



## REACHING OUT TO SCHOOLS

### FINDING THE CONTACT INFORMATION

Developing a database of schools and teachers is an on-going challenge. Teachers retire, move to other schools, and move up or down grades. Maintaining a database isn't easy and takes time and effort.

There are some databases available through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. If you are able to work with MS Excel, you can download the databases, conduct sorts, and develop your own listing. You can find these lists at <http://dpi.wi.gov/lbstat/labels.html>

The Agriculture Education Instructors list is available at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ag/pdf/ageddirectory.pdf>

You can also purchase a Wisconsin School Directory (hard copy) or download the information by visiting <http://dpi.wi.gov/schldist.html>. The hard copy lists all public schools and any private schools that fill out a PI-1281 form.

You can also develop your database by visiting the websites of schools in your county, calling them directly, or having your members check their school district they live in and compile a list.

Once you have the information, you can develop a contact list. If you do this in MS Excel, it is easier to maintain and you can also import it into MS Word to make mailing labels.

The Wisconsin AITC Program does have a teacher contact list that has been compiled from:

- Lists that counties submit
- Teacher's names obtained at teacher's conventions and other events
- Teachers that have used AITC materials, attended in-services or requested information

### HOW TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE USE OF AITC MATERIALS

- You can use the Wisconsin AITC Flyer's blank side for your county information in teacher mailings and outreach. Listing your county's contact information, resources you have, programs and activities offered and other information is helpful for the teachers.
- Call your elementary school, email, stop in or send them a mailing to let them know you are interested in working with the teachers. Build a working relationship with the teachers as well as school administrator or curriculum director.
- Offer an in-service program on Ag in the Classroom. Some schools have required hours that teachers need to attend in-services- this could be your opportunity! Find out who

schedules and approves in-service topics. You may want to include other county resource people in the in-service such as county extension staff, promotion and commodity groups that offer educational programs or services.

- Ask what you can do to help them with their agricultural units- their needs will vary based on experience, time in the district or at that grade level, resources in the school and their background.
- Offer assistance in finding agribusinesses and farms that could be helpful to the teacher if they want to go on tours or guest speakers.
- Notify the Wisconsin AITC Coordinator or your county AITC committee if there are needs, questions or concerns from teachers about our materials.
- If you have financial means, offer scholarships for teachers that attend agriculture related in-services, tours or take graduate credits.
- If schools participate in any of your programs (i.e. Essay Contest, safety, county activities), offer a classroom presentation or some type of resource.
- Invite a teacher that has used AITC materials or attended an in-service or graduate class, to speak to the county Farm Bureau annual meeting, a board of director's meeting or other event.
- If you have a committee interested in working with schools and teachers, invite several teachers to be a part of the committee. They will be a valuable asset in developing programs that teachers want!
- Be positive! Unfortunately, most teachers like to come out to farms in the fall or spring when the weather is nice. That is also the busiest time for farmers. Please try to be accommodating. Your interaction with the teacher may be the only contact he/she has with a farmer, so please let it be a good experience for everyone!
- Use National Ag Day, Food Check Out Day, National FFA Week, and other special events as a time to promote or conduct an activity.
- Use the media to promote your resources, activities and special events. Also use your county Farm Bureau newsletters, commodity newsletters and agricultural media to increase awareness.

### Keep in mind...

- Don't get discouraged if you have a lot of participation one year and less the next year. Sometimes the timing of events, contests and activities just doesn't work with a school schedule or testing dates.
- If you see a decrease in a school's response (or no response), take time to contact the school or teacher to see if there's a problem.
- Reminders are good- whether by a bright colored postcard, an email or phone call.
- Developing a good relationship with a teacher will help increase use of your resources, programs and activities.