

The Use of Show Smart Curriculum in Agricultural Education Courses

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Introduction

Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs) are an integral component of secondary agricultural education courses (Rubenstein, 2015; Talbert et al., 2022). However, a common theme among early career or pre-service agricultural education teachers is low self-efficacy in supervised agricultural experience projects (Atkinson, 2020). As a result, a need has arisen for additional resources and/or training for pre-service agricultural education instructors (Duncan & Ricketts, 2008). Atkinson (2020) reported that agricultural science teachers, regardless of age, show the least self-efficacy in facilitating supervised agricultural experiences, when compared to other teacher duties such as FFA and classroom/laboratory experiences.

The Texas Tech University Agricultural Education Department has recently implemented a new course (Advanced Supervised Agricultural Experience Management, or AGED 4310) for agricultural education students preparing to enter student teaching. This course occurs in the fall semester and serves to prepare these students and increase their knowledge in the field of SAEs. The course utilizes experts in the field to provide in-depth lectures during class and off-campus laboratory sessions to engage in SAE projects. Specifically, one section of the course involves the use of Show Smart, an agriculture curriculum designed for use as supplementary instruction in high school agricultural education courses. The Show Smart curriculum is a program available to high school agricultural science departments that offers in-depth information on various species of livestock projects commonly utilized as SAE projects. The program contains worksheets, up-to-date and interactive videos from professionals in the industry, quizzes, and other resources designed to increase knowledge within SAEs. According to their website, Show Smart “is packed with cutting-edge videos, lesson plans, system-graded quizzes, industry certifications, and printable resources to teach students everything they need to know to successfully raise market animal projects” (Show Smart, n.d. para. 2). Texas Tech University utilizes Show Smart with two purposes in mind. Not only will agricultural education students gain content knowledge within SAEs, but they will be introduced to a useful resource they are encouraged to utilize during their student teaching experience/career.

How It Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

In Advanced Supervised Agricultural Experience Management, the integration of Show Smart was facilitated through a structured approach to enhance preservice teachers’ knowledge and instructional strategies in livestock evaluation. A Show Smart representative first visited Texas Tech to present to the preservice teachers, providing an overview of the program’s tools, best practices, and strategies for incorporating Show Smart into animal science courses. Following this presentation, students were given three weeks to complete ten modules, including the four mandatory livestock selection modules for cattle, swine, sheep, and goats, along with six additional modules tailored to their individual learning needs and gaps in livestock knowledge. Each module required students to engage with video content and complete an assessment to reinforce their understanding. After completing the modules, students participated in an in-class reflection session where they discussed their key takeaways and explored how they could integrate Show Smart into their future classrooms. To further support their professional growth, preservice teachers retained access to the Show Smart curriculum throughout their student teaching experience, allowing them to incorporate the program's content into their instruction.

Results to Date/Implications

Since the implementation of Advanced Supervised Agricultural Experience Management, two classes of agricultural education students (32 students) have completed the course and utilized the Show Smart curriculum. Preservice teachers have completed a total of 320 modules that cover content from all six species featured in the program. Multiple students have emphasized the convenience, relevance, and usefulness of the program. In fact, 100% of students in cohort one (N=17) recommended the continued use of the program in the course. Agricultural education students have shared their experiences with the program throughout their time in the advanced SAE management course and student teaching semester. A graduate of the program stated, "I didn't realize how much I would use the Show Smart curriculum until I started student teaching. The lessons and resources available help me explain concepts to high school agriculture students and are engaging for them to utilize. I especially enjoy using the videos in class to supplement livestock evaluation lessons in livestock production and animal science courses. It is extremely useful to have an updated, engaging source of information I can use while teaching." Another graduate said, "The Show Smart curriculum was an extremely useful tool in allowing me to feel confident during student teaching when helping advise my students with livestock species projects that I was least familiar with. This same principle will continue when I begin my teaching career and need accurate information for myself and students to easily access their livestock supervised agricultural experiences."

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Texas Tech University remains committed to integrating the Show Smart curriculum into this course and the agricultural education undergraduate program. Over the past two years, Show Smart has received positive feedback from students, particularly after they have completed their student teaching experience. Moving forward, the department plans to continue utilizing Show Smart, encouraging preservice teachers to engage with the platform not only to deepen their understanding of livestock SAE projects but also to enhance their student teaching experience. One recommendation for strengthening its use in the course is to incorporate a written reflection assignment after students complete the required modules. This would encourage deeper engagement with the program's full range of features rather than just fulfilling minimum requirements. As Show Smart continues to evolve and gain wider adoption across the United States, its developers actively seek opportunities to improve video content, lesson plans, visual aids, and student resources. To maximize its impact, teacher preparation programs should integrate Show Smart at multiple points in the preservice curriculum, ensuring future educators are familiar with its latest advancements.

Cost/Resources Needed

Access to the Show Smart program is essential for integrating its lessons and resources into a course like this. Access to the curriculum can be purchased for \$900 and includes 20 student seats for a one-year license. Additional student licenses may be purchased for \$5 each. Show Smart has generously donated licenses to students at Texas Tech, allowing them to utilize the platform both during the course and throughout their student teaching experience. Teacher education programs interested in incorporating Show Smart into their preservice curriculum should contact the company to explore similar opportunities. Additionally, each student will need access to a computer or laptop with an internet connection to fully engage with the program.

References

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