

HARRISON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUCCESS STORY

FARM INC. - EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Since 2015, the Harrison County Conservation District began participating in an educational program that was starting up. In 2016, the district became the sole sponsor of this program which is a collaboration between conservation and extension partners.

Farm Inc., formerly called Ag Reality, is a week long program for high school students. Agriculture classes are not required to participate, but highly suggested; our usual students come from Agri-Business classes.

Students choose a farm, decide to be full time/part time farmers (with off farm income, limited farm size); are given financial specifics for their farm/career, and a credit score. For the first few days, in class, guest speakers come to teach the students about Soil/Topography Maps (how to read them and utilize for operational planning), Ag Lending (acquiring loans/planning for annual expenses), and a planning day. On the final day of the program, students meet offsite along with community volunteers as vendors to participate in the "Year of Farming".

Students migrate around to different vendors to purchase, acquire loans, obtain cost-share assistance, etc. A mock-auction is held, where students participate in a "farm auction", and have an opportunity to purchase needed items for their operation. Mid-way through the day, students begin "harvesting" from their operation/selling their crops; with hopes of making a profit at the end of the "year".

Teachers are provided with follow-up assignments for students, if they wish to utilize; and are encouraged to use this program as a graded assignment. The goal of the program is not to be profitable, nor is it to discourage our youth from becoming farmers. The goal is to show students that farming is a business, and has to be treated as one, or it will surely fail. A magnitude of planning, forethought, and decisions are made to provide food for the world and protect our natural resources!

