



# THE GOLDEN SLATE

The official newsletter of the California  
Agricultural Teachers' Association

## CATA Demographics: Continuing the Conversation

By Matt Patton, CATA Executive Director

*"You don't win a debate by suppressing discussion; you win it with a better argument."*

*– Frank Sonnenberg.*

In the previous edition of the Golden Slate, we presented a series of infographics illustrating the current demographic landscape of agricultural teachers. This informative piece sparked numerous responses and lively debates within the agricultural teaching community. Some perceive such debate, discussion, and discourse as unfavorable, perpetuating an unwarranted narrative. Topics like the demographic composition of our profession or Dr. Haley Quade's insights at CATA's Summer Conference on recruitment and retention in ag teaching bring to the forefront needed conversations. Regardless of one's stance on these matters, they undeniably challenge the sustainability of the ag teaching profession.

To adopt the view that these discussions send the wrong message is to ignore the problem without using public discourse to debate and discuss. The public square serves as a platform for the scrutiny of ideas and philosophies, allowing for professional and civilized dialogue. Worthy ideas will be supported by logic and reasonable debate, and poor ideological positions will be exposed. Good and bad ideas should be vetted in the public square professionally and in a civilized manner. This dialogue is a time-tested approach to evaluate and refine concepts.

That being acknowledged, presenting the ag teachers' demographic infographics in the previous edition was intellectually simplistic and lacked context, a shortcoming on my

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part. Fortunately, Bonnie Baxter of Teach Ag conducted a much deeper dive into the data, offering additional context. Bonnie recently revamped the California Teach Ag [website](#), providing an in-depth breakdown of teacher demographics, the ag teacher pipeline, credentialing, and insights into those who exited the profession last year. Spoiler alert: over half of the people that left continue to be involved in or support ag education. A shout-out to Bonnie for her invaluable work; our profession reaps the benefits, and she actively contributes to the quantitative recruitment of individuals into our field.

I encourage you to explore [teachag.org](https://teachag.org), digest the information on the “About” page, and engage in conversations with ag teaching peers about the presented data. Such discussions are beneficial for our profession, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities we face.

