



Welcome to Ag@School!

Class sets of this magazine, aimed primarily at 4th grade level, are **FREE** to subscribing Washington teachers. Instructions for subscribing are on Page 6.

This is the last of three issues for 2024-2025. **Your subscription for next year will NOT be automatically renewed.** We need to hear from you that you would like to continue receiving the subscription. **PLEASE RENEW NOW** for next school year, and **NO LATER** than mid-September to insure you receive the 1st issue! Renew at www.waic.net under subscription button!

Produced by Washington Ag in the Classroom, Ag@School is designed to help teachers meet student educational goals as well as develop agricultural literacy.

This issue is designed to help students understand:

- farmers and ranchers are caretakers for soil and water resources, so every day is Earth Day for them, not just one day a year
- what the term “sustainable agriculture” means
- the water cycle and soil components
- the importance of grazing animals
- the value and necessity of pollinators
- the role of agriculture in the conservation of our natural resources and its importance to the industry
- the economic and environmental impact of various agricultural commodities in Washington

Why Agricultural Literacy?

Agriculture is society’s lifeline and an integral part of our heritage. Unfortunately as our country moved from agrarian to urban, people lost contact with the main industry necessary for survival—food production. America’s largest industry has dropped from public discourse except for the occasional media splash. Yet we all eat, and it is important that we have an understanding of where our food is produced and who we depend upon to deliver it to our tables.

Less than 2% of the US population is involved in agriculture production (farming) yet 24 million American jobs are dependent upon it. Agriculture is more than working the land and tending the animals. This huge industry—production, processing, transportation, and marketing—generates billions of dollars each year. Agriculture is vital to national security, a stable economy, and the US trade balance.

Why Agriculture?

Teaching about agriculture is an ideal way for students to make real-life connections to science, math, and social

studies concepts. Agriculture is relevant because students encounter it daily. Who doesn’t enjoy talking about food? Nearly everything we eat, wear, use- even some fuel that powers cars and buses, comes from plants and animals grown on farms. Agriculture provides perfect real-world connections to STEM and makes learning relevant to students.

Helping students understand the farm-to-table connection is important in our consumer-driven society. Teaching students to be agriculturally literate connects their learning to everyday life.

Browse the Matrix!

Visit our website at <http://www.waic.net> and browse the National Ag in the Classroom link to the Curriculum Matrix.

The Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix is an online, searchable, and standards-based curriculum map for K-12 teachers. The Matrix contextualizes national education standards in science, social studies, and nutrition education with relevant instructional resources linked to Common Core Standards.



Search our instructional, classroom ready resources now! After you find what you need, consider storing them in your personal binder — MyBinder! Create a MyBinder profile now, or login.

Farming in a Glove (grades 3-5)

This activity allows students to see the life cycle of plants and learn what seeds need to germinate and grow. It is important to understand how seeds become plants because they product food, shelter and oxygen – we need and use these things every day!

<https://washington.agclassroom.org/matrix/lesson/831/>

Vocabulary Words

Each issue will introduce several words that may be unfamiliar to students. These words will appear in **bold** type the first time they are used.

Words in the this issue include:

sustainable agriculture, natural resources, conservation, renewable and non-renewable resources, steward, watershed, pollination, stamen, pollen, pistil, stigma, ovule, self-pollination, cross pollination, nectar, topsoil, soil conservation, erosion, reduced tillage, water cycle, condensation, evaporation, groundwater, percolation, precipitation, transpiration, stone fruits, controlling burning, wildfires, tokul soil, food waste.

Definitions can be found scattered throughout the magazine.

Ag@School Funding

Many businesses, organizations, public agencies and individuals contribute money and time to providing you this magazine at no cost. They are listed on Pages 5 and 6 along with a suggested activity for research and writing letters of thanks. We suggest using the activity as a small group project both for internet research practice and, of course, letter writing experience.

Standards Alignment

This publication is aligned with 4th grade standards for Washington state students

Social Studies EARLS (Essential Academic Learning Requirement) –

Economics 2.2.1, 2.4.1

Geography 3.1.2

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Reading –

Questioning, Inference, and Interpretation - RI.4.1, Themes and Central Ideas –RI.4.2

Connections – RI.4.3, Academic vocabulary RI.4.4, Text Structures and Features – RI.4.5, Points of View/Purpose – RI.4.6,

Visual/Auditory Media and Information Sources – RI.4.7, Augment and Reasoning – RI.4.8, Fluency – RF.4.4a.

Writing –

Argumentative- W.4.1b, Informative/Explanatory – W.4.2, Narrative – W.4.3, Task, Purpose and Audience –W.4.4 , Technology –W.4.6, Research – W.4.7, Access and Organize Information – W.4.8.

Speaking and Listening –

Collaborative discussions – SL.4.1, Evaluate Presented Information – SL.4.2, SL.4.3

Language –

Language conventions – L.4.3

Reference materials – L.4.5c

Math –

Multiplication and Division - 4.NBT.B.5, Measurement – 4.MD.A.2

Science (Next Generation Science Standards -NGSS):

Energy 4-ESS3-1, Structure, Function and Information Processing – 4-LS1-1, Earth and Human Activity 4-ESS3,

Engineering Design 3-5-ETS1-1.

Cover – Protecting Agriculture's Resources

Background:

Cultural practices, machinery, and technology in agriculture have advanced in ways that has even amazed farmers. The basic tools of this business have not changed since farming began more than 10,000 years ago. Air, water, soil, and solar energy are essential for plant life, without which animals and humans could not exist.

Care of these tools is important, possibly more so for agriculture than for any other industry. Agriculture takes this job seriously. Stewardship has advanced as science and technology have progressed. Today's farming is a far cry from that practiced just a few decades ago.

Answers page 1:

solar energy; 2) soil; 3) water; 4) air

Page 2 – Farmers and Environmentalists Think and Discuss

Discussion starters:

1. *Why are farmers important environmentalists?* It is the right thing to do and they know that they need to care for the land and livestock in order for it to be productive and prosperous in the future. Farmers are “caretakers” of the land. Their livelihood depends on keeping the soil, water, and air clean and healthy.

2. *Talk about the true definition of sustainable agriculture.* What would happen if people could not make a living? If all US farmers went out of business what would replace agriculture on the land? Where would people get their food? How secure would our food supply be if we had to rely on other countries to grow it for us?

3. *How are farmers able to grow more food per acre?* By using science and technology farmers are able to grow more with less. Please visit Vol 19 issue 2 (Technology issue) to re-visit the many ways farmers use and apply science and technology to farming practices.

4. *Discuss the importance of proper care* of air, water, and soil and how urban and rural residents might have differing views on the best use of these resources (water for example, farming use vs recreational use).

Page 3 – Pollination

There are many lessons, videos, resources and books available on the curriculum matrix on pollination. This issues library corner highlights a book as well on the importance of bees.

Great site for video and activities is <https://www.neok12.com/Pollination.htm>

National pollinators week

June 16-22, 2025

<https://www.pollinator.org/pollinator-week>

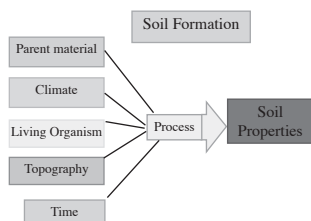


Pollination Crossword

Across: 3- nectar 5 – pollination 7 - pollen 8 – bees 9 – ovule

Down: 1 – seed 2 – stamen 4 – stigma 6 – anther 7 – pistil

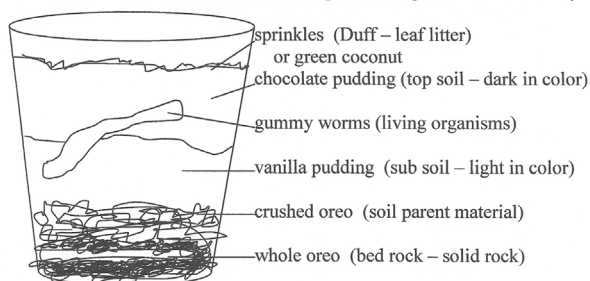
Page 4/5 – Soil and Water



The soil is home to an incredible number of organisms, most of them so tiny we cannot see them without a microscope. They decompose organic matter, take nitrogen from the air and make it available to plants, improve soil

structure, and control crop pests. There are all manner of creepy-crawlies---algae, bacteria, rotifers, fungi, protozoa, nematodes, arthropods, earthworms---all part of the soil food web. The human food system would collapse without the complicated food web that exists in the soil. We are totally dependent upon the soil web to provide and maintain the growing environment for larger plants that feed us and the animals we use for food. Farmers understand this delicate balance. They know if they treat the soil well, it will be able to keep giving back...not just for us today, but for future generations too. If microscopes are available for your use, it is well worth the effort to examine soil samples under magnification. Observing this fascinating world may be just the impetus students need to encourage further scientific investigation. There are also short You-tube videos of soil microbes and pond water organisms.

SOIL PROFILE - SERVE EDIBLE DIRT: Explain the significance of each layer.....



Discussion starters:

- How is water cleaned through the water cycle (evaporation---also large particle contaminants like silt are trapped in percolation process)
- What impurities might be left behind when water evaporates?
- What can people do to prevent impurities from getting into the water in the first place?

Reinforce that salt water cannot be used for drinking water or to water plants and animals. The amount of water in the world is constant although it changes location and physical form.

Water in the atmosphere is mostly in the form of water vapor. If it all fell as precipitation at once, the Earth would be covered with only about 1 inch of water. Students should recognize that each zero to the right of a decimal point is also a factor of 10. For instance, if told that all plants and animals contain 0.0001% of the total water, they should reason that the atmosphere contains 10 times as much (0.001%). They should also be able to recognize that 0.001% is the same as 1/1000 of 1%.

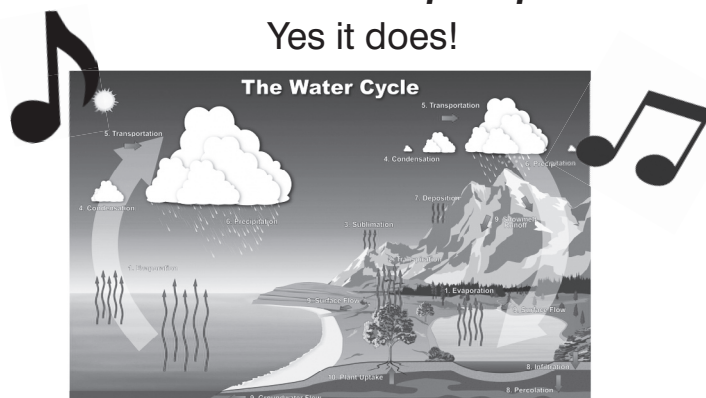
Review the physical states of solid, liquid and gas in the water cycle

Have students follow the directions showing how much water is freshwater. Reinforce that salt water cannot be used for drinking water or to water plants and animals. The amount of water in the world is constant although it changes location and physical form.

Water Cycle Song

(to the tune of
“She’ll Be Coming
‘Round the Mountain”

Water travels in a cycle yes it does,
Water travels in a cycle yes it does,
It goes up as **evaporation**
Forms clouds as **condensation**
And comes down as **precipitation**
Yes it does!



Page 6 – Fruitful State..answers

1. Apple Capital of the World
2. Eastern WA has less precipitation (and irrigation is controlled water application)
3. $9600 \times 8070 = 77,472,000$ # or 38,736 tons (2000 lbs in a ton)
4. Whole grapes have more fiber than juice; both juice and whole grapes are much superior nutritionally than sugar-packed jelly

Page 7 – our state soil – tokul

Great article on our state soil

<https://www.soils4teachers.org/files/s4t/k12outreach/wa-state-soil-booklet.pdf>



Additional Resources



<https://agclassroom.org/>

Take a virtual field trip!

<https://agclassroom.org/educational-resources/>



:Resource materials for your classroom!

<https://agclassroomstore.com/>

Writing prompts for this issue:

- How would you describe the role of agriculture in managing or taking care of natural resources?
- Persuade the reader that the goal of agriculture should be to grow more food on less land. Give reasons to back up your argument.
- Explain the importance and the process of the water cycle in detail.
- Describe the importance and process of pollination for food production.
- Research the number of bee hives lost this past winter to colony collapse. How will this impact food production?
- Describe how you and your family can conserve water and eliminate food waste.
- Research a developing country and report on their growing conditions, food storage and availability, climate, transportation systems and population

Visit www.waic.net

FOR LINKS TO:

- Lessons • Activities • Information
- Student Websites • and more!

Washington Ag in the Classroom
is your launch pad for information and activities about all fields of agriculture!

Publication and Credits

Ag@School is a publication of Washington Agriculture in the Classroom, a non-profit entity created in 1981 to encourage and help teachers increase agricultural literacy in their students. Both public and private groups including the WA Dept. of Agriculture, WSU, commodity commissions, farm organizations, agri-businesses and individuals, support this mission. Teachers may reproduce any pages for use.

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Thank you in advance for your feedback.