



## **FARMER PEN PAL GUIDELINES**

The Sedgwick County Farm Bureau Farmer Pen Pal Program connects farmers and ranchers with classrooms to help students understand where their food, fiber, and fuel comes from. This link creates a personal connection between the classroom and a volunteer in the agriculture community.

Volunteers come from Sedgwick County and are actively involved in production agriculture. Classroom participants come from across the county as well and can be urban or rural. Topics discussed in the letters relate to natural resources, seasons, nutrition, communities, the environment, weather, and the culture of living in rural Sedgwick County.

### **Why do participants participate?**

#### **It's Easy**

The commitment is just three letters during the school year spread across the fall, winter, and spring. This is a low time, high impact opportunity!

#### **It's Fun**

The questions asked and received will make your day! Many students share photos, artwork, and about me information while farmers and ranchers share photos, videos, and seed and fiber samples.

#### **It Makes a Difference**

The Farmer Pen Pal Program provides a personal connection to someone within the agriculture community and supplements learning by aligning with Kansas Standards for English Language Arts.

# Farmer/Rancher Guidelines

The Farmer Pen Pal Program connects a farmer or rancher with a classroom during the school year. The goal is for the pair to exchange letters three times during the school year. Letters can be in the form of hand-written letters or e-mail. Emily Kerschen, Ag Ed Specialist at SCFB, will help set the schedule for exchanging letters with your Farmer Pen Pal classroom. Although only three letters are required, more can be written.

Letters will be sent through the SCFB office. When you receive your letters from your classroom, you will also receive a memo that pulls out some of the most interesting or most asked questions, topics, etc. to help you in your letter writing back to the class.

As a Farm/Ranch Ag Pen Pal, please send your letters to the classroom by the following dates:

- First week of November
- First week of January
- First week of March

If for some reason your letter will be late, please contact Emily/your classroom and let them know when they can expect your letter and if it will be coming in the mail or email.

## Pizza Party

At the conclusion of the program, Sedgwick County Farm Bureau and the Farmer Pen Pal will host a pizza party for the Farmer Pen Pal classroom! Pizza and drinks will be provided along with a special program sharing how the different ingredients needed to make a pizza are grown and raised by Kansas farmers and ranchers! We would like to schedule parties near National Ag Day on March 19, but we will work to find the best date for both classrooms and farmers.

SCFB will help with organizing and purchasing everything needed for the pizza party as well as the program/materials needed to teach students how

Kansas farmers contribute to making a pizza.

# Classroom Guidelines

## Program Guidelines

The Farmer Pen Pal Program connects a farmer or rancher with a classroom during the school year. The goal is for the pair to exchange letters three times during the school year. Letters can be in the form of mailed letters or e-mail.

At the beginning of the program, the Emily Kerschen, Ag Ed Specialist for Sedgwick County Farm Bureau, will be in touch to connect you with your pen pal. We will work with you to set up your schedule for sending/receiving letters and how you will communicate with your Ag Pen Pal farm/ranch when you send the first letter (mail or email). Although only three letters are required, additional touchpoints are welcome. You can also determine at this time if you will have each student send a letter, if you will send a class letter, or if you may do both throughout the program. Please know that most pen pals will send you one letter in return and will answer questions rather than write each student back.

As a Classroom Ag Pen Pal, the suggested schedule to send your letters to the farmer/rancher is as follows (although modifications can be made to best fit your classroom's needs):

- October 1
- December 1
- February 1

If for some reason your letter will be late, please contact SCFB and let them know when they can expect your letter and make necessary adjustments to the letter exchanging schedule. If you have questions or concerns at any time about the program, please contact Emily Kerschen at SCFB right away.

## Letter Ideas

How you want to implement this program within your own classroom is completely up to you! Many Kansas Standards for English Language Arts can be addressed through letter writing: engaging in processes like drafting, revising, editing, and finalizing written work, .Students can write individual letters or work in groups or as a whole class to write a letter.

Below are just a few suggestions that might help your students get started on their letters!

### **Meet Me Questionnaire**

My name is:

My favorite color is:

My favorite food is:

My favorite animal is:

My favorite thing about school is:

Something I would like you to know about me:

My favorite farm animal is:

My favorite subject in school is because...

When I hang out with my friends, I really love to...

If I could go any place in the world, I would go to...

Attach a picture of the student if possible

### **Let Me Show You**

Give the writing prompt “I wanted to write and tell you all about something that I have been working on in class!” Try to include photos of their projects when sending this letter.

### **Share What You’ve Been Doing**

Not sure where to begin? Encourage your student to start small. Begin writing about a pet, what they did that week, or what they love to eat.

### **Ask Questions**

Pen Pal writing is a conversation on paper. Make sure your students include a few questions to keep the conversation going. It also shows your farmer or rancher that your students are interested in what they do, too.

### **Personalize It**

Get creative! Allow students to include drawings, stickers, or little things that show their personality. It doesn't have to be big or grand. Write on colored paper or allow the student to sign their name in a special way.

### **Play Stenographer**

As the teacher, play stenographer and write a sentence as the student says it.

### **Collage It**

Create a collage of pictures (cut out from a magazine) of things that represent each student and have the students write a sentence about their collage.

## **Farmer/Rancher Guidelines**

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Letters will be sent through the SCFB office. When you receive your letter from your classroom, you will also received a memo that pulls out some of the most asked questions, topics, etc. to help you in your letter writing back to the class. Please read each letter individually still!

As a Farm/Ranch Ag Pen Pal, please send your letters to the classroom by the following dates :

- November 1
- January 1
- March 1

If for some reason your letter will be late, please contact your classroom and let them know when they can expect your letter and if it will be coming in the mail or email.

