

**Title:** Georgia 4-H and National 4-H Congress: Partnering to Reach Urban Youth with Agricultural Literacy

**Situation:** The concept of Agricultural Literacy began to appear in the research literature in the late 1980s. Youth today still need basic agricultural literacy and opportunities to better understand agri-food systems. In 2005, six national agricultural education organizations agreed to collaborate to prioritize areas for emphasis concerning agricultural literacy. Looking at the work of Piaget and Ausubel, agricultural educators noted that learning is part of schemata, indicating that learning can occur when integrated into existing conceptual frameworks. Therefore, informal educators understood that impacting conceptual frameworks begins at an early age, and teaching basics decision making and knowledge around the concept of agri-food systems to elementary youth, could impact attitudes concerning agriculture into adulthood.

**Response:** Georgia 4-H, in partnership National 4-H Congress, began a collaborative effort four years ago to introduce agri-food systems/agricultural literacy content to elementary age urban youth through a peer to peer model. The partnership utilizes a service learning model where by high school 4-H youth go through a train the trainer seminar led by University of Georgia Extension Agents and Specialist equips them to share a Georgia agriculture commodity with elementary age youth in the Metro Atlanta area. The agricultural commodity lesson is introduced during the school day, which requires the lesson to be aligned to Georgia Standards of Excellence. The lesson also contains an experiential component, allowing the elementary age youth to make practical application of the agricultural literacy introduced in the lesson.

**Results:** Since 2015, Georgia 4-H through National 4-H Congress, have trained 1,000 youth from all over the nation to deliver a Georgia agriculture lesson to over 3,750 Metro Atlanta area elementary youth. Each November, 35 classrooms in the Metro Atlanta area receive the National 4-H Congress youth as classroom volunteers. As part of the volunteer experience, these high school 4-H youth deliver a prepackaged agriculture commodity lesson with engaging agricultural related activities with the intent to introduce and to begin to form positive attitudes around agri-food systems among the students who receive the lesson. Lesson topics have included emphasis on peanuts, cotton and poultry, which all three play a major role in the \$77 billion dollar industry of agriculture in our state.

J. Ashley Adamo, principal at Fred A. Toomer Elementary School states, “Through our National 4-H and Georgia 4-H Urban Agricultural Literacy emphasis, my students gain a hands on experience and appreciation for where their food comes from and can better relate to the agricultural industry in our state. This is a win win for our school and 4-H as we work to educate youth and families on the benefits of agriculture in Georgia.”