

NEBRASKA
AGRICULTURE
IN THE CLASSROOM

NEBRASKA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION
AG PEN PAL PROGRAM

Classroom
Handbook

Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation
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Getting Started

The farmer or rancher receives their classroom match at the same time you receive your match. The farmer or rancher is the first person to start the letter writing. They must write their letter by September 30. If you do not hear from your pen pal by October 5, please let us know!

Once you receive your match, it is a good idea to send a quick note or email to your new pen pal to let them know you are looking forward to hearing from them.

As the Ag Pen Pal program continues, one of the keys to success is keeping in contact with the farmer or rancher you are working with. Drop your pen pal a note to let them know when they can expect your letters to arrive. You can also determine ahead of time if you will have each student send a letter or if you will send a letter from the class. See below for ideas to write letters.

Meet Me Questionnaire

My name is:

My favorite color is:

My favorite food is:

My favorite animal is:

My favorite thing about school is:

Something I would like you to know about me:

My favorite farm animal is:

My favorite subject in school is _____ because

When I hang out with my friends, I really love to

If I could go any place in the world, I would go to

- Attach a picture of the student if possible

Let Me Show You

- Share with your farmer or rancher what you have been doing in class!
- Give the writing prompt "I wanted to write and tell you all about something that I have been working on in class!"
- Try to include photos of their projects when sending this letter

Share What You've Been Doing

Not sure where to begin? Encourage your student to start small. Begin writing about a pet, what they did that week, or what they love to eat.

Ask Questions

Pen Pal writing is a conversation on paper. Make sure your students include a few questions to keep the conversation going. It also shows your farmer or rancher that your students are interested in what they do too.

Personalize It

Get creative! Allow students to include drawings, stickers, or little things that show their personality. It doesn't have to be big or grand. Write on colored paper or allow the student to sign their name in a special way.

Are Your Students Younger?

Here are some easy modifications:

- As the teacher, play stenographer and write a sentence as the student says it.
- Create a collage of pictures (cut out from a magazine) of things that represent each student.

History of Agriculture in the Classroom

Agriculture in the Classroom is a grassroots program coordinated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Its goal is to help students gain a greater awareness of the role of agriculture in the economy and society, so that they may become citizens who support wise agricultural policies. The program is carried out in each state, according to state needs and interests, by individuals representing farm organizations, agribusiness, education, and government.

The USDA established Agriculture in the Classroom in 1981. It has the endorsement of all living former Secretaries of Agriculture, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the National Conference of State Legislatures, most of the Governors of the States, and the major agricultural organizations and commodity groups. Significant progress has been made through these partnerships of agriculture, business, education, government, and dedicated volunteers.

In Nebraska, the Ag in the Classroom (AITC) program is managed and funded by the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation. AITC has a long history of creating resources and curriculum tied to state standards to assist teachers in connecting their students to their source of food, fiber, and fuel – Agriculture!

The mission of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation is to engage youth, educators, and the general public to promote an understanding of the vital importance of agriculture to all Nebraskans.

The Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization and has been determined as exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions or donations may be tax deductible.

Get Agriculture into Your Classroom!

Buddy Board

Design a buddy board with information from your pen pal as a way to learn more about them.

- Create a map of where your pen pal is located and where your classroom is located.
- Have each student group write one fact about their new pen pal for the board.
- Post pictures from your farmer or rancher.
- Share a Nebraska fact about the area your farmer or rancher is from.

Where Are You?

Pen pals provide a great opportunity to work in social studies standards. From directionality to mapping skills, this activity opens the doors to many standards.

Provide a map of Nebraska to each student or a larger map to display in your classroom.

On the map, find where your pen pal is located. This activity is open-ended to allow you to craft your own lesson or lessons. You could practice directionality (north, south, east and west).

This would also be a great idea to put on your buddy board.

Nebraska Interactive Map (www.nefbmap.org)

The Nebraska Interactive Map contains more than 5,000 maps from Nebraska and the U.S. and uses data derived from the U.S. Census to help educators teach about natural resources, the infrastructure of the state, population, historical perspectives, soil types, what crops are grown in the state, and more. The Interactive Map Project is supplemented with activity guides to assist in the teaching process. Through use of the Map and lesson plans, students will connect to Nebraska and develop a thorough understanding of agriculture's importance to the state. All lessons are tied to state educational standards.

My Favorite Recipe

People in Nebraska love to cook! This activity will take a little more coordination with your farmer or rancher.

Ask your pen pal to send you either a family recipe or their favorite recipe. You can have students bring in their own recipes to share with your pen pal. Bring in the ingredients for your pen pal's recipe and dive into food labels by using a health lesson that focuses on reading ingredients to find the link to agriculture. Which products come from Nebraska?

Wanna Hangout?

Google hangout is the perfect way for you to help your students learn. Ask your farmer or rancher if they would be willing to hang out during harvest to show the students how the combine works or to read a book without ever leaving the farm. If Google Hangout isn't an option, Skype works too!

Makin' Movies

Many schools have tech managers with video capabilities. Ask your tech manager if you can use an iPad or an iPhone to create a quick movie to send to your farmer or rancher. Create a project where you read your letter or thank your farmer or rancher with a poem. The possibilities are endless!

You're Invited

Invite your farm/ranch correspondent or someone who has a career associated with agriculture to visit your classroom and give a brief presentation about their career. Need help finding an ag career? Ask Courtney for help, courtneys@nefb.org.

Opportunities for Classrooms

Agricultural Literacy Classroom Grants

Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation offers two, \$500 competitive Agricultural Literacy Classroom Grants to PreK-8 teachers who have classroom projects that use agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and more. Sample projects include classroom and schoolyard gardens, and aquaculture projects.

Eligibility Guidelines:

- Project objectives should enhance student knowledge of the contributions made by agriculture.
- Applications are welcome from schools and after-school programs.
- Grant recipients are required to submit an online final report by June 30, 2020.
- To feature grant recipients, Nebraska Farm Bureau will send a videographer to capture the project. Photos and/or videos of the project and signed copies of photo release forms of students appearing in photos and videos must be given to Nebraska Farm Bureau.
- Applications must be submitted by October 15th.

Teacher of the Year Award

The Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year Award recognizes a teacher for their interest and integrated efforts to teach students about the importance of agriculture. Application deadline is December 1.

The winner of the award receives:

- A trip to the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference to gain new ideas for their classroom.
- Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation Book Bundle with twelve agriculture books with corresponding literature guides for their classroom.
- \$250 cash prize for use in their classroom.

We Support Agriculture and Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation Field Trip Grants

Through generous support from We Support Agriculture, the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation offers grants to get as many students as possible onto a modern day working farm or ranch to show the correlations between agriculture and the environment. Grants can provide up to \$700 for transportation and admission costs. Applications are available in January and all field trips must be taken by June 1. Apply online at www.nefbfoundation.org.

Free Resources

Visit www.nefbfoundation.org for free teacher resources! Find lesson plans, activity guides, posters and more!

Ag Book Recommendations

A Seed Is Sleepy

By: Dianna Aston
Grades K-6

How Did that Get in my Lunch Box?

By: Chris Butterworth
Grades K-2

Clarabelle

By: Cris Peterson
Grades K-6

Tops and Bottoms

By: Janet Stevens
Grades K-6

Seed, Soil, Sun: Earth's Recipe for Food

By: Cris Peterson
Grades K-6

The Beeman

By: Laurie Krebs
Grades K-6

Grandpa's Tractor

By: Michael Garland
Grades K-6

First Peas to the Table

By: Susan Grigsby
Grades K-6

Plant Secrets

By: Emily Goodman
Grades K-6

Fantastic Farm Machines

By: Cris Peterson
Grades K-3

Cattle Kids – A Year on the Western Range

By: Cat Urbigkit
Grades 3-6

Husker Numbers

By: Rajean Luebs Shepherd
Grades 4-6

C is for Cornhusker

By: Rajean Luebs Shepherd
Grades 4-6

Farmer George Plants a Nation

By: Peggy Thomas
Grades 4-6

Thomas Jefferson Grows a Nation

By: Peggy Thomas
Grades 3-6

Apple Riddle Orchard

By: Margaret McNamara
Grades K-6

From Seed to Plant

By: Gail Gibbons
Grades 4-6

(All titles are available on Amazon)

Fast Facts about Nebraska Agriculture

1. Cattle outnumber people in Nebraska more than three to one.
2. Pork is consumed by more people worldwide than any other meat.
3. One sheep will produce eight pounds of wool each year.
4. 2.8 million eggs are laid by Nebraska's commercial laying facilities.
5. There are 23,000 corn farmers across the state, producing six times more corn than in the 1920's.
6. Nebraska ranks first in the nation in Great Northern bean production.
7. Livestock and poultry in Nebraska used the meal from more than 24.5 million bushels of Nebraska soybeans.
8. Each year, Nebraska harvests between 55 and 70 million bushels of wheat.
9. Nebraska honey bee colonies produce more than 3.75 million pounds of honey annually.
10. Nebraska ranks first in popcorn production in the United States.
11. When fully grown, a sugar beet is about a foot long and weighs between two and five pounds.
12. About one third of Nebraska's potatoes are processed into potato chips.
13. Proso millet has the highest water-use efficiency of all cereals.
14. One in four jobs in Nebraska is agriculture-related.
15. Nebraska ranks twenty sixth in total milk production.

Agriculture Dictionary

Acre

A measure of land that equals 4,840 square yards or 4,425.7 square meters; or about the size of a football field.

Agronomy

The science and economics of crop production and farmland management.

Biotechnology

The scientific manipulation of living organisms, especially at the molecular or genetic level, to produce useful products.

Breed

A group of animals having a common origin and characteristics that distinguish them together from groups within the same species; i.e. Jersey cows are a breed of dairy cattle.

Bushel

A measure of grain or other food stuff.

Combine

A self-propelled or tractor drawn machine that cuts, threshes, and cleans the standing crop while moving across the field.

Crop

The plants that a farmer or rancher grows; Ex: corn, soybeans, wheat.

Cultivator

A machine used to till the upper portion of the soil, primarily used to destroy weeds or to form a moisture retaining mulch.

Disc or Disk

A tractor drawn implement composed of circular plates arranged at an angle with the soil; used to prepare the soil for seeding.

Drill

A farm implement for planting seed which forms a small furrow, deposits the seed, covers the seed, and packs soil over it.

Erosion

A loss of soil quantity and quality caused by the forces of wind and water, often related to the slope of a field.

Farm

A piece of land with a house, barn, and other such buildings on which crops and livestock are raised.

Livestock

The horses, cattle, sheep, and other useful animals kept or raised on a farm or ranch.

Pasture

A fenced area of forage on which animals graze.

Ranch

An establishment maintained for raising livestock under range conditions.

Media & Promotion Resources

Your local paper may enjoy the opportunity to report on your participation in the Ag Pen Pal program. Please feel free to share the good news!

Some of the subjects you could share with media are:

- Writing the letters to the pen pal
- Taking a trip to your pen pals farm or ranch
- The impact the Ag Pen Pal program has had on the students
- The importance of teaching children about agriculture

If you would like help in creating a news article or help with contacting your local media, please contact the Foundation at (402) 421-4747 or at foundationforag@nefb.org.

If you do receive media coverage, please share with us!

Also, if you have pictures that you would like to share please email them to foundationforag@nefb.org.

CONNECT WITH US!

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