

Cream *of the* Crop

A Harvest of Ideas for Educators

Vol. 17, No. 1

Autumn, 2003

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Resources! Resources!



This year's California Ag in the Classroom Conference will explore agriculture in beautiful San Mateo County.

Conference supports ag literacy

Looking for new and creative ways to bolster a connection for students to the food and fiber they use daily? Surround yourself with people, workshops and resources that tackle the task with ease and a whole lot of fun.

This year's **California Agriculture in the Classroom Conference, Oct. 23-25 in San Mateo**, features ideas, resources and techniques that teachers and volunteers can use in and out of the classroom.

The theme, *Healthy Minds Dig into Technology*, emphasizes nutrition and technology throughout. Sessions and field trips will show how agricultural themes can be used to teach **C o n t e n t S t a n d a r d s f o r C a l i f o r n i a P u b l i c S c h o o l s** in all grade levels and subject areas. Additionally, a pre-

conference workshop, "Digging into Garden Education," will be held at the new Life Lab Garden Classroom at UC, Santa Cruz

"The conference is a refreshing way to gather new and proven methods for teaching about agriculture's importance to us all."

(see Take advantage..., page 4, for further details).

"The conference is a refreshing way to gather new and proven methods for teaching about agriculture's importance to us all," says Dena Gibbons, conference coordinator.

Holding an agricultural conference in a setting as urbanized as the greater Bay Area seems oddly out of place. But, says Dena, "you'd be amazed at how much agriculture there is in the middle

See Conference, page 4

Writing that's creative, functional and fun!



Grades 3-8 Deadline: Nov 1, 2003 See back page

Outstanding educator shares thoughts

By Carla Wright
3rd Grade Teacher
Ord Terrace Elementary, Seaside
2003 Outstanding Educator of the Year

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away. (Anonymous)

For 25 years, I've had many breathless teaching moments as I nurtured and watched my students blossom into young adults. Reflecting back, I cherish the memories that brought tears to my eyes or a child's candid remarks that tickled my heart with laughter. Many of those treasured, "breathless" memories are a direct



Carla uses activities, like sprouting seeds in a plastic glove, to teach about the value of agriculture.

result of integrating agriculture throughout my classroom.

Welcome to my classroom! A scarecrow riding a John Deere tractor greets you when you enter my classroom. Two paper-mache cows watch closely while you explore. Students' personal mini pot gardens, pictures, art projects and artifacts of crops grown in Monterey County and California can be found throughout. Because I live near the Salinas Valley, the "Salad Bowl of the World," I incorporate agriculture activities into my core curriculum, as well as throughout the classroom. My curriculum includes units on nutrition, guest speakers, farm day activities, as well as spinning and weaving wool. Throughout the year, I also incorporate field trips to local ag businesses, such as Driscoll Strawberry, to enrich hands-on learning about

Monterey County agriculture.

Social studies and ag. Agriculture can be integrated with state standards while teaching science, math, social studies, and language arts curriculum. For example, in social studies, we learn about agriculture in the Midwest and the San Joaquin Valley. I include Monterey County agriculture and the role it plays locally, nationally and internationally. As a result, students gain a better understanding of where their food comes from and an appreciation for the tremendous work effort involved to produce crops. They recognize that Monterey County produce feeds our local community *and* our national and international communities.

Science and ag. In science, I teach "Heart Power" to all third graders at Ord Terrace Elementary. One activity is "Ways to Keep My Heart Healthy!" Students write five things they could do *now* to keep a healthy heart. Eating a balanced meal (eating healthy) teaches children about the food pyramid, which is a great tool to use in discussion about foods grown locally and state-wide.

Gardening and ag. The mini clay pot garden is another

way to incorporate agriculture while challenging students' math and data analysis skills. Each student is given a pot to decorate, personalize and use for growing an



Students decorate clay pots, into which they will transplant seedlings that have sprouted in plastic gloves or sandwich bags. Activities like these, which Carla uses to keep agriculture in the forefront of her students' minds, helped her to earn the title Educator of the Year.

assortment of seedlings, such as broccoli, beans or cucumbers. (The seeds are germinated first in a damp cotton ball placed inside a clear plastic glove or sandwich bag.) Through daily observations, they measure and record the growth of roots, stems and leaves. Once the plants reach a designated length, the students transfer the plants to their clay pots. They are able to observe continued growth inside the classroom. This project is a great tool utilizing skills of observation and data measurement and analysis.

One of my most delightful discoveries was to find out how much the class enjoys gardening. They find it "great fun" and

See Outstanding educator, page 4

Apply for Outstanding Educator '04

Each year, the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom honors several educators for exemplary efforts in agricultural literacy. The honor of greatest distinction, awarded in 2003 to Carla Wright, is the *Outstanding Educator of the Year*. **Applications for 2004 will be available in September** by calling 800/700-AITC or by downloading the form from www.cfaitc.org. *Nominate your own efforts or those of another special educator!*



Carla Wright also was honored in June by National Agriculture in the Classroom as one of four outstanding educators in the United States.

It may be cliché, but...

Utilize greener pastures to compare apples and oranges

Holy cow! November 3 is **National Cliche Day**. It can be a *pain in the neck* to recognize every observance thought up by marketing America, but *hold on to your hats*. This one could be a *paper tiger* the whole class can *sink its teeth into*.

Cliches are an integral part of the English language. Many regularly used clichés, if translated literally, represent commonplace circumstances of days gone by. As anachronistic as some now may be, clichés survive and add color, humor and interest to our everyday communication.

Lots of clichés make reference to agriculture: Stubborn as a mule... hen-pecked... hold your horses... bellwether. They surfaced long ago because of one's personal observations of or interactions with mules, hens, horses and sheep. Today, we just take their word for it!

Challenge your students to think up clichés with agricultural roots. Starting off may be as *slow as molasses in January*, but once they get the hang of it, their list will *grow like a weed!*

As fun as this activity can be, it also tackles some content standards listed in the current Reading/Language Arts Framework. For example, it teaches fifth grade Reading-Vocabulary and Concept Development standard 1.5, in which students are asked to understand and explain the figurative and metaphorical use of words. Similar standards taught are 1.1 for grades six through ten.

After listing your thoughts, send your most interesting or unusual clichés to the Foundation at cfaitec@cfbf.com. We'll list them on the Web site and give credit to your class! 🌿

Get to know your garden's worms

Face it... worms are not one of life's simple pleasures. Freshly picked snap peas definitely are. So are freshly picked Sweet Peas. But, worms?

It's a good lesson in life for students to learn that, as repulsive as they think

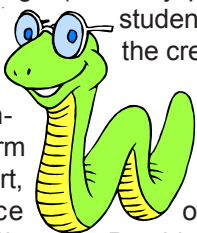
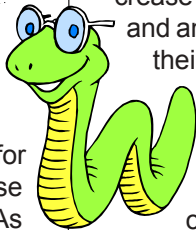
worms are, they are an essential player in the healthy life of snap peas, Sweet Peas, and any other garden delights that tickle their fancies.

Pam Emery, curriculum specialist for the Foundation, suggests an exercise to help students warm up to worms. As Carla Wright (see story, page 2) learned, **o n c e** students have worked around the creatures, they no longer "squeal" when they un-expectedly dig up a worm.

To start, discuss the importance of treating worms carefully. Provide rules, if necessary. Show students a box of soil which contains worms plus dead plant material, such as leaves and grass. Ask what

makes good soil for the garden. Highlight answers which focus on concepts of aeration and decomposition. Point out that as they "worm" their way through the soil, worms loosen up the particulate and increase aeration. Consuming dead plant and animal matter creates nutrients in their waste that nourish plants.

On a sturdy paper plate, distribute to groups of two students a pile of soil containing at least one redworm. Ask students to observe the worms and share what they notice. Help put names to the observations – setae, segments, mouth, anal opening, etc. California Integrated Waste Management Board's *The Worm Guide* includes a helpful graphic on page 9. Download the entire guide, or the graphic alone, from www.ciwmb.ca.gov/schools/curriculum. The guide includes great details on worms and vermicomposting at school. 🌿



Agricultural Facts

Did you know...

Farmers get a helping hand from **bats** that live on farms. Bats control night-flying insects such as moths, stinkbugs and navel orangeworms. In exchange for this valuable service, some farmers provide bat boxes for habitat. (Farm Facts, Spring, 2003)

One acre of **rice** cleans about 23,000 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – as much as is produced by an average car in a year. (Farm Facts, Spring, 2003) In 2001, farmers planted 473,000 acres of rice! (CDFA 2002 Ag Resource Directory)

The US **soy** industry produces about 800 million pounds of surplus oil each year. Research scientists have developed a new skin product sporting soybean oil as the main ingredient. It fared very well when tested against four commercial sunscreens, doing best in overall protection against both UVB and UVA rays! Start looking for it in the sunscreen aisle. (California Farmer, May 2003)

The heaviest **turkey** ever raised weighed 86 pounds, about the size of a large dog – or an average third grader! (CA Country, July/August 2003) According to CDFA, 18,700,000 turkeys were raised in California in 2001.

Los Angeles County long ago lost its ranking as the top-producing county in the state, but the dollar value of agricultural products raised there now reaches a whopping \$258,260,000! (CA Country, July/August 2003)

Nearly two billion board feet of commercial **lumber** are produced from California's timberlands. That's enough wood to build *132,000 homes!* (CA Farm Bureau Ag Day Facts 2003)

From crust to toppings, all ingredients for a combination **pizza** are grown on California farms – wheat, tomatoes, cheese, herbs, pork, beef, peppers and olives! (CA Farm Bureau Ag Day Facts 2003)

Take advantage of ag literacy opportunities!

Multiple events, contests and workshops that combine students, teachers and agriculture are popping up this fall. Contact the sponsoring organizations for full information.

Digging into Garden Education: Spend Thursday, Oct. 23, in Life Lab's new garden classroom at UC, Santa Cruz. The model education garden contains a wild-life garden, outdoor kitchen, pizza bed, the Rot Zone, and more! Gather standards-based science lesson plans and ideas for creating effective learning gardens. Enjoy a farm-fresh lunch overlooking Monterey Bay. Offered separately or in conjunction with the Foundation's annual educator conference (see story, page 1). Registration is \$100. Contact the Foundation at 800/700-AITC or explore www.cfaitc.org.

VIVA! Garden for Schools: This fall and next spring, VIVA! Garden and Home Depot will donate an assortment of herbs, vegetables, flowers and a gardening guide to groups of participating schools. Information may be found at www.viva.garden.com or by e-mailing Jessie Keenan at schools@vivagarden.com.

Kids Gardening Photo Contest: The National Gardening Association is sponsoring a photo contest which includes two categories for young photographers. Entry deadline is an Oct. 27 postmark. Find specific information about rules and entries at www.kidsgardening.com.

Raise Money with Flower Bulbs: Raise money through the Dutch Gardens Bulb Fundraising Program. Varieties include tulip, daffodil, hyacinth and other spring flowering bulbs. Schools keep 50 percent of sales. Note the Sept. 19 order-

ing deadline! Details at www.kidsgardening.com under Grants & Resources.

Workshops for School Gardens: The UC Davis School Gardens Project is offering six workshops in September and October on enhancing elementary school gardens and integrating them into curriculum. Topics range from starting gardens to using them to teach state standards. Workshops are \$10 each and have space for 25. Pre-registration is required. Contact Carol Hillhouse or Cynthia Havstad at

530/752-7655 or jchillhouse@ucdavis.edu and cmhavstad@ucdavis.edu.

Toshiba America Foundation: Toshiba supports education by investing in teacher-designed projects that improve science and math education. Applications for grades K-6 are due Oct. 1. For grades 7-12, applications for grants over \$5,000 are due Feb. 1 and Aug. 1; the deadline is year round for grants under \$5,000. Contact TAF before submitting proposals at 212/596-0616 or 212/596-0667. 🐦

Outstanding educator

Continued from page 2

look forward to the "peaceful quiet time" they get while working in their individual plots. They also enjoy working in cooperative teams as they tend to the school's community plot. Students are fully engaged in the learning process of caring for their crops. Girls no longer squeal when they dig up a worm or discover a green caterpillar camouflaged on their plants. They've learned that the worm is an essential part of the community garden.

Ultimately, enriching their knowledge about agriculture will empower them to be wise consumers, providing a foundation to help them as they become the future leaders making decisions about agriculture land use and practices.

Beyond the classroom. Since 1994, I've been an active advocate for the agriculture industry. As a member of the board of directors for Monterey County Agriculture Education, Inc. (MCAE), I've been involved with community events promoting ag education in Monterey County. I've organized and presented ag literacy workshops, such as a series of MCAE Farm Day teacher in-services for 350 third grade teachers. Each year, I present three new lessons of activities that can be integrated into their daily lessons.

MCAE has given me the opportunity to enrich my knowledge of agriculture in my

county. It has enabled me to be part of an organization that teaches agriculture business to 6,000 third graders (and their parents), 300 high school students, and to all the superintendents of schools in Monterey County. It is a pleasure to work with people who are true stewards of the land.

To me, 2003 will always be remembered as a "breathless" year of cherished moments and memories. I was selected as the 2003 California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom Outstanding Educator in April. In June, I was honored by

"This honor will be a moment that will truly take your breath away while validating your hard, dedicated work."

the United States Department of Agriculture as a National Educator of the Year. I also received Resolutions of Commendation from the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, the Monterey County Board of Education, and the Honorable Bruce McPherson, 15th Senatorial District. Receiving these honors validates what I enjoy doing to enrich and empower my students' lives.

Apply for 2004! I encourage all teachers to consider applying for the 2004 Outstanding Educator award. This honor will be a moment that will truly take your breath away while validating your hard, dedicated work. 🐦

Conference

Continued from page 1

of all these people! It's a good way to show educators how to find ag opportunities in their own neighborhoods."

Registration is \$210 if paid by Oct. 1; \$240 if paid after. Life Lab's pre-conference workshop is an additional \$100. Up to three continuing education units are available for \$45 per unit. Find full information at www.cfaitc.org or call 800/700-AITC. 🐦

Resources inspire explorations into agriculture

The Bookshelf

■ **A Gardener's Alphabet** (Grades Pre K - 4) Striking alphabet book celebrates the simple joys of gardening through stunning woodcuts by talented Vermont artist Mary Azarian. \$16 hardbound. *Mary Azarian, Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000.*



■ **Four Seasons in Five Senses: Things Worth Savoring** (Grades 10-Adult) California peach farmer Mas Masumoto continues, in his most recent book, an insightful commentary of a farming life in a business world. "Farming must be circular in contrast to the straight lines of business." \$24.95 hardbound. *David Mas Masumoto, W.W. Norton & Co., 2003.*

■ **A Symphony for the Sheep** (Grades 1-3) Set in Ireland, this poetic story follows the steps by which a sheep's woolly coat is transformed into cloth and sweaters. Beautifully illustrated in woodcuts by Mary Azarian. \$16 hardbound. *C.M. Millen, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996.*

■ **If You Were a ... Farmer** (Grades K-3) Find out what a farmer's job is like. Colorful pictures and easy text help paint a picture of both a farming and ranching life. Part of the *If You Were...* series. \$22.79 hardbound. *Virginia Schomp, Benchmark Books, 2001.*

■ **Celebrity Stew** (Grades 9-Adult) Leo Pearlstein, a "pioneer in the world of food promotion" shares stories from his 50+ years of using celebrities to promote food products to American consumers. Filled with photographs of celebrities endorsing everything from prunes to turkeys. \$22.95 paperback. *Leo Pearlstein, Hollywood Circle Press, 2003.*

■ **How Groundhog's Garden Grew** (Grades K-2) Little Groundhog loves to eat fresh veggies from his neighbor's garden until a friend teaches him the joy of planting his own garden. Delightfully illustrated. \$15.95 hard-bound. *Lynne Cherry, Blue Sky Press, 2003.*



■ **A Child's Garden of Standards: Linking School Gardens to CA Education Standards** (Grades 2-6) CDE's brand new guide shows how garden-based education strongly supports the state's academic content standards. 112 pages. \$17.50 + s/h/tax. *CDE Press, Sales Office, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95812-0271 800/995-4099 FAX 916/323-0823 www.cde.ca.gov/cdepress*

■ **Great Valley Books Catalog** (Grades 10-Adult) Features books specifically devoted to the literature, art, culture and political/ natural history of the great Central Valley – much of it agricultural. These books strive to develop a deeper appreciation of various aspects of the region's unique history and culture. Free. *Great Valley Books, An Imprint of Heyday Books, Clapperstick Institute, P.O. Box 9145, Berkeley, CA 94709 510/549-3564 www.heydaybooks.com*

■ **California's Golden Sea** (Grades 4-6) CD, developed by the CA Seafood Council, explores the ocean as a source of life, food and livelihood. Contains 27 fun, educational activities, plus much more. Curriculum links to health, nutrition, social science, science, math, language arts and visual and performing arts. Free, while supplies last. *CFAITC, 2300 River Plaza Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833 800/700-AITC cfaitc@cfbf.com www.cfaitc.org*



■ **Paddy Rice** (Grades K-12) Rice, in one cup quantities from the CA Rice Commission, is available for growing and/ or milling in the classroom. Comes with directions on growing rice and a Fact Sheet. One free packet per teacher, while limited supplies last. *CFAITC, 2300 River Plaza Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833 800/700-AITC cfaitc@cfbf.com www.cfaitc.org*

■ **Ag in the Classroom "Alphabet Soup Activities"** (Grades K-6) Booklet developed by Tennessee Foundation for Ag in the Classroom presents an activity for each letter of the alphabet. Talking points, agriculture connections and extensions enhance each activity. \$3 TFAITC, P.O. Box 313, Columbia, TN 38401 931/388-7872 ext. 2214 www.tnfarmbureau.org

■ **Web sites worth exploring!** (Grades K-12) Check out the following sites if you're

looking for information on:
Ag history: http://danpatch.ecn.purdue.edu/~epados/ag101/src/main_f.htm

The Food Pyramid Matching Game: www.dairycouncilofca.org/activities/pyra-main.htm

Greenhouses: www.kidsgardening.com/greenhouseguide/1.asp

Leafy greens: www.leafy-greens.org

Nutrition: www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines

Plan-a-Garden: www.bhg.com under "Garden"

Plants: <http://plants.usda.gov>

Science Projects: www.ars.usda.gov/is/kids/fair/story.htm

Worms/Vermicomposting: www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/worms



New! From the Foundation

■ **A Garden Plot: The Tale of Peter Rabbit** (Grades K-1) Newly revised and aligned to the Content Standards for CA Public Schools. This unit uses *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and other Beatrix Potter stories to teach reading, writing and science concepts. It encourages students to think about where food comes from, distinguish fact from fiction, observe roots and soil, and write about caring for gardens they create. Lesson #601 \$2 plus tax, or download for free.

■ **Science Fair and Lesson Ideas** (Grades 3-12) Newly revised packet contains three sections. The first provides stimulating questions to use when teaching a specific science topic. The second provides science fair ideas, in the forms of questions, that relate to agriculture. The third lists Web sites useful for preparing a science lesson or a science fair project. Lesson #608 \$2 plus tax, or download for free.

■ **Ag in the Classroom E-newsletter** Get monthly notices of activities, events and resources focusing on ag literacy! For educators of all grade levels and AITC volunteers, this electronic newsletter provides information in a timely manner. Free subscription requires submitting an e-mail address, with request to subscribe, to cfaitc@cfbf.com.

To order above resources, contact:
CFAITC, 2300 River Plaza Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833-3293 800/700-AITC FAX: 916/561-5697 e-mail: cfaitc@cfbf.com www.cfaitc.org

Teachers endorse writing contest

“**B**ecome involved! Expose your students to agriculture. Have fun with it... that’s what I like to do!” says Don Steinruck, 7th/8th grade social studies teacher at Smith River School in Del Norte County.

For several years, Don has planted agriculture into his curriculum. “I just thought something was missing from social studies. I found the link through agriculture,” he says. Now, one of the “seeds” he plants every fall is the *Imagine this...* writing contest. Last year, his student, Robyn Suzuki, was a winner.



Imagine this... provides a competitive opportunity for California’s third through eighth graders to write an essay with an agricultural theme. It can be factual or fictional, but must accurately portray agriculture.

Don really appreciates that the contest “shows a stu-

dent product from beginning to end.” As happens every year, Robyn’s story, and those of the five other statewide winners, were illustrated, animated and narrated by high school art and drama students. Their work was transformed by students and Sacramento Educational Cable Consortium into a 30-minute video.



These illustrations from the 2003 *Imagine this...* video represent a final product featuring student work throughout. Third through eighth graders write stories for the contest; high schoolers illustrate, narrate and animate the video.



Dean Weaver, a Lassen County teacher whose student, Casey Ardrey, also wrote a winning story, said, “When I heard there was a contest where a student’s story could be animated and turned into a video... I dreamed of having this for my classroom as a resource to market writing. Anything can be taught, but it’s all in the marketing. When you have an opportunity like this in writing... it’s just incredible!”

Take Don’s and Dean’s advice and get involved! Now’s the time to plant this year’s contest into California classrooms. The 2004 *Imagine this...* contest is in full swing with a Nov. 1 deadline. For details, contact the Foundation at 800/700-AITC or explore the web at www.cfaitc.org.

Imagine this... is sponsored annually by State Compensation Insurance Fund. 🌱

Calendar

100th Birthday of the Ice Cream Cone

Sept. 22: What a cool thing to celebrate on a hot September afternoon!

National 5 a Day Week

Sept. 22-26: Help students make wise food choices by encouraging them to eat five to 9 servings of fruits and vegetable every day. Free education materials: 916/556-3344 or www.healthdcouncil.org/5aday.html

National Popcorn Poppin’ Month National Go on a Field Trip Month

October: Agriculture isn’t only about food production. What nearby facilities tie into ag production, processing, distribution or consumption? If a field trip isn’t possible, ask a rep from one of these industries to trek to your classroom. Don’t forget to serve up some popcorn!

California AITC Conference

Oct. 23-25: San Mateo Marriott. Thursday - Saturday conference for K-12 educators and ag lit volunteers. See story, page 1. For info, call the Foundation at 800/700-AITC.

Life Lab Pre-Conference Workshop

Oct. 23: UC Santa Cruz. Spend Thursday before the AITC Conference in the new Life Lab Garden Classroom. Receive standards-based science lesson plans/ideas for creating learning gardens. \$100 reg fee; one CEU available. For info, contact the Foundation at 800/700-AITC.

Imagine this... Entry Deadline

Nov. 1: Statewide writing contest for California’s 3rd-8th graders. See story, left. For details, contact the Foundation at 800/700-AITC or explore www.cfaitc.org.

Farm-City Week

Nov. 21-27: Honor the interdependence of rural and urban lives in America. Ideas available from www.farmcity.org.

Family Stories Month

November: Can your students link their families to agriculture by asking family members for stories from the past? Could be a good extra credit assignment.

Louis Pasteur’s Birthday

Dec. 27, 1822: What invention of Louis Pasteur’s has revolutionized the dairy industry?


Cream of the Crop

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