



## Ag Advocacy Lesson

Audience: 9-12 Agricultural Science Students

Lesson Length: Three to Four Weeks Combined with instruction and activities (pace depends on each classroom)

### Objectives:

- Students will develop an understanding of the fundamentals of communication
- Students will develop an understanding of the fundamentals of experiential learning
- Students will develop an understanding of what science communication is and its applications
- Students will exercise research and professional skills to apply concepts of communication, experiential learning, and science communication through discussion-based activities

### TEKS Alignment:

- English I
  - 1.A, 2.A, 11.E, 11.F, 11.I
- English II
  - 1.A, 2.A, 11.E, 11.F, 11.I
- English III
  - 1.A, 2.A, 11.E, 11.F, 11.I
- English IV
  - 1.A, 2.A, 11.E, 11.F, 11.I
- Communication Applications
  - 1.D, 1.E, 1.G, 1.I, 2.B, 2.C, 2.F, 2.I, 4.A, 4.B, 4.C, 4.D, 4.F, 4.I, 4.K
- Principles of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
  - 6.A, 6.B, 7.B
- Professional Standards in Agribusiness
  - 6.A, 6.B, 8.C
- Practicum in Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
  - 5.A, 5.B, 5.D, 5.E, 5.F, 5.G
- Character Traits, High School
  - 4.C



Part 1: What is Communication?

➤ **Activity 1: Discussion: What is communication?**

- Instructors: facilitate a discussion with students about communication. Ask students to provide examples of their communication within different contexts (i.e., social media, talking to their parents, talking to friends, on a phone call, etc.)
- *Communication* is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.
  - Discussion Question: What are some common symbols, signs, and behavior you see in your communication patterns?

Part 2: Understanding Science Communication

➤ **What is Science Communication?**

- Have students complete “Defining Science Communication” activity
  - **Activity 2: Defining Science Communication**
    - Begin with a group discussion on what students believe science communication is. Afterwards, split students into groups or have them work independently.
    - In groups of two, or individually
      - Use your device(s) to go to <https://scholar.google.com/>
      - Use key words such as “science communication” and “definition” to develop an understanding of the definition of science communication.
      - Using the information, you found defining science communication develop **your** definition of science communication and prepare to share with the class.
      - Groups/Individuals share definitions with the class.
- After completing the activity, engage in discussion about the definitions and reveal the “Holistic Definition of Science Communication.”
  - *Science communication* is the act of eliciting productive dialogue about key issues (i.e., legislative policy, hot topic issues, etc.) that lack framing by scientific fact.
- **Why should agriculturalists communicate with decision makers?**
  - Define decision makers
    - *Decision makers* are the person or group of individuals who are responsible for making strategically important decisions based on multiple variables (i.e., time constraints, resources available, amount and type of information available and stakeholders involved).



- It is important to communication with decision makers because you can influence their decisions with your personal experience and knowledge.
  - Note: more on this in “communicating with decision makers” portion of the lesson plan
- How is being an agriculturalist involved in science?
  - There are a multitude of ways for agriculturalists to be involved in science. Individuals in the field focus on the essential elements of life: food, water, land, and air. There are a diverse range of occupations within agriculture including farmer, rancher, veterinarian, geologist, land conservationist, and florist. Additionally, occupations outside of the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (ANFR) career cluster are connected to fields in agriculture such as engineers, technology consultants, instructional designers, and more.
    - Discussion Question: What are other ways agriculturalists are involved in/use science?
- **Activity 3: Seminar**
  - **Choose one** of the following three essential questions related to issues the agriculture industry faces.
  - How should our nation’s policies balance concerns about food insecurity against concerns about the safety or environmental impact of modern agricultural technologies? What role should farmers have in discussing and debating these issues in our society and with our lawmakers?
  - Should we draft policy to protect livestock producers from false accusations regarding animal welfare? What could it look like?
  - How do we get the public to support right-to-farm laws? Should these laws be determined on the state or the federal level?
  - Using the chosen question, **develop 3 to 5 questions** you have on the topic and prepare to have thoughtful, meaningful discussion about ways to approach the topic and possible solutions.
  - After students have developed their questions, the instructor will open the discussion by asking the question selected by the group. From that point on, the instructor will not intervene in the conversation unless disparaging or inappropriate remarks are made. This is meant to be a **cooperative conversation, not a debate**.
  - At the conclusion of the conversation, take 5 minutes to reflect on the conversation between you and your peers. What are some ways you can approach the issue you discussed? What are some solutions to the issue?

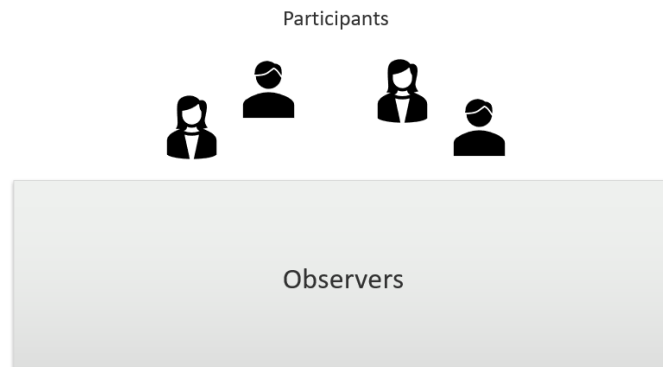


Part 3: Listening to Understand

➤ **Listening to Understand**

○ **Activity 4: Listening to Understand**

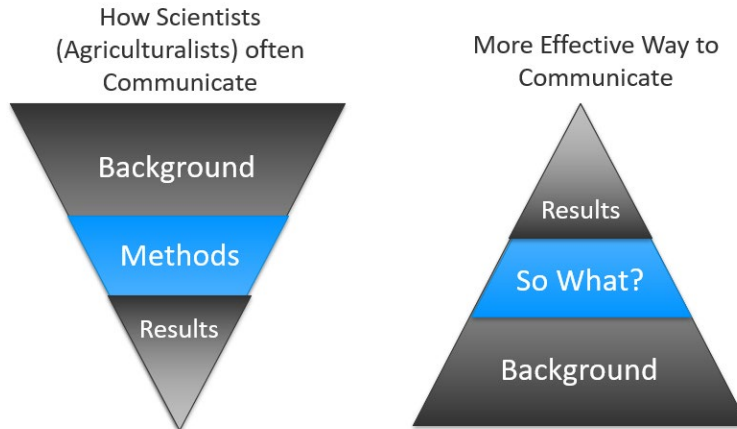
- Set up room in the following format



- Have observers use scratch paper to keep notes on their participant observations and after each round (as many as time allows, with students rotating from participant to observer) discuss the observers observations. Have participants reflect on their experience in the discussion.
- Select **one** of the following topics:
  - Chocolate vs. Vanilla Ice Cream: Which is better?
  - Which is the superior condiment? Ranch, Ketchup, or Mayo.
  - Does pineapple belong on pizza?
- During the discussion, **participants** will deliver a short (30 second to 1 minute) opening statement on their position. Then **participants** will discuss the topic among themselves for 5-8 minutes. After discussion, participants will deliver a 30-second closing statement.
- During the discussion period, the **observers** will take note of how the participants do (or do not) actively listen to what their fellow participants are saying, doing, and expressing. **Observers** will determine if the participants' responses are rooted in a desire to truly understand what the person is saying, or rebuttal.
- Tip: use participants body language, word choice, and tone of voice to decipher their willingness to understand during the conversation.



➤ **How to communicate with decision makers**



- When communicating on a topic passionate about it is typical to want to share the way one does things (**methods**) and the **results**.
- While this information is important, when communicating with a decision maker, they may not have time to listen to the **methods** and **results**.
- A more effective way of communicating the same key message is to 1) share pertinent **background** information, 2) share how it applies directly to the decision maker (**so what?**), and 3) share anticipated **results** if the decision maker were to implement your recommendation.
- **Activity 5: Developing Talking Points**
  - Use Pitch Your Point: Developing Talking Points activity sheet

➤ **How do you take action?**

- Encourage students to use the following resources to stay up to date on agriculture information.
- Resources:
  - Texas Farm Bureau Resources
    - [Texas Agriculture Daily](#)
    - [Texas Neighbors and Texas Agriculture Publications](#)
  - [Southwest Farm Press](#)
  - [Magnetic](#)
  - [Fast Facts About Agriculture & Food](#) by American Farm Bureau Federation
  - Other organizations to seek information from include Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, and Independent Cattlemen's Association along with



agricultural cooperatives, commodity associations (i.e., Texas Corn Producers, Plains Cotton Growers, etc.), and breed associations (i.e., American Brahman Association, American Quarter Horse Association, etc.).

- Know who your decision makers are and communicate with them
  - Offer to be the helping hand, they want the information...better information equals a well-rounded decision
  - **Activity 6: Know Your Decision Makers and Communicate with Them**
    - Use [this link](#) to learn who represents you in Austin, TX and in Washington D.C.
    - Challenge: call, email, or write a letter to one decision maker in Austin, and one in Washington D.C. about an agriculture issue directly affecting you. Politely tell them what the problem is and how you think they can fix it.
    - Think of ways to use your knowledge to communicate a positive message about agriculture
      - Examples:
        - 4-H & FFA Contests
        - County Livestock Show Ambassador programs
        - Jr. Fair Committees
        - 4-H & FFA Ambassador programs