AGED 220 Youth Conferences Course Workbook

A Senior Project
Presented to the Faculty of the
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Bachelor of Science

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Abstract

A sea of blue and gold covers the streets of downtown Fresno every April for the annual California FFA State Conference. The days are packed with recognition, motivational speakers, workshops, and experiences that will last a lifetime. FFA members attending have the privilege of participating in workshops presented by college students including Fresno State, Chico State, UC Davis, and Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. These workshops are dedicated to helping develop premier leadership, personal growth, and career success. At Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, a class is offered every winter, specifically designed to help students create a workshop for the California FFA State Conference. This class is known as AGED 220 Agricultural Youth Conferences. AGED 220 does not have an all-in-one handbook to help guide students while they design a workshop for the California FFA State Convention. Students who took AGED 220 in the past entered the class with overwhelming thoughts and a lack of preparation. Students need to be confident and understand the intentions of the workshops. With the help of this project’s handbook full of ideas and tips, students will be better prepared to present and deliver quality content. This handbook provides all the information students need to design and implement a workshop successfully.

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to create a course workbook for AGED 220 Youth Agricultural Conferences that will serve as a resource for students planning a workshop for the California FFA State Convention. This project will benefit students enrolled in this class as it is a complete guide to creating a workshop from the ground up. Students will have a resource providing all essential materials and guidance for implementing a flourishing workshop. Designing a workshop requires a considerable amount of time and commitment, but with this handbook, the class will be easier for students to navigate.

The objectives to accomplish the purpose of this project are:

- To discuss designing a workshop with faculty who have taught AGED 220 and students who have taken the class and presented a workshop at the California FFA State Conference.
- To provide an all-in-one resource for planning a workshop.
- To list numerous workshop themes.
- To provide previous workshop ideas.
- To eliminate confusion amongst students designing a workshop.
- To use resources Cal Poly has provided to create a successful handbook for AGED 220.
Research

Workshops have been implemented to give people the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills they can apply to their everyday life, workplace, or academic careers. Workshops are meant to be entertaining and educational for both the facilitator and participants. Starting with an icebreaker that gets everyone motivated, then moving into the topic, and closing with a review game, what could go wrong? This portion will explore workshop methods, beneficial teaching techniques and what constitutes a quality, useful manual.

During the California State FFA Conference, FFA members are given the opportunity to participate in workshops. These are short, 50 minute workshops that help promote premier leadership, personal growth, and career success (CalAgEd, 2017). Workshops are a “mode of teaching practical skills and problem solving or raising awareness by drawing on experimental learning principles” (Horsfall and Cleary, 2008). Workshops are led by a facilitator or co-facilitators whose responsibilities are to move things forward and guide participants to apply the knowledge and skills they learned during the workshop. The key to good facilitation is the leaders and participants are equals. In applying this principle, facilitators and partakers share in the discussion equally, creating a good learning experience (Seeds for Change, 2017).

Workshops must be carefully designed. Preparing a workshop plan, such as an agenda or lesson plan, can guarantee a considerable amount of material can be covered in the time available. Workshops have a beginning, middle, and end. As noted by Horsfall and Cleary, the beginning of the workshop is usually for participants to introduce themselves to one another through an icebreaker or name game. This allows the students to relax enough to be ready to learn. The middle is the main section of the workshop where much of the learning takes place. Finally, the end allows for time to review what was discussed in the workshop, tie up loose ends, and acknowledge any questions participants may have. It is important to allocate adequate time to each of these sections of the workshop. Build some flexibility into the plan in case an exercise takes longer than expected (Horsfall and Cleary, 2008).

Preparing the workshop well in advance can help calm presentation nerves and increase the level of confidence amongst the coordinators. Another way is to practice the content a few times by gathering a group of individuals together and facilitating the workshop. This will allow the presenters to work through a few kinks and strengthen the clinic. Mistakes can be learned from and improved upon, being confident does not mean the same as being perfect (Seeds for Change, 2017).

When presenting a workshop, organizers may encounter a few problems. Addressing issues such as over-participation or under-participation can be easily managed by giving participants an equal opportunity to speak during discussions. To ensure everyone has an opportunity, creating a system for selecting people to speak is effective. It is not uncommon for workshops to have more or less people than expected. As
coordinators, it is imperative to plan in advanced for these possibilities. Practicing the workshops beforehand with different numbers of participants can help solve this issue. Late arrivals that disrupt the seminar are always a possibility. If students arrive late, facilitators need to find a balance between welcoming them and disrupting the workshop for everybody else. There are a few options for those who arrive late; leaders can either quickly summarize what has already been discussed, have another participant review the material, or acknowledge them and when time allows, go over what they missed. The problem presenters worry about most is time. Working out how long activities are going to take is always a guessing game. During the clinic, continue to check the time, making sure the workshop is not moving too quickly or too slowly. When preparing for the seminar, it is essential to consider each of these to have a successful workshop (Seeds For Change, 2017).

Methodology
Creating a handbook for the AGED 220 Youth Conferences class required proper planning and adequate resources. At the beginning of the planning process, Cal Poly faculty were contacted through individual messages to assist in the assembly of the workbook. Dr. Ann De Lay, who has taught the class in previous years, Ms. Sherri Freeman, who was currently the instructor of the course during Winter 2017, and Alex Zappulla, the Agricultural Education and Communication Department graduate student who was assisting Ms. Freeman with the instruction of AGED 200. The faculty provided helpful resources which included handouts, websites, and other additional information that was of use when building the workbook.

There were computer files, hard copy materials, and online resources used when creating the handbook. The computer files Ms. Freeman shared on a flash drive that included class information, schedule and structure of the class set-up, and previous workshops that had been presented at State FFA Conference. The printed resources used as a reference were handouts, worksheets, and workshop tips from previous classes. Dr. De Lay provided her AGED 220 binder that contained numerous handouts, class information, and workshop examples along with an FFA workbook that served as a reference in creating the AGED 220 handbook. Alex Zappulla provided useful information in regards to being a first-time teacher of AGED 220 and what he would like to see in a manual for the students to use as the class progresses. The online resources used were to assist in definitions, workshop examples, worksheets, and ice breaker ideas. Each resource used provided valuable support in creating the manual.

After reviewing each resource and selecting the ones that would most benefit students enrolled in AGED 220, the handbook began to develop. In laying the handbook out, the goal was to have it flow from week to week for the students to use as the class progresses. In the beginning, there are several workshop ideas and a list of ice breakers. As the workbook continues, there was spaces and worksheets created for students to use as they discuss those specified topics in class. Online resources were modified to accommodate the AGED 220 coursework and provide students with adequate information.
Meetings were scheduled regularly with Dr. De Lay and Ms. Freeman to ensure the handbook was following the class direction and that all useful information was being included. These meetings were scheduled towards the completion of the workbook and would last 20 to 40 minutes. Corrections were made and the handbook was reviewed until everyone assisting was satisfied with the content flow and format.

**Conclusion**

A class handbook was created for students enrolled in AGED 220 at Cal Poly to provide an all-in-one source of information booklet. The information selected for the course workbook was chosen specific to students enrolled in the AGED 220 course who have not yet developed a workshop before. This handbook provides all the essential resources needed to create a workshop for the California FFA State Conference that occurs annually.

Throughout the process of designing the course workbook, it was helpful to have faculty to assist in worksheets and other necessary materials that would best fit the classwork and be useful to students creating a workshop. For those looking to create or reconstruct a course handbook, look to others who have taught the material in the past and gather as much information as possible. There is never too much information to have when researching and designing a workbook.

The final draft of the handbook was reviewed for copyright errors and made available to faculty in the Agricultural Communication and Education Department. The future professors of AGED 220 will always have access to the course workbook as it is a valuable resource to provide to students enrolled in the class. This workbook will be available to students via hardcopy as well as online if the professor chooses to do so. In the future, the course workbook will be edited and continued to be added to, thus making it purchasable in the Cal Poly Bookstore for a reasonable price.
Resources

CalAgEd. Retrieved from https://www.calaged.org


