

# There's a Farmer in My Classroom

A Virtual Agricultural Education Program



## Strategic Plan



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# Strategic Plan

## Mission of There's a Farmer in My Classroom

To connect students to agriculture through engaging educational programs, fostering a deeper appreciation for food production, and inspiring a lifelong interest in agriculture and its diverse career paths through authentic relationships.

## Overview of the Program

Imagine students across the state stepping onto a farm without ever leaving the classroom, watching cattle graze, seeing crops grow, and meeting the farmers who make it all happen. There's A Farmer in My Classroom is a year-long virtual adventure designed to bridge the gap between students and the farms that feed them.

Created by Sara Preston, a 6th generation farmer and passionate ag educator, this program offers interactive and flexible experiences that fit seamlessly into any classroom. Through live farm tours, real-world connections, and hands-on resources, students will discover where their food comes from, meet the people who produce it, and explore the diversity of agriculture.

There's a Farmer in My Classroom focuses on four offerings:

**Virtual Farm Tours** – Visit farms and fields, from caring for animals to growing crops, and see how agriculture comes to life.

**There's A Cow in My Classroom** – A farmer-led experience rooted in a working beef operation, where classrooms follow a real cow through the school year to learn about animal care, stewardship, and food production.

**Quarterly Live Sessions** – Chat with a real farmer, ask questions, and get an inside look at farm life.

**Bi-Weekly Teacher Newsletters** – Packed with ag themed lesson plans, activities, and grant opportunities.

Teachers can easily integrate agriculture into their curriculum while also building their own agricultural literacy, helping them feel more confident teaching the subject.



# About the Founder

*Sara Preston*

Sara Preston, a 6th generation farmer, was raised on a small livestock farm in southern Minnesota. With deep roots in the 4-H and FFA organizations, Sara has always cherished the opportunity to share and teach her passion for agriculture with others.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Marketing and Communications, with a minor in Animal Science, from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Sara's professional background encompasses diverse roles, including positions within the farm credit system, a state commodity group, Iowa State University Extension, and Ag in the Classroom. These experiences, coupled with her dedication to volunteer work, have significantly honed her speaking, writing, and teaching abilities, enabling effective communication with youth.



Now residing in Northern Iowa, Sara farms with her husband, Jared, their three young children, and Jared's multi-generational family. They operate a cow-calf and row crop farm outside of Swea City.

Sara's advocacy efforts have allowed her to collaborate with various organizations and companies, sharing insights about their farm and the agricultural industry. As a speaker, she connects with audiences of all sizes and age groups ranging from elementary classrooms to professional organizations, bringing agriculture to life in a way that is approachable, engaging, and impactful.

Through this work, Sara has been invited to collaborate with and speak on behalf of the following businesses and organizations:





## Strategic Plan Goal

Between 2025 and 2030, There's A Farmer in My Classroom will establish itself as a trusted, widely adopted agricultural literacy program for elementary educators by expanding classroom participation, deepening curriculum integration, and building a scalable model that supports growth across Iowa and the broader Midwest.

## Core Values

### Authenticity

Real farmers sharing real stories that tie to real learning.

### Education First

Classroom-aligned content that supports standards and strengthens teacher confidence.

### Accessibility

Agriculture experiences for every Iowa student, regardless of location or program access.

### Connection

Building relationships between farmers, students, teachers, and communities.

### Transparency

Honest conversations about modern agriculture practices and decisions.

## Key Audiences

### Primary

- Students
- Educators

### Secondary

- Parents
- Administrators
- Communities

### Tertiary

- Commodity groups
- Ag organizations
- Legislators
- Donors



# Strategic Priorities

## Priority 1: Curriculum and Content Development

Goal: Develop standards-aligned lessons, virtual tours, and an on demand video library.

Metrics include resource usage, feedback, and engagement statistics

## Priority 2: Teacher and School Engagement

Goal: Provide newsletters, professional development, and create a Teacher Advisory Council.

Metrics include open rates, PD attendance, and advisory participation

## Priority 3: Program Expansion and Impact

Goal: Increase participating classrooms and establish new district partnerships.

Metrics include number of classrooms, students reached, participant retention, and survey feedback

## Priority 4: Community, Industry and Sponsor Relationships

Goal: Strengthen sponsor connections and funding diversity with ROI tracking.

Metrics include sponsorship growth, repeat partners, and impact transparency.

## Priority 5: Operations and Sustainability

Goal: Expand staffing capacity and build scalable systems for scheduling, communication, and reporting.

Metrics include efficiency gains and sustainability indicators.

# Strategies, Tactics and Measurements

## Priority 1: Curriculum and Content Development

### Key Strategies

- Maintain factual accuracy and transparency
- Leverage farmer expertise and ag partnerships
- Ensure age-appropriate, unbiased content

### Tactics

- Establish a simple content review process
- Formalize partnerships with ag organizations
- Highlight “behind-the-scenes” realities of farming practices
- Regularly update materials to reflect current agriculture
- Use educator feedback to refine content clarity

### Measures of Success

- Teacher confidence ratings
- Partner endorsements or renewals
- Decrease in reported student misconceptions

## Priority 2: Teacher and School Engagement

### Key Strategies

- Position the program as a go to instructional resource, not a one time experience
- Align content with classroom needs and standards
- Encourage repeat participation year over year

### Tactics

- Develop grade specific lesson bundles tied to virtual farm tours
- Offer educator toolkits with discussion guides and follow-up activities
- Collect and share teacher testimonials focused on classroom use
- Offer priority access or bonus content for returning educators

### Measures of Success

- % of returning teachers
- Number of lessons used per classroom
- Teacher feedback on curriculum integration





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### Priority 3: Program Expansion and Impact

#### Key Strategies

- Use virtual delivery to overcome geographic barriers
- Build repeatable systems
- Prepare for Midwest expansion and beyond

#### Tactics

- Refine virtual farm tour formats for consistency and reuse
- Develop recorded modules to supplement live sessions
- Pilot digital classroom packs for broader reach
- Test expansion with selected Midwest classrooms (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska)
- Document processes to support replication

#### Measures of Success

- Growth in classrooms and states served
- Successful pilot participation outside Iowa
- Reduced delivery time per classroom

### Priority 4: Operations and Sustainability

#### Key Strategies

- Diversify funding streams
- Strengthen partnerships and sponsorships
- Support operational stability

#### Tactics

- Secure multi-year sponsorships and grants
- Align sponsor ROI with classroom reach and impact
- Create tiered participation or support opportunities
- Track outcomes in a simple annual impact report
- Gradually delegate or systematize delivery tasks

#### Measures of Success

- Multi-year funding commitments
- Annual revenue growth
- Reduced dependency on single funding sources

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## Strategic Priority 5: Demonstrate Measurable Impact & Continuous Improvement

### Key Strategies

- Collect meaningful but manageable data
- Use feedback to guide improvement
- Communicate impact clearly

### Tactics

- Annual educator surveys
- Post-program teacher reflection questions
- Classroom engagement and usage tracking
- Publish a yearly impact summary
- Share stories alongside data

### Measures of Success

- Consistent positive educator feedback
- Clear year-over-year growth trends
- Increased demand and referrals

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Learn more about **There's a Farmer in My Classroom** at [farmerinmyclassroom.com](http://farmerinmyclassroom.com) or by scanning the QR code.

