

# OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY

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**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Debra Deskin is named 2017 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year**

“Exciting” is the word that best describes Debra Deskin’s second grade classroom at Orvis Risner Elementary in Edmond, Oklahoma. Students, parents and colleagues all say that Deskin brings a special blend of fun, excitement and inclusiveness to her lesson planning.

Deskin’s creativity has earned her a special honor as the 2017 Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom (AITC) Teacher of the Year. In her 13 years of teaching experience, she has used many lessons from the award-winning AITC curriculum to help her students develop ag literacy. She believes so strongly in the importance of knowing where food and clothing come from that she has presented sessions at two national AITC conferences and has been a presenter four times at the state AITC conference. She has also been an Oklahoma AITC Teacher of the Year finalist three times.

Integrating agricultural topics into elementary teaching subjects is a passion for Deskin. She models “lifelong learning” for her students by constantly planning new lessons and making connections between her school and agricultural businesses.

“I make it a priority to construct meaningful lessons with a project-based and hands-on approach,” Deskin said. One of her former students, Sarah Bolner, shared her memory of Deskin as always nice, funny and the teacher who made learning fun. In short, Deskin made coming to school a blast.

Deskin teaches a variety of concepts using the whole-child approach that helps each child comprehend the subject being taught. It is part of her commitment to welcoming different learning styles in her classroom.

Students have fun trying to herd pink balloon pigs around the playground or improving their math skills by charting county corn estimates. Learning how plants grow by planting dirt babies and singing songs about the 50 states give students good reasons to be excited about going to school. They report that Deskin is joyful, creative and always ready to share a hug.

AITC Coordinators Audrey Harmon, Melody Afill and Cheri Long are enthusiastic about Deskin’s selection as 2017 Oklahoma AITC Teacher of the Year.

“Debra is an amazing teacher and an asset to the Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom Program. As a teacher in an urban school, she works diligently to ensure that her students understand agriculture’s

importance to their lives, even though they live in Edmond and not on farms. We are excited to have her representing the AITC program,” said Harmon.

Deskin will be honored at Ag Day on March 29. The annual celebration of agriculture will begin at 10 a.m. at the state capitol in Oklahoma City. Teachers and students from across the state will be recognized as winners of the 2017 AITC "Agriculture Puts the Puzzle Together" contest. This celebration is open to the public and is free. Sponsors for Ag Day include the Oklahoma Beef Council, Oklahoma AgCredit, Southwest Dairy Farmers, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women, Oklahoma Soybean Board, Oklahoma DairyMAX and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry.

Deskin will also attend the national AITC conference in Kansas City, Missouri and will be "On the Road" with AITC this summer touring "Agriculture on Rt. 66." This summer road trip for teachers focuses on the diversity of Oklahoma agriculture and provides professional development credit. This windshield view of agriculture includes hands-on links with Oklahoma AITC lessons, activities and resources that can be integrated in all subject areas. To apply, teachers can visit the AITC website and click on the "Agriculture on Rt. 66" link.

To learn more about the Ag in the Classroom curriculum, visit [www.agclassroom.org/ok](http://www.agclassroom.org/ok) or contact Audrey Harmon at 405-740-0160 or [audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov](mailto:audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov).

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Suggested photo caption:

Debra Deskin (center) holds a gift basket of teaching resources she received during an awards ceremony as the 2017 Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year. Assisting with the presentation at Orvis Risner Elementary where Deskin teaches second grade are (l-r) AITC Coordinator Melody Auffer, AITC Curriculum Coordinator Pat Thompson, and AITC Coordinators Cheri Long and Audrey Harmon.

