

# 2015 Annual Report



*National*  
Agriculture in the Classroom

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**Front Cover:** An educator draws lines on a glowing stick as part of Tanna Nicely and Wendy Howard's workshop 'Planning and Planting with Plant Parts in your School Garden' at the national conference in Louisville, Kentucky.



# Program Overview

The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) and its affiliates in 48 states and six territories exist to create a better understanding of the agriculture industry that stretches across our great nation. It does so by providing teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade with curricula, materials, awards programs and a national conference to demonstrate how effectively agricultural concepts can be used to teach reading, writing, nutrition, science, social studies and more.

Connecting lessons to items students use every day helps the classroom come alive for them. That's the mission of NAITCO and its member states, each of which share lesson plans and companion resources linked to educational standards and tied to commodities produced across state lines.

The 2015 Annual Report highlights the organization's efforts, which are funded by a combination of dues from member states, sponsorships and support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). NAITCO owes its success in large part to the foundation laid by USDA which launched the program in 1981 and who continues to provide valuable leadership and support.

With the help of its hard working state contacts nationwide, and the support of an executive director and development director, NAITCO is poised to increase the number of K-12 teachers and students it reaches nationally and internationally for years to come.

Left: A teacher works in the "Planning and Planting with Plant Parts in your School Garden" workshop.

# President's Message



Lisa Gaskalla

Connecting U.S. webmail teachers and students to the farm by using agricultural concepts in classroom instruction is the mission of the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO).

NAITCO and its members in 48 states and six territories worked hard in 2015 to develop and provide lessons, workshops, grant opportunities and other programs to help teachers

in kindergarten through 12th grade contextualize agriculture in their reading, writing, nutrition, science and social studies classes. Special programs in 2015 included:

- The National Agriculture in the Classroom National Conference 'Unbridled Possibilities' where nearly 500 teachers and informal educators gathered at The Galt House Hotel in downtown Louisville, KY June 16-20 to learn how to use agricultural concepts in their general education classrooms, after-school events and farm tours.
- The 2015 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award where six teachers from Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Utah were honored for their innovative teaching strategies using agriculture.
- The rollout of NAITCO's National Agriculture Literacy Curriculum Matrix, a database that is the first of its kind with hundreds of free lessons and companion resources that K-12 teachers can easily search by grade level, subject area, educational standard and keyword. A big 'thank you' to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and CHS Foundation, Inc. for their support of this innovative project.

•The regional meetings of NAITCO state contacts in Phoenix, AZ for the Western Region, Lansing, MI for the Central Region, Louisville, KY for the Southern Region and Concord, NH for the Eastern Region where state contacts work in small groups to discuss NAITCO programs and share ideas and resources to help strengthen Agriculture in the Classroom outreach in their home states.

Altogether, NAITCO and its member organizations reached nearly 130,000 teachers and 6.6 million students in kindergarten through 12th grade in 2015 (or about 13 percent of the U.S. student population.) They carried out their programs with budgets totaling \$10 million.

NAITCO leveraged these state budgets with funding it receives from the USDA, CHS Foundation, Inc., American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, Farm Credit, National Grange and others. Without their support, NAITCO and its member states wouldn't be able to carry out the quality programming they deliver that educates K-12 teachers and students about the importance of American agriculture.

Americans continue to take an interest in the source of their food, fiber and fuel and NAITCO and its members are uniquely positioned to reach students beginning at a young age with the message of the importance of agriculture. I have been honored to serve as president of such a dynamic organization of agricultural literacy leaders, and look forward to watching it grow at the state, national and international level in the years to come.

# Number of Educators Reached

2009 – 104,655  
 2010 – 105,256  
 2011 – 156,518  
 2012 – 149,585  
 2013 – 165,000  
 2014 – 171,000  
 2015 – 130,000



# Number of Students Reached

2010 – 5,598,190  
 2011 – 5,641,025  
 2012 – 6,009,045  
 2013 – 6,471,621  
 2014 – 5,299,566  
 2015 – 6,600,000





# National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference

About 500 educators from around the country learned the 'Unbridled Possibilities' of using agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies and more at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization's (NAITCO) National Conference held at The Galt House Hotel June 16-20 in Louisville, Kentucky.

NAITCO, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute for Food and Agriculture and Kentucky Agriculture and the Environment in the Classroom, held three days of workshops that showed kindergarten through 12th grade teachers how to use agriculture to teach core subject areas. In addition, conference participants went on traveling workshops of nearby farms and university research facilities to learn about the equine, soybean and bourbon industries, among other stops.

The conference also honored several national teacher winners and a national Ag Advocate winner for the innovative ways they use agriculture to teach students about an important industry.

"The USDA-NIFA is proud to support the National Agriculture in the Classroom National Conference where K-12 general education teachers from around the country can compare teaching strategies that effectively use agriculture as a teaching tool," said Dr. Victoria LeBeaux, the USDA-NIFA's National Program Leader for National Agriculture in the Classroom.

"What better way to show educators how to use agricultural concepts to jazz up their classroom instruction than to showcase innovative teaching strategies in workshops, awards presentations and tours of agricultural operations?" said Lisa Gaskalla, president of the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization. "Bottom line: We showed teachers that agriculture is a great way to teach core subjects and familiarize students with where their food, fiber and fuel come from."



Left: Teachers work together in Monica Pastor's workshop, 'Integrating Nutrition Lessons with Agriculture.'

Below: Workshop presenter Virginia Deitz makes her workshop 'Tasty Ag Connections to Writing' memorable by dressing up.



Below: Educators learn about 'The Puzzle of Perceptions and The Power of Persuasion' in Rod Wenzel and Betty Wolanyk's workshop.

# National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award Winners, Ag Advocate Award Winner

Each year NAITCO recognizes and showcases at its national conference award winning teachers and educators who have made strides in promoting agricultural literacy by using agriculture concepts to teach core subjects in their classrooms, on their field trips and on their farm tours.

The Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award (EITAA) recognizes teachers from around the country who use agriculture to teach reading, writing, science, nutrition and geography and more. By participating in these lessons and activities, students learn about the importance of agriculture at the same time. USDA-NIFA, Farm Credit Council and NAITCO sponsor the EITAA award.

In addition, the Ag Advocate Award recognizes an informal educator who gives of his or her time freely to educate K-12 students about the importance of agriculture. The National Grange sponsors this award each year.

All of these award recipients are honored each year at the NAITCO national conference, and 2015 was no different. Recipients of the 2015 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award are:

- Florida STEM elementary teacher, Christine Danger, who uses agriculture to teach technology and engineering concepts by having students design vertical growing systems and irrigation systems for their school garden.

- Kentucky seventh grade science teacher, Leslie Preston Meredith, who features agricultural concepts to teach across the curriculum to foster in her students' minds a love of the environment and an appreciation of the importance of agriculture.

- North Carolina kindergarten-through-fifth-grade teacher, Darlene Petranick, who uses an 18-bed school garden to teach all subject areas at her school.

- Tennessee kindergarten teacher, Rachel Parker Morris, who features a new agriculture topic each week by teaching the alphabet with agriculture-related words or class stories, and participating in a year-long study that ends with a field trip to a local farm.

- Virginia kindergarten teacher, M.K. Preston, who tries to instill in students a love of and respect for agriculture and the environment through inquiry-based and hands-on activities, and involvement in the Belview Giving Gardens school garden laboratory.

- Utah fifth grade teacher, Théo Anderson, who created the "Hens for Hunger" service learning project to help her students make connections to agriculture by contextualizing core curriculum in science and social studies. Her students hatch chicks, raise hens, collect eggs and make donations to the local food pantry.

Right: Winners of the 2015 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award at the conference.

Below: Retired Minnesota extension agent, Juanita Reed-Boniface, accepts her award as the National Grange's 2015 Ag Advocate of the Year.



The recipient of the 2015 Ag Advocate Award, which is sponsored by the National Grange, is retired Minnesota extension agent, Juanita Reed-Boniface. She and her husband, Dick, have worked for years with a legion of volunteers who make classroom visits in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, and have expanded their outreach to include programs with Minnesota Farm Bureau, Minnesota and American Cattlewomen, Minnesota State Fair, University of Minnesota 4-H, Minnesota Agri-Women and National Agri-Women and Project Food, Land & People.

# Curriculum Matrix Launched

Teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade looking for real-life applications for their reading, writing, science and social studies classes should search no further. The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) has launched its National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix, a database of lesson plans and related activities searchable by grade level, subject area, educational standard, and keyword.

The Matrix found at <http://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix/> features lesson plans that use agricultural themes to integrate history, geography, nutrition, science, technology, engineering, and math content. It provides teachers around the country with a one-stop-shop for resources that help them connect their students to required learning standards with relevant and engaging resources.

“The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization’s Curriculum Matrix is the only resource of its kind that contextualizes lessons with agricultural applications and ties them to national educational standards,” said Dr. Debra Spielmaker, project director for NAITCO who developed the

Curriculum Matrix. “In addition to lesson plans, the Matrix offers complementary companion resources such as activities, games, videos and more to help solidify in students’ minds the concepts they need to learn.”

NAITCO developed the Curriculum Matrix together with its partners USDA/NIFA and CHS Foundation, Inc. “We’re very proud of the new resource we are able to offer our teachers and educators across the country to help further agricultural literacy instruction in their classrooms,” said NAITCO President Lisa Gaskalla, who is also the Florida AITC state contact.

The Curriculum Matrix’s lessons and companion resources are available to educators free of charge, and a user name and password aren’t needed to access them.

NAITCO launched the Curriculum Matrix at its National Conference ‘Unbridled Possibilities’ in Louisville, KY in June. To view a video about its release please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCv7cY6JKHY>

# National Agriculture in the Classroom Officers



Lisa Gaskalla

Lisa Gaskalla, President Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, Inc.



Lorri Brenneman

Lorri Brenneman, President-Elect Montana Department of Agriculture



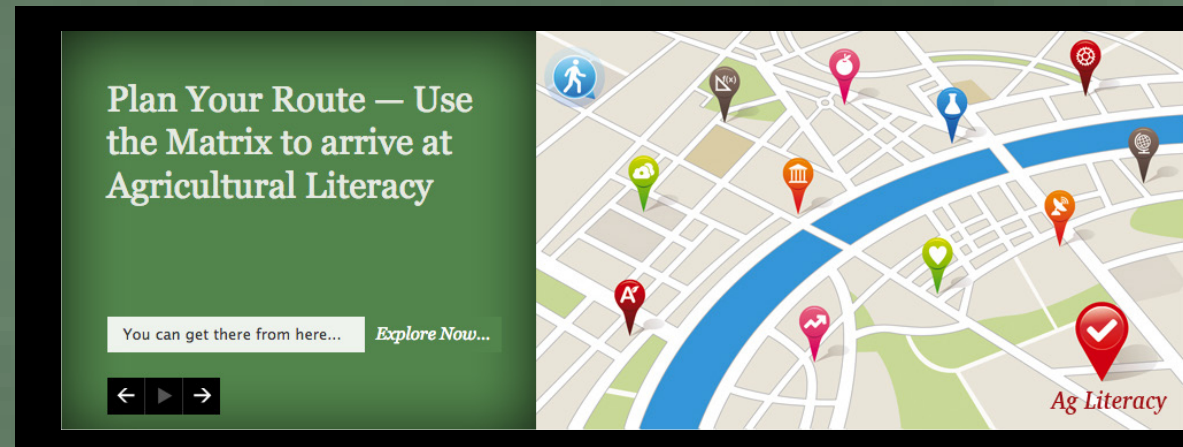
Al Withers

Al Withers, Treasurer Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom



Tonya Wible

Tonya Wible, Secretary Pennsylvania Friends of Ag Foundation



# State Contacts List

## Alabama

Kim Ramsey  
Alabama Agriculture in the Classroom  
kearwood@alfafarmers.org

## Alaska

Melissa Sikes  
Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom  
fairbanksswcd@gmail.com

## Arizona

Monica Pastor  
University of Arizona, College of Ag & Sciences  
mpastor@email.arizona.edu

## Arkansas

Andy Guffey  
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation  
andrew.guffey@arfb.com

## California

Judy Culbertson  
California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom  
judy@learnaboutag.org

## Colorado

Bette Blinde  
Colorado Foundation for Agriculture  
bblinde@growingyourfuture.com

## Connecticut

Martha Johnson  
Connecticut Agriculture in the Classroom  
martha@ctaef.org

## Florida

Lisa Gaskalla  
Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, Inc.  
gaskalla@ufl.edu

## Georgia

Donna Rocker  
Georgia Farm Bureau Federation  
dhrocker@gfb.org

## Hawaii

Naomi Kanehiro  
University of Hawaii, Cooperative Extension  
nkanehir@hawaii.edu

## Idaho

Rick Waitley  
Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom  
rick@amgidaho.com

## Illinois

Kevin Daugherty  
Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom  
kdaugherty@ilfb.org

## Indiana

Julie Taylor  
Indiana Farm Bureau  
jtaylor@infb.org

## Iowa

Will Fett  
Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation  
wfett@iowaagliteracy.org

## Kansas

Cathy Musick  
Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom  
ksfac@ksu.edu

## Kentucky

Scott Christmas  
Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation  
Scott.christmas@kyfb.com

## Louisiana

Lynda Danos  
Louisiana Farm Bureau  
lyndad@lfbf.org

## Maine

Willie Grenier  
Maine Agriculture in the Classroom  
maitc@maine.gov

## Maryland

George Mayo  
Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation  
gmayo@maefonline.com

## Massachusetts

Marjorie Cooper  
Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom  
massaginclassroom@gmail.com

## Michigan

Tonia Ritter  
Michigan Farm Bureau  
tritter@michfb.com

## Minnesota

Sue Knott  
Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom  
sue.knott@state.mn.us

## Mississippi

Clara Bilbo  
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation  
cbilbo@msfb.org

## Missouri

Diane Olson  
Missouri Farm Bureau Federation  
dolson@mofb.com

## Montana

Lorri Brenneman  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
lbrenneman@mt.gov

## Nebraska

Courtney Schaaradt  
Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom  
courtneys@nefb.org

## Nevada

Amber Smyer  
Nevada Department of Agriculture  
asmeyer@agri.nv.gov

## New Hampshire

Debbi Cox  
New Hampshire Agriculture in the Classroom  
nhaitc@nhfarmbureau.org

## New Jersey

Carolyn Taylor  
New Jersey Agricultural Society  
learningthroughgardening@gmail.com

## New Mexico

Traci Curry  
New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom  
agclass@nmflb.org

## New York

Katie Carpenter  
New York Agriculture in the Classroom  
Kse45@cornell.edu

## North Carolina

Michele Reedy  
North Carolina Farm Bureau AITC  
Michele.reedy@ncfb.org

## North Dakota

Ashley Stegman  
North Dakota Department of Agriculture  
astegman@nd.gov

## Oklahoma

Audrey Harmon  
Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry  
audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov

## Oregon

Jessica Jansen  
Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation  
Jessica.jansen@oregonstate.edu

## Pennsylvania

Tonya Wible  
Pennsylvania Friends of Ag Foundation  
tdwible@pfb.com

## Rhode Island

Lyn Spinella  
Rhode Island Farm Bureau  
lspinella@rifb.org

## South Carolina

Vonne Knight  
South Carolina Farm Bureau Agriculture in the Classroom  
vknight@scfb.com

## Tennessee

Chris Fleming  
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation  
cfleming@tfbf.com

## Texas

Mona Oney  
Texas Farm Bureau  
monaoney@txfb.org



## Utah

Denise Stewardson  
Utah Agriculture in the Classroom  
Denise.stewardson@usu.edu

## Virginia

Tammy Maxey  
Virginia Foundation for AITC  
Tammy.maxey@vafb.com

## Washington

Lisa Avery  
Washington Agriculture in the Classroom  
info@waic.net

Kristen Hinton  
khintonranches@gmail.com

## West Virginia

Michelle Bailey  
West Virginia Farm Bureau  
michelleb@wvfarm.org

Mary Beth Bennett  
West Virginia University Extension  
mbbennett@mail.wvu.edu

## Wisconsin

Darlene Arneson  
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation  
darneson@wfbf.com

## Wyoming

Jessie Dafoe  
Wyoming Agriculture in the Classroom  
jdafoe@wyaitc.org

## U.S. Territories

### American Samoa

Aufa'i Ropeti Areta  
American Samoa Community College

### Guam

Res. Instruction Coordinator  
University of Guam

### Micronesia

Jackson Phillip  
College of Micronesia Cooperative Extension  
jphillip@mail.fm

### Northern Marianas

Diana R. Greenough  
Coordinator, Natural Resources Management  
Program  
dianag@nmcnet.edu

### Puerto Rico

Priscilla Hernandez  
P\_hernandez@rumac.upr.clu.edu

### Virgin Islands

Rev. Eddie Williams  
Virgin Island FFA  
eddiejedc@yahoo.com



PESTICIDE EDUCATION PROGRAM

# Insect Mouthpieces



Piercing-sucking

Siphoning

Sponging



Diagram of an Insect



ATE® Pesticide Education

Metamorphosis

Teachers learn about pesticide education and insects at a booth as part of the national conference in Louisville, Kentucky.