HAVE YOU ever heard of someone who did not get a particular job because the person didn’t have experience? What is experience, and how do we get it? As an agricultural education student, you have the perfect opportunity to get experience for a career that interests you while learning record-keeping and financial management skills that will benefit you for the rest of your life!

Objective:

Recognize the value of conducting an SAE program and demonstrate an awareness of the different types of programs available.

Key Terms:

- entrepreneurship SAE
- exploratory SAE
- job shadowing
- placement SAE
- research and experimentation SAE
- scope
- supervised agricultural experience program

Supervised Agricultural Experience

A supervised agricultural experience program is a planned, practical activity that helps a student develop skills, competencies, and experience in a career area of the student’s choice. The program should be designed to implement specific agricultural and academic...
knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. Experiences can range from short-term ones, such as the job shadowing of a person in a career field the student is interested in, to a sequential four-year project in which the student develops his or her own business. Sometimes businesses developed through students’ SAE programs become permanent careers!

SAE AS A CORE COMPONENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Agricultural education has a rich heritage of preparing students for their futures. Students enrolled in agricultural education get exposure to the opportunities that await them after high school and gain the experience needed to be very employable.

The reason for the success that agricultural education has in preparing students for their futures is the educational model that agriculture teachers adopted back in the early 1900s. The three-circle model, which includes classroom/laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experiences, and the FFA organization, has been in existence as long as agriculture courses have been available to students.

The overlap of the three circles represents a complete program that allows a student to gain knowledge and apply it toward career interests while developing leadership skills to be a contributing member of the community. Knowledge gained in the classroom is applied toward student SAE programs to prepare students for their career interests. The FFA organization provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a competitive environment, recognizing outstanding programs and providing scholarship opportunities. Knowledge becomes significantly more valuable to you when you can immediately apply it to your own experience right away. This “learning by doing” approach improves retention of information and makes it relevant in your life! FFA award programs, such as proficiency awards, scholarships, and FFA degrees, are based, in part, on successful supervised agricultural experience programs.

TYPES OF SUPERVISED AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE

You will carefully plan your own SAE. Supervision from your agriculture teacher and your family or other adult allows you to gain from their experience and assures your safety.
ning is a key part of SAE, as it allows you to define what is to be performed and accomplished. The purpose of SAE is to give you a wide variety of experiences to explore the career field you are interested in. The majority of SAE programs are performed outside of regular class time, either at your home or in a place of business.

Understanding professionalism and safety is important in conducting an SAE program. Always follow safety practices and the directions provided you by the adult who is supervising your experience. Remember that you represent yourself and your school when visiting someone’s place of employment and act in a manner that reflects positively on both.

There are four types of supervised agricultural experience programs: exploratory, entrepreneurship, placement, and research/experimentation. Each student’s SAE is based on the student’s interests and available opportunities.

**Exploratory**

An **exploratory SAE** allows a student to have a wide range of experiences to learn more about career opportunities or the agricultural industry in general. This type of experience is not a long-term project or even necessarily focused on a single career path. Rather, it is intended for the student to “get a taste” of a variety of experiences. By getting a variety of experiences, you can make better choices about your future, including the type of education you need and the career opportunities that interest you. You may visit someone who has a job doing what you would like to do and discover that there are many aspects of that job that you really would not like! Conducting that exploratory experience allows you to realize that the career you thought you wanted is not for you. This will prevent you from preparing throughout high school and college, only to find that you have wasted your time and money getting ready for a career that you will not enjoy.

Exploratory SAEs may involve job shadowing. **Job shadowing** is spending time with someone during the person’s normal work day. You see what the individual does daily and observe how the person interacts with other people and their jobs. Other types of exploratory experiences include:

- Visiting a factory or production facility to see how machinery is made
- Assisting in the care of plants in the school greenhouse
- Caring for small animals at home
- Observing a soil conservationist prepare an improvement plan for a farm
- Assisting a landscaper install flowers or grass
- Visiting a museum to learn about the history of agriculture

**Entrepreneurship**

An **entrepreneurship SAE** involves personally owning all or part of an enterprise in agriculture or a related area. The student has an ownership interest in the materials, supplies, and inventory of the business. He or she may be the sole owner or have an ownership share. Regardless of a student’s ownership interest, he or she is expected to be actively involved in the
planning and work involved in the business. The student is responsible for the risk and reward of ownership.

Normally, an entrepreneurship SAE starts small and grows in size and scope. Scope refers to the amount of responsibility, labor, and assets that the student has involved in the project.

Owning a business enterprise usually involves getting the needed tools, supplies, or inventory to start. This may be arranged with your family or other adult. You may be able to trade your labor for resources that a parent or family friend has available. For example, if you decide to start your own lawn-care business, you may not be able immediately to afford the purchase of a riding lawn mower. However, you can possibly provide your services free to your family in exchange for using their mower in your business. As your business grows and income increases, you may be able to purchase a mower of your own.

An entrepreneurship SAE may be a production enterprise or an agribusiness enterprise. A production enterprise involves producing plants or animals for sale or home use. An agribusiness enterprise involves providing services or selling products that you do not produce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1. Examples of Entrepreneurship SAE Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production SAE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising purebred puppies for sale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing a vegetable garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing corn, soybeans, cotton, wheat, or other crops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising cattle, sheep, swine, or goats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising wild game birds for repopulating habitat</td>
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Careful record keeping is important in any type of SAE program. Your teacher can provide a record book that will be helpful in keeping accurate records of your activities, including your income and expenses. Accurate records are valuable as you make business decisions and analyze your business.

**Placement**

A placement SAE involves gaining work experience and competencies in an agricultural or related business by working for another person or a company. The work may be paid or unpaid, depending on the experience and arrangement. You may already have a part-time job that is a natural fit for a placement SAE! Your school’s agricultural education facilities may provide an opportunity for an unpaid placement experience by managing a school greenhouse or mechanics laboratory. An aquaculture placement SAE is possible by managing the school aquaculture facility. Through a placement SAE, you are able to learn many of the competencies of a career without the risk of operating your own business. You will learn the value of workplace skills and financial management skills. All communities have a variety of placement opportunities.

Again, record keeping is very important as you track your hours, skills learned, and pay. The scope of a placement experience may be measured by hours worked or wages earned.
Examples of placement SAEs include working at any of the following places:

- Soil Conservation Service
- Grain or livestock farm
- Landscape design or installation company
- Lawn service
- Floral shop
- Veterinary clinic
- Community parks department
- Campground or nature area

**Research and Experimentation**

A research and experimentation SAE is a science-based experience. It may involve using a science laboratory or an environmental site for study. Research and experimentation SAEs can combine science and agriculture into science fair projects or other research-based activities. A student placed in a local laboratory may have the opportunity to study under an experienced agricultural scientist. Students who participate in science fairs could use their projects as research and experimentation SAE programs. Some examples of research and experimentation supervised agricultural experiences are:

- Working with an agronomist to improve a crop variety
- Studying the effects of salinity on seed germination
- Experimenting to see how certain feed additives affect weight gain in swine
- Testing different food packages to see which ones are most effective
- Conducting water testing around agricultural fields

**CHOOSING THE SAE THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU**

With all the options available for supervised agricultural experience programs, it can be challenging to narrow down the options so that you can choose which SAE is right for you. You may wish to conduct multiple projects at the same time or add a new project each year. To learn about business growth and experience, it is a good idea to have at least one project that you begin your first year of agricultural education courses and continue for several years. The SAE you choose should be based on your career interests and available opportunities. If you are interested in the livestock business and have had cattle as a 4-H project for several years, it is natural that you would choose to have a beef production SAE program. If your family owns a floral shop that you have been working in for several years, a floral placement program is already underway. If you are interested in a career that your family is not currently involved in, talk to your agriculture teacher, your guidance counselor, or someone who is in that industry for ideas on how you can have an SAE program in that career area. These experienced adults may have unique ideas on how you can gain experience while developing your program.

Your SAE program should give you the opportunity to make management decisions and learn new things. Your agriculture teacher will want to meet with you and others involved in...
your program to develop a plan for your experience. These individuals will discuss ideas for providing you with a variety of experiences so that you will learn the most from them. If you are considering an entrepreneurship SAE, you may want to develop a budget showing that your enterprise can be profitable. If you are going to lose money, you may want to choose a different SAE! If you are thinking about a placement SAE, you may discuss ideas on how to gain more responsibility and experiences with your potential employer. By letting the employer know about your SAE program, you will demonstrate your commitment to learning from your job, and the employer will feel like a valuable partner in the learning process.

Summary:

A supervised agricultural experience program is designed to help you practically apply knowledge and skills learned to experiences that will prepare you for an agricultural career. The four types of SAE programs are exploratory, entrepreneurship, placement, and research/experimentation. SAE programs should be based on your career interests and available opportunities. Your agriculture teacher, your family, and other interested persons can be real assets in helping you develop your SAE program.

Checking Your Knowledge:

1. How are the three components of a quality agricultural education program related?
2. List the four types of supervised agricultural experience programs. Give two examples of each not already listed in the text.
3. Describe the differences between an entrepreneurship SAE and a placement SAE.

Expanding Your Knowledge:

Considering your career interests and available opportunities, identify four supervised agricultural experience programs that you could develop. You may identify one or more from each of the different types or all from the same type. Describe what your program would be like and what it would involve.

Web Links:

National FFA—SAE Opportunities
http://www.ffa.org/programs/sae/index.html

National FFA—SAE Best Practices

Agricultural Career Profiles
http://www.mycaert.com/career-profiles