



TIPS FOR WORKING WITH SCHOOLS AND MAKING CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

How to encourage teachers to use AITC materials:

- Develop a database of teachers for your county. Begin with 4th grade as that is the grade level that covers the unit on Wisconsin – and hopefully about agriculture in Wisconsin. You may need to look in the phone book for addresses, call the school, check their websites or use the DPI Wisconsin School Directory. It may help to divide this task between committee members. You could also do a mailing to schools with an information card that they can fill out and return. Sometimes having a drawing or incentive for them to fill out and return the card will improve your return rate!
- Call your elementary school, stop in or send them a mailing to let them know you are interested in working with the teachers. Build a working relationship with the teachers as well as school administrator or curriculum director.
- Offer an in-service program on Ag in the Classroom. Some schools have required hours that teachers need to attend in-services- this could be your opportunity! Find out who schedules and approves in-service topics. You may want to include other county resource people in the in-service such as county extension staff, promotion and commodity groups that offer educational programs or services.
- Ask what you can do to help them with their agricultural units- their needs will vary based on experience, time in the district or at that grade level, resources in the school and their background.
- Offer assistance in finding agribusinesses and farms that could be helpful to the teacher if they want to go on tours or guest speakers.
- Notify the Wisconsin AITC Coordinator or your county AITC committee if there are needs, questions or concerns from teachers about our materials.
- Be positive! Unfortunately, most teachers like to come out to farms in the fall or spring when the weather is nice. That is also the busiest time for farmers. Please try to be accommodating. Your interaction with the teacher may be the only contact he/she has with a farmer, so please let it be a good experience for everyone!

When visiting Classrooms:

- Find out what the visitor's policy is at the school. Most schools require that visitors register in the office and wear some type of identification.
- If you need audio-visual equipment or have other set-up needs, be sure to arrange the details with the teacher ahead of time.
- Find out the number of students so that you have adequate handouts or supplies.
- Ask the teacher to have nametags for students or provide them yourself.
- If you are bringing in food, check with the teacher about any food allergies that students may have. Bring an alternative snack for them.
- Discuss school policy with the teacher if you want to bring animals or larger equipment in for the students to see. Again, check with the teacher about any allergies to animals or grains.
- Present a good image of production agriculture. Dress casually but be clean, neat and well-groomed.
- Write down your agenda of what you want to cover. It helps keep you on track. Make yourself notes as to the amount of time for each part of your presentation. Be aware of the time frame the teacher gave you- they have many things scheduled in a day so it's important not to abuse the time limit.
- Kids love to ask questions or tell about their experiences. That is great – but it is easy to get distracted. If the student poses a tricky question or sticky situation, provide a factual response and avoid direct confrontation. People today have less interaction to production agriculture and some parents may “feed” questions to their child to ask you (i.e. Animal welfare, BST, dehorning, tail docking, and GMO crops) - explain your farm practices but use judgment in the amount of detail you give.
- Bring along some equipment and items to pass around. Favorites include cows' teeth, balling guns, boluses, calf bottles, clippers, dehorner, cow magnets, and similar items. You may want to wait until the second half of your presentation to start passing them around as kids get focused on those items and may not pay much attention to what you're saying.
- Bring along pictures or slides of your farm.
- Bring along agricultural publications, palm pilots, GPS data, farm magazines, bull stud catalogs, computer print outs and other technology that you use in your farming operation.
- If students or the teacher have questions you need to find, be sure to be prompt in your response to them. Have a pad of paper and pen handy to write down questions or other points you want to remember.
- If the students will be coming out to your farm, let them know what to expect. Tell them what they will see, smell and be able to do.