



# ACTION4YOUTH CASE-STUDY: EXPLORE PHASE - Paddock Pen Pals



The [Action4Youth Explore](#) phase introduces young people to role models within agriculture and shows them You Can BE, Who You Can SEE.

At the pinnacle of role model advocacy are the [Young Farming Champions \(YFC\)](#) who connect with young people both in-person and online.

Two great examples of in-person connection are when YFC go into schools (such as at [Lake Illawarra High School](#) when four YFC recently spoke to students about their agricultural experiences) and when YFC invite students to their workplaces (such when Tayla Field took students from Hurlstone Agricultural College to a salad packing plant).

Connecting with young people online has become more important during the COVID years when learning remotely from home became the norm, and when school excursions were curtailed. Luckily, [Action4Agriculture](#) already had a successful program in Paddock Pen Pals to fill the gap.

In 2018, as part of her participation in [The Archibull Prize](#), YFC Emma Ayliffe [beamed into Parramatta Public School](#) from a paddock of cotton stubble. Emma's live cross from the real-world of agriculture showed students how technology is used in the field and how data collected can be instantly uploaded. The paddock of stubble allowed Emma to 'trash' talk and explain the concept of crop rotation to 90 avid watchers.



### YOUNG FARMING CHAMPION CASE-STUDY: TAYLA FIELD AND THE ARCHIBULL PRIZE

Horticulture joined The Archibull Prize for the first time in 2018 with YFC Tayla Field mentoring students. So successful was the partnership that Hurlstone Agricultural High School was awarded Grand Champion Archibull for their interpretation of the world of fruit and vegetables.

Tayla Field joined the Young Farming Champions program in 2018 while she was studying a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Sydney University.

Following the first workshop I felt very out of my depth and worried the program wasn't for me, she says.

However, being in touch with such a supportive network over the past few years has grown my confidence in presentations, communication skills and industry involvement.

On graduation Tayla took a graduate position with salad producer One Harvest and in 2018 was able to combine her work and YFC experience in The Archibull Prize with Hurlstone Agricultural High School, Little Bay Community of Schools and Gwynneville Public School.

This year was really fun and exciting to have Tayla visit. The farmer visit comes when we are in the process of coming up with ideas and we are not sure which direction we want to go in. We were able to ask Tayla questions and she gave us fun activities: the kids got to dress up with hair nets and coats and pretend they were in a factory-line packing spinach, and then they had a biosecurity activity. It gives them knowledge of what farmers actually do and that there are different aspects to agriculture they may not have seen.

Tayla was outstanding when she visited the students. She had plenty of activities for the children that were hands on and got the message across, especially in terms of biosecurity, which is always hard to explain to the students. Her slide-show was very informative in terms of technology and robotics. The school now has plans to add coding and programming to the curriculum.


WATCH THE VIDEO HERE.

Alana Trevato shares the impact of Young Farming Champion Tayla Field's visit on the students





[TAYLA FIELD CASE STUDY \(CLICK TO DOWNLOAD\)](#)



### ARCHIBULL PRIZE CASE-STUDY: COTTON, EMMA AYLIFFE AND PARRAMATTA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Cotton Australia's Young Farming Champion Emma Ayliffe took cotton, community and educational interaction to a new level in 2018 as she worked with Parramatta Public School in The Archibull Prize. Participating in The Archibull Prize for the first time, after teacher Era Smeardon was exposed to the program at the 2018 Sydney Royal Easter Show, Parramatta Public School was assigned the cotton industry to research under Emma's tutelage.

Parramatta Public School first introduced their students to Emma using her career journey video and was thrilled so many students recognised her as she walked in the gate on her school visit. Emma engaged the students with cotton issues such as good and bad bugs, and then extended their learning by skypping from a paddock of cotton stubble, beaming directly to an avid audience of 90 students. During her [skypp presentation](#) Emma showed students how technology, such as moisture probes, is used in the field.

Era believes the experience brought a real-world connection to the classroom. "When we skypped with Emma she was able to show us how they used moisture probes to identify whether or not they needed to water and how they used that data to inform them," she said. "It was great to see the farmer's point of view and what they do to ensure they have a successful crop. All these things we have been learning about has enhanced our kids understanding of what farmers go through and how climate change does affect us and why we need to be careful with biosecurity."

Era and Emma combined to create projects that crossed multiple learning areas including the science of growing plants. "Emma put us onto the Day Degrees formula, which helped us work out the growth cycle of cotton, which we were growing in our greenhouse." Era said. "Water is a very valuable natural resource that we need to take care of and while we don't have moisture probes the kids were able to touch and feel the soil to ensure enough water was being given to the plant."





YOUNG FARMING CHAMPION EMMA AYLIFFE SHARES HER CAREER JOURNEY INTO AGRICULTURE

EMMA AYLIFFE ASK WHICH ARE GOOD BUGS AND BAD BUGS FOR COTTON CROPS

[EMMA AYLIFFE CASE STUDY \(CLICK TO DOWNLOAD\)](#)



## EXPLORE PHASE - PADDOCK PEN PALS

Emma's innovative way of connecting with students led to the formation, in association with [Australian Wool Innovation](#), of the Paddock Pen Pals program in 2019. The program was launched at Carlingford West Public School where 300 Year 6 students gained insights into sheep and the wool supply chain from YFC Danila Marini, Dione Howard, Sam Wan and Chloe Dutschke.

*Many of my students have little time outside and have never visited a farm," teacher Zoe Stephens said. "In order to make their learning relevant, I wanted to connect them to real farmers to share what they have learnt and see what real farms are actually doing in Australia. Every farmer brought a unique perspective to our students and opened windows into the world of agriculture that they had never experienced."*

Paddock Pen Pals has gone on to be a successful partner to primary and secondary schools with the use of online audio and web conferencing programs particularly relevant in the COVID years.

Zoe Stephens now delivers teaching and learning programs for the [City Country Alliance of Schools](#) and has recommended Paddock Pen Pals to 60 new schools. She has written a Paddock Pen Pals Best Practice manual for teachers just as YFC Emily May has written a manual for fellow Young Farming Champions.

Paddock Pen Pals has also inspired spin-off events such as a virtual Ag-Week conference facilitated by the Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Education, which included presentations from 22 young people working in agriculture.

YFC Dr Danila Marini spoke about research and technology for animal welfare, Dr Jo Newton spoke about the future of dairy farming and Emily May gave insights into peri-urban agriculture.

The legacy of Paddock Pen Pals is its ability to be replicated as was shown in 2022 when farm blogger Alison Rutledge encouraged her daughters - Kaitlyn (KT) and Erin - to create a video showing life on their farm with their 3000 sheep, 200 cows, 13 chooks and working dogs. The [video](#) was published online and shared with Zoe's City Country Alliance community.

Paddock Pen Pals continues in schools participating in The Archibull Prize and [Kreative Koalas](#) and YFC [Emily May](#) recently spoke about the project on ABC radio.

*I am really passionate about this program, which connects school students in urban areas with upcoming young rural leaders, allowing them to learn about the wonderful world of agriculture."*



**[BOOK YOUR PADDOCK PEN PALS SESSION HERE.](#)**