

The Integration of SAE for All Philosophy Throughout the Preservice Agricultural Education Experience

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Introduction and Need for Innovation

As professional development occurs across the country to assist teachers in understanding SAE for All, we must ask how will future teachers build the same understanding? While pre-service teachers will eventually graduate from programs that include SAE for All, in the interim, focus must be placed on preservice programs. Rubenstein et al. (2014) stress, “In order to increase teacher utilization of SAE programs, preservice teachers must feel adequate in their ability to utilize SAE programs and feel confident in their ability to assist students in the development, implementation, and sustainment of SAE programs” (p. 74). Students entering undergraduate agricultural education programs have a varying range of experience with SAEs prior to arriving to the University. In order for all of our future teachers to know the value and importance of SAE and to feel adequate and confident with SAE implementation, preservice teaching programs must “instruct students in the why, what, and how” of SAE programs (Rubenstein & Thoron, 2015, p. 84).

At Kansas State University, we believe this preservice teacher confidence in SAE implementation cannot be developed with just one inservice on the SAE for All model. For the “authentic, relevant instruction to preservice teachers on developing, implementing, maintaining, sustaining, evaluating, and supervising an SAE program” (Rubenstein et al., 2014, p. 72) to actually occur, teacher educators must engage preservice teachers with an integrated and systematic approach to SAE. Therefore, the Agricultural Education faculty built a program that strengthens and sustains preservice SAE knowledge, ability, and confidence for a new generation of teachers by integrating SAE instruction and experiences throughout the four-year undergraduate experience.

Methodology

All first semester students in Agricultural Education took AGED 300 Introduction to Agricultural Education, including incoming freshmen, transfer students, and students who had changed their major to Agricultural Education. In this course, students were exposed to the foundation of the SAE philosophy and taken on a tour of agricultural education programs in the state. The tour included three programs and each of the teachers highlighted their integration of SAE into their program. In addition, students were provided an AET account, some time to explore the system, and were expected to document their professional hours throughout their time in the program to get practical use of the program.

As a sophomore or junior, students took AGED 505 Early Field Experience in Agricultural Education. The students were assigned to visit two programs for three full day visits. During their visits, 20% of the assignments were based on learning about the SAE integration and philosophy of the programs. Students were asked to select from a list of experiences such as going on an SAE visit, interviewing a student about their SAE, reviewing records, and learning how the teacher tracks SAE visits.

As seniors, students took Agricultural Education block classes the fall semester before student teaching in the spring. During the Block II experience, professional development Fridays were established. The September 2019 Professional Development Friday was focused on the SAE for All Integration training. The training was delivered by two SAE for All national trainers who also served on the development committee of the SAE for All materials and conducted integration trainings across the country. The training was held from 8 am to 4 pm and included 23 of the 27 student teachers and 9 cooperating teachers. Pre and Post-test data was collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. Thirteen questions related to self-perceived knowledge and ability were posed to the participants. To further reinforce the SAE for All philosophy, students explored how to apply the concepts to their future classroom in the AGED 621 Program Planning Class. The SAE for All philosophy was applied in the “SAE for All” Integration plan assignment. In the SAE unit, students were further exposed to the AET Record Keeping System from the agriculture teacher and FFA Advisor’s standpoint.

During the **Student Teaching Internship** there were multiple expectations on the “Professional Development Log” students were to accomplish during their semester that focus on SAEs. Students were asked to “Teach, supervise, and analyze record books of three students assigned by cooperating teacher.” In addition, they were asked to visit these student's SAE's and reflect on what they learned. Other options in the SAE category included determining grades for SAEs, conducting 10 SAE visits, and establishing an agreement between the student, school and/or employer.

Results

Every question had a statistically significant increase from before to after. The question with the highest mean (1 = yes, 2 = maybe, 3=no) before ($M=1.22$) and after ($M=1.22$) was *I understand the need to adopt the SAE for All model in Agricultural Education programs*. The two questions that had the largest change from before to after were *I feel proficient in my ability to create an Integrated Plan for Immersion SAEs* ($\Delta = 1.13$) and *I feel proficient in my ability to teach others to create an Integrated Plan for Immersion SAEs* ($\Delta = 1.01$). With a significant increase in each item it can be concluded that the training had a positive impact on the students perceived knowledge and ability. Trenton Smedley, a current Kansas State University student intern, reflected on his experience with the integrated approach to SAE, “through the coursework and professional development experience, I have gained useful knowledge and am prepared to implement the SAE for All framework during my teaching internship and in my future agricultural education program.”

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Integrating a SAE or All philosophy throughout the undergraduate program takes a high level of commitment from the agricultural education faculty. This philosophy only works when the program has a clear goal for SAE integration over multiple courses and experiences. The faculty must have the support of current teachers and from the agricultural education team across the state to make SAE for All integration a success.

Costs

The Kansas FFA Foundation sponsored lunch at a cost of \$500.00. For the actual cost of a SAE for All trainer, contact the National Council for Agricultural Education.

References

Rubenstein, E. D., & Thoron, A. C. (2015). Supervised agricultural experience programs: An examination of committed teachers and student-centered programs. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 56(4), 75–89. doi:10.5032/jae.2015.04075

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