



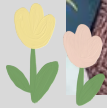
THE CULTIVATED CONNECTION



November 2025 | Virginia Tech CALS

Teacher Spotlight

Join us in recognizing the teachers who have participated in the Engaging Secondary Teachers in CALS Research for Agricultural Literacy program.



Kathryn Sharpe

Math and Social Studies Teacher
Lynchburg, VA

Tell us about yourself and your background:

I was born and raised in Bedford County, VA. After graduating from Staunton River High School, I attended and graduated from Gardner-Webb University with a degree in American Sign Language and Middle Grades Education with a focus on Middle Grades Math and Social Studies. Later, I obtained my Master's in Deaf Education from Texas Women's University. I have been teaching for 15 years, all in urban school settings. For the past 10 years, I have been teaching math at Sandusky Middle School.

What was your favorite part of the PDAL conference?

Besides meeting some wonderful teachers and professors, I have absolutely loved falling in love with learning again. In 8th grade, I struggled with science and developed the mindset that I just wasn't good at science. It didn't come as easily to me as math. I was a little weary about this conference at first, but stepped out and loved all the hands-on science activities. I learned the science and then had "light bulbs going off" on how to go back and relate it to not just math, but to my students who are inner city students with little experience with agriculture. This past summer was my second year participating, and I didn't think it could be any better, but CALS never disappoints with more diverse learning opportunities for us.

How did the agricultural science materials connect with your math content?

It is easy to see how any of the science activities could connect with data collection and graphs; however, this is the second year that I have used a variation of "wicked" problems in my class. This year, I started with it and had students answer the question, "What would a day without math look like?" All the students soon became engaged with identifying all the things that would cease without math and the impact that would have on something else. Students learned the importance of math in their everyday life, but even more, how to agree and disagree respectfully. They learned how to back up statements with facts or examples.

What would you tell other teachers about the program and the opportunity to learn about agricultural sciences?

If you don't, you are missing out! There is so much to learn, and the rich network of people and opportunities is priceless. You may not think it is connected to what you teach or what your students have to learn according to the state, but it could be exactly what one student needs.

CALS CURRENTS

What's happening in VT CALS?



Students from Patrick County High School joined us Virginia Tech's campus to engage with CALS faculty and students! Students participated in exciting activities including learning about cereal production and DNA extraction.

Interested in planning a campus visit? Please reach out to Karen Ealy-Sanders at kasande1@vt.edu.

Ready, Set, Grow!



Here's a free lesson plan (written by a former participant) that you can use in your classroom:

Mind Your Own Beeswax Lab

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Interested in receiving a free beeswax kit for the lab?

We'd be happy to send one to you! Email mooredm@vt.edu for more information.

Are you planning to share your PDAL experience at a professional conference? We have travel funds available to help cover travel and materials. Email

mooredm@vt.edu with inquiries.

And don't forget, it's time to submit your three lesson plans! We are ready to distribute funds to you. Please send lesson plans to mooredm@vt.edu.

Contact Us!

We'd love to hear from you! If you have questions about our programs or opportunities to engage with CALS please reach out to **Dr. Donna Westfall-Rudd** at mooredm@vt.edu or **Nia McLean** at mnia@vt.edu