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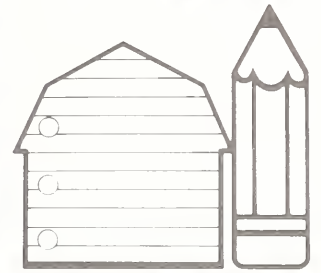
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# Ag in the Classroom

# Notes

United States  
Department of  
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A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 317-A, Administration Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-2200. 202/447-5727

## California: Foundation Exceeds Fundraising Goal

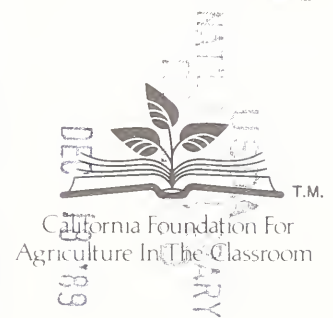
When Mark Linder, California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom Executive Director, set his fundraising goal last year at \$100,000 — twice as high as the goal in the previous year — he says he never doubted the goal would be met. "More and more people in the agricultural sector are learning about the Foundation," he notes, "and as they learn about our activities, they become more and more supportive."

When the fiscal year ended on September 1, 1989, the Foundation had not only met its goal, but exceeded it — raising a total of \$110,620 from 588 donors. Donations ranged in size from \$5 to \$10,000.

The key to successful fundraising is personal contact, the California Foundation found. "We wrote letters to every potential donor we could think of, and followed up with phone calls," Linder says. In August, as the fiscal year was ending, "we called people again and told them we'd certainly like to include their names on our publication listing our donors." That incentive, he believes, was one of the reasons that the Foundation raised more than \$30,000 in the final month of the fiscal year.

The key to success, Linder believes, is "offering a wide variety of programs" in teacher training, student programs, and resource

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## Florida AITC Program Named "Program of Excellence"

Agri-Fest, an AITC project developed by the Imperial Polk County Farm Bureau, was named a "Program of Excellence" by the Florida Council of the Social Studies. The award is designed to recognize social studies programs of outstanding quality that are consistent with curriculum guidelines, provide for a variety of teaching strategies, and encourage the involvement of teachers, students, and the community.

One of the goals of Agri-Fest was to help Polk County students become aware of the importance of agriculture in our food supply system. During an introduction to the day,

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Students in Polk County, Florida enjoyed learning at Agri-Fest.

## From the Director

Dear Readers,

Congratulations to Megan Camp for your impressive appearance on the CBS "This Morning" network television program. You were an articulate spokesperson for Shelburne Farms and for agriculture. (Megan is Director of Education for Shelburne Farms and one of our contacts for AITC in Vermont.)

Here are two conference dates for your calendars: The Western Region will meet in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on March 8, 9, and 10, 1990. For more information, contact Grace Cain at the

New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau in Las Cruces. Her telephone number there is 505/526-5521.

The National Ag in the Classroom Conference will be in Washington, D.C., June 3, 4, and 5, 1990. We'll have more details in the next issue of Notes.

Yours truly,



Shirley Traxler

## "Program of Excellence"

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Leah Lauderdale, Chairman of the Polk County AITC program and County Coordinator for the Polk County Farm Bureau, asked the students how many thought their lives were affected by agriculture. Only a few students raised their hands. But when she asked the children how many of them eat, they all raised their hands.

Once students recognized that agriculture did play an important part in their lives, they moved to "hands-on" learning stations that exposed them to four areas of agriculture that have the greatest economic impact in Polk County:

beef, citrus, phosphate, and horticulture.

For example, Elin Oak, Vice President of Public Affairs with the Florida Phosphate Council, gave each pupil

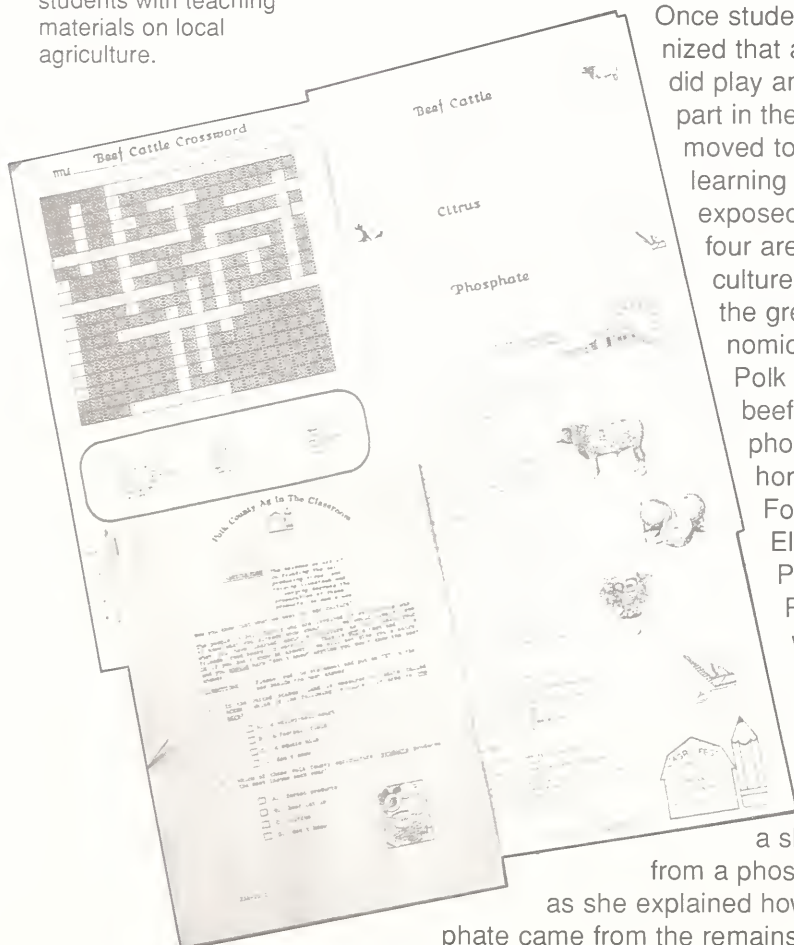
a shark's tooth from a phosphate mine as she explained how phosphate came from the remains of prehistoric animals.

"The key to our success," said Lauderdale, "was involving as many people as possible in the planning process." After Superintendent John Stewart gave the go-ahead, Lauderdale worked closely with school staff members in developing educational activities. All materials, for example, were reviewed by a reading specialist to make sure they used appropriate reading levels. Specialists in math, science, and social studies also helped design activities for their subject areas. An agricultural steering committee of 16, representing organizations as diverse as 4-H and the Florida Phosphate Council, was also directly involved in planning Agri-Fest. Working with so many individuals "took longer," Lauderdale said, "but it really paid off. Everyone felt a tremendous sense of ownership."

The result of the partnership between agriculture and education was a program that supported required curriculum objectives without adding to the teaching load. Although Agri-Fest was designed primarily to integrate with the social studies curriculum, teachers also received supplemental teaching materials for reading, math, and science. Students also learned of career opportunities associated with agriculture.

Most of all, the students had fun while learning. Jody Ogle, a fourth grader who attended the 1988 Agri-Fest, summarized her reactions to the day in a letter to Mrs. Lauderdale. "I hope that next year, y'all can have it," she wrote, "because my sister will be in grade 4."

Agri-Fest provided students with teaching materials on local agriculture.



# Spotlight

## Students Learn by Teaching

In 1983, ag teacher John Cooran's students were invited to speak to a kindergarten class in Apopka, Florida. Cooran brought three students to help him tell the children about the importance of farming in their community. After their talk, each child had the opportunity to ride on a tractor. But Cooran says he "didn't think very much would come out of it."

It's not surprising that Cooran could not foresee what would grow from that initial classroom visit. During the 1988-89 school year, Cooran and his FFA students from Apopka Middle School taught agriculture to an average of 500 students each week — more than 6,000 students during the course of the school year. And a survey the FFA Chapter conducted as part of FFA's Building Our American Com-

munities Program found even greater interest in agricultural programs. In fact, the survey found that of the 100 elementary schools in the county, 95 requested some kind of agricultural program. This year, Cooran's agriculture students were booked every week from the day school started until the day school is dismissed.

Building Our American Communities (BOAC) is a community development program involving more than 4,600 local FFA chapters nationwide. In BOAC, FFA members and advisers work in cooperation with local civic leaders to identify special community needs. The cooperative effort allows FFA members to put into practice the skills they learn in agriculture classrooms, as well as developing leadership skills.

One of the primary objectives of the Apopka program is to help students learn about the importance of agriculture in their community and to become aware of possible careers in agriculture. Discussions with younger students



Teacher John Cooran helps kindergarten children at Zellwood Elementary School plant a tree.

typically start with something concrete — a favorite food, for example. "We ask them to tell us what goes into a hamburger," Cooran says. Cooran's wife, a home economics teacher, has sewed a large pillow that looks like a hamburger, complete with ketchup and even a pickle. "As the students mention each part of the hamburger, we ask them to tell us where they think that food comes from," Cooran says.

Some classes also have the opportunity to watch eggs hatch. Cooran's students bring in an incubator that they have preset with eggs that are nearly ready to hatch.

Grade school students also have the opportunity to plant gardens. Older students plant seeds, but younger students, "who tend to

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# Students Learn by Teaching

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Apopka Middle School students helped fourth graders plant flowers for a school landscaping project.



portable grow lab, which can be moved easily from classroom to classroom.

Cooran believes the key to the program is the enthusiasm that comes from students teaching students. Six student team leaders train other FFA students, who in turn teach the grade school children. But the FFA students learn as much as the children they teach, Cooran believes. For example, this year the FFA chapter has added four classes of hearing impaired students, "so we're

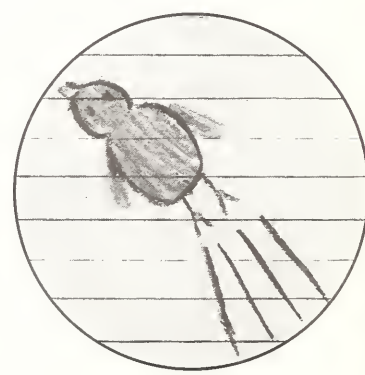
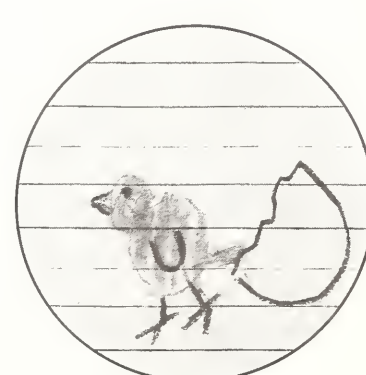
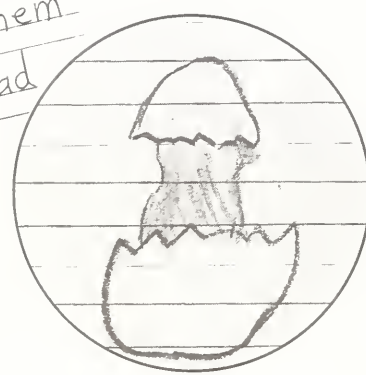
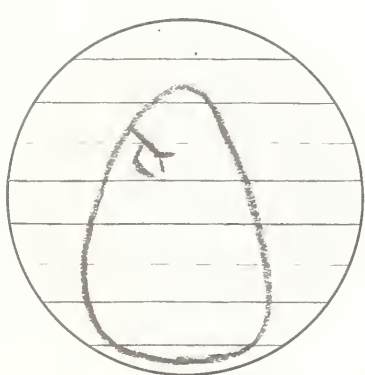
lose interest pretty quickly," plant seedlings. Last year, the America the Beautiful Foundation provided the seeds used in the program.

The area is growing so rapidly that some schools do not have the space for students to plant gardens. "Two weeks ago, we planted a garden at a local elementary school," Cooran said. "This week, they had to put a portable classroom in that space." For those schools, the Apopka FFA chapter has now purchased a

learning sign language," he says. After discovering that there were some children who were both hearing impaired and blind, Cooran's students began to plan activities that could involve them as well. "We've decided that we'll bring in some chicks that have already hatched," he says.

The Apopka program was recognized as one of ten outstanding Youth Garden Programs by the National Gardening Association. It has also received an award from Walt Disney World's Ecology and the Environment Program.

Dear FFA,  
Thank you for  
bringing the eggs  
to our room. We  
liked to watch them  
hatch I love, Brad



## Urban Texas School Districts Teaching Ag in the Classroom

In Texas, agriculture is big business, representing about 20 percent of the state's economy. But that's not the only reason three of the state's largest school districts have launched AITC programs, says Linda Nowell, Education Coordinator for the Texas Farm Bureau. "They have adopted the program because we provide them with excellent resource materials they would have a hard time collecting on their own," she says.

A grant by the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show allowed the Fort Worth Independent School district to become the first large school district in Texas to teach agriculture to all fourth grade students. The grant made possible the distribution of almost 200 Texas Agriculture Resource Guides and accompanying "What's To Eat" videos to all fourth grade teachers in the district. Using these materials, teachers will direct students into exploration of various facets of food and fiber production in Texas. Students will also learn how agriculture contributes to the lifestyles of people throughout the world. "The Resource Guides offer teachers excellent information on Texas history and geography," Nowell said, "and make it easier for teachers to meet existing curriculum objectives."

Nowell introduced Fort Worth teachers to the materials in a day-long inservice session held by the school district this fall. "Inservice is critical to keeping the program alive," Nowell says. "We give teachers the tools they need to integrate agriculture into their program throughout the year — not just as a one-day lesson."

Nowell is also working with two other large Texas districts to begin implementation of the AITC program. Later this year, she will conduct an inservice for 180 lead fourth-grade teachers in the Houston Independent School District. These lead teachers, in turn, will present the program to other teachers in their schools. Nowell has also conducted an inservice for teachers in San Antonio. These three districts represent 50 percent of the large school districts in Texas.

"For teachers in urban districts, the initial appeal of the AITC program is that it helps them teach existing social studies content," Nowell says. "But after they start using the materials, they say they often learn as much as their students about the importance of agriculture to our state's economy."



Photo courtesy of Fort Worth Star Telegram. Dale Blackwell photo.

Sy N. Karlin, program director for the Social Studies Department of Fort Worth Independent School District; David Gibbs, Livestock Show Department manager of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show; and William Lasater, Jr., Tarrant County Farm Bureau AITC chairman; discuss implementation of AITC in the Fort Worth schools.

# California Foundation

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materials for the classroom. "What works for one teacher may not be effective with another," he notes, "and what excites one student may not appeal to the student in the next desk." The variety of programs also appeals to a variety of donors.

For this year, the Foundation has again doubled its fundraising goal. Foundation President Bob Vice says, "California has a growing population that exceeds 25 million. It doesn't take much arithmetic to understand that we need to add zeros to our yearly goal."

This year, the Foundation will institute four new projects that target specific groups to raise their awareness of agriculture's importance in the American society and economy.

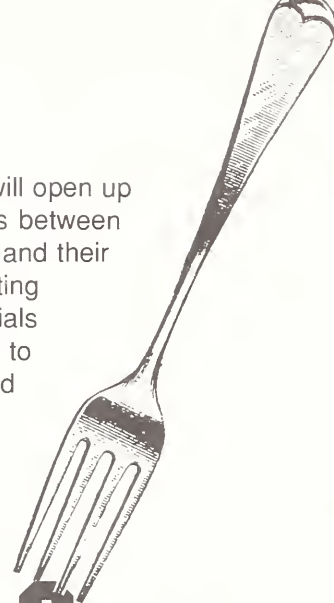
An Agricultural Institute for Government Executives will offer public policy makers an opportunity to learn about California's Agriculture in the Classroom activities and resources.

An Agricultural Academy for Leaders in Education will give school administrators and education leaders an intensive seminar on agriculture. Carefully selected education leaders will tour ag facilities and hear prominent individuals in agriculture and politics discuss agriculture's complex and changing role in society.

An educational magazine will be targeted to fourth grade students. Since this is the year when children typically learn about their state's history and economy, the magazine will provide fun and interesting information on California agriculture.

The Ag in the Classroom Ambassadors Program will eventually place one contact person in each school in California. These

Ambassadors will open up communications between the Foundation and their school, distributing resource materials and information to other faculty and students.



## Having Your **CAKE** And Eating It Too

Thanks to a new no-calorie, high-fiber flour additive, those watching their calories may one day be able to have their cake and eat it, too. Made by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists from cereal crops and farm products, the additive was selected as one of the 100 most significant new technologies of 1989 by Research & Development Magazine.

The flour additive can boost the content of dietary insoluble fiber in prepared foods such as pancake and cake mixes, doughnuts, cookies, bread and other food — all without affecting taste or texture.

"And the fiber does not add calories," said chemist J. Michael Gould, who invented the additive with a team of scientists at the Peoria, Illinois, Northern Regional Research Center of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. "We found we could make a white bread that looks, feels, and tastes like any other white bread, but which has as much dietary fiber as whole wheat bread and fewer calories than other white bread.

The fiber can replace 30 to 50 percent of the flour used in baked goods and prepared mixes. Tests found it reduced the calories in an average slice of chocolate cake by 25 percent while giving it as much dietary fiber as a bowl of high-fiber breakfast cereal.

Nutritionists have long recommended that Americans add more dietary fiber to their diets, since fiber may prevent some chronic diseases of the large intestine. The average American diet is relatively low in fiber.

ARS researchers began developing the fiber five years ago. They were searching for ways to open new markets for farm products.

### Next

#### Video-Teleconference Scheduled

"Food, Science...Technology with Taste" is the next live video-teleconference featuring the USDA National Agriscience Ambassador, Susan Forte. The teleconference will involve a visit to a food technology laboratory of a major international food corporation. The show will be aired on Thursday, December 7, 1989, from 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. (CST) and will be carried on the satellite Westar IV, Ch. 14. For further information and a free teacher packet contact: The Louisiana Educational Satellite Network (LESN), Southern University-Shreveport, 610 Texas Street, Shreveport, Louisiana 71101. The program is co-sponsored by the Higher Education Programs office and the LESN.



The most successful teachers build on what students learned in previous years. The Alabama AITC program, too, is building skills and knowledge about Alabama agriculture. This year, the AITC program is continuing to implement the K-3 curriculum while also piloting a new curriculum for students in fourth through ninth grades.

Elementary school teachers and curriculum supervisors from every county in Alabama attended a teacher workshop held in conjunction with the Alabama Farm Women's Regional Meetings. In those workshops, they were introduced to the Alabama AITC curriculum for grades K-3.

The curriculum guide, called "Alabama Treasures," offers teachers in the primary grades a series of activities that teach students about Alabama agriculture, while at the same time reinforcing basic skills in social studies, language arts, science, math, and nutrition.

The "real beauty" of the curriculum, says Jane Alice Lee, state contact for Alabama AITC, is its adaptability. Although the curriculum guide presents a basic outline of Alabama agriculture, teachers can adapt it to emphasize the specific agricultural products that are most

important to their local communities. And, she adds, because the curriculum materials are so complete, "a teacher can teach a lesson on peanuts without ever needing to make a visit to the library."

Second and third graders can play a game called "Growing Gold," based on Trivial Pursuit. "The children do wonderfully," Lee says, adding, "but I've not mastered the game yet."

Two early childhood education specialists helped develop the curriculum, which encourages children to use their imaginations and develop their creativity. In the primary grades, the curriculum guide includes instructions on how to make a computer out of a cardboard box. The computer, says Lee, "has all the answers" about Alabama agriculture.

The curriculum for older students, however, will use real computers. Called "Alabama Agri-Base," the database provides a wealth of information about Alabama agriculture. The curriculum for students in grades 4 through 9 was presented to superintendents throughout the state for approval early this fall. It will be pilot tested this year and introduced in teacher workshops to be held in 1990.



These students from Dozier Elementary School have learned about "Alabama Treasures" as part of the AITC program.

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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