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AITC *Notes*

Test Scores Reflect Success of AITC's Programs

Ag in the Classroom is currently engaged in a comprehensive, multi-state evaluation [projected for completion in 2003] that will provide guidance on the impact of AITC programs. Until that study is completed, we have an example from Utah showing a rise in students' scores after their teachers participated in AITC workshops.

Debra Spielmaker, Project Director of Utah AITC, developed an instructional unit "Dirt: Secrets in the Soil" and in-serviced teachers with the lesson plans and activities in 1998. The instructional unit is an 88-page guide that includes soil lessons, classroom activities, a video, and a practice test. Soil samples

of sand, silt, and clay are included as part of the kit. The lesson plans were specifically designed for Utah's 4th grade students, and the curriculum materials were tested statewide.

In the spring of 1998, students scored a 62% on the soils section of the Utah State Standardized Science Test. In the summer of 1998, fifty teachers from across the state attended a statewide teacher in-service training on using these instructional materials and the video. Participating teachers received state funding to take the instructional unit back to their own districts and instructed local teachers

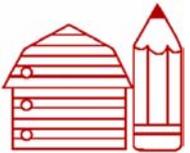
with the materials for use in the 1998-99 school year.

In the spring of 1999, students' scores had increased to 85% on the soils section of the state test.



The students' test scores increased 23% in one year.

Teachers attribute this success to "Dirt: Secrets in the Soil." Currently, based on teacher training and package orders, the instructional materials have reached nearly 120,000 4th grade students.



Greetings from the National Office

We have been very busy implementing Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) programs for fiscal year 2002. The major funded projects include:

"Building Stronger Agriculture in the Classroom Programs" grants program: A mini-grants program that seeks to strengthen State Agriculture in the Classroom programs by funding innovative ideas and proven outreach strategies to increase agricultural literacy among teachers and their students. The National Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium in concert with the USDA-AITC will administer the program. Mini-grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to AITC state contacts who are members of the National Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium. The Request for Applications is scheduled for release in February 2003. Funding for the first year's competition is \$45,000.

Space Ag in the Classroom (SAITC): A joint project with NASA, USDA, and the University of Florida to develop teaching materials about agriculture's utility in space programs. SAITC will meet science and technology literacy objectives by bringing to students an awareness of the current and newest technologies used by NASA, USDA, and other cooperators in their research, food production, and other mission areas.

Forest Service's "Natural Inquirer": We will print several additional copies of their upcoming publication for national distribution through the AITC state contacts. The *Natural Inquirer* is a science education resource journal that contains articles describing environmental and natural resource research conducted by USDA Forest Service and their cooperators. These articles have been reformatted to meet the needs of Grades 5 and above. The goal is to stimulate critical reading and thinking

about scientific inquiry and investigation while learning about ecology, the natural environment, and natural resources. Past issues and articles from the *Natural Inquirer* are available by visiting the web site: www.naturalinquirer.usda.gov

Continued AITC programs:
Resource Guide: The web-based resource guide is being developed and is now in its second year of funding.
Web Site: Continuation of the supporting funds for maintenance of the AITC Web site.
National Conference: Funds to help sponsor the 2003 AITC National Conference.
Program Evaluation: Final phase of funding for the AITC evaluation from Oklahoma State University.

From March to September 2002 the AITC Web site received nearly 27,000 hits!



Public/Private Partners Promote Healthy Eating

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman and Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced that an alliance of federal agencies, private industry, and health organizations have joined forces to strengthen efforts to help all Americans meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption. This unprecedented public/private partnership will increase promotion of the **5 A Day for Better Health Program**. As the largest nutrition education initiative in the world, the program encourages consumers to eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Under the agreement, USDA, whose programs and activities touch one of every six Americans, will increase consumer education opportunities related to 5 A Day, conduct research related to nutrient values in fruits and vegetables, and strengthen collaboration among federal, state, and industry organizations to promote fruit and vegetable consumption in addressing health issues.

"Approximately 70 percent of all U.S. adults and children do not eat the recommended five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day," said Lorelei DiSogra, EdD, RD, Director of the 5 A Day for Better Health Program.

Partners with the National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health (the lead federal agency for the program) also include the Produce for Better Health Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Cancer Society, National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, Produce Marketing Association, and United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association.

5 A Day Nutrition Education Program

Bobby Banana and his friends can't wait to guide students through the **Land of 5 A Day** in the "5 A Day Adventures" CD-ROM. Each of the eight interactive educational modules have complementary behavioral objectives designed to teach children the importance of eating 5 A Day and to motivate them to actually do it! Students, laugh, learn, sing, and play their way to 5 A Day.

Sponsored by Dole Food Company, the Nutrition Education Program offers education materials free of charge to U.S. elementary schools, to encourage children and their families to eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables every day to promote better health.

Dole's 5 A Day Web site directly offers educational resources designed to help teachers make 5 A Day come alive in their classrooms with:

1. [Online order form](#) for free 5 A Day nutrition education materials for classrooms, including CD with games, activities, music, and more.
2. [Lesson plans](#) with cross-curricular activities in math, social studies, science, music, and language arts that help get kids excited about eating fruits and vegetables.
3. [Fruit & Vegetable Encyclopedia](#) to help students learn more about fruits and vegetables.
4. [Jammin' 5 A Day Songs](#) and fun games that get kids excited about eating fruits and vegetables.
5. [Ideas from other educators](#) on how to make 5 A Day come alive in the classroom and community.
6. Information about the national [Creative 5 A Day Teacher of the Year Award](#). Apply today! You and your students may win a 5 A Day Party as well as national recognition.
7. Information about [5 A Day Student Ambassadors](#). Nominate your students to represent your state this year.



State 5 A Day Coordinators

Every state in the United States has a **5 A Day Coordinator**. This person is usually a health professional, typically a registered dietitian, whose job is to promote the 5 A Day program at the state and local level. Your state 5 A Day Coordinator can provide assistance and support to you when planning 5 A Day school and community events. To find out who your state coordinator is and how to contact him or her, go to www.5aday.gov/statecoord-listings.html.

I'm loaded with all the good stuff, like fiber and vitamin C ~

A big yellow bunch of potassium, and I give you lots of energy!

4 Teachers Receive National Honors

The USDA's AITC Program and the National AITC Consortium recognized four teachers in the 2002 *Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture: A National Awards Program*.

Designed to focus national attention on the critical role of teaching, the Awards Program honors teachers for their outstanding contribution to education about American agriculture.

Recipients this year were Rebecca Baker, Missouri; Deni Lopez, California; Victoria Richey, Oklahoma; and Peggy Wittwer, Utah. The teachers received an honorarium of \$500 and up to \$1,500 toward travel to the 2002 AITC National Conference, where they were recognized.

Applications for the 2003 awards have been mailed to AITC State Contacts. Electronic copies are available through the National AITC Web site at www.agclassroom.org.

Regional Highlights

From the President

Hello from the Volunteer State. It seems like yesterday that we were all enjoying the DC Conference. Thanks to Maryland and Laurie Adelhardt for a splendid conference. Don't let anyone tell you that it is easier being President and National Conference Host the same year. I can't see the rock wall in front of me and we have seven more months before we roll out the red carpet for the next conference, "Cows, Crops and Country Music" June 24-28 at the Sheraton Music City in Nashville, TN.

Your National Consortium Board met in DC with USDA in October to review current programs and priorities for 2002-03. We are developing a 5-10 year strategic plan to set in place programs and organizational plans with USDA and your AITC Consortium. Yes, these programs and plans could be modified annually, but this will become an officially approved track for the National Organization to follow.

Looking forward to seeing you in Nashville!

*Charles Curtis, President
AITC Consortium*

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**Jennifer Hooper was elected president-elect, but has taken another position. At the 2003 national meeting both a president and a president-elect will be elected.*

Western Region

The Western Region has tentative plans to hold a Regional meeting in Arizona in January 2003. State Contacts and other participants will be asked to share how they educate teachers about the issues in their state's agriculture industry. These issues include water use/rights, grazing, chemical usage/regulations, fugitive dust, and labor. It is interesting to see the affiliation each State Contact has for their state's AITC program. Six of the programs are coordinated through a Foundation. Two programs have a Farm Bureau affiliation. Two programs have university/Cooperative Extension ties but work with a Foundation. One has a state Department of Ag affiliation that relies on a Foundation. One has no statewide organization but has strong county programs. AITC programs can be successful whether or not there is a full-time employee(s) or dedicated volunteers. We have twelve successful programs we can brag about in the West.

Central Region

Plans are underway for the Regional Meeting April 1-2, 2003 in Kansas City. More information will be available shortly from Consortium Regional Representatives Kevin Daugherty (IL) and Judy Roush (OH). Teachers had the best time ever at the **Kansas** summer session. Teachers love their Educators' Guide, and the Kansas Kids Connection has been a hit. During a successful year of School Assemblies, 40 of 104 counties and nearly 6,000 students were reached, and over 300 teachers received Agri-Bags. The Post Card Contest has gone two years now with 4,000 entries, and has just had a new theme launched! Kansas will now have personalized agriculture license plates! Work has also been done to improve their Web site.

Wisconsin's Ag Literacy Partnership, representing nine organizations, was formed in June under the direction of AITC staff to coordinate and unite the efforts of various agricultural groups promoting ag literacy in Wisconsin. The initial project was a joint exhibit at the state's largest teacher's convention in late October. Launched on July 31st, www.wisagclassroom.org, features program information, an online directory of resource materials available, local AITC contacts, and links to a variety of educational websites. The AITC Steering Committee formed in July has established a 2-year work plan. Among the projects outlined are developing a new set of elementary lesson plans, updating resources, building our county AITC network, and sponsoring a statewide Ag Literacy Conference in June 2003. Wisconsin AITC also recently hosted an inaugural golf outing fundraiser, which was quite successful! **Indiana** had a successful Farming the Classroom Update (annual meeting for volunteers), which provides new program ideas and networking. A new middle school program about renewable fuels is in the works,

which is tied to the national security of having our own energy to produce food. Their Teachers Workshop was September 30. Teacher workshops are in full swing in **Ohio** using economics materials they have developed. Educators continue to re-affirm the need for resources that cover the state (and national) standards they must teach. In **Illinois** a busy summer was highlighted by 22 Week Long Summer Ag Institutes, in which more than 600 teachers learned more about agriculture. Additionally, the new "Candy, Culture and Creativity" Agriculture and Candy Resources developed by Illinois AITC has been very well received. A limited number of these products were made available at the National Conference, and now the resource guide and lessons plans are available to download from their Web site. Plans are underway for their Annual Statewide Agriculture Literacy Conference to be held February 5th in Rockford, with the theme—Harnessing the Power of Agriculture Literacy.

Southern Region

Arkansas AITC has just published a new Ag in the Classroom book for grades 3-4. The book has 17 lessons on 500 pages. More than 600 of the resource guides have been placed in schools through 6 area workshops and the county women's committees. Since August 23, **South Carolina** AITC has fielded more than a dozen requests from SC schools for Ag in the Classroom workshops during the 2002-03 school year. A mailing was sent to all school district curriculum specialists and school principals including a lesson plan sample correlated to state learning standards, State Dept. of Education endorsement letter, workshop scope and sequence description and positive comments from former workshop participants. A waiting list has been started, and the calls keep coming

Northeast

Virginia has been busy with 15 workshops. School garden project registration has begun with 200 participants registered for the 2003 program. Barbara Evans reports that eleven teachers representing five different wards in the **District of Columbia** are participating in AITC workshops and initiatives. **New Jersey** is launching a new garden project at four schools to incorporate Ag in the curriculum throughout the year. Lesson plans and activities will be supplied. A pep rally including the school, parents, and community is planned. **Maryland** has moved into new headquarters. The summer workshop had 55 teachers from 14 counties. Included in the session was a tour of the mobile Biotechnology: Food, Fiber and You science lab that visits schools throughout the state. **Pennsylvania's** summer workshop had 99 teachers from 38 counties. The first issue of PA AG Mag was produced featuring vegetables. This is targeted for 4th grade and will be distributed this school year.

National Conference brings 300 to DC

The Agriculture in the Classroom National Conference was held June 20-22, 2002 in Washington, DC. More than 300 teachers and program administrators from 44 states and the District of Columbia participated in the three-day conference.

The conference was co-hosted by the AITC Consortium, USDA National AITC Program, and the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation.

With the theme of "Discovering Agriculture *Capitol Style*", participants found agricultural connections and resources in workshops and tours of the Smithsonian Museums of Natural and American History, National Arboretum, Urban Oasis Farm, and National Zoo.

Three dozen exhibitors representing state AITC programs, USDA, and agricultural organizations showcased new agricultural programs and resources. Workshop sessions were offered on agricultural projects and programs that can be used to educate students and staff about agriculture in K-12 classrooms.

Highlights also included a reception on Capitol Hill and banquet with a performance by the *Capitol Steps*. More than \$3000 was raised in the Silent Auction, benefiting education programs of the AITC Consortium.

The Annual Conference provides an excellent opportunity to find new ideas, resources and energy for implementing Ag in the Classroom programs.



Set your sights on Nashville for 2003

With the backdrop of the Grand Ole Opry, rolling farm fields, and Tennessee hospitality, the 2003 AITC National Conference promises to be an event not to miss!

Mark your calendars for June 24-28, 2003 at the Sheraton Music City when your AITC hosts will present a program full of new resources, hands-on workshops, exhibits, and entertainment for three days of professional exchange, education in agriculture, and country entertainment!

Upcoming Events

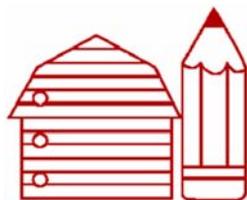
The 54th Convention of the National Association of Agriculture Educators
December 10-14, 2002 in Las Vegas, NV. Visit www.teamaged.org for additional information.

The American Farm Bureau Federation's 84th Annual Meeting and Convention
January 19-22, 2003, in Tampa, FL. Visit www.fb.org for registration and agenda information.

Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences Annual Conference and Career Fair
"MANRRS-Pursuing Excellence in Leadership, Scholarship, and Service" will be March 27-29, 2003, in Atlanta, GA. Visit www.manrrs.org for additional information.

Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture: A National Awards Program
Applications are now available from AITC State Contacts, the National AITC Office, or from the national AITC website. Deadline is March 1, 2003.

Visit www.agclassroom.org to learn of other upcoming events and opportunities.



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