

## **Problems Encountered by Beginning Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers**

**Sally E. Arnett**  
**Northern Illinois University**

*The purpose of this study was to describe problems faced by beginning family and consumer sciences (FACS) teachers in Illinois. Ninety (59%) Illinois FACS teachers who taught four or fewer years responded to the online questionnaire. Qualitative analysis revealed four themes: student management, facility management, instruction management, and external relations. Each theme contained subthemes; the predominant subtheme was student discipline and classroom management. Implications for teacher education programs and professional development are discussed.*

Meeting the needs for family and consumer sciences (FACS) teachers is of great concern to the profession. A deficit of available certified secondary FACS teachers has been a persistent problem over the past two decades (Jackman & Rehm, 1994; Miller & Meszaros, 1996; Mimbs, 2002; 2000; Tripp, 2006). While the FACS teaching profession continues to experience a shortage, it is essential to retain as many current teachers as possible. In fact, Mimbs (2002) recommended that more efforts need to be made to keep practicing FACS teachers in the classroom as a remedy to the shortage.

The largest population of teachers to leave the profession is beginning teachers (Lambert, 2006; Tamberg, 2007). Many new teachers leave the profession because of problems faced in their teaching assignment (Boone & Boone, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Previous FACS retention studies have focused on veteran teachers and those no longer teaching, but little evidence exists about concerns of beginning FACS teachers that may result in leaving the classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe problems faced by beginning family and consumer sciences teachers in Illinois. An understanding of problems facing beginning FACS teachers is a critical first step for FACS professionals and school administrators seeking to improve the retention rates of novice FACS teachers and find solutions to the teacher shortage plaguing the FACS profession.

### **Teacher Attrition**

Teaching in career and technical education (CTE), of which FACS is a service area, is a rigorous yet frequently underrated challenge (Cushall, 2002). This is evidenced by the attrition rates of beginning teachers. Nearly 25% of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years and 50 – 60% of new teachers resign within the first five years (Lambert, 2006; Tamberg, 2007). Osgood (2001) referred to the induction phase as the most critical facet related to remaining or exiting the profession.

Teaching is one of the few professions in which beginning teachers have as much responsibility as their experienced colleagues (Tait, 2008). Huberman (1993) proposed that the first three years are a time of beginnings and teachers feeling their way as new professionals. However, beginning teachers are expected to perform at the level of veteran teachers. Novice teachers experience a reality shock when confronted with the demands of teaching, and as a result feel ineffective and overwhelmed (Bennett, Iverson, Rohs, Langone, & Edwards, 2002).

Croasmun, Hampton, and Herrmann (1999) cited one reason so many new teachers leave was that the [teaching] profession has been slow to develop a systematic way to induct beginners gradually into the complexities of a job that demands hundreds of management decisions every day. Research focused on the beginning teacher experience found copious evidence to show that the transition from educational student to a professional teacher is often a difficult and stressful experience and one that is frequently associated with an early exit from the profession (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Schonfeld, 2001).

Teacher attrition has been linked to a multitude of problems faced by beginning teachers in their teaching assignment (Boone & Boone, 2007). Veenman (1984) conducted a thorough examination of educational research and identified 91 studies that involved early career teacher concerns. Within these studies, the most frequently reported problems for beginning teachers were classroom management and discipline, motivating students, insufficient supplies, insufficient preparation time due to high teaching loads, and relationships with colleagues. Poor or lack of administrative support was identified as a key problem by many leaving the profession (Boone & Boone, 2007; Fox & Certo, 1999; Self, 2001). Other problems included: time management (Heath-Camp, Camp, Adams-Casmus, Talbert, & Barber, 1992; Steinke & Putnam, 2007); facilities and equipment (Boone & Boone, 2007; Heath-Camp et al., 1992; Stair, Warner, & Moore, 2010); working with special populations (Farrington, 1980; Zirkle & Winegardner, 2007); budgets and funding (Boone & Boone, 2007; Stair et al., 2010); salaries (Ingersoll, 2003; Self, 2001); and curriculum development (Myers, Dyer, & Washburn, 2005). While the problems identified are true for beginning teachers we are uncertain if they are true for beginning FACS teachers.

Particular to beginning FACS teachers, Nichols and Mundt (1996) found that classroom control and facility management (e.g., equipment and budget) were the most important competencies necessary for surviving the first years of teaching. Other problems concerning FACS teachers have been identified through previous satisfaction and retention studies (Bartley & Sneed, 2004; Mimbs, 2000; Tripp, 2006). Researchers found tasks associated with negative perceptions of the job among FACS teachers were (a) contemporary job-related responsibilities including standardized testing, meetings, and added paperwork; (b) negative image of FACS teachers/curriculum; (c) loss of program integrity; (d) student-characteristics including discipline and affiliation with special education programs; and (e) support from building and district-level administrators and personnel (e.g., teachers, guidance counselors) (Erwin, Moran, & McInnis, 1996; Fedje, 1999, Mimbs, 2002; 2000; Stout, Couch, & Fowler, 1998). The focus of these studies was on veteran teachers or those no longer teaching; whether beginning FACS teachers experience the same problems is not known.

Induction programs have been used as a strategy to support and mentor beginning teachers. While many induction issues for beginning teachers are similar across disciplines, it can be debated that there are unique elements associated with being a career and technical education (CTE) teacher (which FACS is a part of) that may require different mentoring strategies (Greimann, Torres, Burris, & Kitchel, 2007). In fact, research has been cited that often induction programs are not responsive to the unique needs of CTE teachers and provides even a more marginal focus for that of beginning FACS teachers (Croasum et al., 1999; Lynch, 1998; Huling-Austin, 1986).

### Theoretical Framework

Career satisfaction has been a determinant of a teacher's decision to remain or leave the profession (Lee, Clery, & Presley, 2001; Ubom & Joshua, 2004). Previous research indicated novice teachers expressed strong dissatisfaction as the primary reason they left their jobs due to problems within their teaching assignment (Voke, 2002). Self (2001) suggested that teachers resolve the question of whether to remain in education through "satisficing" rather than through optimizing. The level of satisfaction is the rationale basis for a teacher leaving as opposed to trying to improve the situation.

The theoretical framework that has guided research related to job satisfaction primarily focused on intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Mottaz & Potts, 1986). Garton and Robinson (2006) stated that the Motivation-Hygiene Theory centered on intrinsic and extrinsic factors could explain why teachers identify with certain employability skills needed and why they leave their positions.

Herzberg (1966) developed the Two-Factor Theory of Job Satisfaction also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. The central tenant of this theory was that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction were influenced by two substantially different sets of work-related factors termed *motivator* and *hygiene*. Motivators are intrinsic factors of work while hygiene (maintenance) factors refer to extrinsic factors. Table 1 illustrates some of the motivation (intrinsic) and hygiene (extrinsic) factors that were reported to influence job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among teachers.

Table 1  
*Motivation-Hygiene Theory: Examples of Influential Motivator and Hygiene Factors in Education*

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Motivation Factors	Hygiene Factors
achievement	job instability
advancement	negative supervision
characteristics	poor collegial relationships
growth	poor policies and/or procedures
recognition	inadequate compensation
responsibility	poor social status

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The Motivation-Hygiene theory operates on two mutually exclusive continuums. The job satisfaction continuum is impacted by motivator (intrinsic) factors and varies from a level of satisfaction to a level of no satisfaction. On the other hand, the job dissatisfaction continuum is impacted by hygiene (extrinsic) factors and operates from a level of dissatisfaction to a level of no dissatisfaction. Both the motivator and hygiene factors however may prove to facilitate negative experiences in the classroom.

As applied to this study, if beginning teachers encounter problems due to a lack of preparation and/or competency [in problem areas], they may be less likely to be engaged with their work environments, grow professionally, or continue their interest in their jobs (Myers et al., 2005). If so, as a result, it is more likely they will leave the teaching profession and seek alternative types of employment (Berns, 1990).

## **Methodology**

### **Purpose and Objective**

The purpose of this study was to describe problems faced by beginning FACS teachers in Illinois. The primary objective was to identify and categorize a list of problems encountered by FACS teachers during their first years in the education profession. The following research question provided direction for the study: what were the problems faced by beginning FACS teachers in Illinois?

### **Method and Procedures**

A qualitative research design was selected to examine the phenomenon in detail and allow the respondents to describe the situations in their own words (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2006). A questionnaire adapted from Boone and Boone (2007) was used for this study. The questionnaire consisted of one open-ended question that asked respondents to describe two problems they encountered as beginning teachers in family and consumer sciences. The questionnaire was placed online using [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com).

The population consisted of beginning FACS teachers employed in Illinois during the 2009-2010 school year. For the purpose of this study, beginning teachers were defined as teaching for four or fewer (based on the evaluation decision for tenure). The sampling frame was established using the state's secondary FACS teacher directory, and the entire population (N = 153) was studied.

In spring 2010, a cover letter that included the questionnaire link was emailed to every teacher in the accessible population. They were given one week to complete the questionnaire. Although the research design and data analysis were qualitative in nature, Dillman's (2007) method was used to increase the response rate. Following the one week deadline, two subsequent weekly emails were sent to remind respondents to participate in the research study. Ninety respondents (59%) completed the questionnaire.

Data analysis was divided into three stages (Avry et al., 2006). In stage one the principal investigator transcribed the data into a database. In stage two the responses were reviewed, response categories were established, and the responses were placed in the categories by the principal investigator. The principal investigator having taught FACS education for 14 years had firsthand knowledge of the problems faced in the state by beginning teachers. The questionnaire, coding rubric, and final results of the coding were presented to FACS education professional colleagues to review to establish credibility of interpretation and to ensure conformability. Following the group discussion, data were recoded to establish the reliability and validity of the process. In stage three, the data were summarized and interpreted.

## **Findings**

The responses to the open-ended question on problems encountered as a beginning FACS were analyzed and four themes emerged. The four themes were (a) student management, (b)

facility management, (c) instruction management, and (d) external relations. Each theme contained individual subthemes.

The first theme was student management. Within this theme, there were two subthemes (a) discipline/classroom management and (b) student motivation. Discipline/classroom management was the predominant problem described by beginning FACS teachers in the study. Examples of the responses included “how to handle behavioral problems on the spot,” “classroom control,” “students would test their limits making classroom management a constant struggle,” “no follow through from administration when sent a student to office for discipline sanctions,” and “students swearing, blatantly not following directions, talking back, and sleeping in class.”

The second subtheme within the student management theme was student motivation. Responses included “students don’t seem to want to learn,” “many work late or are taking substances or medication that makes them sleepy or irritable in class,” “how do you motivate uninspired students?,” “getting students to participate in class discussions,” and “student apathy.”

The second theme was facility management and included two subthemes (a) facilities and (b) equipment and budgeting and funding. Responses in the facilities and equipment subtheme included “I am teaching Foods without stoves, ovens, or even sinks for everyone,” “not enough equipment (sewing machines) and other supplies to go around,” “broken equipment but expected to have labs,” “out-of-date equipment,” “traveling from classroom to classroom to teach,” and “having to teach labs in a regular classroom.”

Budgeting and funding was the other subtheme in the facility management theme. Problem statements included “trying to maintain a quality culinary program with budget cuts,” “how to extend the budget to allow more learning experiences,” “how to develop a budget- I work by trial and error and hope to have enough money left by the end of the year,” “last in the school to have materials replaced,” and “no monies allotted for professional development.”

The third theme was instruction management. Subthemes within this theme included (a) curriculum (content, lesson planning, teaching strategies), (b) multiple class preparations, (c) time management, and (d) lab management. Responses in the curriculum subtheme included “coming up with new and interesting teaching strategies while making it fun,” “how to curriculum map,” “being able/expected to teach in all areas of FACS but not having prior content knowledge/experience,” “only taking one foods course in college and having to teach an entire course,” “no curriculum to follow,” and “seeking activities that promote interdisciplinary learning.”

Multiple class preparations was a subtheme within instruction management. Respondent statements included “feeling like a jack of all trades, master of none because I had so many different courses to teach, so I feel overwhelmed with my teaching load,” “planning for seven different preps,” and “juggling six preps, feel overscheduled.”

Time management was another subtheme within the instruction management theme. Problem statements included “not enough time in the day to teach and do the ‘business’ side of this job,” “balance of extracurricular responsibilities with teaching responsibilities,” “not prepared to ‘punt’ if the lesson plan took less time than I anticipated,” and “too much to do and not enough time.”

The subtheme lab management was classified within the instruction management theme. Examples of the responses included “finding a good method for setting up labs, lab rules, assign lab groups, etc.,” “sharing labs with other Foods teachers and not having the same expectations

for cleanliness,” “getting labs done within 42 minute periods,” and “grocery shopping for labs on own time.”

The fourth theme was external relations. Within this theme there were two subthemes (a) image and (b) administrative support. The most common respondent statement for the image subtheme was “our classes are ‘dumping grounds’ for students that have nowhere else to go.” Other problem statements concerning the image included “the administration wanted me to do a cooking show for the faculty,” “lack of respect among academic teachers,” “coach wanted me to round up the new basketball uniforms and wash them,” and “FACS is not taken seriously or valued by colleagues because courses are electives.”

The other subtheme within external relations theme was administrative support. The most common problem statement in this subtheme was “lack of administrative support.” Other statements included “the administration did not value my program,” “lack of communication,” and “favoritism with other disciplines.”

### **Discussion and Implications**

The purpose of this study was to describe problems faced by beginning family and consumer sciences teachers (FACS) in Illinois. Qualitative results revealed four themes: student management, facility management, instruction management, and external relations. The themes contained individual subthemes. The problems described have been reported in previous studies as problems among teachers.

Within the student management theme, discipline and classroom management was the prevailing problem described by beginning FACS teachers. This finding is consistent with findings by a number of researchers including Boone and Boone, 2007; Ingersoll (2003); Mimbs (2000); Myers et al., (2005); Nichols & Mundt (1996); Self (2001); Stair et al., (2010); and Veenan (1984). As a continuous problem, it seems discipline and classroom management is not being adequately addressed within teacher preparation programs. It may be beneficial for these programs to require a course dedicated to classroom management or induction programs to provide continuous professional development on the topic. Without classroom control, instructional time is narrowed to deal with inappropriate student behavior. Wong and Wong (2009) suggested that classroom management is one of the three characteristics associated with being an effective teacher.

Respondents described facility management, which included facilities and equipment and budget and funding as a problem area. Similar results were found by Boone and Boone (2007); Heath-Camp et al., (1992); and Stair et al., (2010). Given the economic times, most schools are either being frugal or eliminating line items from the budget. Facilities and equipment cannot be improved without money in the budget so FACS teachers need to find alternative ways to teach their classes or seek external sources of money, such as grants, fundraisers, or community outreach/donations.

The theme of instruction management was a problem area described by respondents. Specifically, lab management was a problem expressed by beginning FACS teachers. This supports findings of Nichols and Mundt (1996) who reported lab organization as the second most rated competency needed among beginning FACS teachers. Although FACS has varied lab experiences (e.g., pre-k and textile), respondents indicated problems predominantly with the operation of managing a foods lab, ranging from how to group students to when to grocery shop. For beginning teachers struggling with lab management, it would be valuable to seek guidance from a FACS teacher who has had experience with foods labs. Additionally, this problem should

be communicated to the administration and a request made for an aide during labs to help monitor labs and shop. It would be beneficial for teacher education programs to dedicate course time to adequately address lab management, especially food labs.

The other subthemes within the instruction management theme included time management, multiple class preparations, and curriculum. Each of these problems has been identified in the previous studies as problems teachers encounter (Boone & Boone, 2007; Fox & Certo, 1999; Heath-Camp et al., 1992; Self, 2001; Steinke & Putnam, 2007; Veenman, 1984). Teacher education programs should consider extending the length of student teaching and have student teachers assume the full teaching load for a longer period to be prepared for the instructional responsibilities associated with teaching.

The image of FACS was a subtheme of external relations. Consistent with findings from Fedje (1999) and Mimbs (2000) image has been a persistent problem among teachers within the FACS profession. It is the responsibility of every FACS teacher to be proactive to educate and advocate for the profession. One way to be proactive is to be visible within the school and community through Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) sponsored events such as participating in Crop Walk (awareness campaign to fight against hunger) or engage in service learning projects. For example, start a school garden and provide the grown produce to the school cafeteria or donate to the local food pantry or senior care facility. This visibility can be utilized as a public relations campaign to educate people about family and consumer sciences thus updating people's perception of FACS.

Applying the results to this study's theoretical framework, the problems (themes and subthemes) can be classified in both the motivator and hygiene factors categories. According to Herzberg's theory, the problems identified can be located on the negative end of the two factors' respective continuum – no satisfaction (motivator's continuum) and dissatisfaction (hygiene's continuum). That means both factor sets can contribute to poor experiences for a teacher thus decreasing their satisfaction level. A joint effort should be attempted to integrate solutions to teacher problems to shift the levels of satisfaction towards the positive ends of each factor's continuums. However, if the identified problems are not resolved, it could potentially impact teachers by withdrawing or exiting the education profession.

### **Recommendations**

Many teachers leave the profession because of problems they face in their teaching assignments. Those responsible for the preparation and retention of FACS teachers must then recognize problems faced by beginning FACS teacher and gain a better understanding of how to best address these problems.

The following are recommendations made based on the outcomes of this study.

1. Teacher education programs need to ensure the problems identified (e.g., classroom management) in this study are adequately being addressed within their program of study.
2. Stakeholders, including FACS university teacher education faculty, state FACS staff, FACS professional organization leaders, and veterans and novice FACS teachers could jointly develop and coordinate in-service workshops and opportunities for professional development with topics based on the problems identified from this study. Examples of topics include classroom management, lab budgeting, and professionalism. These could be delivered synchronously locally and regionally as well as delivered asynchronously through online modules or webinars.

3. Administrators need to be informed of the problems identified in this study faced by beginning FACS teachers and strategize a plan of action to resolve or curtail the identified problems. For example, the use of mentoring, one-on-one ‘wellness’ checks, or provision CTE area programming. Additionally, administrators need to be proactive in helping beginning teachers during their induction period.
4. Teacher educators and induction coordinators could use the problems described in this study as a foundation for case studies. These authentic case studies could be used as instructional tool in an effort to expose pre-service and beginning teachers to potential problems they will likely encounter. Conversations about dilemmas prior to their occurrence can help novice teachers identify multiple solutions or consequences in handling problems, sharpen their decision making skills, and improve their confidence.
5. Teachers beginning their careers could benefit from a mentor. To be most effective, however, the mentor would need to be a FACS teacher or if there is not a FACS teacher in proximity, a senior CTE faculty member could suffice. Giving beginning teachers an outlet to safely express concerns or seek advice could dictate the novice teacher’s success or failure in the classroom.
6. Pre-service or beginning teachers [who migrate] need to ask during their interview to what extent is induction programming offered to beginning teachers, specifically in the area of FACS.
7. Pre-service teachers and beginning teachers need to be informed of the importance of professional organizations and the benefits associated with being a member. The major benefit is networking. Teachers can ‘bounce’ ideas of each other, share lessons or projects, and seek or give advice.

By adequately preparing FACS teachers at the pre-service and entry levels to handle potential problems, the profession can increase job satisfaction and reduce teacher attrition. Further research should include (a) a follow-up study to determine improvement of problems described by beginning FACS teachers over time; (b) survey and conduct interviews with school administrators to find if they view the described problems in this study as relevant; (c) survey and/or conduct focus groups with FACS teachers and administrators to seek resolutions to the identified problems; (d) observe and interview effective teachers on how they manage their classroom; and (e) expand the scope of the study to a regional population.

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#### **About the Author**

Sally E. Arnett, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in Family, Consumer and Nutrition Sciences at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

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