

March 2009 Ag In The Class Newsletter

“Try to learn something about everything and everything about something.” – Thomas H. Huxley

March is roaring in like a lion!! But that just means Spring is just around the corner.

This is your “not so glamorous” AITC Newsletter, but you will now be able to get information faster and more of it. We plan to give you links, ideas, and ways to get and stay involved in your county. So without further ado, let's get started!

National Ag In The Classroom Conference

I am sad to report that we did not get enough people to fill the bus to St. Louis. There are still several of you making the trip so Indiana will be well represented. If you have not made your reservations, act now to get the best deal. The early bird registration ends on April 30th!! The current rate is \$380 but it goes up to \$450 after April 30th. You can register by going to www.agintheclassroom.org once you register, be sure to make your hotel reservation at the Millennium Hotel, the price for the hotel is only good till May 24th. All the details are on the above website.

They also have great tours planned for all of us, you will get to pick your top three options. Each tour will make 3-4 stops so you will get to see a lot of different things. After the tours on Thursday we will all get back on the bus to head to Grant's Farm. The park will be open to just those attending the conference. Here we will have a cookout and get to meet one of the Budweiser Clydesdales. We were asked to remind everyone that you will have to wear closed toed shoes on all of the tours. If you try to get on the bus in sandals you will be asked to get off the bus!!

St. Louis is a fun place to visit, so if you plan to go over early or stay after, be sure to research and look into all the great things it has to offer. The hotel and conference will be taking place right on the river and across the road from the arch. If you have never made the trip to the top, it is a great view! The Cardinals will also be in town, so if you are a baseball fan you may want to check that out.

If you have already made your reservation or when you do, please send me a quick email. It would be nice to know who will be there.

Spring Conference

It was great to see so many of you at Spring Conference and thanks to those that attended the session on new ideas for the classroom! I hope you had a good time. One of the projects was to write your ideas on a paper acorn and place them on the tree before you left. I will be sharing some of those ideas in the coming months. Here are a few:

Idea: Bury Styrofoam packing peanuts in the ground for a year. After the year dig them up and show how they have or have not changed. Compare them to the corn based biodegradable packing peanuts that dissolve in water.

Remember: This is a great idea, just remember where you buried the packing peanuts!! You could also bury them in a clear jar or aquarium to show the process as well.

Idea: Team up with a local cub pack or Boy Scout troop.

Remember: This is another great idea, but don't stop there, try Girl Scout troops, after school programs, pre schools, home school groups, etc. The list could go on and on, there may be groups in your county looking for exactly the type of programs you offer. If your county host an ag day, make a flyer to give to the teachers or adult chaperones, they may be able to pass the information on to other interested individuals.

Idea: Take an animal to school.

Remember: Before taking any type of animal to the school, consult with the teacher or school administration to make sure this is ok or if they have any special rules about bringing in animals.

New AFBF Website Features

The American Farm Bureau has added several new features to their website. Be sure to visit this page <http://www.fb.org/index.php?fuseaction=yourag.home>

There are several great links to give you ideas on how to spread the word of agriculture. We have a special prize for those of you visiting this link. There is a section called "Meet A Farmer". Who is the farmer that they are featuring? Email your answer to jwallman@infarmbureau.org by Monday March 16th. We will draw 2 winners from all of the correct answers. One winner will get the ready to use misconceptions of ag program from AFBF, this kit contains everything you need to make displays for use in the schools or at your county fair. The other winner will receive the same program, but it is a do it yourself kit, and the pictures have to be printed from the included CD. These are great tools to have. If you don't win, they can be purchased from AFBF at www.ageducate.org. Good Luck!!

AITC Reporting Forms

Keep sending in your reporting forms after you have visited a classroom or had an ag day event. These numbers help us get funding and help us to show the impact the program has throughout the state. We will take forms through the rest of the school year and set a deadline in June to get them in for this year. We want to make sure we have an up to date and accurate list of volunteers. Please contact us at anytime if you wish to be removed from the list. In June we will go through the list and remove anyone that we have not received reports from in the past two years (school year 2007-2008 and school year 2008-2009). If you have any questions, please let Joni know.

Promotional Items

Counties that still need items for ag days or county fairs need to act now for the best selection!! Many of the items we have are in limited quantities, so order early for the best selection. Please contact Jena at 317-692-7830 or jhalcomb@infarmbureau.org to place your order.

AITC Update Meeting

The date has changed for the annual update meeting. The Ag In The Class Update will take place on Thursday, September 3rd. Stay tuned for exciting information about this event!! Save the date, we hope to see many of you there!!

New Lesson!!

If you have the chance, rent or borrow the movie WALL E from Disney Pixar. It recently won an Oscar for best Animated movie. It is has a good message about agriculture in it. Kids love it and it is even fun for adults to watch. Be a kid at heart!! Here are some ideas to use based on the movie. Hope you enjoy and if you have any questions, please let me know.

Ag In The Classroom Lessons

Based on the Movie

Wall-e

After hundreds of lonely years of doing what he was built for, the curious and loveable WALL E discovers a new purpose in life when he meets a sleek search robot named EVE, sent to earth to look for plant life after all the inhabitants of earth have spent years living in space.

There are many agriculture and environmental lessons that can be learned from this movie and many ways to get students involved.

Lesson 1

Our “directive” is to preserve agriculture for future generations.

The power of even one single plant can set us on a mission to save our planet.

This lesson will use the simple process of planting soybeans in crystal soil via a necklace or other container. (beanie baby lesson)

If students have seen the movie they will be able to understand the importance of the seeds and the plant they are about to grow.

Even students that have not seen the movie will enjoy planting and watching their seeds sprout.

Bean Sprout Necklace

Materials Needed:

Crystal soil or cotton ball (found at many craft stores)

Small ziplock – jewelry size

String

Soybeans

1. Prepare crystal soil per package directions.

Place a small spoonful of crystal soil in zip lock. Place three soybeans in bag, making sure they are in the soil. (If crystal soil is not available a wet cotton ball will also work.)

2. Seal the zip lock. Many of these bags will come with a hole pre punched. If not punch a hole in the very top of the bag. Place string through hole and tie a knot, creating a necklace.

3. Wear the necklace between your clothes and body so it has a dark, warm place to start to sprout. Check it often for changes. Record the date and time you see the seeds begin to sprout, record other changes and if all seeds start to sprout at the same time.

Lesson 2

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

In the movie, WALL E places his seed sprout in an old boot. Students could find items around home that are no longer in use and fill them with potting soil and seeds. This is a great way to reuse items that would normally become trash. Other items could include:

Egg carton	Milk jugs
Food cans	Water bottles
Shoes	Caps from laundry detergent
Baby food jars	Fast food containers
2 lt. bottles	Coffee cans

The list could go on and on, if it would hold soil and some water, it could be reused to start seeds or a transplant!

Lesson 3

Going Green Part 1

Other lessons from the movie can be discussed, as we are stewards of the land, and it is up to us to protect it. Farmers and those in agriculture are doing their part in various ways, from developing new crops to plant and studying new ways to use existing crops.

How do plants make food? What is needed for this process?

Plants make food by using a green substance in their leaves, called chlorophyll. This soaks up energy from sunlight. Plants use this energy to turn carbon dioxide and water into a kind of sugar. They take in carbon dioxide from the air and water through their roots. Tubes in the stem carry the sugary food to all parts of the plants.

Farmers have to be familiar with the land they are using to plant crops so they can plant seeds that will do best in that area. They have to know how long seeds take to germinate and grow and compare that with the growing season in their area. In the Midwest we are successful planting corn and soybeans because we have the right climate for the seeds to sprout, grow, and be harvested. However, farmers in the Midwest would have a difficult time growing crops like cotton or rice because we don't have a long enough growing season or the conditions these crops need.

Going Green Part 2

We have seen a rise in "green" products made from corn and other commodities that will biodegrade and not fill up our landfills. Corn is one commodity that been used in many new products. These products will biodegrade much faster then conventional items like Styrofoam and plastics. They are also becoming more readily available in stores. Have a collection of these items to show students and discuss how using these products will help landfills from filling up.

Other uses for commodities can be discussed including soy biodiesel, E-85, bamboo fibers, etc.

Lesson 4

Keep Moving

In the movie WALL E, there is no longer a need to move or exercise. Everything is done for you and people move around in a moving chair. This of course results in everyone being over weight. Students need to understand the importance of a balanced diet, the need for fresh fruits and vegetables, and of course the need for physical exercise.

To close the program, get everyone up and moving. Every location will be different so determine how much room you have to work with and get everyone up. Start with some

stretches. You could talk about how farmers that grow fruits on trees have to stretch and reach when they harvest apples, peaches, etc. Do some squatting exercises. Talk about bending down to plant crops, or squatting down to inspect crops. Next you can do stepping in place. Most of the equipment farmers use are very large and they have to climb steps or a ladder to get into the equipment. It really doesn't matter the movement you use, just get everyone moving!

Summary

If you haven't seen the movie, take the time and see it for yourself. There are many messages in the movie about how we need to be stewards of the land and take care of it, or it won't be here in the future. We also see how important a single plant can be to the stability of the planet and that we all need to understand how things grow.

You may already be using some of these lessons, but keeping them fresh and aligning them with something new that students can understand, will help send the important points home.

Good Luck!!

Until next time, make it fun!!

Joni

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