

# OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY

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**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Amber Bales is named 2016 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year**

Third-grade teacher Amber Bales told her Morrison Elementary students that if you don't succeed the first time, just keep trying. She pointed to herself as an example of how her advice can pay off.

Last year, Bales sent in her application for the Ag in the Classroom (AITC) Teacher of the Year award, and was named one of the top three finalists. That spurred her to do everything she could possibly do to claim the honor. During her year of self-improvement and discovery she grew as a teacher.

"I learned a lot about myself, including the passion I had for agriculture, more ways to integrate agriculture and technology and was given new opportunities to share my agricultural experiences," Bales said.

Her determination and over 19 years of teaching experience paid off. Bales was surprised to be named 2016 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year at a Morrison Elementary school assembly. AITC Coordinators Audrey Harmon and Cheri Long were on hand to bestow the honor along with a gift basket and news that she will have her expenses paid to attend the national AITC conference.

Bales will be expected to speak at Oklahoma's summer AITC conference and serve as an inspiration for other teachers who use the AITC curriculum to bring agriculture inside the classroom. She will help them learn how to use lessons like sprouting bean seeds, learning why purple vegetables and fruits are so good for your health, protecting pollinators and researching buffalo facts.

In addition to being selected AITC Teacher of the Year, Bales was the 2001-2002 Morrison Teacher of the Year.

Morrison Elementary Principal Christy Williams noted that Bales is a dedicated teacher who strives to infuse the elementary curriculum with agricultural knowledge. She is known for her leadership and her enthusiasm for agriculture.

Bales will be honored at Ag Day on March 30 by Oklahoma Farm Credit, Co-Bank, Oklahoma Soybean Board, Southwest Dairy Farmers, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women, Oklahoma State Dept. of Education and the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry. The annual celebration of

agriculture takes place in the state capitol in Oklahoma City. It is open to the public and all events are free.

Bales will attend the National Ag in the Classroom conference in Arizona and be On the Road with Ag in the Classroom this summer. The summer road trip for teachers focuses on the diversity of Oklahoma agriculture and provides professional development credit. This windshield view of agriculture includes hands-on links with Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom lessons, activities and resources that can be integrated in all subject areas.

To learn more about the Ag in the Classroom curriculum, visit <http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/> or contact Audrey Harmon at 405-740-0160 or [audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov](mailto:audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov).

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Suggested photo caption:

Amber Bales (center) holds a gift basket of teaching resources she received during an awards ceremony for the 2016 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year. Program coordinators Cheri Long (left) and Audrey Harmon surprised Bales at Morrison Elementary School where Bales teaches third grade.