# Increasing Student and Community Engagement through an Experiential Learning Laboratory Experience: The Think OINK! Project

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## INTRODUCTION

- The average American is at least three generations removed from the family farm (Perry, 2018).
- It is often the responsibility of the local agriculture teacher to provide authentic, experiential learning experiences to help bridge this knowledge gap for those in their communities.
- High quality laboratory instruction has often been considered a keystone in successful SBAE programs to provide opportunities to apply technical area concepts taught in the classroom (Phipps et al., 2008).
- SBAE teachers are searching for unique ways to repurpose their current facilities to become multi-faceted learning laboratories in hopes of providing enriching, hands-on experiences for their students in technical agriculture areas.

## HOW IT WORKS

- Provides students an opportunity to gain exposure and understand animal production practices through a hands-on initiative.
- Students artificially inseminate a sow, track her progress through gestation, and assist in the delivery in the school greenhouse.
- Labor process is livestreamed for international interaction and engagement.
- Students process piglets through the removal of needle teeth, provide vaccinations, and castration. Students also learn about welfare, nutrition, and care.
- Students may also purchase piglets for SAE Projects.

## RESULTS

- 500+ students have engaged in the Think OINK project from 2017-2021.
- 2018's delivery livestream had 45,000 views, 91 shared posts, 802 comments, 30,647 engagements, and reached over 234,002 people with people engaging from 6 countries.
- Four other state ag programs implemented their own Think OINK project in their district in 2020.

## FUTURE PLANS & ADVICE TO OTHERS

- Analyze performance data prior to selecting semen & utilizing the carcasses as part of their meats unit.
- Make sure have proper ventilation & foot wear for students.

## COSTS

- Seek industry sponsors, local donors, and grants to secure funds.
- Capital resources included a farrow crate, sow, video camera,, computer, and feeding equipment ($2650).
- Non-capital resources included pig semen, AI equipment, feed, vet supplies, and bedding ($675).

## REFERENCES

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