

Ag in the Classroom

Educating Students on the Importance of Agriculture

Franks, M. L.¹, Black, T. C.², Burch, K. C.³, Sapp, J. P.⁴

¹Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, Burke County Waynesboro, GA 30830, ²Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, Burke County, Waynesboro, GA 30830, ³Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, Jenkins County, Waynesboro, GA 30830, ⁴Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, Burke County, Waynesboro, GA 30830

Situation

The number of school age children who live and work on a farm has drastically decreased over time. This is extremely important in a time when only one in seven Georgians work in agriculture or related fields and the average American is three generations removed from the farm, according to American Farm Bureau. Although Burke County is very rural and had a total Farm Gate Value of \$147,378,320 in 2017, most students do not understand agriculture or where their food comes from. According to 4-H Enrollment, 733 students were enrolled in Burke County 4-H in the 2019 school year with only 27 students residing on farms.



Response

Burke County Extension created and coordinated a two-day Agriculture in the Classroom program that was held at the Southeast Research and Education Center in Midville. This program was designed for fourth graders in the county and their teachers. Students from Blakeney Elementary, Faith Christian Academy, and Edmund Burke Academy attended the program. In collaboration with the Burke County Farm Bureau, AgGeorgia Farm Credit, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, UGA Extension Water Educators, Burke Truck and Tractor, Burke County Young Farmers, Burke County Master Gardeners, local dairy farmers, local farmers and other volunteers, the program held a variety of classes to enrich the agricultural literacy for our students. Lessons included plants, soils, and fertilizers, peanuts, dairy and beef cattle, water, equipment safety, and wildlife. There were six classes that students rotated through during the day, with lunch also being provided by Burke County School Nutrition.



Impact

Burke County's Ag in the Classroom program reached 268 fourth grade youth in the county. After students received information from each of these six classes, a short survey of knowledge gained from the program was administered. According to the survey, 252, or ninety-four percent of students stated that they learned something new from the program. Teachers and parents praised the program and its no-cost benefit. Teachers were also given educational materials and other goods to send home with their students and share with their families. These materials included but were not limited to: peanut plant stages posters, the dairy story books, wildlife pamphlets, and Farm to Fork Friends magazines. These materials were instrumental for teachers to reinforce and continue teaching about agriculture in their classroom. Equipping citizens with factual knowledge about the agriculture industry from an early age will strengthen and support the economic growth of Georgia and Burke County.