



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Job Shadowing in Agriculture



How Ag Prep is Connecting School with Work

Fall 2016



Contents

Introduction	1
What is Ag Prep?	2
What is Job Shadowing?	3
Developing the Job Shadowing Program	5
Next Steps	9

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Each spring in California’s San Joaquin Valley, while the almond orchards bloom rosy pink and the pomegranates set vermilion flowers, high school sophomores participating in Wonderful Agriculture Career Prep (Ag Prep) put down their books and get to work. Rather than attending classes for a day, they head to a nearby agriculture company to job shadow a midlevel manager, analyst, crew leader, or director.

These sixteen-year-olds have never seen the inner workings of a professional workplace. They’ve never been up close with a supervisor at a job site. They’ve never attended a budget meeting, listened in on sales calls to India, tracked boxes of mandarins in production, compared chemical impurities in almond sweeper oil, tracked citrus trees in a nursery for shipping, or researched garlic pricing in China.

Ag Prep students witnessed each of these activities this year. Company supervisors described the experience as “exciting” and “priceless.” Students called it “eye-opening” and “life-changing.” This brief outlines Ag Prep’s job shadowing program, which was piloted in 2015–16 as a one-day experience for all sophomores. In 2016–17, the program will be expanded to two days for each sophomore, which will make it even more transformative for students.

“I learned about truth and integrity. You have to be honest on prices and other things in sales. Being accurate about your numbers is everything.”

— Ag Prep Student

“This motivated me to think more about the major I’m going into, and to learn more about jobs before I make my final choice.”

— Ag Prep Student

What is Ag Prep?

Wonderful Agriculture Career Prep (Ag Prep) is a partnership in the San Joaquin Valley that brings together seven high schools, three community colleges, and several agricultural companies—including The Wonderful Company and Olam International—to **create fundamental changes in how students experience school** (see “Ag Prep Partners”). In a region where too many students face low expectations, Ag Prep raises the bar for all students academically, while grounding learning through hands-on, work-based experiences.



Students participating in Ag Prep complete a college-prep curriculum and more than 50 college credits in high school, which enables them to earn an associate degree for transfer (AS-T) by the summer after high school graduation. Students also participate in one of **three agriculture-themed pathways: Ag Business, Ag Mechanics, or Plant Science**. Graduates can choose between accepting a well-paying, skilled career position within The Wonderful Company or entering a four-year college as a junior, **earning their undergraduate degree in half the time, at half the cost**.

“It was life-changing. I went in there thinking I never want to do a job that involves agriculture, but after I job shadowed Alejandra, it really opened my mind that I could do what she’s doing.”

— Ag Prep Student

Ag Prep Partners

High Schools

Avenal High School
Mendota High School
Reedley Middle College High School
Sanger High School
Wasco Union High School
Washington Union High School
Wonderful College Prep Academy (Delano)

Community Colleges

Bakersfield College
Reedley College
West Hills College

Agricultural Companies

The Wonderful Company and its brands:
POM Wonderful, Wonderful Citrus,
Wonderful Halos, Wonderful Orchards,
Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds
Olam International



What is Job Shadowing?

Ag Prep’s job shadowing program **helps students learn about careers in agriculture** by enabling them to shadow a midlevel employee throughout the workday, in an occupation aligned with their pathway of study. Each host employee is paired with only two students, so that **each student can engage extensively with the employee while witnessing the activities and tasks associated with the job**. The hosts are encouraged to perform their regular duties and converse with students about their job and career.

“After going to a lab, I realized that I can use math in my everyday job—and English, because if you’re behind a desk all day you communicate with people and you write.”

— Ag Prep Student

Overall Purpose

Job shadowing helps students expand their knowledge of job opportunities and prepare for career decisions. Ag Prep’s objectives are also to:

- **Inspire students by introducing them to the dynamic, innovative ag industry.** Agriculture is a high-tech industry that employs skilled professionals. Whether on the plant floor or in finance meetings, students can see for themselves how knowledge and skills are applied in a fast-paced work setting. In many cases, it’s the students struggling academically who are most inspired by job shadowing and other work-based learning; that inspiration helps motivate them to advance academically.
- **Broaden horizons by showing students the variations within and across ag jobs.** Most high school students have little or no experience with the everyday tasks associated with specific careers, and yet they are beginning to make career choices through their course selections. By interacting closely with a midlevel professional for a full day, students expand their knowledge of career options and gain experience in the first steps of networking.

“I thought that agriculture was picking grapes and working machines. But then she [turned on] her computer and all these numbers came up. . . I never knew there was that part to agriculture.”

— Ag Prep Student



A Cornerstone of College and Career Preparation

For each year of high school, Ag Prep provides students with a **unique off-campus learning experience in the agriculture industry**. These hands-on, work-based learning opportunities are integrated into Ag Prep’s overall college and career strategy and are tailored to the student’s pathway of study. Job shadowing is the second of four phases of Ag Prep’s work-based learning sequence in the ag industry:

- **Freshman year: Ag conferences.** All ninth graders attend a prominent ag industry conference in California (such as the World Ag Expo, the Almond Board Food Quality and Safety Symposium, or the AgSafe Conference), where they meet with ag professionals and learn about career opportunities.

- **Sophomore year: Job shadows.** All sophomores participate in two intensive job shadowing experiences with midlevel managers at an ag company.
- **Junior year: Mentorships.** All juniors participate in a sustained mentorship with a senior manager, including interview practice, career guidance, and feedback on capstone projects.
- **Senior year: Paid internships.** All seniors who fulfill the program’s requirements are guaranteed a paid internship with The Wonderful Company.

“The job shadowing experience is gold. It’s a very high priority, it’s intensive, and its impact on students is dramatic.”

— **Noemi Donoso**
Senior Vice President, Wonderful Education

Ag Prep’s Work-Based Learning Sequence in the Ag Industry

FRESHMEN:
Ag Conferences

SOPHOMORES:
Job Shadows

JUNIORS:
Mentorships

SENIORS:
Paid Internships

Developing the Job Shadowing Program

Ag Prep developed its job shadowing program by building on its close working relationships with The Wonderful Company and with Olam International. Supervisors at The Wonderful Company have worked with high school teachers and college faculty on Pathway Advisory Committees (PACs) since 2014–15. Through a guided process, the PAC members **created skills maps for each of Ag Prep’s three pathways** to help align the curriculum with the skills needed for well-paying careers and with the rigors of university expectations (see “Skills Mapping in the Central Valley” at wonderfuleducation.org).

“I saw how important it is to be organized and prepared for the next day. You’ve got to be detail-oriented.”

— Ag Prep Student

The skills maps helped identify gaps in the traditional high school curriculum that the work-based learning sequence could help to address, such as the following professional skills:

- **Work readiness:** Work ethic (high levels of effort and perseverance) and a positive attitude toward work.
- **Teamwork:** Collaborating well with others and promoting a teamwork environment.
- **Leadership:** Motivating and directing people as they work; inspiring others to feel invested in the company’s accomplishments.

Drawing from the committees’ work, Ag Prep developed a job shadowing program that included a process for engaging with its company and school partners to (1) build their commitments to the program, (2) prepare host employees and students for the experience, and (3) follow up with the hosts and students afterwards. The program was piloted in 2015–16 and will be expanded in 2016–17 to a two-day experience for all sophomores.

Ag Prep’s Job Shadowing Events, January–May 2016

In Ag Prep’s inaugural year of job shadowing, every 10th grader completed at least one job shadowing event at an industry site in the San Joaquin Valley.

Company	Locations	# of Events	Ag Prep Pathways	# of Students	# of Employees
Olam International	Fresno, Hanford	3	Ag Business, Plant Science	67	33
POM Wonderful	Del Rey	5	Ag Mechanics, Plant Science	41	21
Wonderful Citrus	Delano	2	Ag Business	32	19
Wonderful Citrus Nursery	Visalia	2	Plant Science	53	26
Wonderful Orchards	Shafter, Lost Hills, McKittrick	4	Ag Business, Plant Science	30	15

1. Building Commitments.

Goals. Ag Prep staff members meet at least annually with executive leadership at The Wonderful Company and Olam International to confirm their commitment to the shadowing experience, and more frequently with supervisors (in most cases, the human resources director) to set specific goals and address logistics. The skills maps have been crucial in laying the groundwork for a common language during these discussions. Choosing specific skills to address during the job shadowing experience helps the company supervisors decide which employees to select for job shadowing—that is, those who best exhibit the skills identified and who are most appropriate for interacting with high school students. Host employees are selected at midlevel positions, such as managers, directors, analysts, and crew leaders.

Ag Prep also meets with principals and other high school leaders to explain the job shadowing goals, confirm their commitment, and receive their guidance.

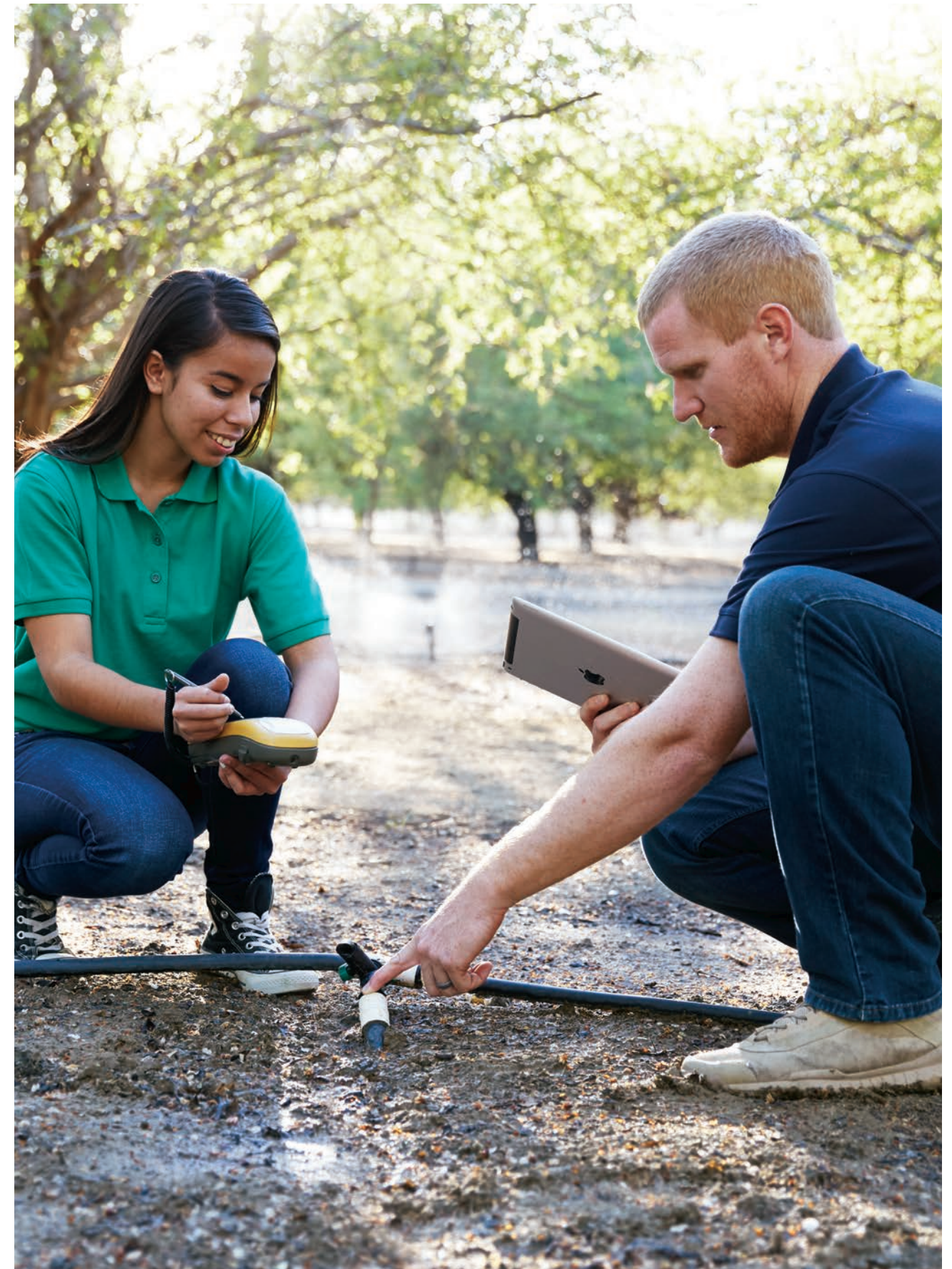
Design. Ag Prep emphasizes to all partners that each job shadowing event is an intensive and transformative daylong experience for students and their hosts. The day is highly structured, yet the shadowing experience is personalized, based on the hosts' job routines (see "Typical Job Shadow Schedule" below). Boxed lunches are provided and offer a further opportunity for professional engagement. Each host employee is assigned two students for the day. About 10 to 16 students and 5 to 8 employees participate in each session.

"It's infectious when you get to show students their options. It energizes everybody."

— **Sonya Carrillo**
Financial Analyst, Wonderful Citrus

Typical Job Shadow Schedule

8:15 a.m.	Students arrive at job shadow site
8:30 a.m.	Welcome, overview, safety briefing, host introduction
10:00 a.m.	Morning job shadowing
Noon	Lunch with hosts
12:45 p.m.	Afternoon job shadowing
2:30 p.m.	Debrief activity
3:00 p.m.	Bus departs for school





2. Preparing Hosts and Students.

Employees. Ag Prep meets with host employees about a week prior to the event to review the job shadowing goals and design, answer questions, and gather information about each employee. Employees discuss the specific skills they will be addressing.

Students. Ag Prep meets with students at the schools several days in advance to explain the upcoming experience, conduct a safety training, answer questions, share links to reading material about the company, and provide information about the host employees. The students participate in role playing to prepare them for success in a work environment: practicing a firm handshake, using direct eye contact, and asking appropriate questions.

Pairing employees and students. Ag Prep works with teachers to pair students with employees, based on the student's ag pathway and interests, and the personal and professional information that employees shared about themselves.

In both the company and school settings, Ag Prep has found it crucial to explain that job shadowing is neither a PowerPoint presentation nor a field trip. In particular:

- **Ag Prep encourages employees not to vary their day significantly.** Employees tend to think of their own days as routine and they may want to spice things up for students. However, the activities they do routinely are precisely the ones that students need and want to see.
- **Ag Prep works with students in advance to prepare questions for industry hosts.** Many students are intimidated by the prospect of conversing with a professional for several hours. However, asking questions and engaging in conversation one-on-one is precisely the experience that is transformative for students.

3. Following up with Students and Employees.

Ag Prep follows up with students and employees after each event, and improves the experience based on their feedback. During the debrief activity at the end of the day, the students reflect on their experience. Afterwards, they write a thank-you card to their host employee and submit a 500- to 1,000-word personal narrative online about the impact of the experience on their future plans. Each employee provides written comments on the participation and skills exhibited by their students.

“We give them an opportunity to see their potential future. That’s priceless. We also hope that one day they’ll be interested in working for us.”

— **Jared Lorraine,**
Director of Continuous Improvement
and Food Safety, Wonderful Citrus

Next Steps

Now that the job shadowing model has been piloted, Ag Prep is strengthening the program's depth and rigor and expanding it so that all sophomores participating in Ag Prep this year will have two job shadowing experiences. Meanwhile, Ag Prep is designing and implementing a robust mentoring program for juniors, which is the next phase of its work-based learning sequence in the ag industry.

“I saw that you can’t just trust that something got done. You have to make sure. You have to have follow-through and quality control.”

— **Ag Prep Student**



Jobs for the Future

Jobs for the Future works to ensure economic opportunity for all. Our innovative college and career pathway models give those struggling to succeed access to needed knowledge, skills, and credentials. We partner with education, workforce, and business leaders to understand the labor market and design systems to sustain a pipeline of skilled workers. We advocate with policymakers for state and federal policies to support this work.

The Wonderful Company

The Wonderful Company is a privately held \$4 billion international company that offers healthy, iconic brands for healthy lifestyles. Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds is the largest vertically integrated pistachio and almond grower and processor in the world. Wonderful Citrus is the largest integrated grower, packer and shipper of fresh citrus in the U.S. These operations, which are located in California's Central Valley, are also affiliated with the worldwide leader in fresh California pomegranates and various pomegranate-based products. The Wonderful Company's products can be found in the produce aisles of grocery stores nationwide under popular retail brands, including Wonderful Pistachios, Wonderful Almonds, Wonderful Halos and POM Wonderful. For more information, go to www.wonderful.com.

Wonderful Education Programs

Wonderful Education is an innovative educational program that is driving positive change in California's Central Valley. As a philanthropic extension of The Wonderful Company, Wonderful Education funds a host of college and career readiness programs to promote opportunities for young people in California's Central Valley. Wonderful Education initiatives include college and career readiness, college scholarships, school grants, summer school programs, arts education, early childhood programs, teacher development and parent engagement. Wonderful Education coordinates directly with The Wonderful Company to offer a sequence of rich work-based learning experiences for all Wonderful Agriculture Career Prep students, including paid internships.



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