New Jersey Agriculture in the Classroom

November Newsletter

Our mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among New Jersey educators and students. You can learn more on our website *newjersey.agclassroom.org*

Click to subscribe to our newsletter

An Opportunity to Amp Up Your Ag Teaching

In this issue, Kimberly Garcia, our 2026 Teacher of the Year, highlights her experiences at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization's conference. We sent Kimberly, a second grade teacher at Patton J. Hill Elementary School in Trenton, to the conference in Rhode Island last summer, and she said she returned with "renewed enthusiasm for bringing agriculture into the classroom."

If you want to take your teaching of agriculture to the next level, there is no better place to learn how to reach that goal than NAITCO's annual conference, which will be held next year June 28-July 1 in Oklahoma City.

If a trip to the conference feels out of reach, it's not! There are two opportunities to apply *right now* for a scholarship to cover your conference registration and expenses. Check out the details below.



NJAITC Program Leader Caroline Etsch with 2026 Teacher of the Year Kimberly Garcia

If you have questions about the conference or how to apply, feel free to send us questions at ***njagliteracy@gmail.com.***

National Agriculture in the Classroom Annual Conference

June 28- July 1, 2027
Oklahoma City



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURE

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture is offering scholarships to cover travel expenses to the National Agriculture

Our parent organization is offering a scholarship to provide 2027 National Agriculture in the Classroom conference registration and up to three nights lodging for PreK-12th grade teachers. The scholarship does not cover travel expenses. The deadline to apply is December 15, 2026.

Click ***here*** for more information and an application.

in the Classroom conference for K-12 grade teachers.

The deadline to apply is December 1, 2026.

Click ***here*** for more information and an application.

Apply Now for a Scholarship!

Teachers From Across the Country Bring Agriculture to Life



A school garden in Rhode Island

By Kimberly Garcia

NJAITC 2026 Teacher of the Year

My most valuable experience at the 2026 National Agriculture in the Classroom conference in Rhode Island was connecting and networking with educators from across the country who share my passion for teaching students where their food comes from.

I was in awe of the number of dedicated teachers integrating agriculture into their classrooms and learning about the unique agricultural industries in their home states. Listening to their experiences, discovering their creative teaching ideas, and hearing how they bring agriculture to life for their students was both inspiring and motivating.

One of the highlights of my conference experience was choosing a traveling workshop that focused on visiting local school gardens. Seeing how other schools designed and used their gardens as outdoor learning spaces gave me so many ideas to bring back to our own school garden at Patton J. Hill Elementary School in Trenton.

Experiencing agriculture in Rhode Island also gave me a greater appreciation for the unique agricultural opportunities and practices found throughout our country.

I returned with fresh inspiration for creating meaningful, hands-on agricultural learning experiences that connect students to science, environmental stewardship, healthy eating, and the origins of their food.

I encourage fellow educators to apply for a scholarship to attend the 2027 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference in Oklahoma City.

It is an opportunity to learn from passionate educators, explore innovative teaching strategies, and return to your school with practical ideas and renewed enthusiasm for bringing agriculture into the classroom.



Play With Your Food, an activity Kimberly brought back from the conference that encourages students to try new healthy foods

Turkeys! Our Newest *NJ Ag in a Box* Topic

NJAITC's *NJ Ag in a Box* series gives teachers in grades 3-5 the resources and materials to teach three lessons every season about one of New Jersey's crops. The lessons, which each cover a different academic subject, can be modified for older and younger grade levels



Our latest ag box is *Turkeys!*

This box includes the book *My Family's Turkey Farm,* by Katie Olthoff
It includes lesson plans for:

- *My Family's Turkey Farm (literacy and science), including an NJAITC powerpoint presentation and turkey farm tour video*
- *Thanksgiving Dinner Breakdown (nutrition), including an NJAITC powerpoint presentation*
- *Build a Turkey Cage (STEM), including an NJAITC powerpoint presentation*

Materials for the turkey cage activity -- toothpicks, pipe cleaners, straws, play-doh, and tape -- as well as a class set of 30 AgMags on Poultry also come in the box.

An NJ Ag Box costs $30, including shipping. See all of our different ag box topics and place an order ***here.***

Lessons of the Month

Cranberries!



The Cranberry Bounce Test

Grades 3-5

Ripe cranberries bounce! Farmers use this characteristic to separate unripe cranberries from ripe cranberries after harvest. In this lesson, students test cranberries for bounciness, by estimating, observing, and separating the cranberries, and using fractions to record results.

Make a Cranberry Catapult

Grades 3-5

In this engineering design lesson, students work in small groups to create a simple catapult for cranberries, measure the distances their catapult can fling a cranberry, and graph and compare results.

The Geography of Thanksgiving



For grades 6-8

For grades 9-12

Students identify common Thanksgiving foods and their farm source, determine if those foods can be produced locally, and locate the common origins of their Thanksgiving day dinner.

Cranberry Fun Facts

It's cranberry season in New Jersey, and farmers are busy! New Jersey ranks third nationally in cranberry production, with up to 60 million pounds harvested each year.



Did you know...

1) Cranberries are one of the few fruits that are native to North America, along with blueberries and Concord grapes.

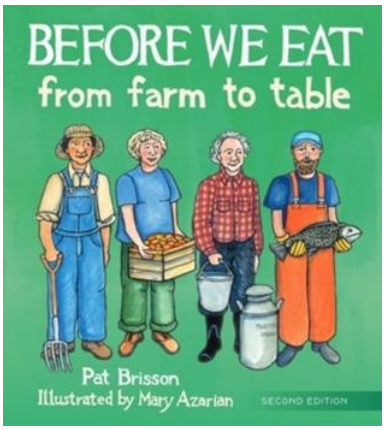
2) Early European settlers thought cranberry blossoms looked like a crane's head and neck, so they called them *craneberries*. Over time, the name morphed into cranberries.

3) It's a common misconception that cranberries grow in water. Farmers flood the fields at harvest. A machine called "the egg beater" then knocks the cranberries from the vines and they rise to the surface and float.

4) Cranberries contain four small pockets of air that enable them to float.

5) Cranberry sauce was invented by a New Jersey farmer named Elizabeth Lee in 1917.

Library Corner



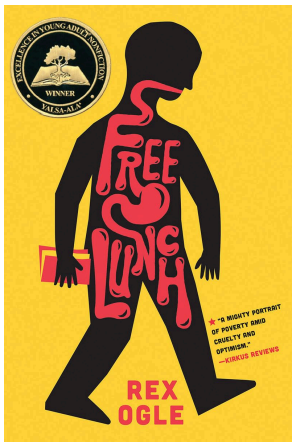
Before We Eat: From Farm to Table

By Pat Brisson

Grades PreK-3

Before we eat, many people work very hard: planting grain, catching fish, tending farm animals, and filling crates of vegetables.

This book reminds us what must happen before food gets to our tables to nourish our bodies and spirits.

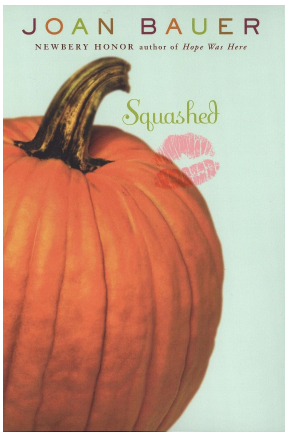


Free Lunch

By Rex Ogle

Grades 4-8

A story of food insecurity: Instead of giving him lunch money, Rex's mom has signed him up for free meals. The story follows Rex's efforts to navigate his first semester of sixth grade, all while wearing secondhand clothes and being hungry.



Squashed

by Joan Bauer

Grades 6 and up

Ellie's life would be perfect if Max would just put on about two hundred pounds and if she could lose twenty. After all, Max, Ellie's giant pumpkin, could very well be the next champion of the Rock River Pumpkin Weigh-In. And minus a few pounds, Ellie might have the courage to approach the new boy in town.

November Ag Gag

Which side of a turkey has the most feathers?

The outside!

Happy Thanksgiving!



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