The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) and its affiliates in 48 states and six territories exist to create a better understanding of the agriculture industry that stretches across our great nation. It does so by providing teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade with curricula, materials, awards programs and a national conference to demonstrate how effectively agricultural concepts can be used to teach reading, writing, nutrition, science, social studies and more.

Connecting lessons to items students use every day helps the classroom come alive for them. That’s the mission of NAITCO and its member states, each of which share lesson plans and companion resources linked to educational standards and tied to commodities produced across state lines.

The 2015 Annual Report highlights the organization’s efforts, which are funded by a combination of dues from member states, sponsorships and support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). NAITCO owes its success in large part to the foundation laid by USDA which launched the program in 1981 and who continues to provide valuable leadership and support.

With the help of its hard working state contacts nationwide, and the support of an executive director and development director, NAITCO is poised to increase the number of K-12 teachers and students it reaches nationally and internationally for years to come.
Connecting U.S. webcam teachers and students to the farm by using agricultural concepts in classroom instruction is the mission of the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO).

NAITCO and its members in 48 states and six territories worked hard in 2015 to develop and provide lessons, workshops, grant opportunities and other programs to help teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade contextualize agriculture in their reading, writing, nutrition, science and social studies classes. Special programs in 2015 included:

• The National Agriculture in the Classroom National Conference ‘Unbridled Possibilities’ where nearly 500 teachers and informal educators gathered at The Galt House Hotel in downtown Louisville, KY June 16-20 to learn how to use agricultural concepts in their general education classrooms, after-school events and farm tours.

• The 2015 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award where six teachers from Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Utah were honored for their innovative teaching strategies using agriculture.

• The rollout of NAITCO’s National Agriculture Literacy Curriculum Matrix, a database that is the first of its kind with hundreds of free lessons and companion resources that K-12 teachers can easily search by grade level, subject area, educational standard and keyword. A big ‘thank you’ to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and CHS Foundation, Inc. for their support of this innovative project.

• The regional meetings of NAITCO state contacts in Phoenix, AZ for the Western Region, Lansing, MI for the Central Region, Louisville, KY for the Southern Region and Concord, NH for the Eastern Region where state contacts work in small groups to discuss NAITCO programs and share ideas and resources to help strengthen Agriculture in the Classroom outreach in their home states.

Altogether, NAITCO and its member organizations reached nearly 130,000 teachers and 6.6 million students in kindergarten through 12th grade in 2015 (or about 13 percent of the U.S. student population.) They carried out their programs with budgets totaling $10 million.

NAITCO leveraged these state budgets with funding it receives from the USDA, CHS Foundation, Inc., American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, Farm Credit, National Grange and others. Without their support, NAITCO and its member states wouldn’t be able to carry out the quality programming they deliver that educates K-12 teachers and students about the importance of American agriculture.

Americans continue to take an interest in the source of their food, fiber and fuel and NAITCO and its members are uniquely positioned to reach students beginning at a young age with the message of the importance of agriculture. I have been honored to serve as president of such a dynamic organization of agricultural literacy leaders, and look forward to watching it grow at the state, national and international level in the years to come.

President’s Message

Number of Educators Reached

Number of Students Reached

Lisa Gaskalla
About 500 educators from around the country learned the "Unbridled Possibilities" of using agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies and more at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) National Conference held at The Galt House Hotel June 16-20 in Louisville, Kentucky.

NAITCO, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute for Food and Agriculture and Kentucky Agriculture and the Environment in the Classroom, held three days of workshops that showed kindergarten through 12th grade teachers how to use agriculture to teach core subject areas. In addition, conference participants went on traveling workshops of nearby farms and university research facilities to learn about the equine, soybean and bourbon industries, among other stops.

The conference also honored several national teacher winners and a national Ag Advocate winner for the innovative ways they use agriculture to teach students about an important industry.

"The USDA-NIFA is proud to support the National Agriculture in the Classroom National Conference where K-12 general education teachers from around the country can compare teaching strategies that effectively use agriculture as a teaching tool," said Dr. Victoria LeBeaux, the USDA-NIFA’s National Program Leader for National Agriculture in the Classroom.

"What better way to show educators how to use agricultural concepts to jazz up their classroom instruction than to showcase innovative teaching strategies in workshops, awards presentations and tours of agricultural operations?" said Lisa Gaskalla, president of the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization. "Bottom line: We showed teachers that agriculture is a great way to teach core subjects and familiarize students with where their food, fiber and fuel come from."
Each year NAITCO recognizes and showcases at its national conference award winning teachers and educators who have made strides in promoting agricultural literacy by using agriculture concepts to teach core subjects in their classrooms, on their field trips and on their farm tours.

The Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award (EITAA) recognizes teachers from around the country who use agriculture to teach reading, writing, science, nutrition and geography and more. By participating in these lessons and activities, students learn about the importance of agriculture at the same time. USDA-NIFA, Farm Credit Council and NAITCO sponsor the EITAA award.

In addition, the Ag Advocate Award recognizes an informal educator who gives of his or her time freely to educate K-12 students about the importance of agriculture. The National Grange sponsors this award each year.

All of these award recipients are honored each year at the NAITCO national conference, and 2015 was no different. Recipients of the 2015 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award are:

- Florida STEM elementary teacher, Christine Danger, who uses agriculture to teach technology and engineering concepts by having students design vertical growing systems and irrigation systems for their school garden.
- Kentucky seventh grade science teacher, Leslie Preston Meredith, who features agricultural concepts to teach across the curriculum to foster in her students’ minds a love of the environment and an appreciation of the importance of agriculture.
- North Carolina kindergarten-through-fifth-grade teacher, Darlene Petranick, who uses an 18-bed school garden to teach all subject areas at her school.
- Tennessee kindergarten teacher, Rachel Parker Morris, who features a new agriculture topic each week by teaching the alphabet with agriculture-related words or class stories, and participating in a year-long study that ends with a field trip to a local farm.
- Virginia kindergarten teacher, M.K. Preston, who tries to instill in students a love of and respect for agriculture and the environment through inquiry-based and hands-on activities, and involvement in the Belview Giving Gardens school garden laboratory.
- Utah fifth grade teacher, Théo Anderson, who created the “Hens for Hunger” service learning project to help her students make connections to agriculture by contextualizing core curriculum in science and social studies. Her students hatch chicks, raise hens, collect eggs and make donations to the local food pantry.

The recipient of the 2015 Ag Advocate Award, which is sponsored by the National Grange, is retired Minnesota extension agent, Juanita Reed-Boniface. She and her husband, Dick, have worked for years with a legion of volunteers who make classroom visits in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, and have expanded their outreach to include programs with Minnesota Farm Bureau, Minnesota and American Cattlewomen, Minnesota State Fair, University of Minnesota 4-H, Minnesota Agri-Women and National Agri-Women and Project Food, Land & People.
Curriculum Matrix Launched

Teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade looking for real-life applications for their reading, writing, science and social studies classes should search no further. The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) has launched its National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix, a database of lesson plans and related activities searchable by grade level, subject area, educational standard, and keyword.

The Matrix found at http://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix features lesson plans that use agricultural themes to integrate history, geography, nutrition, science, technology, engineering, and math content. It provides teachers around the country with a one-stop-shop for resources that help them connect their students to required learning standards with relevant and engaging resources.

“The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization’s Curriculum Matrix is the only resource of its kind that contextualizes lessons with agricultural applications and ties them to national educational standards,” said Dr. Debra Spielmaker, project director for NAITCO who developed the Curriculum Matrix. “In addition to lesson plans, the Matrix offers complementary companion resources such as activities, games, videos and more to help solidify in students’ minds the concepts they need to learn.”

NAITCO developed the Curriculum Matrix together with its partners USDA/NIFA and CHS Foundation, Inc. “We’re very proud of the new resource we are able to offer our teachers and educators across the country to help further agricultural literacy instruction in their classrooms,” said NAITCO President Lisa Gaskalla, who is also the Florida ATIC state contact.

The Curriculum Matrix’s lessons and companion resources are available to educators free of charge, and a user name and password aren’t needed to access them.

NAITCO launched the Curriculum Matrix at its National Conference ‘Unbridled Possibilities’ in Louisville, KY in June. To view a video about its release please visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCv7cY6JKHY

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Lisa Gaskalla, President Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, Inc.

Lorri Brenneman, President-Elect Montana Department of Agriculture

Al Withers, Treasurer Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom

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Plan Your Route — Use the Matrix to arrive at Agricultural Literacy

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