# AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM COMPREHESIVE SUMMER AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE/AG IN THE CLASSROOM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to determine how Summer Ag Institute Attendees use/continue to use the training and information obtained during the seminar and to determine how familiar attendees are with Agriculture In The Classroom (AITC) resources. Additional information includes measuring attendees' perspectives of their students' interest in agriculture, and the use of Agriculture In The Classroom materials.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

- A questionnaire was mailed to all those who had ever attended a Summer Ag Institute 1992-2002
  (1964). Questionnaires were color coded by year attended. A raffle for a paid registration (\$100 value)
  to the 2004 Illinois AITC conference plus agricultural books and videos were offered to encourage
  participation. A total of 669 usable responses (34%) were received.
- This report summarized the results for the total. Detailed results for the following segments are available in the data tables: year institute was attended; grade taught; cluster (based on the cluster analysis of question 19). The clusters are based on the level of agreement of the respondents to each of the 17 agricultural statements in question 19. The cluster analysis revealed two groups: those who had the "Most positive" responses to the statements and those who had "Positive" responses to the statements.

## **COMPARISON TO 2000 STUDY**

 Where appropriate survey results from the 2000 Summer Agricultural Institute Study will be compared to the 2003 findings.

### **Results**

- Grades taught: PreK/K (16%), 1-4 (51%), 5/6 (20%), 7/8 (13%), 9-12 (12%), library/administration (2%).
- Subjects taught: 67% reported teaching Multiple Subject Elementary.
- Importance of teaching agriculture: 88 % very important, 12% somewhat important.
- Frequency of incorporating Ag into lessons: 48% incorporate Ag on a daily/weekly basis.
- Top Ag topics taught: Environment 69%, food pyramid 64%, Earth Day 63%, plants 63%, natural resources 57%, water 57%, conservation 56%, dairy 55%, corn 54%, human nutrition 54%, insects 52%, apples 52%, flowers 50%, careers 47%, importance of ag 44%. While the top topics were the same in the 2000 and 2003 studies, the order of these topics changed slightly.
- Supplemental materials used most in the classroom: materials from the Summer Ag Institute 79% followed by videos 57%, handouts, books, articles 54%, Ag Mags 51%, and Ag kits 48%. Ag kits were noted most often in 2000.
- Top source of supplemental materials: County Farm Bureau 65%.
- Main contact for agriculture related classroom materials: County Farm Bureau Manager 28%, County Extension Service 23%, County Ag Lit Coordinator 22%.
- Respondents believe it is very important to teach children about agriculture (88%).

- Students benefit from learning about agriculture: greatly 73%, somewhat 27%.
- Students have an interest in agriculture: great interest 52%, some interest 45%.
- Respondents do teach about careers in agriculture (67%). Yet student interest in agricultural related careers is relatively low with 57% reporting less than 25% of their students are interested in employment in the Ag sector. In 2000, this figure was 36%.
- When the word "agriculture" is mentioned, 75% think of a small family farm; 70% think of a large family farm; and 49% listed "other."
- Top terms used to describe farmers and ranchers include hardworking (95%), good family values (89%), honest (87%), environmentalist (85%), efficient (84%), jack of all trades (84%), computer literate (79%), risk-taker (77%), safe food provider (74%), well educated (72%), low cost food provider (65%), non-polluter (59%). These results are similar to 2000.
- Technology used most often in the classroom is VCR and monitor (87%), internet access for teachers (77%), personal computer (70%), Internet access for students (63%), and CD-ROM (55%).
- Respondents recommend Agriculture In The Classroom materials to other teachers (87%).
- County Farm Bureau is most likely contacted once a year (47%) or once a semester (19%) for supplemental agricultural materials.
- 40% of the respondents have visited the AITC website. This is up from 23% in 2000.
- Respondents report Illinois Learning Standards can be met through incorporating Ag into lessons: 40% strongly agree, 56% agree.
- Respondents believe agriculture enhances their curriculum: 56% strongly agree, 42% agree.
- Respondents believe students at all levels should be taught about agriculture.
- Respondents believe agriculture should be incorporated into their class curriculum because it is important, it is relatively easy to do, the students enjoy it and it provides important career information.

## **OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Summer Ag Institutes are making a positive impact on teachers.
  - Respondents place great importance on teaching students about agriculture.
  - Nearly half the respondents incorporate agriculture into their lesson plans on a weekly basis
  - Respondents recommend the Summer Ag Institute to teachers.
  - They feel Illinois Learning Standards CAN be met though incorporating agriculture.
  - Respondents feel agriculture enhances their curriculum.
  - They feel students at all levels should be taught agriculture.
- The Summer Ag Institutes are making a difference, continue with these programs.
  - Respondents have fun while learning at the Summer Ag Institute.
  - Respondents have a very positive image of farmers and ranchers.
  - Respondents find the materials obtained through SAI's to be very helpful and use them frequently.
  - Respondents gain or have existing agricultural knowledge reinforced through the lessons and hand-on experiences.
- 96% of the respondents indicate they use supplemental agricultural materials. 65% obtain the materials from their county Farm Bureau office and 28% indicated the county Farm Bureau Manager was their main AITC contact. Continue to support delivery of AITC products through this system.
- 42% of the respondents receive AITC materials from County Extension, Soil and Water staff, or high school agriculture teacher (FFA). Consider outreach/education to these groups.
- Respondents continue to incorporate agriculture in a wide range of subject areas. Help attendees to share their lesson plans with others, perhaps via the website (bulletin board or chat room for exchange of ideas) and through listings to the county Farm Bureaus. Consideration could also be given to direct contact to teachers through a statewide newsletter and /or email newsletter.
- Promote the resource list posted on the AITC website and given to county offices. While this list exists many respondents are not aware of it.
- Respondents report a strong belief in both student benefits from learning about agriculture and student
  interest in agricultural topics. This provides an excellent promotion opportunity for enticing other
  teachers to participate in these sessions.
- Half the respondents contact their county Farm Bureau office annually for materials. There may be an
  opportunity to create greater awareness of the materials available through this venue.
- Ag Kits are very popular teaching aids. Consider developing additional kits with age appropriate
  material. Also have a system in place that will ensure consumables in the kits are replaced and that all
  parts of the kits are complete and in working order.
- Access to Ag Kits is difficult for some respondents. Business hours for kit collection are not always convenient. Consider evaluating current distribution methods.
- Support for Ag Institute II is strong. Consider offering this program on a wider basis and providing the attendees the option of receiving either graduate credit or continuing education units.
- Consider forming a speaker/resource bureau listing the name, location, and topic of the speakers. It
  could be organized by district and housed on the website and in the county Farm Bureau office.

- While 67% of the respondents teach their students about ag related careers, there is relatively low interest in these occupations among the students. There may be an opportunity to expand this topic to include more non-traditional ag careers marketing, research, GPS, advertising, GMO issues, sales, etc. that could create a new awareness and greater interest in ag careers.
- Ag in the Classroom website has experienced an increase in use from 2000 (23% to 40%). Continue to promote this site by giving people a reason to visit.
- VCR & monitor are the most widely available forms of technology used in the classroom. Other top
  technologies include internet, personal computer and CD-ROM. Continue to provide information using
  these technologies.