



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

Sen. Akshar, CCE and BOCES Announce “Growing Our Agri-Future” to Bring Agriculture Back into Classrooms

FRED AKSHAR January 6, 2017

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Senator Fred Akshar joined officials from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Broome-Tioga BOCES and superintendents representing schools from across the 52nd District to announce a new program to connect local students with agricultural education and opportunity.

Growing Our Agri-Future will bring Agricultural Educators into classrooms in five school districts across the 52nd Senate District as a Pilot Program.

The program will help students gain a greater appreciation for agriculture and its impact on

our community and highlight the benefits of pursuing careers in the growing multi-billion dollar industry.

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“As a young man, I was raised in rural Afton NY where, like many parts of our community, agriculture is a way of life and an important economic driver,” said Senator Fred Akshar.

“Agriculture is one of the biggest and most diverse industries in our community and the state, but the average age of a farmer in New York is 55. That tells me we need to invest in our future and help educate the next generation on the wide range of career opportunities available through agriculture.”

Growing Our Agri-Future classes and curriculum will be administered by Cornell Cooperative Extension. An Agricultural Educator will visit each school regularly throughout the school year, providing 14 lessons per month for each school. Each school's curriculum would be customized to suit the needs of individual school districts. Classes could range from learning about the science and technology of agriculture to touring local farms to growing food at school gardens.

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"Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) is excited to partner with Senator Akshar and Broome-Tioga BOCES," said Victoria Giarratano, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County. "CCE programming provides exposure to experiential learning and promotes the diversity of agriculture. Agriculture is the leading industry in NYS. Creating a viable pathway to careers in agriculture is the priority of Ag in the Classroom program."

Broome-Tioga BOCES will serve as a key sponsor for the program.

"Broome-Tioga BOCES is very grateful to the Senator for reaching out to us and approaching this initiative with a regional perspective that will create a very positive experience for as many students as possible," said Broome-Tioga BOCES CEO and District Superintendent Allen Buyck. "We are looking forward to our collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension and the school districts on this BOCES. "

Growing Our Agri-Future's Pilot Program will begin this semester at Harpursville, Maine-Endwell, Owego Apalachin, Union-Endicott and Windsor school Districts.

"The Ag in the Classroom program is another example of the unwavering commitment Senator Akshar has made to public education and, specifically, our students," said Harpursville School Superintendent Michael Rullo. "Through this partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension and Broome-Tioga BOCES, expertise and ingenuity are directly placed in our classrooms. The program will certainly support the sense of wonder and inquisitiveness inherent in our students while at the same time exposing them to the world of agriculture that is central to our lives and critical to our region. Not only do I want to extend my most sincere gratitude to Senator Akshar, but I also want to commend him for his forward-thinking, community-based approach demonstrated through the Ag in the Classroom program."

"Upstate New York, and in particular, the Greater Southern Tier, has historically provided opportunities for families to make a living through the agriculture industry," said Maine-Endwell Superintendent Jason VanFossen. "We have an opportunity to not only provide insightful and engaging educational opportunities for children, but, provide career exploration opportunities and ideas that may generate an appreciation and realization that making a living in upstate New York is a reality."

"'Growing Our Agri-Future' is a timely and intelligent initiative with an eye on the future," said Corey Green, superintendent of Owego Apalachin Schools. "With roughly 20 percent of all jobs in New York state tied to agriculture, this is a tremendous opportunity for our students to learn about existing agricultural production, and the career opportunities that could arise in this important area over the coming years. The initiative has great value across the state, and especially in our more rural communities."

"The Union Endicott Schools are thrilled to be able to access agriculture education for our students," said Union-Endicott Superintendent Dr. Suzanne McLeod. "With regional economic development including future careers in agriculture, this is a curriculum area of high value for our students and their future careers."

"Public education must realize our collective higher purpose beyond graduation rate and reimagine K-12 education as an economic driver through deliberate and collaborative programming," said Windsor School Superintendent Dr. Jason Andrews. "The Ag in the

Classroom program is an opportunity to create awareness and inspire a new generation of agricultural entrepreneurs. The Windsor Central School District is both excited and appreciative of the opportunity provided by Senator Akshar and Cornell Cooperative Extension.”

“From the start, I've pledged my commitment to supporting quality education for the kids in our community,” said Akshar. “I've also pledged to be a loud, energetic voice for our farmers and local agriculture. Today, I'm proud to join a team of dedicated, hardworking partners who share our vision and want to invest in our community's future.”

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