

Ag In The Classroom Honoree Says Relationship With Students Is A Partnership

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Somerset Co. Correspondent
CENTRAL CITY (Somerset Co.) — "I consider my relationship with my pupils a partnership. I teach them and they teach me," said Celeste Meck.
The Shade-Central City School

District teacher of fourth, fifth and sixth grade science was recently honored for her Ag in the Classroom curriculum, by the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Rancher Committee. In being awarded honorable mention, Meck received \$250

worth of materials to enhance her Ag in the Classroom ideas.

Nikki Dohner from the Milton Hershey School in Hershey, Dauphin County, received the Outstanding Teacher award at the same time.

"On the one hand I was real surprised, but on the other hand, I wasn't because we had done a lot in agriculture," said Meck who had attended the 1995 workshop at Penn State.

Interestingly, albeit coincidentally, Shade's school district that year began block scheduling classes for its intermediate grades. The trial was to last three years.

Each of language arts, mathematics and science-health were set for 80-minute blocks with appropriate breaks.

For Meck the timing was ideal. In 80 minutes there would be time for all kinds of imaginative lessons using the techniques and knowledge from her summer experience.

Walk into her classroom (Don Barta co-teaches and the aide is Ruth Weaver), and you feel the energy pulsating — the energy of

a teacher who believes in her calling to expand the seeking minds of the young children who pass under her influence.

It's hard to imagine boredom becoming a problem in this classroom when Meck is serving up a fresh idea.

She says that the workshop really heightened her awareness of agriculture. "I learned a lot at Ag in the Classroom. Growing up I thought agriculture was raising a garden and chickens and so forth," she said.

"I found it's much broader. Agriculture is in everything," she said, enthusiastically.

To help her pupils also understand, she invited a local farmer to demonstrate sheep shearing, let them see wool spinning, planted a tree on Arbor Day and took field trips.

During their studies on nutrition, Meck video taped the children's buttermaking experiment. Not only were they educated, but later, watching a replay of their own work was highly entertaining and fun, besides enhancing their powers of observation.

Meck makes her opportunities count. One advantage is having a daughter who lives in Southampton County, Virginia, where Meck can latch on to peanut and cotton plants form nearby growers of them.

With these "visuals" — one potted and the other in a box — the teacher told her pupils that two words sum up what agriculture is — "food" and "fiber."

"Agriculture is anything to do with food and fiber," she stated, opening the lesson with a discussion about that morning's breakfast and the fact that everybody was wearing clothes, to illustrate her meaning.

She continued, explaining that the peanuts actually grow under the ground but their plant is above the ground.

"Peanuts are called 'goober peas,' and cotton is called 'white gold'," she told them.

Next came the Healthy Food Snack Company. The children, seated by fours at their desks, lettered off — A, B, C, D — and the A's formed a factory assembly line behind the long table.



Celeste Meck of the Shade-Central City School District was awarded honorable mention for her Ag in the Classroom curriculum.

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Each wore a card to correspond with the job being done. Foreman, plate separator, date stamper, celery provider, peanut butter spreader, raisin counter, raisin placer, quality control inspector, packer, delivery man, custodian, and the advertisers. Consumers were those who chose to eat the snack, or the B, C, and D kids.

A few lessons on courtesy were also inserted, such as don't begin eating until all have been served, then everybody should eat at the same time.

Meck was amazed how easily agriculture fit into all subjects including, besides science (she also teaches fourth grade social studies), language, all types of writing, mathematics, art, and even music.

In the cafeteria the students sing the Green Bean Daily song while signing. This activity is helping the children learn how to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired.

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