

Using Monopoly™ to Teach SAE Record-keeping Skills in a School-based Agricultural Education Program

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Introduction

School-based agricultural education (SBAE) has traditionally been framed within a three-circle model composed of classroom/laboratory instruction, student leadership education via the National FFA Organization, and Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs (National FFA Organization, 2015a; Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008). Each portion of this model is designed to provide students with diverse opportunities for growth and personal achievement through comprehensive educational strategies, allowing for immersion in diverse areas of the agricultural industry (Phipps et al., 2008). A particular portion of this model, SAE programming, is designed to provide experiential, work-based learning opportunities for students enrolled in SBAE programs (National FFA Organization, 2015b). Currently, SAE types include Ownership/Entrepreneurship, Placement/Internship, Research, Exploratory, School-based Enterprise, and Service-learning (National FFA Organization, 2015b). Though different in size, scope, and operational style, each SAE type is characterized by the common trait of student-led record-keeping (Phipps et al., 2008).

A vital portion of a high-quality SAE program, a practical record-keeping system is typically used to keep track of student earnings, hours worked, investments, expenses, etc. Complete and accurate records are mandatory for many awards within the SBAE and FFA structures, such as Proficiency Awards, the American FFA Degree, the Star Farmer Award, and more (Phipps et al., 2008). Further, these records can be required by many agricultural education teachers as part of participation in SBAE curricula. Interestingly, improving the teaching of record-keeping skills to students has been cited as a professional development need by teachers (Layfield & Dobbins, 2002). Perhaps this need has been historically-rooted, as Foster (1986) suggested that several factors, including teachers' lack of familiarity with several aspects related to SAE programming, may hinder the teaching of record-keeping skills.

There exist a variety of generic practice problems available for student use when learning how to use the SBAE program's SAE record-keeping system. Some of these resources are available for free, such as those on the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) Communities of Practice website, while others are available to purchase from various instructional materials vendors. An issue with many of these resources is that the concepts and methods being utilized are often abstract in nature, sometimes confusing students. We found that many students were already familiar with the board game Monopoly™; perhaps a Monopoly™-based SAE Practice Problem could work well to fill the record-keeping knowledge gap.

How it Works

The SBAE program in the present abstract currently utilizes the Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET) as its record-keeping platform. Thus, the Monopoly™-based SAE Practice Problem was developed with the AET software in mind. We developed this particular practice problem for students to develop familiarity with the AET system. We found that for the activity

to be beneficial, a minimum of four consecutive 50 minute class periods should be used to complete it. The first day was used to review the Monopoly™ based SAE Practice Problem lab packet, set up student AET practice accounts, and learning to navigate the AET program. We also conducted a brief review of Monopoly™ board games rules to help ensure clarity about the activity portion.

Over the following three days, students played Monopoly™ while recording all information regarding their progress on the practice AET account. We had three to four pairs of students playing on each game board. One student played Monopoly™ while the others recorded information on AET. Halfway through the period, students switched positions. This design allowed students to build upon various record-keeping concepts as they advanced during the game. Students started by completing journal entries about their progress, followed by learning how to record income and expenses. The next step involved learning about how to buy and sell non-current items and record inventory. To complete the project on the final day, each pair of students took turns working toward the summative assignment, a Complete Record Book Report.

Results to Date & Implications

We noted that students often appear to more firmly grasp the record-keeping concepts of AET through this approach versus our prior way of teaching record-keeping skills. We believe that the simplicity of the Monopoly™ board game combined with the AET program results in improved familiarity with the concepts related to effective record-keeping. One of our co-authors indicated that her students seem more excited to enter records on AET due to increased familiarity with the system's use. As a result, she also feels more comfortable and competent teaching about record-keeping and the AET system.

Future Plans & Advice to Others

Our primary concern with this approach was any possible AET page and web link changes that may occur. Thus, we suggest that teachers regularly check these items and make necessary adjustments to the Monopoly™ SAE Practice Problem packet prior to using the practice problem with an additional set of students. We also recommend that students record their log-in credentials for their practice AET accounts to provide more efficient access to the practice accounts each day. Otherwise, all of their information previously entered may be lost. We noted that it may be easier and more beneficial to students to perform this activity individually. We do wish to recognize that this type of activity may be used to emphasize record-keeping skills in areas of SBAE besides SAE, such as animal science, etc., and plans for expansion into these arenas are forthcoming.

Costs & Resources Needed

The only resources needed to implement this idea were the Monopoly™ games, the Monopoly™-based SAE Practice Problem packet, and access to AET. Due to the need for an AET subscription for each student, this particular cost can vary based on the size and enrollment of the SBAE program. In addition, the approximate cost of each Monopoly™ board game set was \$25.00.

References

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