

CREAM OF THE CROP

A Harvest of Ideas for Educators

Fantastic Fact:

It usually takes 90–110 days for pumpkin plants to grow from seedlings and produce fully mature pumpkins.

Imagine this...

Writing Contest

Students
grades 3-8



The *Imagine this...* Story Writing Contest is open and accepting submissions. Students can submit stories with the [click of a button](#). A mail-in option is still available, but now it's easier than ever to submit a story.

Going on its 25th year, the contest entails students writing stories (real or imagined) based on accurate information about California agriculture. One winning author is selected from each grade (3-8). These students will travel with their families and teachers to the State Capitol in March to be recognized and celebrated during National Agriculture Week.

☐ **Winning students get:**

1. The opportunity to be a published author
2. Their name in lights on the State Assembly floor and a tour of the State Capitol
3. An e-reader
4. Transportation-expense paid trip to the state capitol for the *Imagine this...* Ceremony. Parents and teachers included
5. To watch their story come alive as it is illustrated by high school art students

☐ **Winning teachers get:**

1. A scholarship to attend the 2023 California Ag in the Classroom Conference
2. Transportation reimbursement to the State Capitol for the *Imagine this...* Ceremony
3. Free resources for their classrooms
4. To watch their student shine as a published author

Reminder, students can now submit stories online.

Deadline: November 1!

SUBMIT STORIES HERE!



LearnAboutAg®



HEAR FROM LAST YEAR'S WINNERS

Got 2-minutes? Check out last year's *Imagine this...* winning authors' top tips for writing and submitting a story.

Show your class or a student you know this video to inspire them to get writing and enter the contest.



CONFERENCE RECAP

This September, more than 200 educators from across the state joined us in Sacramento for the 36th Annual Ag in the Classroom Conference this September.

The conference, spanning three days, took attendees from the farm to the fork, quite literally. Educators enjoyed collaborative events within the Sacramento Farm to Fork Festival, as well as

field trips to local farms, educational workshops, networking with other conference goers, and more.



Stacey Amparano

Grade Taught:
TK-12th

School:
UCANR Desert REC: Farm Smart

County:
Imperial



Let's start with the basics: What is your favorite California commodity?

It's all about carrots! From showcasing the vibrant world of colored carrots to the excitement of harvesting and savoring these crunchy delights, carrots have a special place in my heart.

How and when did you first learn about Ag in the

I learned about Ag in the Classroom when I joined the [Farm Smart](#) team in 2015 as the new Farm Smart program manager. The CA Ag in the Classroom Conference was one of the first work conferences I attended after being hired. Since the first conference I attended in 2015, the CA Ag in the Classroom conference remains my favorite conference to attend each year.

How long have you been teaching students about agriculture?

I have been the Community Education Supervisor for the Farm Smart program since 2015; directly educating youth and adults about agriculture through field trips to our 255-acre research farm and connecting local teachers to CA Ag in the Classroom materials. Through this program, I see over 10,000 participants a year. In addition to my work with Farm Smart, my family has raised club lamb sheep for over 30 years. I enjoy volunteering with 4-H and FFA, assisting in educating youth about sheep production and showmanship.

What is your favorite AITC program, resource, or event, and why?

The annual CA Ag in the Classroom conference is by far my favorite event of the year. At each conference, I leave inspired by the amazing educators from across California

sharing resources and methods for communicating agriculture to our youth. I also enjoy the conference field trips to local farms and ranches. California agriculture is amazing and I'm always learning something new! Being able to visit these farms and ranches during the conference is a great opportunity to see agriculture in action and provide inspiration for our future lessons.

Describe an agriculture-based project you have been involved with lately.

One of my favorite projects of the year is our annual Read with a Farmer event. For the past 6 years, we have teamed up with Imperial County Farm Bureau, Imperial Valley Vegetables Growers Assoc, Imperial County CWA, IV H2O, and AgWest Farm Credit to bring farmers into our local Imperial County third-grade classrooms to read an ag-accurate book. We select a book to read each year and donate those books to the classrooms after the farmer reads it to the class. The students are thrilled to listen to the farmers read the story and ask questions. This event fosters a deeper appreciation for our local agriculture and where our food comes from. Our local farmers now look forward to connecting with classrooms through the Read with a Farmer event.

Do you have any advice for other teachers on how to implement agriculture into their classrooms?

Implementing agriculture in classrooms can be a rewarding experience. Ag in the Classroom has amazing free resources that make integrating agriculture into your lessons more accessible and achievable. I also recommend that teachers seek out their local UC Cooperative Extension or Farm Bureau to invite a local farmer, UC Farm Advisor, or UC Specialist to your classroom to speak. This creates a local connection for your students and opens conversations for careers in agriculture.

Any Ag-ha moments in your classroom?

My favorite Ag-ha moment is the first vegetable a student picks, like carrots! I can describe to the students in detail that we are going to take a wagon ride to the field and harvest carrots, but it isn't until that first tug of the carrot top in the field that you see the student's faces light up and exclaim "I found a carrot." It's at that time you get that amazing ag-ha moment and agriculture comes alive for the students.

I am passionate about helping students connect to the food they eat. We call it food literacy-helping students understand where our food comes from, how it is grown, how it gets to our plates, and the nutrition it provides for our bodies. Our program is unique in that we have the opportunity to take students out of the classroom and into the research farm.

BE OR NOMINATE A TEACHER FEATURE: EMAIL US HERE!



Pumpkins.. Halloween Fun and More!

This month, we invite you to venture into the eerie and mysterious world of pumpkins, where scientific exploration meets Halloween magic. Our featured resource, designed for students in grades three through five, is bewitchingly engaging, offering a perfect blend of educational intrigue and spooky fun.

This resource can be found in the National Agriculture in the Classroom organization's Ag Literacy Curriculum Matrix. This comprehensive repository offers instructional materials tailored for teaching agricultural literacy and provides K-12 educators with relevant standards-based instructional resources. The lesson plans and companion resources use agriculture as a context for science, social studies, and nutrition education content.

[CHECK OUT THE RESOURCE](#)



Interested in championing nutrition education, advancing nutrition security, or boosting agricultural literacy in your school or community?

The Let's Eat Healthy Community Grant program advances the activation of the Dairy Council of California's Let's Eat

Healthy Initiative, engaging champions to empower healthier children, families, and communities through a myriad of strategies and partnerships to meet the needs of local communities.

This funding program advances innovative and collaborative solutions to improve nutrition education and access to nutritious foods that include milk and dairy, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.

Applications are now being accepted for 2023-2024 Let's Eat Healthy Community Grants.

The application deadline is October 23, 2023

[LEARN MORE](#)

Community Events

[National School Lunch Week](#) **October 9-13, 2023**

During National School Lunch Week school districts and organizations throughout the country will celebrate the vital role school lunch programs play in nourishing students. The week is dedicated to encouraging participation in school lunch programs and sharing the positive impact a healthy school lunch can have on a child's life. More information [HERE](#).

[Imagine this...Story Writing Contest](#) 3-8 grade students statewide **Submission deadline: November 1, 2023**

California students in grades 3-8 creatively explore where their food comes from by writing narratives. The winning stories from each grade are illustrated by high school art students and published in our annual storybook, *Imagine this... Stories Inspired by Agriculture*. More



information [HERE.](#)

[Ventura County Farm Day](#)
November 4, 2023
10 AM - 3 PM

On Saturday, November 4, more than 15 Ventura County farms, ranches, and agricultural organizations will invite the public to experience a day of free agricultural activities and tours during the 11th Annual Ventura County Farm Day. Visitors can map out their day by viewing the Farm Day Trail Map. See details [HERE.](#)

[Purple Plow Challenge](#)
Online
Fall 2023

The Purple Plow STEM Learning Challenge engages students in creating solutions for real-world, complex issues related to agriculture. The Fall 2023 Challenge includes activities related to pollinators, energy consumption, and cattle ranching. Find information [HERE.](#)

[Submit Your Fall Class Artwork!](#)
The California Kindergarten Association
Deadline: December 8, 2023

The California Kindergarten Association's Visual Arts Committee wants to showcase your students' art at the 35th CKA Annual Young Children's Art Exhibit. This event will be held Saturday and Sunday, January 13 and 14, 2024, during the California Kindergarten Conference at the Hyatt Regency Santa Clara, where Ag in the Classroom will be offering a workshop!

You are invited to submit paintings, collages, drawings, prints, class quilts, murals, sculptures, puppets, and more by PreK, TK, K, and Grade 1 students. More information [HERE.](#)



Show Your Support for Agricultural Literacy

Help us continue providing FREE programs and materials that create an awareness and understanding of agriculture among California's educators and students.

**MAKE A
GIFT
TODAY!**

Stay Connected! @LearnAboutAg



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