

Alaska Agriculture Activity Ideas

Here are some quick and easy ideas to celebrate and educate on Alaska Ag Day:

Elementary Classes

1. Using pieces of rope 4 to 10 feet long, have students, in groups, make letters of the alphabet by holding the rope above the ground, working together to form the letter shapes. Ropes are important tools for ranches.
2. Read a book that depicts American agriculture. Avoid books that have stereotypes about farming. If you chose a book about farming in the past centuries, be sure to explain how farmers use technology today.
3. Ask students to draw and name as many farm animals or plants as they can. Talk about the abundance of different ones in Alaska, and why that may be.

Elementary and Middle School Classes

1. Discuss agriculture in your area --Are there farms around your community? What is grown there? --If there are no farms around your community, why not? --Are there gardens? Do your students have gardens or participate in 4-H? --Do students gather berries, go hunting, or participate at fish camp with their families?
2. Talk about what is raised or grown in Alaska. Quiz students about what is raised in Alaska and what isn't. Discuss why some foods cannot be grown here.
3. What's on the school's menu for Alaska Ag Day? Have students figure out where the ingredients for those foods may have been grown or raised.

Middle and High School Classes

1. **Math** — Use acres of crops in math problems — there are 43,560 square feet in an acre.
2. **Science** — Agriculture has connections to many of the sciences. Tie the unit you are teaching to one of the many ag-related sciences.
3. **Art** — Try painting with dirt. For instructions, see Alaska's Awesome Soils, Page 10, which can be downloaded at <http://www.alaskaswcde.org/-Edprograms.html>. Some of the world's most famous pieces of art are agrarian in subject. Discuss some of the works, and their importance to the culture.
4. **Social studies** — Agriculture and livestock are directly tied to the movement of populations throughout history. Geography and agriculture are integrally related. On a state, national or world level, look at social studies with agriculture as a theme.
5. **Technology** — New technology has drastically changed the face of agriculture: from remote sensing to GPS locating to robotic farm equipment. Discuss what may be next.
6. **Literature** — From Little House on the Prairie to Grapes of Wrath to modern books, authors have portrayed the gritty reality of farming. Poems like those by Robert Frost are also great introductions to discussions of literary realism regarding agriculture.
7. **Languages** — What are the names of crops and livestock in the language(s) your students are studying? Do ESL students understand words that apply to agriculture and food production?
8. **Economics** — Farmers operate on a small profit margin in a high-risk business. How much does a farmer get for a bushel of corn compared to the cost for a box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes? How much does a farmer get for a gallon of milk compared to the cost of cream or butter?
9. **Government** — Many of America's founding fathers were farmers. How may have these agrarian roots have influenced their stand on issues? The Farm Bill has had a number of changes through the years. Compare how different administrations have thought about agriculture.
10. **Career Exploration** — Agriculture is a fast-changing science with many careers available to students in a wide variety of specialties. Students can research options.