

The AgBadging Field Guide Program

Saydee C. Longhurst
Utah State University
2300 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-2300
saydee.longhurst@usu.edu

Michelle S. Burrows
Utah State University
2300 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-2300
michelle.burrows@usu.edu

Tyson J. Sorensen
Utah State University
2300 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-2300
tyson.sorensen@usu.edu

The AgBadging Field Guide Program

Introduction/Need for Innovation

Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) programs work to increase agricultural literacy in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade education (NAITCO, 2024a). Within AITC, there are various programs to aid teachers in using agriculture as a vehicle to teach core education topics. However, there has previously been little incentive for students to engage with agricultural literacy in a sustained way. A program that can provide incentives or rewards for sustained student engagement with agricultural literacy can serve an important function to increase the knowledge about agriculture among youth. That is why the AgBadging Field Guide was developed (NAITCO, 2024b).

How it Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

Dr. Debra Speilmaker from Utah State University curated the AgBadging Field Guide program. Patterned after the idea of earning badges in Girl Scouts, the hope was to engage youth about agriculture through an avenue that allowed for choice and motivation to earn a reward, i.e. the badge(s) within each theme. The program was launched in late October of 2022 and thousands of AgBadging Field Guides have been sent to Agriculture in the Classroom programs and teachers across the United States.

The AgBadging program is designed for students in grades 3-5. The guide leads learners through an exploration of the agriculture industry and the way it relates to them personally—what you eat, wear, and use every day as a consumer. It is designed for non-formal (e.g., farm field days, agricultural expos through FFA chapters) as well as being used formally in the classroom guided by a teacher. Students can earn five different themed badges and a completion badge. Badges provide recognition for learning and serve to positively motivate learning about agriculture. Students select activities to earn badges within the themes of Agriculture & the Environment, Plants & Animals, Food & Health, Technology & Engineering, and Geography & Culture. Each theme has milestones that track the student's agricultural journey. Students select three milestones to complete for each badge. Students can opt to do more than three milestones. Upon reaching the required number of milestones, students can visit the Agriculture in the Classroom website to receive their field scout code name by completing a survey to indicate what milestone(s) they completed from each of the five themes.

Results to Date/Implications

Thus far, data has been collected by National Agriculture in the Classroom, summarizing popular milestones to earn the five badges within the AgBadging Field Guide. The information was submitted to AITC through a survey by individuals who had completed at least one milestone in each of the 5 badge areas. Descriptive statistics were calculated. A total of 87 students visited the AgBadging website to redeem their field scout name. Of those students, 18 (21%) completed all five milestones for the Plants & Animal Badge, 28 (33%) completed Seed

Innovative Idea

Sprout, Weather Watch, and Light Investigation. Within the Agriculture and Environment Badge, 34 (39.1%) completed Agriculture & Me, Farm Tour, and Life Cycles as milestones to earn this badge. The Food and Health Badge reported 30 (34.5%) students completed the MyPlate Menu, Produce Poster, and My Energy Cycle as chosen milestones. For the Technology and Engineering Badge, 25 (28.7%) students completed Agricultural Inventors, Build a Barn, and Career Exploration. 17 (19.5%) students completed all five milestones, Agricultural Inventors, Innovating Farm Equipment, Build a Barn, Farming the Future, and Career Exploration. Finally, for the Geography and Culture Badge, 22 (25.3%) students completed the Where in the World? milestone. Closely following, were 20 students (23%) who reported completing all five milestones, Cooking Video, Where in the World?, What's for Lunch?, Food Supply Chain, and Holiday Traditions.

Based on these results, it is easy to see what milestones were most popular among students. A large number of participants choose to do all five milestones within each theme. This is encouraging to see. Only a small number of students did the minimum of only completing one milestone within each theme to receive a badge. Statistics also showed a large portion of the respondents choose 3 milestones to complete each badge. When looking at the data, it is important to note the milestones that were most popular and making note of it when considering the impact this field guide can have on students.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Regarding badging as a way of teaching and motivating students, the Ag Badging Field Guide encourages students to take ownership in the learning experiences they have. In regard to the current data collected, it is easy to see what milestones were most popular within each theme and others that were not as popular. Most participants reported doing all five milestones within each badge theme. Going forward, it begs the question of how the Field Guide was utilized for those who completed all five milestones. While thousands of field guides have been distributed, there were only 87 participants that visited the AgBadging website to receive their field scout code name. Going forward, AITC aims to find a way to better track participants that receive field guides and if completed. This innovation also provides the opportunity to see what level of agriculture literacy students can reach by participating in this program.

Costs/Resources Needed

This innovation is funded fully through the National Agriculture in the Classroom. Expenses included wages for a full-time staff member who designed the guide as well as a full-time staff member with web design skills who edited and updated the National AITC website.

References

National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization. (2024a). *About Agriculture in the Classroom*. National Agriculture in the Classroom. <https://www.agclassroom.org/get/about/>

National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (2024b). *AgBadging overview*. National Agriculture in the Classroom. <https://agclassroom.org/agbadging/overview/>