. Triangulation was used during the data analysis of the interview and the observation data and artifacts (Denzin, 1970). By utilizing a variety of methods, such as observations and interviews, “triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity” of the study (Merriam, 1995, p. 207).

Peer examination confirmed the consistency of the information transcribed verbatim from the interviews’ audio tapes. A colleague of the researcher verified the correct information was transferred from the tapes onto the record sheets for analysis. Additionally,
an audit trail was produced in a notebook from the researcher’s observations at each participant’s FFA activities. Some emerging findings were recorded during the transcribing and analyzing of the data and this information helped formulate the conclusions and recommendations for the study. The records were used as an additional summary when the data was examined and the final analysis was written.

Summary

A descriptive, qualitative case study was conducted to identify lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability in advising a quality FFA Chapters. Four lateral entry individuals who advise FFA chapters in North Carolina were interviewed. These teachers were deemed, by a panel of experts, to be quality FFA advisors in the State. Each individual completed two rounds of interview questions which were audio recorded. The interviews, once transcribed, were sent back to the correct participants (by the means of member checks) to validate that the data was correct and accurate. Methods of triangulation, colleague examination, and audit recordings were also used throughout the study to ensure reliability, validity, and consistency throughout the data analysis. The participants were also observed at a FFA chapter event and asked to share artifacts related to their FFA chapter with the researcher. Data collected from all of the interviews, observations, and artifacts were coded and compared through qualitative means.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study was to identify lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability in advising quality FFA chapters. With an increased number of lateral entry teachers entering the profession, it is important to understand the backgrounds, abilities, knowledge, and perceptions of these teachers in order to assist them in building a successful agricultural education program, establishing leadership in the classroom, and advising and overseeing FFA Chapter activities and events. The purpose was to examine lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability to advise their FFA chapter and how they create opportunities for students that encompasses FFA knowledge, customs, and traditions. The research questions guiding the study were:

1) What prior experience do lateral entry teachers have relating to the National FFA Organization?

2) What prior knowledge do lateral entry teachers have relating to the National FFA Organization?

3) In what events do lateral entry teachers’ FFA Chapters participate and what achievements/honors have their Chapters earned?

4) What do lateral entry teachers believe are the FFA areas that they could have been better prepared in prior to advising an FFA chapter?

5) What do lateral entry teachers believe are the FFA areas that they could be better prepared in while advising an FFA chapter?

The sample for the study included four lateral entry teachers who advised FFA
chapters in North Carolina and have had zero to five years teaching experience in the agricultural education curriculum. The North Carolina Agricultural Education Regional Coordinators nominated quality FFA chapter advisors/teachers and the researcher selected the four total participants to be interviewed for the study. Three of these participants were female and one was male.

Data were collected during two face-to-face interviews between the researcher and the study participants. In addition to interviews, the researcher observed the participants’ FFA chapter meetings or other FFA events. The researcher also obtained a collection of materials, such as the FFA chapter’s Program of Activities, website print-off documents, and pictures of various FFA events for this study to further examine the activities and opportunities that each participant was providing their students.

Participant Data

In order to provide detailed background information on the participants, a short biographical sketch of each individual’s personal, educational, and teaching backgrounds and prior involvement in the FFA has been highlighted below. To protect the identities of these individuals, pseudonyms have been assigned to each participant throughout the study.

Participant One

Participant One received an associate’s degree in Agricultural Business Management and previously worked in the agricultural sales industry. His past job required too much travel, so Participant One began to offer consulting for local agriculture businesses. Participant One wanted to finish his degree in Agricultural Education and looked for a place where he could teach, but still conduct business. He is currently teaching at a private school
in North Carolina that offers an agricultural curriculum for middle and high school students. This is his fourth year teaching agricultural education and also advising the school’s FFA Chapter. Participant One is the only teacher in the school’s Agricultural Education department. He has had an extensive background in FFA and uses the same foundations he learned from time in the FFA and uses them to advise his school’s FFA Chapter.

Participant Two

Participant Two received a Bachelor’s degree in Agricultural Business Management with a minor in Animal Science. For her first career, Participant Two worked in poultry processing, but admitted that this was not the job for her. She pursued another career path and worked successfully in the sales industry for six years. After Participant Two married and decided to raise a family, she decided to focus on parenting and took on part-time jobs, teaching pre-school and becoming a teacher’s assistant near her home in North Carolina. Participant Two was disillusioned by the salary and the effort needed to be a teacher’s assistant and instead she sought another career path. Participant Two is currently teaching at a public high school in North Carolina and this is her fifth year teaching agricultural education and advising the school’s FFA Chapter. She is the only teacher in the school’s Agricultural Education department. Prior to this, Participant Two did not have any experience within the FFA organization, but was a very active member in 4-H during her youth. Currently, she is taking classes to fulfill the requirements for a Master’s degree in Agricultural Education.

Participant Three

Participant Three received a Bachelor’s degree in Horticulture with a concentration in
Participant Three double majored in Agricultural Education and Horticulture throughout college, but elected to receive a degree in Horticulture in order to graduate early. While in college, Participant Three worked for a landscape design/architecture firm, but with the dim economy, the firm could not offer her a job position upon graduation from college. She currently teaches at a public high school in North Carolina and this is her second year teaching Agricultural Education and helping advise the school’s FFA chapter. There are two other Agricultural Education teachers that Participant Three collaborates with in the department. Participant Three was an active member in the FFA while in high school and pulls from her experiences as a member when advising her own group of students in the FFA chapter. Currently, she has her lateral entry teaching license and is working on credits to receive her Master’s degree in Agricultural Education.

Participant Four received Bachelor’s degrees in both Political Science and Sociology. She originally pursued a graduate degree in Sociology with the intent of attending Law School. However, Participant Four felt that pursuing a Master’s degree in Agricultural Education better suited her professional goals. She currently teaches at a public high school in North Carolina. This is Participant Four’s first year as a teacher of Agricultural Education and it is also her first time advising an FFA chapter. She is the only teacher in the Agricultural Education department at her high school. Participant Four had numerous FFA experiences while in high school and was elected North Carolina’s FFA State President during her sophomore year in college.
Interest in Teaching Agricultural Education

The participants were asked to describe the influences encouraging them to teach Agricultural Education. While all four participants had different educational and professional journeys before being hired as agriculture teachers, there were some common themes present in their answers: the desire to teach because of a strong love for agriculture and/or FFA and existing relationships with past agricultural teachers and mentors.

Participant One stated that teaching Agricultural Education was actually a second career choice and that he had a desire to teach, but the salary was an issue. He considered teaching as a form of retirement so that he could slow down, but he admitted that instead, it seemed like time has sped up. When Participant One finished his degree in Agricultural Education, he was contacted about a job at a private high school and accepted an interview. He secured the job and was able to select the curriculum and negotiate hours of work time.

Participant Two had a strong farming background growing up and the majority of her family still is involved in the agricultural industry. Participant Two declares herself a strong advocate for agriculture and was very active in 4-H as a child. She uses her love for agriculture as a motivation to teach students about the many opportunities the agricultural industry can offer.

Participant Three stated her close ties with her former high school agricultural teacher and her love for FFA and the activities she was involved in. She stated,

Honestly, I was pretty close with my Horticulture teacher in high school, he was pretty much like a father figure to me... he treated me like I was one of his daughters. I worked for him in the greenhouses every summer. I love working with plants and I just thought I like what I do... I love FFA, why wouldn't I want to make a career out of this. That is what kind of pushed me to saying, ‘I think I
can do this’. I really like working with people and it’s not easy work with High School kids, but I love it. I love being around them, even though some of them try my patience every day, like that's their job and like they are getting paid for it. I think FFA was probably was the main factor. I wanted to be an FFA advisor. I wanted to take my kids to National Convention. I wanted to take my kids to contests. I wanted to do all these things that my advisor had done with me. FFA really pulled me out of my shell. I was really shy my freshman year of High School, by my senior year, I could talk to a group of 500 people and not be shy. Nothing fazed me anymore and it was really because of FFA.

Similar to Participant Three, Participant Four was also very involved in FFA as well and credited this experience to her desire to teach agricultural education. However, she did not have affectionate feelings towards agricultural education during her early high school years. Participant Four was a non-traditional student in that she enrolled in the Agricultural Education classroom because her class schedule did not originally work out. Participant Four admitted that her attitude was “I don’t want to join the dumb farmer club” in the beginning. After taking classes and being involved in FFA events, she was hooked and attended every National Convention and leadership activity possible. She continued her FFA involvement while in college, but did not think it would be “cool” to be a State Officer. After some soul searching during her sophomore year in college, she changed her mind and ran for State office. She was elected State President and traveled extensively in the United States and overseas. Participant Four acknowledged that she always had the idea of being an agricultural teacher in the back of her mind, but decided to follow the law school path. However, a North Carolina Regional Coordinator mentioned the need for an agriculture teacher in her area and she decided to enter the classroom instead. She stated that “the opportunity to not only meet officials and business people, but to be in classrooms on a daily
basis with students and see how much FFA could possibly change someone's life, because it completed changed mine." Participant Four went on to detail how FFA helped her self-confidence and leadership abilities when collaborating with others. Since her undergraduate degree was not in Agricultural Education, she admitted it was a learning curve when taking the reins of her own classroom, but her FFA and Agricultural Educations experiences in high school and college served as a foundation and helped guide her.

**Prior Involvement and Instruction in FFA**

The participants were asked to detail their FFA involvement prior to becoming an agricultural teacher. The data collected from the participants indicated varied levels of involvement. Participant One, Three, and Four had extensive involvement in the FFA; however each had their own different experiences and positions held in the local chapter. Participant Two was the only individual without prior experience in the organization.

Participant One stated he was involved in just about every contest offered in his high school FFA Chapter and held district and state officer positions. Participant Three served as the FFA Senior Treasurer, FFA Sweetheart, and also competed on her FFA Chapter’s Floriculture, Forestry, and Parliamentary Procedure teams. Participant Three was involved in many community service activities and stated that “anything the FFA did, I wanted to be involved in because I met so many people through FFA, not just from my school, and so every time they went somewhere, I wanted to go.” Participant Four was a State Officer, Chapter Officer, Regional Officer, and worked as camp staff while involved in FFA.

In contrast to the participants above, Participant Two did not have any experience in the FFA. Only after she accepted her current teaching job did she become immersed in FFA.
activities, background, and procedures. However, she stated clearly that she was heavily involved in 4-H growing up and the experiences she received in 4-H have helped her tremendously when judging livestock teams or teaching concepts to her classes and FFA chapter members.

Current FFA Responsibilities

Participants were asked to describe various information about their chapter’s activities, career development events, student awards, and community service projects. There was a wide range of emphasis and importance placed on each of the different categories. This variance of participation depended on student motivation, chapter funds, advisors’ time commitments, and community involvement.

Career Development Events (CDEs)

All the participants mentioned that they were active in CDE events and spent time preparing their teams before and after school for contests. The amount of participation in CDEs varied depending on student interest and resources, but all participants tried to offer their students a wide variety of options to become involved on competitive teams.

Participant One listed the CDE events his chapter participates in: Forestry, Livestock Judging, Public Speaking, Dairy Judging, Agricultural Sales, Creed Speaking, Poultry Judging, Parliamentary Procedure, Prepared Extemporaneous, Hunter Safety, Food Science, Agricultural Issues, Soil Judging, Biotechnology, Agricultural Mechanics, Truck & Tractor Driving, Biotechnology Quiz Bowl, and Farm Business Management. He mentioned his students, being from a fairly new chapter, wanted to strive for greatness after seeing the success of other chapters at CDE events. Participant One felt that it had not taken the
students long to succeed in winning and placing in a majority of the competitions. There was a trophy case full of awards and plaques hanging on the classroom walls, from just the last three years of participating in competitions. Participant One’s chapter won the State Livestock competition twice and FFA Quiz Bowl once. They also currently have two Federation officers, one Regional officer, and will potentially have a State officer within the next two years.

Participant Two listed the following CDE activities for her chapter: Poultry Judging, Dairy Judging, Creed Speaking, Extemporaneous Speaking, Prepared Public Speaking, Livestock Judging, and Horse Judging.

Participant Two mentioned that her chapter has been successful in public speaking events, competing and placing at the State level at least twice. However, she noted that not teaching Agri-science this year has been a “thorn” in her side when trying to persuade more freshmen to become involved in the FFA and FFA events. She has been trying to persuade administration as to the importance of teaching the course and benefits of getting freshman involved in the FFA earlier, and in hopes of generating additional teams for FFA events.

Participant Three listed the following as CDE events that her chapter prepares and participates in: Truck & Tractor Driving, Creed Speaking, Extemporaneous Speaking, Tools Team, Poultry Judging, Dairy Judging, Parliamentary Procedure, Livestock Judging, Marketing, Agricultural Sales, Floriculture, Nursery Landscape, Horse Judging, Hunter Safety, and Introduction to Horticulture.

Participant Three stated her teams did really well in Dairy Judging and Parliamentary Procedure this year. They also placed 2nd in the state last year in Livestock Judging (and
only lost 1st place by a few points), 5th in the state in Marketing, and the junior team placed first in their first time competing in Agricultural Sales. Also, Participant Three mentioned that they are planning to train for Envirothon, Land Judging, Job Interview, and Meat Evaluation within the next year or two. Participant Three thought it was important to take students to as many events as possible to provide exposure to the materials and experience, but to also satisfy their job requirements as advisors.

Participant Four listed these CDE as events for her chapter: Parliamentary Procedure, Prepared Public Speaking, Creed Speaking, Extemporaneous Speaking, Dairy Judging, Farm Business Management, Forestry, Agricultural Mechanics, Job Interview, and Tractor & Truck Driving.

Participant Four said the chapter plans on adding Horse Evaluation and Land Judging to the events list this year. Participant Four mentioned that she was able to train teams with some assistance of community members. For example, an individual from the Forestry Service came to help students with the Forestry CDE training. However, the one challenge Participant Four mentioned is that it may be hard to prepare for certain events that have little resources available in the county. For example, where Participant Four’s school is located has very few dairy cow operations/farms so it is difficult for her to find assistance and resources when trying to train her Dairy Judging team.

Observing Participant One and Three’s Dairy Judging CDE team practice provided insight into the chapters’ successes during judging events. Participant One’s practice was a joint activity where middle school and high school students could participate to make the Dairy Judging team. Participant One coached most of his students on ways to strengthen
their terminology for the competition and reminded them what characteristics are most important to mention first about dairy cattle classes, how to project voices loudly and clearly, and how to boost confidence during their reasons. Participant Three worked through sample exam questions with her team making sure they understood the terminology and content. If the students answered a question, regardless if the answer was right or wrong, Participant Three would ask them why they choose the answer and what information led them to select that choice. After practicing the written portion the contest, Participant Three asked her students to place a class of dairy cattle and made sure to monitor their progress when writing reasons for their placements. Both methods executed by Participant One and Three seemed to work well for each of their individual FFA Dairy team groups while preparing for the upcoming CDE contest.

**FFA Sponsored Events**

Participants were asked if their students have taken part in any of the FFA sponsored events across the state of North Carolina or around the nation. All participants mentioned that they have taken their students to National and State Convention and participated in events held at the conference (such as FFA Quiz Bowl). This was the first year in Participant Four chapter’s history that they attended the National Convention. Participant One and Four mentioned taking their members to Regional Rallies and Leadership Conferences. Participant Two and Three mentioned MEGA Conference in their interviews.

**Recruitment of New Members**

Participants were asked to discuss how they motivate new members to join their FFA chapter. All the participants approached new member recruitment differently in terms of
advertisement or chapter sponsored dinners, but at least two of the participants mentioned that they rely heavily on word-of-mouth to reach out to new members.

Since Participant One teaches both middle and high school students, he felt it was easier for him to disseminate information about the chapter and its activities. The agricultural education courses offered in 4th and 5th grade act as feeders for the FFA. Participant One said these classes help increase student enrollment numbers from year to year in the FFA chapter and introduces young students to future opportunities in FFA events and contests.

Participant Two’s chapter relied on word-of-mouth to reach new students. Because Participant Two was the only agriculture teacher in the school, she saw a limited number of students compared to other teachers in her building. However, the FFA chapter officers make announcements on the public announcement system at the start of the school day, hold a “welcome back cookout” every year in the fall, and speak with upcoming freshman during the summer during “FIT” (Freshman in Transition) to advertise the chapter events and activities held throughout the year.

Participant Three said peer pressure from members already in the chapter has worked well. Students are able to influence others to join the organization because of the social aspect of the chapter’s activities, but also promote the fun contests and trips occurring throughout the year. In addition to this peer influence, the FFA chapter sponsored a membership drive where the students can receive a free lunch if they bring their schedule and show that they were enrolled in an agricultural education class during the past semester or two. The fun and food enticed new members to think about joining or at least giving the
chapter activities a try.

Participant Four’s approach to new member recruitment was the responsibility of the chapter President and other officers on the team. These individuals traveled to all 8th grade classrooms in the area that feed into the high school and spoke to students about the chapter, leadership activities and contests, and preparation for future careers. In addition, an FFA Fun Day was planned at school for the school’s student body to learn about the chapter with games and prizes. An Agrium Mobile Classroom was sponsored by the FFA chapter during this fun day and grade school students were invited to attend. Participant Four said these methods of recruitment and fun days keep membership for the chapter high. In order to alert students of activities, posters and flyers were hung up around the school in order to attract and alert new and future members of the events. Participant Four shared recruitment materials, as artifacts for the study, that she saved and changed from year to year depending on the need and activity planned to recruit new students.

Proficiency Awards

When asked about proficiency award applications, only one participant clearly stated they had a high completion of applications from year to year. The others discussed the struggles of trying to encourage their students to submit proficiency awards.

Participant One was the only one who felt confident they had a successful grasp on completely filling out proficiency awards with their chapter members. Participant One stated last year, 2009-2010, they had several placings in both beef production and specialty crop production and a student placed in the top three in the region. This year, Participant One has implemented a mandatory requirement, as part of their curriculum, to complete a proficiency
award. Participant One believed there would be between 20-25 applications this year. He also mentioned there is one student in the chapter that will probably be a good candidate for the Star State Farmer award this year as well.

Participants Two, Three, and Four admitted they are working on incorporating proficiency awards as requirements in classes and motivating students to complete the award applications.

Participant Two noted a lack of student involvement,

Only filled out one, I am sorry to say. The student was sixth or something in the state which is pretty good. But that's not something that we have not done a very good job at. I've got to get better- I figured that is really a process that you have to start at the beginning of the year, or at least the beginning of the new semester, in order to be successful with that.

Participant Three shared:

[Proficiency awards are] something we don't do enough of. A lot of things we do, it's like pulling teeth to get our kids to fill out the applications. And if you have ever seen a proficiency award application, it’s like filling out a college application, it's ridiculous. I think that is something the FFA needs to think about simplifying because I have kids who just, they are just like I don't know how to fill this out. A few of them placed last year, two of them placed in the state, and one placed nationally. One of the boys worked for a Veterinarian and he and I worked really hard on his proficiency award. I stayed with him after school, before school, work days to fill it out. It was hard. I mean even for me as a teacher, I was thinking, man... this is a lot. And, filled it out and he placed 3rd in the state and I think he was the type of the student who never won anything before and he was really excited. And then another one of our boys placed first in the state and then he placed... when you go to National level, they break it down regionally... so he placed in our region, which technically means he placed nationally, but he didn't get recognized at National Convention. But, if proficiency awards weren't such a headache we'd fill out a million of them. We have plenty of kids with SAEs- all of our kids
have an SAE of some kind... and then we have plenty of them have a large scale SAE that could work, it’s just that when do you find the time to fill out the proficiency award and someone has to show them how to do it and you know, a lot of our kids want the guidance of... hey, help me do it. Easier said than done.

Participant Four echoed a statement similar to Participant Two above in that:

SAE is something I have been working on. We have not applied for any proficiency awards yet, but I hope to this year. It wasn't extremely stressed previously when the other teacher was here. So it is sort of a learning curve. It's hard to explain to the students, they don't understand why there isn't a deadline. I try to explain that it’s an oncoming project that you will have throughout high school... it's just going to take time.

_Greenhand, Chapter, State, and/or American Degrees_

The participation for Greenhand, Chapter, State, and American Degrees varied between the four chapters. Two participants in the study have had many students receive degrees in the past and were looking forward to more being awarded in the future. One participant was hopeful that more degrees would be submitted in the future and another participant realized that she needed to focus on this area in her chapter planning.

Participant One stated one of their students just received an American Degree this year. Also, six students also received State Degrees. With having a middle school program, they also have Discovery Degrees. Participant One brought up a concern about awarding degrees. He expressed,

We have a small problem... we have to modify the FFA manual a little bit. Technically, your first year in FFA you can get the Discovery Degree and I let my students do that. However, I make it mandatory...
that they have to be at least 8th grade or higher to get to Greenhand and then the Chapter. Our problem is that we will have 10th graders this year, who will be eligible to get the State degree, but if I didn't stop it, the book says, all you have to do is do these things, gosh; I could have Chapter degrees before they get out of middle school. So, we have to space it out. It's kind of unusual; our students were walking around National Convention and didn't realize that other students were kind of watching. See, I've got one student here that has got 3 gold awards for winning 3 state contests, she's in 9th grade.

Participant Two expressed they have not filled out any at this present time. She said, We have not gotten to the point... we should have two or three State degrees this year for my seniors that are graduating. No American Degrees yet... there could have been some in the past, but like I said, when I got to this Chapter there had been many 3 Ag Teachers in the last 5 years... so there has been a big turnover.

Participant Three shared with the researcher that members complete Greenhand and Chapter awards and student achievement is recognized at the banquet. Also, they have had a few students in the past receive State degrees, but they have not had any American Degrees yet. Participant Three was hopeful this year, they would have a student qualified to receive an American Degree at National Convention.

Participant Four listed there were 40 Greenhand, approximately 60 Chapter, and 2 State Degrees awarded last year. This was the first time in 10 years that there was a State Degree given out in the chapter. Also, Participant Four informed the researcher she is helping a student fill out an American Degree for next year.
Banquets

All of the chapters held a banquet for their members at the end of the year to celebrate the accomplishments and achievements of the students.

Participants Two and Three belong to very strong Federations so they participate in a banquet at the end of the year hosted by the Federation. At the banquets, all of the participants shared that they award all students, not just the ones who win at CDE events or other FFA activities and at the banquets and the new officers are introduced. Participant One and Four said the numbers of students attending the banquet are on the rise as membership continues to grow. Participant Two mentioned they also distribute awards to community members who supported the chapter during the year. She also was the only participant mentioning students had to pay for tickets for the catered event, but hopes with more revenue in the future, the ticket price will be lowered to $5 person or nothing at all.

Alumni Involvement

Only one individual in the study stated they have a strong alumni involvement within their chapter. The other participants acknowledged the need for the alumni involvement and highlighted there is interest from the community if alumni chapters were to be established.

Participant Four was the only individual in the study stating they have extremely active alumni involvement for their chapter. Participant Four stated the alumni group has meetings twice every semester and one usually coincides with a huge oyster roast. The alumni and parents provide funding to the chapter for travel funds for State and National Convention as well as scholarships for members entering college.

Participants One, Two, and Three expressed the need and importance for an alumni
chapter. While Participant One noted there is a lot of parent involvement in his FFA chapter, but an official alumni group has not been established. By the end of the school year, Participant One hoped to have an alumni chapter started.

Participant Two mentioned the alumni group is in the works and stated:

The Alumni that help now are the ones that have been there since I have been. In our POA, we have an interest meeting that we have scheduled for January to start an alumni chapter. We have gotten some parents that are excited and what to increase that community pull so I hope, knock on wood, that we will have some type of alumni association by the summer.

Participant Three seemed to understand the need of having an active alumni chapter. She said,

I think that’s where we lack where a lot of other chapters are doing well with fundraising and things like that. As of right now, we don’t have an alumni group at our school, but we should do that.

“FFA Week Celebration”

All participants in the study mentioned a great deal of activities organized during “FFA Week Celebration”. The activities were designed to celebrate the history and the mission of the National FFA Organization.

Participant One organized a petting zoo on the school’s ground for the younger students and also an FFA sponsored dance involving both middle school and high school students. Participants Two and Three both detailed each day had some type of theme or dress-up day such as National Blue/Corn Gold Day, FFA T-shirt Day, and Hillbilly Day. Participant Three said these dress-up days encourage excitement among members and allows other students to see how important agriculture is to communities around the United States.
Participant Four said they have Agricultural Fun Days with pie eating contests, Cheer Wine chug, relay races, and hold FFA trivia on the radio for prizes. Most importantly, this year they will be visiting the County’s Agricultural Summit where they meet with governing officials, members of the agricultural industry, and farmers to talk about the state of agriculture around the county.

Chapter Meetings

Each participant had their opinion about what worked best for chapter meetings. Because of school schedules and policies, some of the chapter meetings were rescheduled to certain times of the day.

Participant One’s chapter held meetings after school. The participant appreciated this time because the chapter averages one meeting every 45 days, lasting anywhere between 3-4 hours. Occasionally, the sports teams had to miss the meeting due to practice or games which was recognized as a drawback to holding the meetings right after school. There were about 200 students in the middle and high school combined and about half of these students are in the FFA chapter at Participant One’s school.

Participant Three’s chapter held meetings spontaneously or whenever event decisions needed to be made. With prior approval from the principal, meetings were held during second block class time to discuss FFA chapter matters. They had approximately 200 members so it is easiest to meet during school time when they can have the auditorium to hold their discussion.

Participant Four tried to hold a meeting at least once a month and sometimes it coincided with Club Day at school. She found that mixing business with fun during the
meeting keeps the attention of the 60-70 members that show up to discuss the Chapter’s business.

Participant Two had to change her schedule around because of a new policy at school. She states,

This year the school decided that there would be no club meetings during the day-- which has really made life difficult, especially for freshman and sophomores that don't drive when you have after school meetings. We start out meeting once a month, the first Wednesday of each month. And it's okay, but we have added the first and third hoping we can have more consistent participation. We have a new program at our school called Enrichment. It's 30 minutes every day that everyone in the building is supposed to be doing the same thing. And we have an emphasis everyday reading and writing and math... you know, critical thinking and those kinds of things. So the world on the street is that next semester they may take Fridays as a club day so we can have 30 minutes on Fridays to do some type of club activity. Because it is has hurt membership, especially since I don't have Agri-science and don't have club meetings during school so it’s kind of been a thorn.

Participant Two stated out of the 40 students who are dues paying members, about half attend meetings on a regular basis. Observing Participant Two’s chapter meeting provided some insight on responsibilities the officers and members had in order to conduct successful meetings. Participant Two allowed the officers to run, speak, plan, and facilitate the meetings, but was around to interject her thoughts and details about important events and happenings during the gathering. The chapter officers addressed the membership in the classroom and detailed the agenda, new business, and announcements on the board for members to see and copy. During this particular meeting, the chapter had a lot of community service events in-progress or coming up so Participant Two and the chapter officers had the
job of updating the students on specific details and meeting times for the future events.

Before the meeting concluded, an FFA member presented her senior project. This project was a collection of CDE information and the careers students can specialize in with the knowledge learned from participating in these events.

Community Service

During the interviews, all four participants stated they try to stay active in and around their community. From organizing educational opportunities for younger students to community beautification projects, these projects keep each individual chapters busy throughout the year.

Participant One’s chapter cleaned up litter from the roads around the school, participated in Relay for Life events and actively sought new projects to take on around their community. These activities were documented in yearly scrapbooks for the chapter and the photos are included on their school’s website for community members to view. Participant One allowed the researcher to take pictures of these scrapbook pages and print out portions of the chapter’s website as artifacts and documentation for the study.

Participant Two’s chapter provided flower donations to businesses and individuals that have been active supporters of the chapter all during the year. They also participated in landscaping and litter clean-up activities around the school, and sponsor an Agri-safety Day in which they teach fourth graders in the neighboring schools about safety procedures and accident prevention. Participant Two showed the researcher an FFA calendar poster that listed all the community service activities of the chapter each year for the artifact collection. The calendar was distributed to each member to clearly show their activities and when
participants are needed to help. Participant Two provided the researcher with a similar calendar to the one printed on the poster as an artifact for the study.

Participant Three and Participant Four’s chapters both participated in “Adopt-A-Family” during the holiday season. Canned food was donated and presents were provided to the less fortunate families in their communities. Participant Three’s chapter also was involved in Habitat for Humanity programs and painted fire hydrants around town. Participant Four’s Chapter dedicated their time to collecting canned food for a food drive during the year and also continued to spread cheer by caroling during the holiday season. Both of these individuals produced documents of their Program of Activities for the researcher’s artifact collection. Their community service efforts were clearly listed and planned on the document and these programs have become a tradition for their Chapters throughout the year.

An observation of Participant Four’s FFA Chapter members wrapping gifts collected by students for the “Adopt-A-Family” project and distributing fruit for a chapter fundraiser showed the commitment and dedication the chapter has to serving members of the community. A group of students recorded each gift, gave it a description so that the organization receiving the toys knew what was in the package and its age appropriateness. At the same time, another group of students were putting together packages of fruit and helped load the boxes into vehicles of those family and community members who purchased the fruit.
Preparation for FFA Responsibilities

In order to better understand the preparation lateral entry teachers needed to advise an FFA chapter, the participants were asked if they received any FFA advisor instruction while pursuing their alternative teacher certification. Participants who had instruction were asked to specify what type of instruction was provided. While participants acknowledged specific instruction pertaining to FFA advising was not provided, at least three of the participants received broad information relating to student organizations and program management through their coursework.

Participant One stated he did not receive any FFA advisor instruction. In his opinion, teaching at a private school was unique and more involved than public schools. He explained his private school has different testing requirements and standards embedded in the curriculum as compared to the surrounding public schools in his county. As a result, Participant One indicated he had to design the program from scratch and implied it would be hard to receive specific instruction to meet the needs of his particular situation.

Participants Two, Three, and Four all recognized they received some type of student organization and classroom management guidance through their coursework. Whereas, the information was more broad as opposed to focused specifically on the FFA, the information still helped give some background on student needs while advising an organization. Participants Three and Four also highlighted the help they received from their University, State Staff, and old agriculture teacher mentors. Their mentors checked up on the participants regularly and offer help, guidance, and advice about issues pertaining to running a FFA chapter.
Perceptions of FFA Responsibilities

Each individual was asked to reflect on a time prior to becoming an FFA advisor and detail what they believed their FFA responsibilities would include. They were also asked if any of these perceptions changed once they actively advised their own chapters.

Participants One and Four believed they had at least an adequate understanding of what was expected to advise a Chapter, however, Participants Two and Three did not realize exactly how much time and responsibility would be required.

Participant One stated he knew “exactly what we are doing. This FFA program here is modeled similar to what the FFA program was when I was a student. Of course the curriculum doesn't match anything, but FFA does.” He also said his perceptions did not change once he became the active advisor of the Chapter. Participant Four also claimed she had a basic idea of the responsibilities of the job, but her presumptions changed a little bit because her high school agriculture teacher made it seem effortless. She mentioned the amount of paperwork she completes is endless, but the reactions on the students’ faces when they get involved in FFA activities makes all the hard and tedious work worth it.

When asked about current responsibilities, Participant Two said she “really didn't know.” She went onto reiterate since she was not in FFA in high school, she only knew of certain aspects through her friends’ experiences in their Chapter or her own similar opportunities through 4-H membership. Participant Three did not understand the full extent of the responsibilities as well. She echoed Participant Four’s statement in she did not realize just how much her high school FFA advisor actually did and accomplished for his students. She commented she is glad she does not have a family to raise like some of her advisor
friends because that would be an extra responsibility for her to juggle with her job at the moment.

The participants of the study were asked to recall what FFA responsibilities were mentioned when they applied and interviewed for their current positions. When applying for the job and interviewing for the position, none of the four participants said the FFA responsibilities were discussed during the hire. Participant One commented on what he was told at his interview,

This school has a lot of large sponsors that are in Agricultural Industry, including the owners of Murphy Brown, Prestige Farms, Butterball, Smithfield Foods, Nash Johnston, Parks Livestock. They wanted an Ag. program here. They knew what FFA was, they knew what they wanted students to learn, but they had no idea how to put it in place. This is what I was told when I came.

Participant Two was not told anything about the FFA responsibilities other than they had some students holding Regional office positions. When asked her opinion regarding this lack of information she shared,

You know, you don't know what you don't know. And so I had that in the back of my mind the whole time. I guess that has been the one thing that has been a little challenging... is that everybody assumes that everybody knows everything.... because you know, you were in FFA and now you are an advisor and have a fabulous Chapter and you think everyone is just like you. Well, it's not like that. And so, as a lateral entry person that did not have an FFA experience that was one of the most frustrating things I dealt with. When you try to ask questions, they look at you like you are stupid because you didn't know. But I had no reason to know.
Participant Three received little information about being an FFA advisor because administrators assumed she knew about the responsibilities associated with the position. However, Participant Three did comment the previous principal, who did the interviewing and hiring, may have had something to do with the lack of information shared. The new principal at the school was much more hands-on and active with the curriculum and student clubs. He was once an agriculture teacher and his background might allow him to be more specific about the job responsibilities during the hiring process.

Participant Four was only told about the need to keep the community happy while she held the position of agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor. She stated,

I was told, and this is honest opinion, that I had to make certain people happy. That there was a lot of politics tied to the position. That was first and foremost what I was told. Also told that the students in these classes normally were the lower performing students and that they had traditionally made it a dumping ground for problem kids. So I have tried to change that perception a little bit. But it is difficult, it is very difficult. There wasn't a prerequisite for me to do any competitions because they hadn't done any in the past. I didn't have to take people to Convention because it just wasn't an active Chapter before. To me, I can't imagine not going to National Convention. With my advisor, it was always a given. So it didn't seem like a responsibility, it was more like 'okay, we are going to do this.' The administration really liked the fact that we were stepping up the game. What was good was that we started off so low, that just a few things made a lot of people happy. The way it looks like to some people around here is that it’s like 'wow, incredible.' But it’s just the normal things that most active Chapters do.

Participants were asked to recall if they felt apprehensive of any of the FFA responsibilities expected of them and the factors contributing to their level of confidence in
their leadership abilities. All of the participants shared they were not apprehensive about any of their responsibilities advising an FFA chapter. While some participants in the study expressed more confidence in their abilities than others, as a whole, they seemed secure in their abilities to advise students.

Participant One expressed no apprehension at all. The only concern he had about accepting the job was there was not a shop, greenhouse, barn, or suitable classroom space for his students to work. He spent a few weeks organizing his classroom and then aimed to construct usable facilities on the school campus as well. This lack of facilities challenged Participant One to develop a curriculum that could generate interest among students and keep them engaged while sitting in the classroom (in anticipation of the facilities being built).

Participant Two was not apprehensive about any of the FFA responsibilities, rather she had to learn how to grasp (and still understand) how curriculum, standardized testing, and chapter activities were supposed to integrate together. She stated she knew this would continue to be a work in progress; however her 4-H background still offered her a lot of support. She further explained,

Without the 4-H experience, it would be more than overwhelming. They parallel as far as competitions, similarly. So I was not completely blindsides to come in and do livestock judging because I did that as a 4-Her. I did that collegiately, so I had some sort of basis to pull from.
Participant Three expressed her worry about making sure her CDE teams continued to be successful. She said,

Overall, I haven't been apprehensive about a lot because leadership wise... when I was in high school, I think I was a little more mature than most people. I knew how to behave. I knew what was expected of me. But the main thing that I was ever nervous about and this is going to be sound so silly... was livestock judging. When we did that contest because I was coming in, taking over a team that someone else that had kind of been training, and the team has been like 2nd, 3rd, 4th place in the state every year, and I had never judged a steer in my life. We got 2nd place last year, so I was like (whew!) but I was very, very nervous about it at first. I was thinking, 'oh my gosh I am going to let these people down'; if I popped up and we got 10th in the state... they are going to be like, newbie coming in. But, I did fine and I was surprised and I felt a lot better. Once I transitioned into it, it wasn't so bad.

Based on experience as a State Officer, Participant Four commented putting on a workshop for students is extremely different compared to filling up 90 minutes a day/three times a week for students will all kinds of different accommodations and levels of ability. After gaining some experience in the classroom, Participant Four believed she gained some classroom management skills. She states,

I think I have acquired some abilities. But by no means, am I a great teacher, of a curriculum. I think that I may be really good as an FFA advisor, but I am trying my best to turn it the other way around. I remember hearing someone say, a summer or two ago, 'you have to be an Agriculture teacher... FFA advisor is just an added bonus'. I am working on that part because it's really difficult. But, the curriculum is definitely... the hardest part. Not necessarily the content, but teaching the content. And activities that are exciting for people because you are always having to entertain students.
Lateral Entry FFA Advisor Support

Participants were asked to describe what influence(s) colleagues had on them, as a lateral entry FFA advisor. The participants all identified at least one colleague who exerted influence on them while advising their FFA chapter. Participant One felt his principal was a great supporter of the curriculum and always does what he can to contribute to the success of the chapter. As the only agricultural teacher in the building, Participant Two found some help from advisors of other clubs like HOSA and the Science Club when she needs support. While the schools’ clubs may be competitive at times, the club advisors still have a good working relationship when they need to collaborate.

Participants Three and Four both mentioned former agriculture teachers and administrators as their biggest source of help. Participant Three said she utilizes more experienced teachers/administrators for guidance and when she is seeking advice because they often have had prior experience with a similar issue. Participant Four felt she could always seek advice from her high school agriculture teacher when questions arise and felt a sense of support from administrators in the building, even if they are not present in her classroom.

Participants were asked to detail the areas of FFA they felt they could have received more instruction and/or guidance while in the advisor role. Broadly speaking, Participant One simply stated, “I’m sure there is one, but I am not sure what it would be.” Seemly confident in his answer, he provided nothing more for the question. Participant Three also stated she wanted helped with CDEs, in general. She felt it would benefit her if she knew
exactly which teachers she could talk to since some agriculture teachers do not like to share their secrets of success with others. Participant Three said she devoted time to gathering resources for her CDE teams, but the process became exhausting as some of the material is very outdated. She shared,

I think if you had more help with CDEs, because they are a lot of fun, and obviously everyone wants to do well... but you always have those schools that are always going to do good, and you are like 'how am I ever going to beat them, what are they doing, who do they know- they obviously know somebody' - I know of schools that have school that actually come from the community to help judge the teams, and I do understand I have gotten lucky to have a good livestock judging team, and other schools are like 'how does she have such a good livestock judging team... she's only a 2nd year teacher’. But, I have gotten lucky in the fact that I know a lot of people in 4-H and I have a lot of kids in 4-H so they are naturally good.

Participant Three believed setting up a workshop to help find more information for CDE event training would be more helpful for lateral entry and beginning teachers in the profession.

Participant Two seemed to know exactly where she needed some more guidance. She identified,

Proficiency awards and national awards- it not something I am very strong in and not have been able to do the job I think I need to do for the amount of work that we do as a Chapter. I have dropped the ball on that national chapter recognition. I felt sure that after a year or two we should have had that and I just not have been able to get it together to fill it out- because it is like some monstrosity of a form. They are hard and entrepreneurship is even crazier than placement- and so you know, we will do
placement here for a while until we figure out how to do that well and then we will more onto entrepreneurship.

Participant Two commented she has yet to meet a student who likes record keeping, unless they are super competitive. This added to the struggle completing and submitting award applications.

Participant Four admitted she “could always use help with the leadership CDEs. There is some magic formula for Parliamentary Procedure that I don’t know yet. We don’t have a lot of competition in our area so I think my kids get a false sense of what it entails.” She also stated that she has little knowledge in production agriculture and would like more training in that area to become an effective advisor regarding that specific CDE.

Participants were asked during the interview to specify what areas of FFA they felt most comfortable advising students. The participants overwhelmingly selected leadership activities as the areas they felt most comfortable in advising. All of the participants have placed in regional and state competitions in leadership events contributing to the level of efficacy in advising these events.

Participant One was very comfortable in leadership development as well as livestock judging. He believes his chapter will be in the regional competition and most likely to go State competition in Public Speaking and Parliamentary Procedure as well. He stated, “To be honest, I really don’t feel uncomfortable in any. There isn’t a single contest that we compete in that I didn’t compete in as a student. And I train teams the way I was trained, and it seems
Participant Two added she believed she could prepare individuals to do well in Public Speaking events. She attributed success in Livestock Judging, Poultry Judging, and Dairy Judging to her familiarity of animals through Animal Science and 4-H background.

Participant Three, also noted her enjoyment of helping students prepare for future careers. She passionately stated,

I think that FFA is the main reason that being an Ag Teacher is so much fun. I mean if you are an Ag Teacher and do not have a strong FFA program or are not doing anything with FFA; I don't know why you chose to teach Ag. It doesn't make sense to me... like why not just teach Science or Biology then? You know, if you’re not really interested in the FFA aspect... because it’s a huge part and I think for me, that FFA in High School brought me out of my shell so much... so I kind of like to push the public speaking stuff and anything I can get my kids to go and interact with other schools- like at RLC- which is the Regional Leadership Conference. When I can get them to go and do a leadership conference when they are going to be interacting with someone from their school and are forced to interact with someone else, I find that most of the kids when they come back, they are like 'you are right, it was actually pretty fun, I really didn't know anyone, but everyone else was pretty nice and nervous like me' and if they keep doing it by their Senior year, they are like 'I know everyone there now!' Kind of educating them on other opportunities in FFA would be the best thing.

As a past State Officer, Participant Four felt most comfortable assisting students with public speaking exercises, preparing state officers, community service, fundraising events, and anything related with the community.

Participants were asked to identify the areas of FFA they wish they learned more about before becoming an FFA advisor. Based on the very unique experiences of each
individual, several areas were identified, ranging from time management to adherence to tradition.

While Participant One clearly believed he received all the knowledge he needed about FFA through his deep active involvement in the organization when he was younger, Participant Two found her first year advising a chapter was somewhat difficult. She remembers,

The first year I taught I didn't really understand about cooperating FFA, curriculum, plus all the stuff for VoCATS and CDE... it's really challenging to be able to mesh all those things together to work to the benefit of all. It gets to be difficult, especially here because it's such a diverse population, for the most part, no matter how hard I'm trying or the kids are trying, it’s still the 'good-ole-boy-farmer looking club. And even through the diversity of my classes, I still can't get beyond that mindset. They still think FFA a bunch of farmers; no matter that we talk about a whole section in every level I class about careers and that it is beyond that. But that is really still overwhelming a little bit, trying to get it all in.

Participant Three commented about the time it requires to do all of the responsibilities when given the role as an FFA advisor. She says she learned,

Well, I guess no one has the answers, but since I was so active in High School I knew a lot of the stuff.... but before coming an advisor, probably how much time the advisor puts into everything, ya know. I mean I knew about proficiency awards and SAEs and CDEs and what you do with officers, like a POA and the meetings and fundraisers, but I guess I didn't know the behind-the-screens stuff the advisors does. Like, every day that you stay at school and practice with teams or here taking care of fundraising, or working in the greenhouse... kind of like there is a lot of things that people don't consider and you wouldn't even know when you student teach... because you aren't there the whole
Participant Four simply stated politics around FFA traditions in and around the job position were something she wishes she learned about before advising. She said,

I think I saw some of it but I was oblivious or I didn't care when I was a state officer. It didn't really bother me. But, now to see some of the strings that are attached to a lot of things people do and the money they give and how things are interconnected. I think I wish I would have known that.

Participant Four used her chapter’s fruit sale as an example. She said it was not very profitable, but people expect it done every year and if it would stop, people in the community would be very upset.

The participants were asked to give advice to other lateral entry teachers preparing to advise an FFA chapter. Based on the variety of background experiences among participants, several recommendations were made for other lateral entry teachers.

Participant One promoted the importance of a good working relationship with other teachers, administrators, and the school board. He connected to his experiences in sales, saying,

I came at an older age. I came in with a lot of experience dealing with people. This job requires not only to sell to the students, but to sell to the board. Your program must have a working relationship with the board that smooth a lot of things out- and I think the teacher before me had trouble with that and that is why she didn't stay. I think that is a reason why another teacher might not stay.

Participant Two discussed the time demands of the job. She made it clear agriculture teachers and FFA advisors often spend extended hours at school unlike other teachers in the
Participant Two states,

That it is a time consuming activity. And if you are not willing to come early and stay late, then maybe it's really not for you. Because you cannot get here 5 minutes before it starts and leave 10 minutes after it ends because it just won't... you won't... have a Chapter. You can teach agriculture but you can't have an FFA Chapter.

Participant Three received valuable advice from her former agriculture teacher she thought would benefit others. He told her to never be scared to try new things because the worst that can happen was that it does not work and one can learn from it. Also, “you need to step out of your shell, to let kids step out of theirs.” The job responsibilities might be overwhelming at first, but Participant Three said the feeling was completely normal and understandable. She says,

Sometimes you think... ‘what am I doing... why am I a teacher’... you may love your job, but there are always going to be days when you think 'Oh my goodness, I don't think I can do this tomorrow' because there is always bad days or students that make you want to scream... but patience is another piece of advice. You can't let things or students get to you. I tell my students all the time, ‘if I make you mad, I'm sorry... and if you say something to me and you think I'm going to lose sleep over it... I'm not. You can think what you want because I might think things myself.’ Don't be so serious and just don't be afraid to try things is probably the best I can give because it was probably the best advice I was given.

Participant Four also reflected on the advice her high school agricultural teacher gave her to share with other lateral entry teachers. He advocated new teachers need to stick with the job and give it a chance through a second year. She shared,

I think the best advice my FFA advisor gave me, and it’s not something I haven't even gotten to yet...
and it’s to get out for a second year. I still feel like just coming in as THE teacher and not the replacement, I have become more comfortable with things that we do. And I think it gets better all of the time. And sometimes in the beginning it just seems like the world of mess. My southern slang or saying! It just seems crazy and how can you possibly do it all. But I think if you keep on, things start to work themselves into place, and students start to understand and get what you are trying to do and they are very supportive and their parents become very supportive. We have to have a lot of community support. I don't know how we would do anything without them.

A question posed to the study’s participants inquired into how might regional FFA Supervisors, FFA State Staff, and/or University Teacher Educators better support them as FFA advisors. All of the participants noted the valuable support received from Regional and State Agricultural Education and State staff. The four participants felt they could call on certain individuals for assistance or advice and receive help almost immediately. Participants Three and Four said their contacts with North Carolina State University and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University staff has been positive and they are flexible and understanding of situations, especially when it comes to juggling the demands of teaching and coursework.

Participant One became very candid on a policy he would like to be implemented. He says,

Part of the FFA is getting people interested and then once they get interested in using the FFA to get more in-depth in whatever they want to do. If I’ve got 35 people that interest in poultry and they want to spend time after-school, on the weekend learning how to judge poultry AND I have to pay to carry a team that I then should be able to pay to carry not only one team, but ten teams. And when I do that, I'm going to designate one team to be official, but what's the difference, if I'm paying it, I should be
able to carry and that I have a little bit of an issue with state staff. State staff says we can only handle so many people... appreciate that, but I don't have a problem if you want to charge me $10 or $20. If I got the money to pay, get the room, let me bring the people.

Participant One believed he would love for more FFA events and contests suited for middle school students to be added throughout the year. He has vocalized this idea to many state and regional FFA staff and hoped this change would be implemented one day in the near future.

Participant Two expressed FFA membership was being reduced to a numbers game. Especially with a feeble economy, Participant Two felt like the FFA Staff is after documentation about how many students are members in each chapter. She shared,

I guess the last time we had a regional meeting- that was the premise- they had a big hammer out and I'm sure they don't think they did, but it was numbers, numbers, numbers. And I understand that money is dictated from numbers and you have to show numbers and have to show growth- I got all that in everything you do in life... but sometimes you have to go for quality as opposed to quantity. And that is really what I have tried to do here. I am not going to have 150 members. So, I know that they can't help that because that what their what job dictates and that gets a little annoying. So I guess, maybe just seeing beyond those numbers.

While Participant Two praised the State Staff for their constant help, she believes the continued pressure to increase membership numbers received too much emphasis over time.
Summary

Each participant in the study may hold a lateral entry teachers’ licenses but there are many similar as well as differences in the way their FFA chapters are advised. Some participants place more emphasis on community service events, while others choose to focus on training numerous CDE teams in order to give students a myriad of opportunities. Prior background in the FFA varied between the participants; three participants were members in high school while one participant chose to participate in 4-H activities during her youth. However, each participant highlighted their own personal successes and struggles while advising students in their FFA chapters. These experiences have given these teachers the knowledge to share and advice to give other lateral entry teachers who are preparing to enter the agricultural education profession and the FFA advisor position.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION,
& RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to examine lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability in advising quality FFA Chapters. It is important to understand the backgrounds, abilities, knowledge, and perceptions of lateral entry teachers in order to assist them with the tools needed in building a successful agricultural education program, promoting leadership development in students, and advising and overseeing FFA Chapter activities and events. The researcher wanted to examine lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability to advise their FFA Chapter and how they create opportunities for students that encompass FFA knowledge, customs, and traditions. The research questions were:

1) What prior experience do lateral entry teachers have relating to the National FFA Organization?
2) What prior knowledge do lateral entry teachers have relating to the National FFA Organization?
3) In what events do lateral entry teachers’ FFA Chapters participate and what achievements/honors have their Chapters earned?
4) What do lateral entry teachers believe are the FFA areas that they could have been better prepared in prior to advising an FFA chapter?
5) What do lateral entry teachers believe are the FFA areas that they could be better prepared in while advising an FFA chapter?
Summary of Procedures

For this case study, North Carolina Agricultural Regional Coordinators nominated 12 lateral entry teachers who were deemed quality FFA advisors as potential participants in the study. Four teachers with zero to five years of teaching experience were contacted and agreed to participate. Three of these participants were female and one was male.

A series of two interviews were conducted with each participant. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions about educational and professional backgrounds, influential factors that led to lateral entry certification, prior FFA involvement, FFA Chapter activities, and perceptions of FFA advisor responsibilities, collegial influences, advice for other lateral entry teachers, and possible program assistance from Agricultural Education state staff and University teacher educators. During the study, the researcher conducted observations in each participant’s FFA chapter meeting, CDE practice, or community service event. Also, artifacts were collected from the teachers’ classrooms for analysis. Artifacts included photos related to FFA events, scrapbook pages, chapter website documents, Program of Activities, and recruitment materials.

The lateral entry teachers in this study had at least some prior knowledge of FFA activities and/or knowledge of the agricultural industry from other activities and hobbies. Furthermore, these participants identified leadership events as a strength and proficiency awards as a weakness when advising an FFA Chapter.
Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were formulated:

Experience & Influence on Decision to Teach Agricultural Education

The participants valued their prior FFA experience and agricultural background as the foundation for their career choice. While the majority of the participants in this study were former members of the FFA, all of the participants noted their love for the agriculture industry motivated them to share their passion with students enrolled in agricultural education courses.

Lateral Entry FFA Preparation and Support

The study’s participants received preparation in general classroom management and/or student organization advisement, but did not receive specific FFA advisor instruction prior to being hired as an agriculture teacher.

Current FFA Responsibilities

The amount of involvement in CDE events varied due to a combination of factors, including teacher resources and time available, teachers’ prior knowledge in certain events, student interest, and community resources. All participants expressed their desire to train additional CDE teams, but due the variety of factors the numbers of teams were limited.

Recruitment of new members varied greatly from chapter to chapter depending on the involvement of chapter officers and recruitment strategies. Teachers relied heavily on recruitment through word-of-mouth or by hosting social gatherings to recruit new individuals. The participants who used recruitment materials (such as signs and posters) were able to recycle these items and revise them for events in the chapter held annually.
Several participants stated proficiency awards, Greenhand, Chapter, State, and American Degree applications were too tedious and difficult for the student to complete and the teacher to provide appropriate guidance. The participants cited the lengthy and detailed form made it difficult for students to complete without assistance. The participants also stated they want to focus more effort within the next year on completing more degrees, especially the State and American degrees.

There was little alumni involvement in the participants’ FFA chapters. However, the teachers understood the importance and benefits of having an alumni group for their FFA chapter. Each participant expressed a desire that alumni groups will be established in the near future.

*Perceptions of FFA Responsibilities*

The participants’ beliefs on advisor responsibilities were based on their previous FFA experiences. The teachers drew from the experiences and involvement with their past agriculture teachers as a model to help them advise their own chapters. The participant without any FFA experience had to be flexible to accommodate the full responsibilities of the job. Also, it was documented that during interviews for agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor positions, job responsibilities were not fully described to all applicants.

The lateral entry teacher participants were not apprehensive of any FFA advisor duties. However, they were most concerned with matters ranging from classroom management issues, the integration of curriculum, standardized testing, chapter activities, and the preparing and sustaining successful CDE teams.
Lateral Entry Support

Each participant in the study identified at least one person that positively influenced them from the agricultural industry. Mentors included former agricultural education teachers/FFA advisors or individuals within the school administration showing great support for the agricultural education program and FFA Chapter.

The lateral entry participants were able to identify and express how certain mentoring helped them in the classroom and/or advising their FFA Chapter. Participants stated CDE information and resources from other teachers and FFA Regional Supervisors helped them better prepare and train their teams.

Participants felt most comfortable in preparing students for leadership events. The participants’ students have placed in regional and state competitions in leadership events contributing to the high level of self-efficacy in advising these events.

Overall, positive support was given from FFA administration, agricultural education regional supervisors, and University staff. However, a few participants in the study had specific requests they believed would better their students’ experience within the organization. For example, a request was made for more middle school contests because of the overwhelming interest of the age group to participate in FFA sponsored events. Additionally, one participant felt the FFA staff continually expressed concern about student enrollment in FFA chapters. The participant realized each chapter has to show growth in both enrollment numbers and overall profit, but she stated it should be more important to emphasis quality rather than quantity in local FFA chapters.
Discussion

Questions related to efficacy examined participants’ perceived levels of confidence and apprehension about job responsibilities and expectations. All of the participants expressed confidence in their abilities to prepare chapter members for leadership contests. Each participant has been successful advising teams in leadership areas, whether in local or regional competitions. Bandura’s (1995) definition of self-efficacy links a person’s confidence level with their ability to perform tasks or responsibilities well. Gibbs (2002) stated the more confidence a teacher has in their leadership abilities can equate to greater outcomes for students in the classroom. The National FFA Organization (2010) values the confidence an advisor has in their leadership abilities because it encourages students in their quest for personal and professional excellence. Vaughn (2000) also observed that the greater leadership experience teachers had equated to a greater influence on quality FFA programs.

While previous FFA background varied between the participants in this study, it can be concluded that all the individuals respected the mission and values set by the National FFA Organization. Each participant and their FFA chapters promote leadership, community service, and achievement throughout the year and connect students with other members around the country during National FFA sponsored events. According to Stewart (1994), this value of supporting the National FFA’s mission and values ultimately attracts students to become involved in the Chapter and all of its personal and professional benefits. Even though three out of four participants had past FFA experience, they stated they continued to learn more about the organization and its events after accepting their teaching and advising position. These comments are similar to what Vaughn (1976) indicated in his study when he
found even those teachers with great knowledge about the FFA still seek additional resources and information when trying to lead their own FFA Chapters.

**Recommendations for Practice & Research**

Based on the findings and discussions of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

*Recommendations for Practice*

Lateral entry teachers who will be advising an FFA Chapter should not only have general classroom management and student organization assistance, but also guidance specific to the National FFA Organization. Participants in this study did feel confident in advising FFA activities, but their confidence was specific to leadership activities. Ideally, advisors should be confident in all content areas within the FFA. Workshops should be provided for all new lateral entry teachers, regardless of past FFA background, covering specific advisor and leadership duties when advising (or co-advising) a chapter. Live versions of a workshop can be offered for lateral entry teachers to attend for professional development. Due to current budget restrictions, workshops can also be held in an online forum in which teachers can interact with the session moderator and other participants and be recorded for future uses in the profession.

Proficiency awards and degree applications workshops could assist in making application submission easier for the student and the FFA advisor. Instead, a professional workshop could be offered for new agricultural and/or lateral entry teachers in order to help them with the task of filling out award and degree applications. Workshops can be offered to teachers in a live format for professional development. Also, in lieu of budget restraints, these
workshops can also be taught in interactive online sessions.

It is important job responsibilities and expectations of the FFA advisor be articulated during the interview process. Individuals, such as State and Regional Agricultural Education Coordinators/Staff, should be alerted of job openings and encourage the hiring committee to discuss details of the job and expectations to the new individual. This is not intended to overwhelm the potential hiree, but instead outline the expectations of the job position and the responsibilities of the FFA advisor.

Considerations should be given for the creation of a lateral entry and/or new agricultural teacher and FFA advisor support group or message board forum at the state level. Lateral entry teachers can offer advice, especially about the time it takes to complete certain job responsibilities and about curriculum, FFA, and SAE integration suggestions for the agricultural education program.

Overall, positive support is provided from regional FFA supervisors, FFA State staff, and University teacher educators, but these individuals need to continue efforts in identifying and supporting lateral entry teachers in order to support the development and continuation of a quality FFA chapter. If a method of communication (such as internet chat sessions, message board posts, e-mail announcements, etc.) between lateral entry teachers and regional FFA supervisors, FFA State staff, and University teacher educators is successfully initiated, other states would also be able to adopt the strategy. The open lines of communication can offer lateral entry agricultural education teachers and advisors constant support and needed resources as they strive to produce their own quality FFA Chapters.

The profession, as a whole, needs to continue to embrace the influx of lateral entry
teachers. With the shortage of agricultural education teachers around the United States, lateral entry teachers, with or without past FFA experience will continue to apply for positions. More experienced advisors and/or Regional and State FFA staff need to serve as mentors and supply lateral entry teachers with the resources they need to ultimately lead quality programs.

Recommendations for Research

Research should be conducted on the effects of alumni involvement and the impact on a small FFA Chapter and/or a one teacher program. This research may help more teachers establish an alumni Chapter for immediate support and resources. For a novice or lateral entry teacher, the alumni group could offer a multitude of resources and connections in the community to support the FFA Chapter.

A study should be completed to analyze the criteria which Regional Coordinators utilize in order to select quality FFA chapters. This research could examine possible similarities between selected participants’ chapters and also investigate the unique qualities that make their programs successful. The findings may also be helpful to other FFA chapters as they work to improve the quality of their chapter.

This research study should be replicated by other researchers in other states in order to see how experiences of lateral entry teachers differ by state and region. More specifically, other study should examine lateral entry teachers who did not have any previous background in the National FFA Organization nor the 4-H Organization. This research will provide additional insight as to why some lateral entry teachers choose to teach agricultural education after spending time working or studying in other professional areas.
In addition, a longitudinal study should be completed in order to examine how the needs of lateral entry teachers change over the years of teaching. The needs of these teachers may change due to trends and concerns within the agricultural industry, budget issues within the school systems, and possible changes in teachers’ perceived self-efficacy when advising FFA chapters.
REFERENCES


Vaughn, P. R. (1976). *Factors related to the success of New Mexico vocational agricultural teachers as FFA advisors. Summary of research*. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, Department of Agricultural Education.

Dear ________________.

My name is Justine Kinney and I am a 2nd year Graduate Student at North Carolina State University. I am conducting a research study entitled, *An Analysis of North Carolina Lateral Entry Teachers’ Perceived Ability to Lead Quality FFA Programs*. The primary purpose of the study is to examine how lateral entry teachers perceive their ability to advise their FFA Chapter and create opportunities for students that encompasses FFA knowledge, customs, and traditions.

I received a list of North Carolina lateral entry teachers from Joshua Bledsoe (see e-mail attachment). I know that he solicited your assistance and you aided him in retrieving the information from these teachers. However, I would like to ask for further assistance. Would you select, based on your opinion, the top four (4) lateral entry teachers that advise (or co-advises) quality FFA programs in your region? Your selections must be lateral entry teachers who have been teaching Agricultural Education for 0-5 years. From this narrowed list, I will contact some of these individuals and set-up interviews to collect data for my study.

I really appreciate your assistance with my research. You can send me the selected names by e-mailing me at jckinney@ncsu.edu.

Thank you!
Justine Kinney
Dear ______________________________,

My name is Justine Kinney and I am a 2\textsuperscript{nd} year Graduate Student at North Carolina State University. As a future agricultural teacher who is pursuing teacher certification through an alternative route, I have developed an interest in how lateral entry teachers advise effective FFA chapters. This interest has formed my thesis topic entitled, “An Analysis of North Carolina Lateral Entry Teachers’ Perceived Ability to Lead Quality FFA Programs”.

The North Carolina Regional Agricultural Education Coordinators have identified you as an outstanding lateral entry teacher and referred me to speak with you about volunteering for this research opportunity.

If possible, I would like to conduct two interviews (lasting approximately 1-2 hours total) at a time and location convenient to you. As well, I would appreciate the opportunity to attend a chapter FFA meeting or other FFA event and discuss important components of your FFA chapter, such as the Programs of Activities, website components, recruitment materials, etc. I would really appreciate your assistance with my study. Your participation will be a valuable contribution to the Agricultural Education profession and supports the preparation of lateral entry teachers in the future.

Please contact me by calling (610) 442-5048 or sending me an e-mail reply at jckinney@ncsu.edu with your interest by \textbf{October 14, 2010}.

Thank you for your time!

Justine C. Kinney
Graduate Student- Agricultural Education
North Carolina State University
APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ANALYSIS OF NORTH CAROLINA LATERAL ENTRY TEACHERS’ PERCEIVED ABILITY TO LEAD QUALITY FFA PROGRAMS

Primary Investigator: Justine Kinney  Faculty Advisor: Dr. Wendy Warner

A research project on lateral entry teachers’ perceived ability to lead quality FFA programs is being conducted by Justine Kinney in the Agricultural and Extension Education Department at North Carolina State University. The purpose of the study is to examine how lateral entry teachers perceive their ability to advise their FFA Chapter and create opportunities for students that encompasses FFA knowledge, customs, and traditions.

You are being asked to volunteer to take part in this research study by participating in two face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher, allowing the researcher to observe and take notes at your FFA Chapter meeting, and disclosing specific artifacts of your FFA Chapter (such as Program of Activities, website print-offs, recruitment materials, and photos related to FFA events) with the researcher. These interviews will be audio recorded, with your permission, and they will take place in an area where you can speak freely without being overheard. Your participation will take approximately 1 hour per interview at your place of employment. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research, or is participation a job requirement, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent provided by the law. Your responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential by the researcher. You will be assigned a code number that will be used throughout the study and to report findings and conclusions of the study. To protect the privacy of others, you are asked to not use full names of others when responding to interview questions. If names are captured, they will be masked or removed from the transcripts. No reference will be made in oral reports which could link you to the study. The audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. There is no compensation, monetary or otherwise, for participating in this study. However, your participation in this study will be a valuable contribution to the Agricultural Education profession and support the preparation of lateral entry teachers in the future.
If you have any questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Justine Kinney at (610) 442-5048 or jckinney@ncsu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by signing below. A copy of this form will be given to you for your reference.

Thank you for your participation in this research study.

__________________________________________  ______________________
Signature of Volunteer                        Date

__________________________________________
Signature of Researcher                      Date
From: Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: September 28, 2010

Project Title: An Analysis of North Carolina Lateral Entry Teachers’ Perceived Ability to Lead Quality FFA Programs
IRB#: 1648

Dear Justine Kinney,

The research proposal named above has received administrative review and has been approved as exempt from the policy as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (Exemption: 46.101, b.2). Provided that the only participation of the subjects is as described in the proposal narrative, this project is exempt from further review.

NOTE:
1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU projects, the Assurance Number is: FWA0003429.
2. Any changes to the research must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
3. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days.

Please forward a copy of this letter to your faculty sponsor, if applicable. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Carol Mickelson
NCSU IRB
APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Interview Questions

- Describe your educational and professional background before becoming a lateral entry teacher.

- Describe what influenced you to want to teach Agricultural Education?

- Prior to becoming an agricultural teacher, what was your involvement in the FFA?

- Did you receive any FFA advisor instruction as you worked towards your alternative certification?
  - If so, what kind of instruction did you receive?

- How many years have you been teaching in the classroom?
  - Is this the same number of years you have been teaching an Agricultural Education curriculum?
  - Is this the same number of years you have lead an FFA Chapter?

- Besides yourself, how many teachers are there in your Agricultural Education Department?

- Describe the activities of your FFA Chapter:
  - Career Development Events (CDEs)
  - Community Service
  - Recruitment of New Members
  - Proficiency Awards
  - Banquets
  - Alumni Involvement
  - “FFA Week” Celebration
  - Chapter Meetings
  - Greenhand, Chapter, State, and/or American Degrees

- What FFA sponsored event(s) have you and your students participated in?
  - If none- Why has your chapter not been involved in any FFA sponsored events in the past?

- What did you think the FFA responsibilities would be before you first took on the role as advisor?
  - Did these presumptions change once you became the active advisor?
• What FFA responsibilities were mentioned when you applied and interviewed for your current position?

• Were you apprehensive of any of the FFA responsibilities that were expected of you?
  o If yes, what were they?
  o If not, why were you so confident in your FFA leadership abilities?

  Follow-Up Interview Questions

• What influence(s) do your colleagues have on you, as a lateral entry FFA advisor?

• What areas of FFA do you feel you could receive more instruction and/or guidance in?

• What areas of FFA do you feel most comfortable advising your students on?

• What areas of FFA do you wish you learned about before becoming a FFA advisor?

• What advice could you give other alternatively certified teachers who are expected to lead an FFA program?

• How might regional FFA supervisors, FFA state staff, and/or university teacher educators better support you as an FFA advisor?