

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

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Ag in the Classroom State Summer Conference STEMulates Learning

This year's Ag in the Classroom (AITC) State Summer Conference theme "Gate to Plate to STEMulate," provided teachers across Oklahoma with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) activities to stimulate agricultural learning in their classrooms.

Highlights from the state conference included keynote speaker Josh Hargis, Program Director of AgVocates for Exceptional Individuals and 36 workshops presented by teachers and industry experts from across the state. There was also an appearance by YouTube sensation, The Peterson Farm Brothers, who have received over 41 million views on YouTube videos. More importantly to the AITC group, the brothers are spreading the word about agriculture through creative and innovative methods. They served as a great example of how learning about agriculture can be fun for students.

The purpose of AITC is to help Oklahoma students become acquainted with our state's food and fiber industry through special curriculum. The summer conference is a great way for AITC coordinators to offer valuable agriculture knowledge and resources to Oklahoma teachers.

"Ag in the Classroom wants to make sure that teachers end their summer on an exciting note," said state coordinator Audrey Harmon. "It is the goal of Ag in the Classroom to always make sure teachers feel special and appreciated. This day is a great opportunity to highlight amazing teachers from across the state and let them share what they are doing to engage students in their classrooms."

Harmon also said that the conference brought in some of the best teachers in the state to present exciting and engaging workshops, including 2016 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year from Morrison, Amber Bales and 2016 National Excellence in Teaching Agriculture Award Winner, Lisa Storm of Kingfisher.

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

Through AITC, educators not only learn about agriculture themselves, but they learn creative new ways to incorporate agriculture into their everyday curriculum.

“We want educators to learn about agriculture,” said Harmon. “*From the Gate*—this is why we also brought in agriculture producers to present, *to the Plate*—our hope is they will understand and be able to convey to their students how agriculture impacts their lives, *to STEMulate*—several workshops today focused on STEM activities and we hope they will stimulate learning about agriculture in the classroom.”

An important factor of AITC is equipping teachers with valuable teaching resources. This year’s conference participants received the brand new AITC Financial Literacy cards. The cards, made possible by a generous donation from Oklahoma AgCredit and CoBank, feature agriculture-related financial literacy questions and math problems. The cards offer a unique method for educators to teach financial literacy and agriculture simultaneously. AITC’s hope is this will result in more fiscally aware students graduating high school.

In addition to the workshops and entertainment, Ag Advocate Kitty Beavers was recognized for her efforts in promoting AITC, as well as recently retired State Coordinator, Dana Bessinger for her years of dedication to the program.

The conference took place on Monday at the Moore-Norman Technology Center and had an impressive 300 Oklahoma teachers in attendance.

For more information about Ag in the Classroom, visit www.agclassroom.org/ok.

Five things you’ll learn from Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom

Fascinating facts about agriculture are plentiful. Following are just five of the seemingly countless facts provided by Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom.

- Many of the tribes located in Indian Territory were growing peaches well before Oklahoma statehood. Travelers through the area reported peaches as one of the foods offered by their Indian hosts.
- Beef is an important part of a healthy diet. About 50 separate nutrients are essential to good health. No single food contains all of these nutrients. For this reason, dietitians and health providers recommend consuming a wide variety of foods daily from several different food categories. One of the nutrients you need, Vitamin B12, can be found only in animal foods, such as beef. Beef also provides significant amounts of other important nutrients—protein, riboflavin, niacin, iron and zinc.
- Female swine are called sows. Sows give birth to litters of pigs twice a year. Each litter usually has eight to 12 baby pigs. Giving birth to baby pigs is called farrowing.
- Because wheat is such a versatile crop, it is being harvested somewhere in the world every month of the year.
- The chicken can travel up to nine miles per hour.

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom “Lesson” plans

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a joint project of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H Youth Development, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, and the Oklahoma State Department of Education. For lesson plans to use in the classroom, go to <http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/lessons/index.html> .

Photo Captions: Teachers enjoying the morning workshops at the AITC State Summer Conference.

300 teachers from across the state of Oklahoma gathered Monday morning for the AITC State Summer Conference at the Moore-Norman Technology Center.

Josh Hargis, Program Director for AgVocates for Exceptional Individuals addresses teachers at the AITC State Summer Conference.