



1422 Mountain Springs Road
Cabot, AR 72023
T:(501) 339-6140
W: www.agclassroom.org
E: director@naitco.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 28, 2022**

SEVEN TEACHERS, TEAM OF TEACHERS SELECTED FOR THE 2022 NATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING ABOUT AGRICULTURE AWARD

A Maine teacher of fifth and sixth grade students who also sponsors a school garden club, a Utah fourth grade teacher who teaches students to solve agriculture challenges and six other teachers from around the country have been selected as the 2022 National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award winners.

The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO), U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) and Farm Credit partner each year to honor teachers in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade (Pre-K-12) from around the country for the innovative ways they use agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies, STEM, STEAM and more.

"These outstanding teachers recognize that agriculture also is fertile ground for teaching botany, biology, chemistry, finance, climatology, and arts, in ways that any age or level of students can understand, appreciate and apply to their daily life," said Dr. Carrie Castille, director of USDA-NIFA, which provides federal leadership and annual funding for NAITCO. "When a student makes that real-life connection to the lessons their teachers share, students continue to learn and absorb the true meaning of those lessons when they leave the classroom. Innovative teachers like these are often responsible for awakening a student's love of learning, nature and science."

"National Agriculture in the Classroom and its state and territory program leaders are honored to recognize and celebrate these talented teachers for the innovative ways in which they use agricultural themes to teach core curriculum concepts in science, social studies, language arts, and nutrition," said Denise Stewardson, president of NAITCO and director of Utah Agriculture in the Classroom. "Their efforts are critical in cultivating an understanding of and appreciation for agriculture in this generation of students."

"Teachers are key partners in agricultural literacy education, helping to shape the next generation of agriculture advocates through intentional and engaging activities," said president and CEO of the Farm Credit Council Todd Van Hoose. "Farm Credit is proud to honor these innovative educators and support their ongoing commitment to growing future leaders."

This year's winning teachers are:

- Abby Plummer, a fifth and sixth grade teacher at Edna Drinkwater School in Northport, ME, uses lessons across all subjects, an after-school garden club, a school greenhouse and student-run farm stand to bring ag literacy to her students and others in kindergarten through eighth grade.
- Jennifer Nichols, a first grade teacher at Lake City Elementary in Lake City, MI, has her students study life cycles while hatching chicks in an incubator, learn about agriculture and the environment through field trips to maple sugar farms and Christmas tree farms, as well as using virtual learning to adopt a calf from a neighboring farm and take virtual field trips.
- Jennifer Bailey, a second grade teacher at Argyle Central School in Argyle, NY, inspires creativity, curiosity and science exploration in her students using vermicomposting in the classroom, identifying maple trees to tap on the school grounds or analyzing school garden sites for pollinator habitats.

- Lisa Durham, a kindergarten teacher at Westminster Elementary in Westminster, SC, introduces agricultural literacy to her students using a classroom tower garden, Ag Science night at school and field trips in addition to helping organize ag in the classroom professional development for other teachers.
- Meaghan Porritt, a fourth grade teacher at Lewiston Elementary in Lewiston, UT, incorporates agriculture into her classroom using Ag Challenges, trivia, embryology and comparing methods of plant science used in greenhouses, hydroponics and aquaponics.
- Natalie Murray, kindergarten through fifth grade music teacher at Mirror Lake Elementary in Villa Rica, GA, uses a large garden program to teach weekly lessons in agriculture, conservation, environmental stewardship and healthy living to all of her students .
- Brad Hay and Paul King, teach seventh and eighth grade at Simmons Middle School in Flemingsburg, KY, and developed a hands-on learning environment called Cougar Hill Farm that exposes students to innovative agricultural concepts, career pathways, public speaking opportunities and teaching lessons on agriculture at the local elementary school.
- Tiffany Kobbermann, a seventh through twelfth grade family and consumer science teacher at Minnewaska High School in Glenwood, MN, uses agriculture in every lesson in with her students to provide a well-rounded perspective of agriculture. She helped organize ag career day at the school which won a national award for creative programming.

They will be honored at the 2022 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference “Empire State of Agriculture” June 28-July 1 at the Saratoga Springs City Center and Saratoga Hilton in Saratoga Springs, NY.

USDA/NIFA provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences. It invests in and supports initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture. NIFA applies an integrated approach to ensure that groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice. To learn more about USDA/NIFA, please visit <https://nifa.usda.gov/>.

Farm Credit supports rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services today and tomorrow. To learn more about Farm Credit, please visit <https://farmcredit.com/>.

NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing Agriculture in the Classroom programs in most of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Its mission is to educate Pre-K-12 teachers and students about the importance of agriculture by providing them with web-based materials, workshops and awards programs that demonstrate how agriculture can be used to effectively teach core subject areas. To learn more about NAITCO, please visit www.agclassroom.org.

This work is supported by the Agriculture in the Classroom Program, grant no. 2018-45042-28608/project accession no. 1016518, from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT ANDY GUFFEY at (501) 339-6140 or director@naitco.org