

**Are Foundational SAEs Catching On?**

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## Introduction/Need for Research

The three-component model of agricultural education consists of FFA, SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience), and classroom instruction (National FFA Organization, 2017). In 2015, the National FFA Organization partnered with the National Council for Agricultural Education to create a uniform SAE model to engage all school-based agricultural education (SBAE) students called SAE for All (Boehm, 2019). One new component introduced in SAE for All is the Foundational SAE (NCAE, 2015). While SAE has supported career preparation since its inception by Rufus Stimson (Moore, 1988), the Foundational SAE crystalized these career preparation areas into five basic components including workplace safety, financial literacy, college and career readiness, career exploration, and agricultural literacy (Kreifels, 2021). Students should maintain continuous participation in a Foundational SAE throughout their time in SBAE to prepare for their lives after high school. Skills developed through Foundational SAEs will build upon each other and can be started at any level (Kreifels, 2021; NCAE, 2015). Rollout of the SAE for All model was halted in some states with the COVID-19 pandemic, so a re-launch was initiated in 2023 to increase engagement across the country (B. Pastir, personal communication, September 2023).

## Theoretical Framework

Rogers (2003) diffusion of innovations theory framed the study. With new innovations, members of a social system evaluate the innovation and choose to adopt or not based on multiple characteristics (Rogers, 2003). With SAE for All having been introduced to SBAE teachers as early as 2015 and now reintroduced following the COVID-19 pandemic, we sought to examine whether adoption and implementation of Foundational SAEs was taking place.

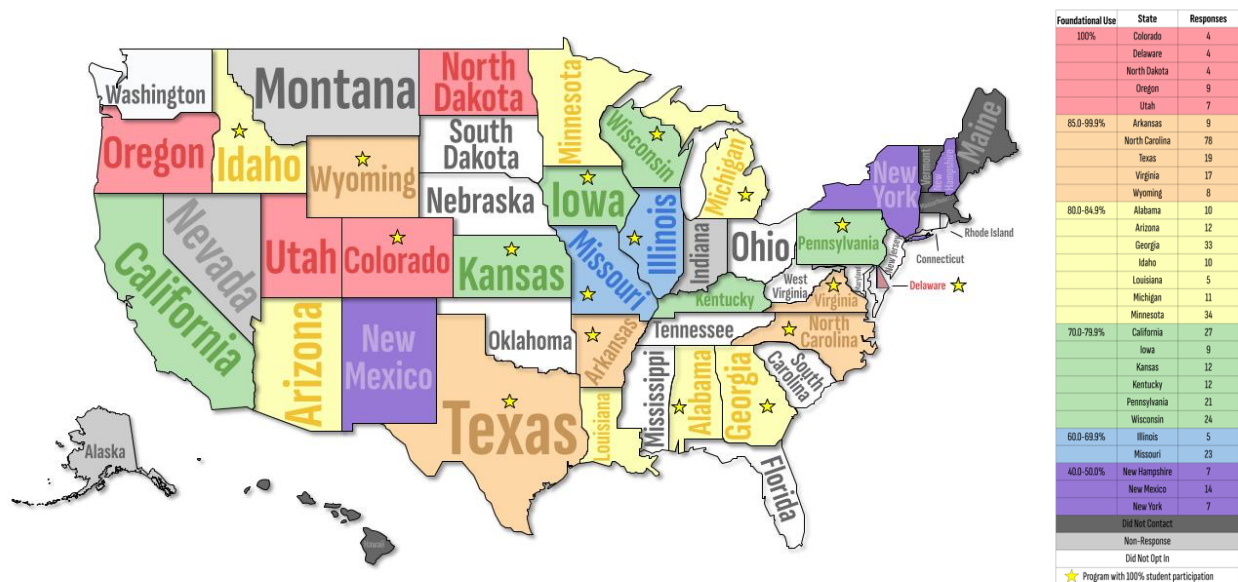
## Methodology

A Qualtrics survey was sent to all SBAE teachers in 32 states through their respective SBAE state leaders in December 2023-January 2024. We received 505 usable responses from teachers in 28 states. We used SBAE teacher responses to their state location and to a question about student participation in Foundational SAEs to assemble a heat map of Foundational SAE implementation in the United States. Data was calculated based on whether teachers indicated students were engaging in Foundational SAEs or not. The percentage of yes/no was plotted on the state map. Additionally, we identified in the data the states where teachers indicated 100% of their students had a Foundational SAE. In this study, the average participant was female (61.6%,  $f=311$ ), under the age of 40 (67.7%,  $f=291$ ), with ten or less years teaching agriculture (56.8%,  $f=282$ ), teaching in a rural community (67.1%,  $f=339$ ), who came through a traditional agricultural education college preparation program (72.5%,  $f=366$ ), and considers themselves the leader of SAE in their program (87.9%,  $f=444$ ) (Ford, 2024). We recognize there are limitations to this study. We attempted a national study but did not achieve participation from every state. There is no national SBAE teacher frame, so we utilized gatekeepers for access to our population of interest. Sample size is also limited in some states. We also recognize that in the request for participation email, we identified this as a study about SAE, so those who were not engaging in SAE may have opted out. Data presented in this study may represent early adopters of SAE for All and should not be generalized beyond the participants.

## Results/Findings

While page limitations do not allow for all the data and data visualization we would include on a poster, we are offering a heat map of Foundational SAE implementation among respondents (see Figure 1). We have additional data for this map including the number of respondents per state. Since the ideal implementation of Foundational SAE would be that every student in every program had a Foundational SAE, we also mapped data for states where 100% implementation was occurring and reported by at least one program in the state. This is indicated on the map with stars.

**Figure 1**  
*Implementation of Foundational SAE*



## Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations, Impact

Foundational SAE is being reported as happening across the United States and it appears that having 100% participation in a Foundational SAE is possible. States, where every program had some Foundational SAEs going on, were not necessarily the same as the states with programs in which every student is doing it. It appears these programs are implementing Foundational SAEs but are not fully aligned with SAE for All. If Foundational SAEs continue to be adopted it will enhance a student's potential for career connections, and skill development. For the program, this will increase access to the benefits of SAE by all students and create more time for teachers. If Foundational SAEs continue to be adopted, SAE for All holds the potential to increase agricultural career connections and skill development for students. Foundational SAEs also hold the power to allow every student in an SBAE program to access the benefits of SAE and help teachers balance their time by incorporating more components of SAE implementation and supervision into their contract time. Due to the limitations of the study, we recognize that the heat map does not fully describe what Foundational SAE looks like. It is worth investigating whether students are completing Foundational SAEs once or if it is iterative, following students through their time in SBAE as intended.

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