

What Is a Supervised Agricultural Experience Program?

Lesson 1: What Is a Supervised Agricultural Experience Program?

The Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program dates back to the beginning of agricultural education in the early 1900s. SAEs started as “home projects” for agricultural students. At that time, agricultural students were boys from farms and ranches who were going to return home after their schooling was completed. Early home projects were production-based and focused on things such as livestock, poultry, or crops.

Since the early 1900s, a lot has changed in agricultural education, including SAEs. Over the past hundred years, agricultural education has grown to include young people of all backgrounds from all over the country learning about agriculture. Today, an SAE program is defined as being made up of one or more projects that meet the following criteria:

- **Supervised** – Does the plan include supervision from a teacher, parent, and/or employer? All of the people that are responsible for supervising the SAE are there because they have advice to help the project succeed.
 - **Agriculture** – Is the project in an area related to agriculture, food, fiber, or natural resources?
 - **Experience** – Does the planned SAE include hands-on, practical experience? An SAE provides opportunities for students to apply what they learn in the classroom.
 - **Program** – Is there a planned course of action including record keeping and expansion? An SAE program may be made up of several individual projects or a long-term experience. For any type of SAE, goals are essential to having a good program.
 - **Instruction** – Is the program related to classroom instruction, or will instruction be provided?
 - **Time** – Is the planned SAE conducted outside of scheduled class time?
 - **Economic base** – Does the activity have the potential to make a contribution to family income now or in the future, and will it be profitable?
 - **Evaluated** – Is there a planned evaluation, summary, and incorporated grade given?
- **Recognition** – Does the project have the potential to be recognized through the FFA awards program? Every year outstanding SAE projects are recognized by the Proficiency Award program at the chapter, area, state, and national levels.

Purpose of the SAE Program

The purpose of an SAE program is to provide a teacher-supervised, individualized, hands-on, and student-developed real-world experience to help the student select a career, secure employment, and/or prepare for further education in the field of agriculture. An SAE project can be a single event or activity, perhaps something small like a project at school or working for a day or week at a business, but an SAE program is made up of a series of related individual projects or a long-term experience.

SAE and Agricultural Education

Agricultural education is composed of three equal parts: classroom/laboratory instruction, FFA, and SAE. Classroom instruction is the foundation of agricultural education. In the classroom students may receive instruction in animal science, plant science, food science, wildlife and land conservation, leadership, economics, and much more.

The National FFA Organization instills leadership, promotes growth, and encourages career success. FFA can motivate students and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. FFA can also attract new students to the agricultural education program and build goodwill and recognition in the school and community.

The SAE program builds on the principles of both classroom instruction and FFA by giving real-world application to the concepts that have already been learned. The three circles of agricultural education (Figure 1.1) illustrate the equal proportions of classroom/laboratory instruction, leadership development and personal growth (FFA), and experiential learning (SAE) that make up the ideal agricultural education program.

Supervised Agricultural Experience

Figure 1.1 – Three Circles of Agricultural Education

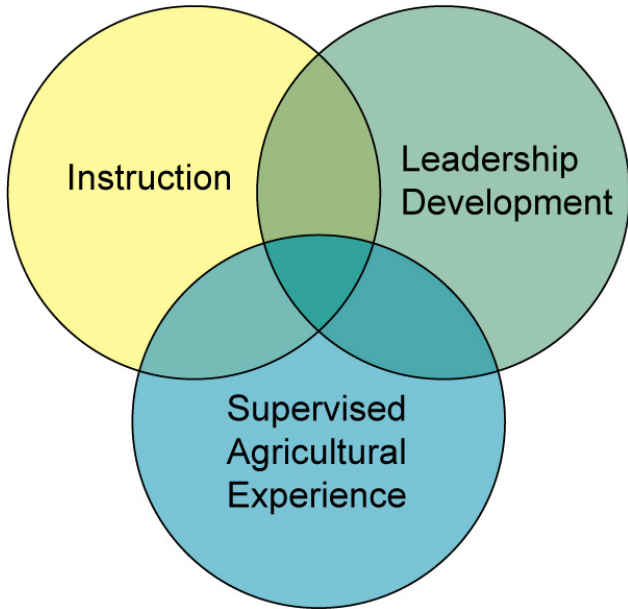


Figure 1.2 shows another example of the relationship of SAE programs to the agricultural education program. Classroom instruction and leadership and personal development activities provide a foundation for application in the SAE program. External motivators such as contests and proficiency awards encourage student success. In addition, application experiences can lead to future employment or additional education, which may lead to a career.

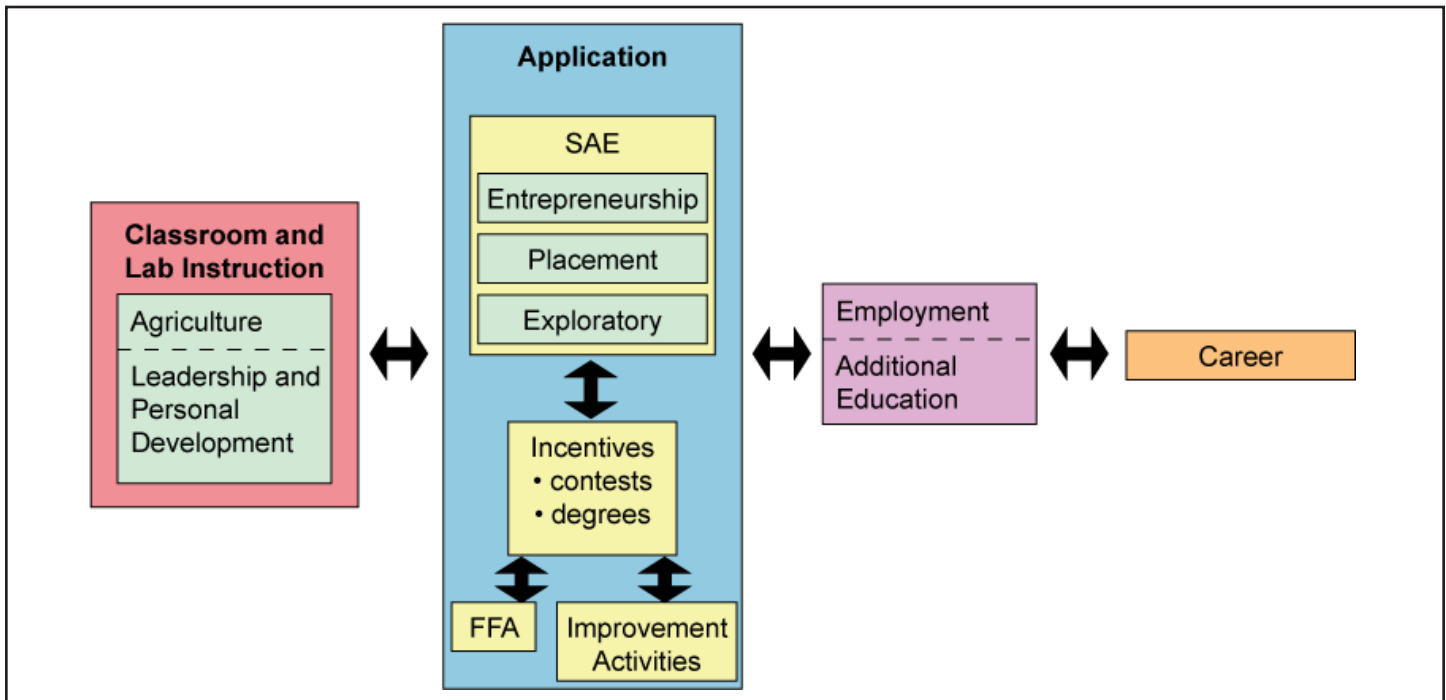
Benefits of an SAE Program

A quality SAE program provides many benefits to the student. An SAE helps students learn to make career and personal choices and develop critical thinking and decision-making skills related to their program. An SAE allows students to apply record-keeping skills and learn to manage money. It may also allow students to achieve a sense of independence, whether it is financial or decision-making independence, and develop pride in ownership. An SAE gives the student the chance to expand upon the knowledge he or she finds most interesting. An SAE also allows students to individualize their learning. If a student makes good decisions, an SAE can help the student gain self-confidence as the SAE grows. Most SAEs give students the opportunity to refine their human relations skills and develop responsibility, accountability, and an appreciation of a good work ethic. SAEs also provide an opportunity to explore different careers.

SAE and Future Careers

For many students, an SAE can lead to a permanent career. The skills students learn through their SAE can be the foundation for the rest of their lives. Many SAE benefits are the same qualities that are

Figure 1.2 - Agricultural Education Program



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needed for success in a future career, regardless of the career a person chooses. Some of these qualities include developing human relations skills such as good communication skills, responsibility, and accountability. The development of a good work ethic is also very important, as is understanding the value of teamwork.

Students often have the opportunity to learn about and use new and cutting-edge technology and techniques in certain agricultural fields through their SAEs. In addition, they have the opportunity to learn these skills from industry professionals. These resources provide students with opportunities that they would not usually be exposed to in a classroom setting.

Summary

A Supervised Agricultural Experience program is a fundamental part of agricultural education. SAEs allow students to gain hands-on application of classroom instruction. An SAE has many benefits for students entering college or the workforce and can provide valuable real-world experience.

Credits:

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Supervised Agricultural Experience
