



Santa Maria Joint Union
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
NEWS * NEWS * NEWS
PRESS RELEASE

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2026

Nearly 100 students from the Santa Maria FFA Agriculture Science and Horticulture Pathways recently completed a three-day STEM Career Pathways in Agriculture program.

This program, held in collaboration with Students for Eco-Education and Agriculture (SEEAG) of Santa Barbara County, provided students with a comprehensive look at modern agriculture through hands-on learning and local industry tours. The program helps bridge the gap between classroom agriculture science and real-world application.

The three-part program includes Career Discovery where students engage in a career pathway presentation, exposing them to the diverse roles in the industry—from agronomy and food safety to ag-tech and business management. Industry Tours were the second part of the program where students took their learning into the field with site visits to local agricultural businesses including Plantel Nurseries and Betteravia Farms. These tours allowed students to see large-scale operations firsthand and speak with professionals about the skills needed in the Santa Maria Valley agriculture industry.

Freshman, Yuleidi Lopez Lopez stated, “Going to the Plantel trip taught me how the process of growing vegetable crops works behind the scenes, showing that food does not just come from the grocery stores and there are many people working hard to properly grow our crops.”

The final part of the program allowed students to engage in a hands-on STEM lesson. Depending on their focus, students participated in either a hydroponics lab, exploring soil-less growing technology, or a soil testing lab, analyzing the soil moisture and the nutrients of soil to optimize crop health.

Senior, Evelyn Rojas-Mata said, “We’d like to thank SEEAG for visiting our class and showing us their hydroponics STEM lab, giving us the opportunity to explore this innovative way of growing plants. It was exciting to learn new planting methods and experience a completely new concept. Working in groups, we each played an important role— from assembling the hydroponic system and building the battery, to preparing the plants and planting the seeds. This hands-on experience helped us strengthen our communication skills and teamwork. Thanks to See Ag Lessons, we were able to explore new techniques and gain a deeper understanding of what agriculture has to offer.”

Senior, Adeline Cruz shared, "The SEEAG tour was an eye-opening experience that introduced me to the wide range of opportunities within the agricultural industry. Observing the level of precision and the use of advanced technology such as the use of AI in equipment, showed me how the industry continues to grow and evolve."

Agriculture Teacher Shannon Powell stated, “We are very appreciative of this partnership with SEE AG and our local agriculture leaders. Providing our agricultural students with the chance to see

classroom concepts in action prepares students for the agriculture industry. We look forward to working with SEEAG again this fall during the Santa Barbara County Farm Day."

The SMJUHSD has nearly 40 Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways and about as many Industry Partners.

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