



Cream of the Crop

a harvest of
ideas for educators

CALIFORNIA FOUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM



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Teacher Feature - Robin Hillman

Grades Taught:

1st grade and
The GATE
program for 4th-
6th graders

School: Red Bank Elementary, Clovis Unified School
District



DID YOU KNOW?!

**Bell peppers are a
great source of
vitamin C.**



California Foundation for
Agriculture in the Classroom

1. How and when did you first learn of Ag in the

Classroom?

My husband, Taylor Hillman, is the assistant news director for AgNet West Radio Network, and one weekend I attended a pesticides convention with him to help out his company. I was walking around the booths and unsuspectingly I happened upon the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom booth. I was shocked to find so much curriculum and tools to use in the classroom about agriculture right there at my fingertips. The woman running the booth was so informative and I was instantly hooked and felt that my GATE students would be immediately engaged in this topic. Seeing how the school I teach at is smack dab in the middle of the Central Valley, I wanted to bring agriculture into my students' world.

2. How long have you been teaching students and why did you choose to become an educator?

This is my fourth year as a full time Elementary teacher. Previously I taught dance for 12 years. I chose to become an educator because I wanted to inspire kids to overcome their struggles, to plow through challenges, and to hurdle any obstacles that blocked their path in pursuing their goals and dreams. Little did I know that they would be my inspiration to do all of these things in turn. I truly love education because of how it opens your mind and how empowered it makes you feel when you learn something new. I wanted to share that with the vibrant young children of our future.

3. What is your favorite AITC program/resource/event and why?

My students and I loved all of the AITC lessons, but my favorite was the "Mix It Up- Food Scientist" lesson. The students took this project head-on and created some really unique recipes. They all taste tested their colleagues recipes and scored them on a rubric. The slogans and posters they created were fun and clever. I was impressed with the amount of seriousness and importance the students put into this project. They had to market their product, create a graphic design, conduct a survey and taste test, develop a cost analysis check list, and finally present their product to the class. One student's recipe was called #sweetypop,

which was a chocolate covered kettle corn coated with candies. It was delicious!

4. What is the most profound impact that agriculture education/awareness has had on you?

I realized how important it is to have our upcoming leaders and community members of the future to be educated in agriculture. With so much focus being on technology and pop culture, agriculture has taken a backseat to many of our students who haven't grown up in an agriculture surrounded life. These students will feed our future. I realized how important Ag in the classroom was to my 4th-6th grade students when they asked me if they could teach agriculture. They brought up the idea to teach the primary students about agriculture. They read the Kindergarten-2nd grade students a book about agriculture and then taught them a lesson about an agricultural topic. They were inspired from learning about National Agriculture Day.

5. Has agriculture continued to impact the way you educate students?

Absolutely. I try and make at least a couple of references to agriculture each school day. I figure, if it comes up in casual conversations and pops up throughout lessons, it will become a "normal" topic for my students. Maybe it will get them to carry the conversations on at home, or even ask more questions to either their parents or myself.

6. Tell us about one person who has most influenced your own education and educational career.

Both my 5th grade teacher, Jim Feramisco, and my California History professor from CSU Fresno, Dr. Cady. Each of them influenced my education and educational career. Mr. Feramisco made learning fun and helped me become organized and confident as a student. Dr. Cady shared his incredible knowledge and passion for California history, which in turn made me love California and want to know more about it. I wanted to give my future students these passions and qualities as well.

7. Tell us about a golden teaching moment.

The best golden teaching moments are unexpected and are best when the students start the discussion. In that moment, it's important not to tell the student the answer, but to make them search and discover their own understanding or enlightenment. As a teacher, I provide the canvas and paint, the students have to create their own artwork.

8. Describe any agriculture-based projects you have been involved in lately.

My students recently made desktop gardens and have been taste testing all sorts of specialty crops and commodities. It's been a blast seeing them taste things such as dried plums, bell peppers, and even local strawberry ice cream!

9. Do you have any advice for other teachers on implementing agriculture into the classroom?

My only advice is to simply dive in, even if you don't know a lot about agriculture. You'll learn right alongside the students which makes it fun and relatable. You'll be impressed with how much your students learn and how much fun you'll have.

10. Why do you believe it is important for our students to be agriculturally literate and aware in today's society?

Agriculture isn't a fad or a hot topic, it's something the human race needs in order to survive. If we teach our students to be agriculturally literate and aware in today's society maybe our now-fallowed fields will once again be plentiful and green. Maybe dinner plates will more often consist of delicious homemade meals from local produce or even veggies from home grown gardens. Today's students hold tomorrow's future, and our future depends on agriculture.

1. 2015 California Agriculture in the Classroom Conference

Save the Date! Oct. 22-24, 2015, The Queen Mary, Long Beach, CA

Join us for the 20th California Ag in the Classroom Conference as we go Full STEAM Ahead in exploring

agriculture's journey from farm to you. Come aboard The Queen Mary October 22- 24 to learn from speakers, participate in workshops, experience field trips and learn how you can incorporate agriculture in your classroom. [Registration](#): \$280. Please call (800)700-2482 or email info@learnaboutag.org with questions.

Call for Proposals

We are seeking enthusiastic presenters who would like to share their expertise, experience, and educational resources with conference attendees. [Proposals](#) are being accepted to present a workshop or Make 'n' Take, exhibit at the conference, or host "A Taste of California" dinner table!

2. Scholarship Opportunities for 2015 AITC Conference

CALIFORNIA FOUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

AITC is pleased to offer a limited number of scholarships for California teachers to attend the 2015 California Agriculture in the Classroom Conference, October 22-24. The scholarships will cover a minimum full registration fee of \$280. Depending on sponsorships received, some scholarships may cover hotel and travel.

CHARLES SPINETTA FAMILY SCHOLARSHIPS

The Charles Spinetta Family is pleased to offer scholarship opportunities for teachers in Amador County to attend the 2015 California Agriculture in the Classroom Conference, October 22-24.

Apply for a [scholarship](#) now!

3. *Imagine this...* Story Writing Contest Deadline: Nov. 1, 2014

Put your students' imaginations and creative writing skills to use with the *Imagine this...* Story Writing

Contest. This contest promotes creative writing, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, meets Common Core State Standards, and helps students make real-life connections to agriculture. Six stories, one from each grade level, third through eighth, will be selected as state winners. For more information, and to download the entry form, visit <http://learnaboutag.org/imaginethis/>.

4. Life Lab School Garden Workshop

Saturday, September 12, 2015

Sowing the Seeds of Wonder: Discovering the Garden in Early Childhood Education - Cost: \$180/person. One semester unit of graduate education credit available per day for an additional \$60 fee per day. Please register by September 1, 2015.

See more at: www.lifelab.org.

5. Literacy for Life Grants

Deadline: October 1, 2015

Have you wanted to take your class on an agriculturally themed field trip, purchase a class set of books focusing on agriculture, or host a farm day? Here is your chance! Grant possibilities are limitless, be creative and innovative with your idea! Applications for the 2015 Literacy for Life Grants are now available! These grants are designed to initiate new projects or expand existing projects that promote agricultural literacy.

For grant ideas and to apply, visit <http://learnaboutag.org/literacyforlife>.

6. Seed Survivor is Coming to California

Seed Survivor is coming to California! California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is hosting Seed Survivor Mobile, a plant nutrient classroom on wheels, this November through March 2016!

During this time, two mobile classrooms will be traveling throughout California to help teach plant nutrient units to grades K-6. Contact us today if you are interested in having Seed Survivor at your school! (800)700-2482 or info@learnaboutag.org.

** California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom*

is also looking for volunteers to help teach these units. If you have a passion for teaching and a passion for agriculture contact us today!*



Say Cheese! - Ag Bite

Bite-sized activities for bring agriculture into your classroom. *Say Cheese!* investigates the cheese making process and teaches you how to make Mozzarella cheese while incorporating science, math and English into the lesson! [Download](#) a copy of the activity today!



County - Local Events

August 15, 2015 - 3rd Annual El Dorado County Ag in the Classroom 20 Mile Taste Fundraiser.

<http://agintheclass-edc.org>

November 5-6, 2015 - FREP/WPHA Conference. Nutrient Management: Challenges and Opportunities.

www.cdfa.ca.gov



Show Your Support for Agricultural Literacy

Help us continue to provide programs and materials to create an awareness and understanding of agriculture among California's educators and students.

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