Agriculture in the Classroom and its Impact on Agricultural Literacy

Holly Schindler
Graduate Student, University of Arizona
Dept. of Ag. Ed, Forbes Building 228, PO Box 210036, Tucson, AZ 85721
Office: 520.621.7175 Fax: 520.621.8662 Email: HollySchindler@aol.com

Monica Pastor
Associate Agent, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

Dr. John “Jack” Elliot
Professor, University of Arizona

Abstract
The world population is dependent upon an agricultural system that will provide them with food and clothing, and a variety of other products to enhance their living environment. Unfortunately, less than two percent of America is involved in production agriculture; thus, a large majority of the country is unable to make informed decisions about topics such as food safety, genetic engineering, trade policy, and pesticide issues. To combat the countries agricultural literacy problem, the USDA established Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) in 1981. The AITC program provides K-12 educators with training and materials to incorporate agricultural lessons into their curriculum. Quantifiable justification as to the benefits of AITC is essential if the program is to be seen as an effective component within public education.

The purpose of this poster was to determine the impact of AITC. Specific objectives were to: 1) identify those specific components and practices which correlate with AITC measurable program success; and 2 determine the significant impacts (including agricultural literacy and academic achievement) of AITC measurable program success.

AITC programs have been deemed pedagogically sound within today’s educational environment of high stakes testing and thus, a better informed citizenry, consumers, and a future agricultural workforce (i.e., business leaders, scientists, legislators, educators, etc.).

• A citizenry that understands the relationships of food, fiber, natural resources, and the national and international origins of food products has the potential to make informed political decisions on water usage, urban encroachment, public lands, trade agreements, and other related issues that is visionary and environmentally sound.

Keywords: Agriculture Literacy, High Stakes Testing