

YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

2024 - 2025 Regional Agriculture Days



Introduction

Inside Education's Regional Agriculture Day programs engage students and farmers alike in discussions and demonstrations of many key parts of the food and agriculture systems including production, research, retail, and consumption. The focus of these programs is connecting students to what sustainable agriculture looks like in their backyard by hearing directly from local farmers, ranchers, operators, researchers, and community volunteers.

The Regional Agriculture Day programs are open to groups of junior and senior high school students from Grade 7-12. In total, **351 students** and **23 teachers** from **8 schools** attended these **5 unique events** in the 2024 - 2025 school year.

Each event had its own guiding theme, cemented in the local agriculture communities and their region-specific abilities to raise and grow food, as well as the goals of the local teachers requesting the program. Inside Education is both host and facilitator; we provide an introduction and a debrief to each day, framing the event in the context of the greater conversations around sustainable agriculture across the province, as well as connecting the day's themes to relevant school curriculum. Working within bell schedules, and by offering to cover busing costs, Inside Education has made this program accessible to schools across the province, engaging rural and urban students alike and providing high quality educational programming with little extra work for teachers.

We are excited to share the outcomes and impacts from this unique program through this summary report. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from students and teachers indicates a strong desire for agriculture education across the province of Alberta.

The Regional Agriculture Day programs took place in locations on the traditional territories of the First Nations of Treaty 6, 7, and 8, as well as the Battle River, North Saskatchewan River, and Peace River territories of the Metis Nation of Alberta. Inside Education respectfully acknowledges the Indigenous Peoples who have lived on and cared for this land since time immemorial.

Inside Education is proud to work with partners committed to excellence in agriculture education

Lethbridge - October 22nd, 2024

Our first Regional Agriculture Day of the year brought us to a small but mighty crew of **16 students** in Lethbridge from Gilbert Paterson Middle School. The day kicked off with an engaging overview of Agriculture in Alberta to set the scene for the day of exploring vegetable and beef food production in the Lethbridge area.

The first of two tours for the day took us to Mans Organics in Coaldale, where we learned about the difference between a traditional greenhouse, where produce is typically grown in a hydroponic system, and an organic greenhouse, where produce is grown directly into the soil. The students were excited to see the quails and bugs used for biological pest controls, dig their hands into the soil, and eat some fresh tomatoes. We also explored the solar powered weed picker that is used in the onion fields during the summer.

Our second tour brought us to K3 Seeds/Kolk Farms in Picture Butte. Here students split their time between learning about how the feedlot cares for the cattle including vaccinations, ear tags, and cattle sorting by horseback, as well as learning about the seed cleaning process for the crop side of the business. The group had the chance to stand in the chute and weigh themselves, and practice opening and closing it before watching the staff operate it with a steer. Kolk Farms participates in Alberta Open Farm Day, so had hands-on activities, educational signage, and highly engaging speakers.

Throughout the day, students played games to learn about the top crops grown in Alberta, and the amount of water it takes to grow different food products. We ended off the day by writing thank you notes to the farmers we visited.

"I would like to thank Mans Greenhouse for their wonderful tour. I enjoyed seeing how the greenhouse works, [like] how they open the roof and water the plants. I had fun sitting in the [solar powered] weed picker."

-Pheonix, Grade 7 student, Gilbert Paterson Middle School



PARTICIPATING SCHOOL

Gilbert Paterson Middle School | Lethbridge School Division

Guiding Theme:
Indoor and outdoor agriculture



Grande Prairie - February 11, 2025

We were proud to host our February Regional Agriculture Day on Canadian Agriculture Day! Two schools participated in the event, with a total of **107** students engaging in a day themed on how the local landscape ecology has supported humans since time immemorial.

Classes visited the County of Grande Prairie and met with various departments to learn about local agricultural challenges and innovations. Key topics included the management of invasive species and the tailored approaches used to address them. Students were also given the opportunity to visit Elder Len Auger, who shared Indigenous perspectives on agriculture. He discussed traditional practices, modern-day rituals, and their ongoing significance in land stewardship and food systems!

The students took a trip to the National Bee Diagnostic Centre in Beaverlodge, where they participated in an immersive, sensory experience—tasting honey, identifying local bee species, and learning about the essential role of bees in agriculture. These students learned about some of the impacts of disease on livestock, the different types of bees that are native to Alberta, and even how to extract DNA!

While in Beaverlodge, Foster's Seed & Feed Ltd. gave students a tour of their facility, and showed them what happens on the day-to-day at a local seed company. The folks there shared knowledge on how seeds are transported, sorted and what they look for in a lab! Students also got a chance to get up close and personal with the large machinery that makes modern agriculture possible in the northern climate of the Grande Prairie region.

The event successfully deepened students' understanding of agriculture from municipal, Indigenous, and ecological perspectives.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Isabel Campbell School |
Grande Prairie Public School
Division

St. Mary's Catholic School
School | Grande Prairie
Catholic School Division

Guiding Theme:

*The relationship between
ecology and agriculture*



Calgary - March 20, 2025

Inside Education teamed up with the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology four out largest attended event yet! Two junior high schools sent **107 students** in Grade 8 to celebrate World Water Day. As Albertans near the headwaters of many watersheds, this year's theme of Glacier Preservation was a timely topic for urban students, who often hear about drought in the South Saskatchewan basin, but may not understand the implications on agriculture in their region.

Students started off with an introduction presentation at their school to introduce the event, detail World Water Day's history and discuss agriculture in Alberta's watersheds. Once at SAIT, the students spent time between the World Water Day Expo and a presentation with Margo Jarvis-Redelback, the executive director of the Alberta Irrigation Districts Association. Her thoughtful presentation helped students understand the nuances of balancing water quantity availability and farm planning.

In the World Water Day Expo, students explored a number of hands on activities at booths run by SAIT students, WaterFirst, CAWST, and other industry professionals.

To wrap up the day, Inside Education led students through a hands-on workshop where students learned how to measure snow water equivalent to predict water availability using different densities of craft materials. It was a practical way to pull the day's learning experience together, and a prime example of inside Education enhancing science curriculum.

Thank you to the additional partners on this event:



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Holy Child School | Calgary Catholic School District

Lakeshore School | Calgary Board of Education

Guiding Theme:
Water Availability



Central Alberta - April 17, 2025

The Central Alberta program saw **56 students** from two schools join us on tours of farms in Lacombe County to talk about regenerative agriculture, soil health and animal care.

Each school started off with a presentation about Agriculture in Alberta to set the scene for the history and comparing it with what is happening today. Each school attended the same tour locations, Peony Farms and Majak Meadows. These locations are small scale farms working in the regenerative agriculture landscape, each with unique reasons for their approach to growing food and raising animals, yet just a kilometer apart.

At Peony Farms, students practiced plant identification skills by searching for as many different shaped leaves as possible in the natural pasture land that the cattle raised at the farm graze on. Learning about the plants that grow on the land can give us clues into the nutrients available in the soil and therefore the nutrients available to the cattle. Students also learned how to texture the soil by using soil augers and getting their hands dirty!

At Majak Meadows, we split our time between learning about how the farmers handle and take care of the sheep and cattle by looking at first aid equipment, farrier tools and more. We also spent time using a soil moisture probe and infiltrometer to assess soil characteristics in the field, and discuss how water access affects agriculture in Alberta.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Ecole Lacombe Junior High School |
Wolf Creek Public Schools

Bluffton School | Wolf Creek Public
Schools

Guiding Theme:

Soil science and small scale agriculture



"It was cool to see the different types of soil and I liked learning about the science of soil."

-Jack, Grade 7 student, Ecole Lacombe Junior High School

Edmonton - May 13, 2025

The Capital Region program saw **64 students** in Grade 8 from Balwin School join us on tours that focused on agriculture innovations, technology and research.

All of the students began their day with a presentation about Agriculture in Alberta to provide context for the day's event. The students then headed out to see their two tour locations!

The focus was on research and urban agriculture at the University of Alberta South Campus. Students heard from Kevin Jones at the Prairie Urban Farm, a volunteer-run community farm. Students learned about food security, skill-building opportunities, and community resilience, all while taking part in chores such as weeding, watering and seeding!

The next stop was the Pig Science Centre, connected to the U of A's Swine Research and Technology Centre. Students were able to get close to 3 week old piglets and sows through the viewing area. Dianna Goller explained the research focus on environmentally responsible livestock production, showcasing the experimental open birthing room. The students were also able to practice assisting with birth through a novel hands-on-simulation!

Finally, Balwin School visited Detimdale Holsteins, a dairy farm located in Leduc County. Here they learned about one of the biggest dairy innovations - robotic milking! The students were able to watch the robotic milking process, learn about how robots can keep a barn clean, and experience what it feels like to be on a farm where the cow's comfort is held top a high standard.

All in all, the students had a jam packed day of fun on the farm!

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Balwin School | Edmonton Public School District

Guiding Theme:

Innovations in Animal Husbandry and Urban Agriculture



Program Impact and Feedback

Inside Education is thrilled with the many successes of the Regional Agriculture Day programs. Each student completed a pre- and post-program survey to assess shifts in student understanding of Alberta’s food production system and sustainability in agriculture as it relates to soil, water, and climate. The post-program questions reflect an average increase in student’s understanding from the pre-program survey, as demonstrated in the charts to the right.

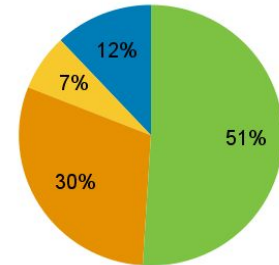
For the World Water Day event, students were asked pre- and post-survey questions related to water quality and conservation. Students indicated overwhelmingly that they increased their knowledge regarding innovations and technology that exist to improve water quality (**77% of respondents**), about careers in environmental and water sciences (**84% of respondents**), and about actions they can take to participate in water conservation and improve water quality in their communities (**87% of respondents**).

“This was à fantastic day out of the classroom. The depth of knowledge demonstrated by the farmers, especially Craig and Miriam, was incredible and set an excellent example for the students. It was an excellent opportunity to explore lesser known aspects of agriculture.”

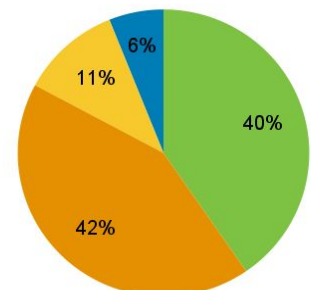
- Teacher feedback, Regional Agriculture Post-Survey

I have increased my understanding of how Alberta's food production system works.

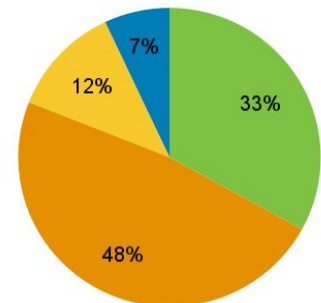
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree



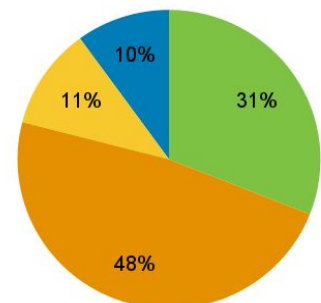
I have increased my knowledge of how food is produced and how it affects the price we pay.



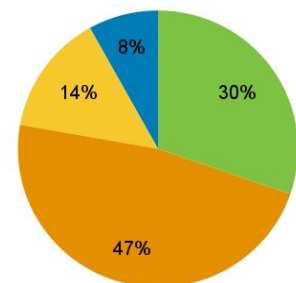
I have increased my understanding of Alberta's agriculture industry and their commitment to sustainability.



I think that Canada's agriculture and food growing industry is headed in the right direction.



I have increased my knowledge of Canada's agriculture industry and their sustainability practices.

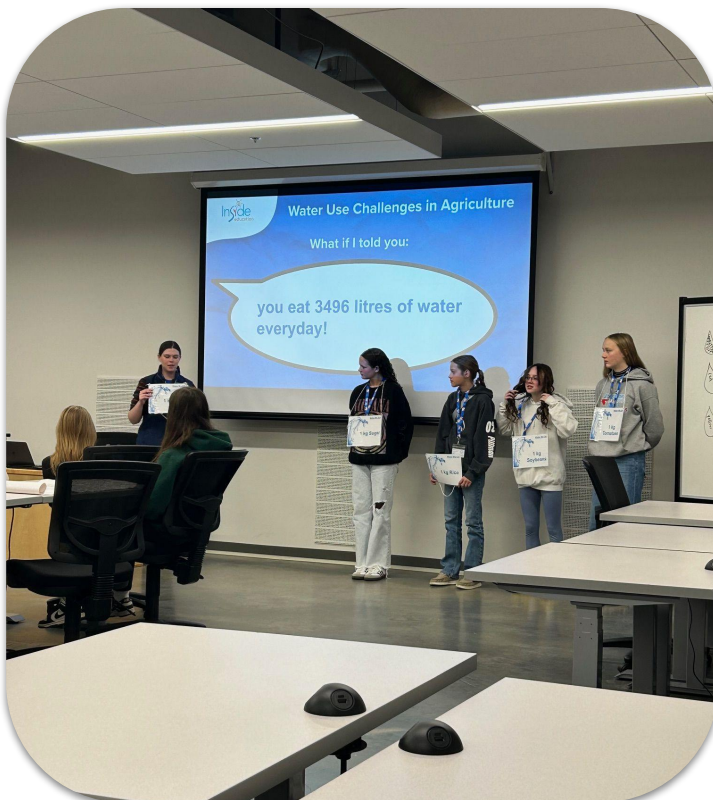


Harvesting Ambitions - Southern Alberta Collegiate Institute

In addition to our own programs, Inside Education had the pleasure of presenting at the Southern Alberta Collegiate Institute's Harvesting Ambitions: Women in Agriculture event on November 21st, 2024. This event was planned by the E3 team at Lethbridge Polytechnic and we were invited to discuss the connection between water and agriculture in Alberta. The event was attended by students from 16 different schools across 5 school districts in southern Alberta.

In our presentation, students discussed the importance of water quantity and quality through hands-on activities such as creating their own dream riverfront property and discussing how they could be good stewards of that land. Another game discussed the connection between growing food and water use. We had **17 students** from **13 schools** attend the workshop.

Additionally we got some time with each of the teachers attending the program to present on Inside Education as a education resource and our upcoming agriculture education programs including classroom programs, Regional Agriculture Days and Cultivate 2025.



Summary and Future Opportunities

Inside Education is excited to continue the momentum of these programs with more Regional Agriculture Programs in the next school year, and the Cultivate: Agriculture and Youth Leadership Summit to be held in Edmonton from November 6-9th where we will invite 20 teams of 4 students and 2 teachers from high schools across Alberta.

We look forward as well to continuing partnerships with other organizations such as the Southern Alberta Collegiate Institute and SAIT in their dedication to engaging youth in environmental topics through events such as Harvesting Ambitions and World Water Day.

We are currently working on a number of complementary programs for agriculture education at all grade levels including:

- Updated teacher's guide for our Running Water poster learning resource
- The coordination of Agriculture in the Classroom Canada's Little Green Thumbs program, and the Nutrients for Life Learning Garden grant in Alberta
- Providing full scholarships to teachers to attend our award-winning teacher professional development programs
- The 2025 and 2027 Cultivate Youth Leadership high school summits

For our 2024-2025 school year, we had 16 schools apply to attend a Regional Agriculture Day, some willing to travel over two hours to the starting destination for the opportunity. The desire for this type of no-cost, high quality agriculture education is increasing, and Inside Education expects that demand will grow as teachers share their knowledge, ideas, and experience with their colleagues from across Alberta. We are committed to developing high-quality learning opportunities to support agriculture and environmental education in Alberta. Inside Education recognizes that agriculture is an important area of study for today's students; the key to creating a generation of informed stewards and decision makers.



Contact

For More Information Contact:

Inside Education Society of Alberta
www.INSIDEeducation.ca

Jayme Nelson, Program Manager | jnelson@insideeducation.ca

Kathryn Wagner, Executive Director | kwagner@insideeducation.ca

YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

2024 - 2025 Regional Agriculture Days

