

AET Mini Assignments

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Introduction

Current coursework in agricultural education preparation programs focuses on a total agriculture program which includes classroom instruction, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs, and FFA (Rank & Retallick, 2017). The National Council recognizes SAEs as an “essential component of students learning and should be used with every student in school-based agricultural education” (The National Council, n.d.). Record keeping is an important skill agriculture students use when documenting their Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE). Research has found pre-service teachers have a high need in relation to teaching record keeping for student SAE projects (Price et al., 2023; Rank & Retallick, 2017). The most popular program used for data management is theAET (Price et al., 2023) TheAET data management system was released in 2007 to assist agriculture educators in teaching record keeping and SAE management (The Agricultural Experience Tracker, 2023). TheAET also aligns with the FFA awards and allows states to customize their awards to submit at the national and state level (TheAET, n.d.). Recent agriculture education preparation studies have found pre-service teachers have low self-efficacy when using theAET (Price et al., 2023). Teacher preparation programs should focus on integrating the tool into their courses.

How it Works

In response to this need, Washington State University (WSU) created and implemented a series of theAET mini assignments to utilize in an agricultural education teacher preparation course, beginning the fall of 2022. TheAET mini assignments were created to help establish a foundation of the tool for pre-service teachers to utilize in managing their future agricultural programs. These assignments are unique for pre-service agriculture education teachers because they were able to view and practice using theAET in student and teacher mode. The assignments aligned to topics discussed throughout the course, including managing student leaders, SAEs, and applying for student awards. In an earlier preparation course, student accounts were added to the university AET account and practiced record keeping from a student perspective. For this course student accounts were granted teacher access. The assignments listed below describe the components created to develop skills required to use the different tools and activities for pre-service teachers to utilize in their programs.

AET Assignment #1: Setting up Your Profile & Activating/Deactivating Students

- Student mode: set up profile to 100% completion.
- Teacher mode: activated and deactivated assigned students.

AET Assignment #2: SAE Explorer

- Student mode: completed SAE explorer quiz.
- Teacher mode: developed 50-minute lesson for 8th grades to introduce SAE projects.

AET Assignment #3: Managing Student Leaders

- Teacher mode: added themselves as student leaders to access meeting manager, chapter website, and Program of Activities (POA).
- Student mode: created a meeting invite and planned events in the POA manager with a group of four students.

AET Assignment #4: SAE Practice

- Student mode: used scenarios provided by the AET website to enter SAE project data.
- Teacher mode: reviewed SAE projects by summarizing a peer's SAE entry through the teacher tracker.

AET Assignment #5: Awards

- Teacher mode: reviewed video on viewing and submitting student applications on the AET website and used the Washington State FFA Degree Checklist to evaluate a sample State Degree application.

Costs and Resources Needed

The AET provides free chapter accounts to pre-service preparation programs, so there were no direct costs associated with creating and utilizing the AET mini assignments. Resources utilized in these AET mini assignments were collected from the teacher resources tab on the AET website and from previous agriculture high school students' work as examples for the students to evaluate the methods used in a high school classroom.

Results to Date

The AET mini assignments were introduced and completed by 16 pre-service students at Washington State University over two years. Student engagement was high during each of the assignments due to their previous knowledge of the AET and their experiences with record keeping in their high school agriculture programs. Their engagement was demonstrated by their participation on the assignments and later feedback provided at the end of the semester. The pre-service students suggested more hands-on experience with the financial aspect of the AET including record keeping as well as applying for awards. To expand on the assignments and create a greater impact on pre-service teachers, the AET assignments were adjusted to address the needs of previous pre-service students.

Future Plans and Advice

In the future, this series of assignments should be repeated in agriculture education teacher preparation courses. A new AET mini assignment will be created around financial management through AET focusing on SAE financial records for student mode and chapter financial budgets from the teacher mode. Literature suggests pre-service teachers and alternative certification teachers need additional training on financial literacy teaching methods and utilization of data management platforms such as the AET (Price et al., 2023). Increasing exposure of the data management platform could increase self-efficacy of managing an agricultural student's SAE project. In the future, instructors should collect pre-service students' knowledge about the data management platform and follow up data to assess the knowledge and skills gained through the assignments. Professional development for the AET should also be implemented by state and national organizations to assist in the lack of knowledge of utilizing the technology by agriculture teachers certified through a teacher preparation or alternative program.

References

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