

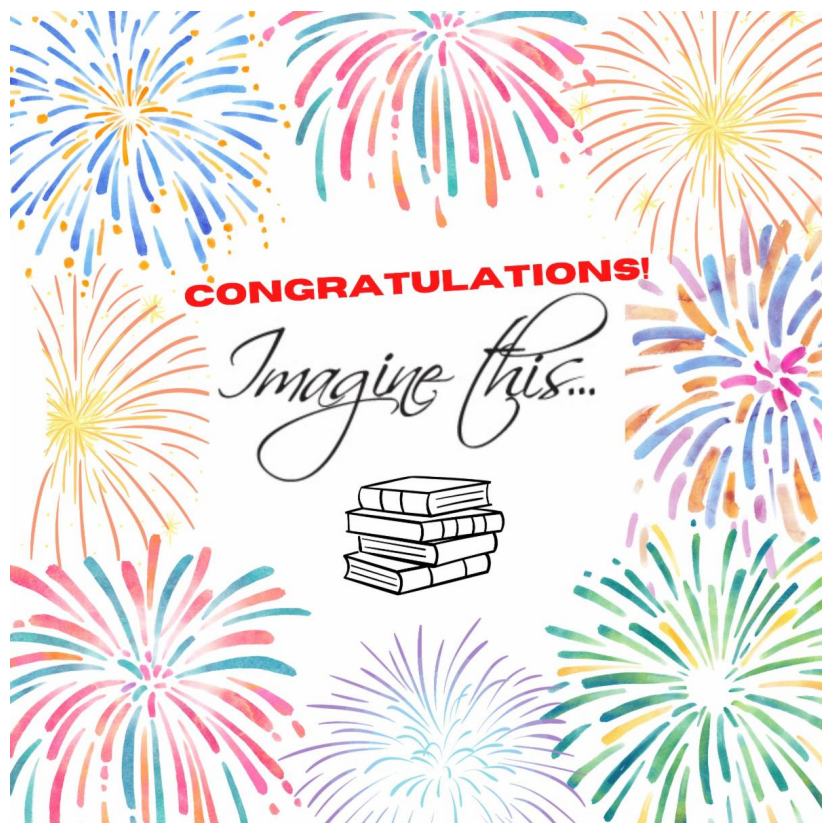


CREAM OF THE CROP

A Harvest of Ideas for Educators

Fantastic Fact:

Carrots come in many colors including orange, white, yellow, and purple.



STATE WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

Drum roll, please...

Introducing the 2023-2024 *Imagine this...* Story Writing Contest state winners.

California students in grades 3-8 creatively explored where their food and fiber come from by writing narrative stories. See who won [HERE](#).

Each story is being illustrated by high school art students to be published in our annual *Imagine this...* book with a release date of March 2024.

P.S. The *Imagine this...* Story Writing Contest turns

25! Celebrate and support agriculture literacy with us at the Northern National Ag Week event, hosted at the Tsakopoulos Library Galleria in downtown Sacramento on Friday, March 22, 2024.

Find out more [HERE!](#)



LearnAboutAg[®]

Unwrap Resources for the New Year!

Hello 2024...it's going to be a grape year! Or a great year, rather, to learn about agriculture. Get a jump start with a packet full of resources for your

classroom, including a healthy meal recipe book.

The first 100 people who fill out this [form](#), will receive this resource bundle.



SIGN UP FOR THE NEW YEAR'S PACKET

Teacher Feature



Jennifer Epley

Grades Taught: 7th-8th grade

School: Isbell Middle School

County: Ventura

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

It's difficult to pick one favorite California commodity! Since I am a Ventura County girl, I'd have to say strawberries and avocados are my favorites.

How and when did you first learn about Ag in the Classroom?

I learned about Ag in the Classroom about 8 years ago. A colleague and I were trying to start an Ag pathways program at our school and get a garden going. We stumbled upon all the amazing resources on the Ag in the Classroom website, LearnAboutAg.org and continue to use it as our main resource.

How long have you been teaching students about agriculture?

In the past, I taught ancient civilizations and agriculture was always a part of that subject. In Ventura County, agriculture is a way of life, and you can't go far without seeing orchards and fields. I am in my 26th year of teaching and no matter what the grade level or subject, agriculture is always a part of my classroom.

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

My favorite AITC program is the yearly conference! I love all the energy, resources, and immense knowledge I glean from every conference! I cannot wait for next year's conference!

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

This past year we planted a wellness garden in our school garden. We filled it with herbs and students will dry the herbs to create tea blends that will be sold in our school Wellness Center. We are working towards making the entire garden an area for wellness and peace for students who want to escape to nature.

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

Start with what you're passionate about. If you love apples, look for lessons on apples. Students will get excited when they see you excited and then you'll feel more confident to look further for other ways to incorporate ag into the classroom! Also, look for inspiration on the [LearnAboutAg website!](#) There are so many amazing resources to use.

Any "ag-ha" moments in your classroom?

We were recently discussing the food of peasants in the Middle Ages. It was great to hear students discuss the crops and how these people may have farmed. Students who were more familiar with agriculture from our Ag Club did a great job explaining the challenges of root crops and how herbs can be preserved. Lots of idea sharing and great inquiry!

BE OR NOMINATE A TEACHER FEATURE: EMAIL US HERE!



Featured Resource

Cowabunga! All About Dairy Breeds

Our lesson plan on dairy breeds has officially been crowned as one of the TOP TEN most viewed lessons of 2023 on the NATIONAL Agriculture Curriculum Matrix!

Yes, you heard it right! Our lesson was not just a MOO-dium success; it was an udderly phenomenal hit, leaving other lessons grazing out in the pasture. Don't miss out on this locally grown resource being used by teachers across the nation!



[DOWNLOAD THE RESOURCE](#)



Grant Feature



PLANTS Grant Application OPEN

Interested in transforming the school food supply chain?

Proposals for projects led by groups of local partners with systemic and equity-driven approaches are currently being accepted for the Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS) grant program.

Projects should seek to build and strengthen relationships among community-based food system stakeholders and School Food Authorities (SFAs) as well as expand scratch cooking in schools to build more nourishing school meal programs. This project is funded by the USDA Food & Nutrition Service Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative and is administered by the Chef Ann Foundation in partnership with Kitchen Sync Strategies Collaborative, Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, and National Farm to School Network.

Grant application deadline is January 22, 2024

[LEARN MORE](#)



[California Kindergarten Conference](#)

January 12-14, 2024

The 2024 CA Kindergarten Conference in Santa Clara, CA.

AITC will be presenting "Life on the Farm: Incorporating Agriculture into Early Childhood Classrooms," on Saturday, January 13 from 3:30 pm to 4:45 pm. Find more information [HERE.](#)

[FREE Mobile Dairy Classroom Assembly](#)

Bring agriculture to life with the Dairy Council's FREE Mobile Dairy Classroom Assembly. Find more information [HERE.](#)

[Hilmar Cheese Company Educational Tours](#)

Hilmar, CA

Hands-on activities to explore the science and technology in dairy and cheese making in the Central Valley. Request a tour and find more information [HERE.](#)

SAVE THE DATE!

[Northern National Ag Week Event](#)

March 22, 2024
Sacramento, CA

This year's Ag in the Classroom Northern National Ag Week event is at the Tsakopoulos Library Galleria in downtown Sacramento.

The focus of this event is to support California ag literacy, a cause that is vital to ensure a prosperous future for our state. Enjoy a delicious dinner, hosted wine bar, live music, and a silent auction.

Join us, along with the Secretary of California Department of Food and Agriculture, Karen Ross, and others in the agriculture community in supporting agriculture education.

Register [HERE.](#)

[Pollinator Partnership](#)

Pollinator Partnership is launching the [2024 Pollinator Steward Certification](#) and the newly restructured [Bee Friendly Gardening Program.](#)

[Food and Agriculture Center For Science Education](#)

The Food and Agriculture Center for Science Education provides learning materials that are in alignment with contemporary STEM standards; materials

that spark inspiration. More information [HERE.](#)

[Soybean Science Challenge](#)

Eleven Ag Pathway video mini-lessons for science classrooms are available through the University of Arkansas Extension Program. Get more information [HERE.](#)

[Purple Plow Challenge](#)

Online

Students can help conserve natural resources locally and protect local ecosystems by addressing current and historical problems associated with the erosion of topsoil that limits the ability to grow food. After thoughtful research to evaluate how these challenges exist locally and globally, students will design, test, and demonstrate a solution that reduces topsoil erosion for their unique location or situation to help conserve productive soil. The final product will be a model which demonstrates a measurable reduction in soil erosion. 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.

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DONATION
TODAY!

Stay Connected! @LearnAboutAg



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