2005

Food Quality and Food Choice Project

Cesar Chavez Foundation

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National Youth Leadership Initiative
Los Angeles Unified School District

School: South Gate High School   Local Dist: J
Title of Project: Food Quality and Food Choice Project
Community Need Identified: Better Schools/Better Food

Standards Connections: U.S. History 11.1.4, 11.2.1, 11.6, 11.9.1, 11.9.7, 11.1.5
World History 10.9.8, 10.10
Students will examine the political, social, and economic effects of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Industrial Revolution, including the portrayal of working conditions and food safety, the National School Lunch Program, and issues of world hunger.

Teachers Involved: Mr. Johnson 10th grade World History & 11th grade US History
Partner Organizations: Center for Food and Justice Occidental College
Service Group: South Gate High School
Number Served: 5,000 high school students
Number Engaged: 200 high school students

Project Description:
Students at Southgate High School identified school improvement as a pressing need. Students chose to focus specifically on the dissatisfaction with food served on campus. Students developed a campus wide survey to report on improvements that can be made in food service as well as healthy food alternatives in cafeteria and vending machines. Students also learned about the value of good nutrition and the lack of quality and fresh food available in low-income communities of color.

“The food at school is horrible, hopefully we can have a say in making it better.”
- High School Student
**Responsibilities:** Teachers oversee project, supplies acquisition, academic standards connections, and assignments (tasks can be shared with other teachers and administrators)

Students complete assignments, participate in discussions, and organize service components

**Costs:** Minimal
Guest Speakers – N/A
Supplies: Transparencies and photocopies

**Step 1**

**Community Needs Assessment/Presentation of Cesar Chavez**

**Step 2**

**Setting the Context**

After the issue of Food Quality is identified, it is important to present information to students so that they have a comprehensive understanding of the topic and its historical connections in order to brainstorm effective service activities. Food quality involves a discussion of nutrition and health as food served on campus is tied to the nutritional standards of the National School Lunch Program. In our experience, we realize students are quite fond of junk food and lack knowledge of the nutritional value of the food they eat. Therefore, integrating relevant nutritional information is essential for a critical examination of food quality and choice.

The school district nutritionist, food services department, and school cafeteria manager have essential information for food served in schools. A variety of food justice and nutrition organizations can provide appropriate information for the project on nutrition and health. Local food quality resources in Los Angeles include the Center for Food and Justice and nojunkfood.org (see appendix for contact information).

In setting the context, discuss initiatives that may have passed at the state and district level that affect the food served at schools. For example, in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) a soda and junk food ban was implemented that will place the same nutritional standards on vending machines as those set by the National School Lunch Program. The ban was initiated in response to the high incidences of obesity nationwide, particularly among Black and Chicano/Latino youth.
• The CDC reports that over 64 percent of Americans are either overweight or obese.¹
• The public pays $39 billion a year for obesity through Medicare and Medicaid programs.²
• Among children in LA County public schools in grades 5, 7, and 9, Latinos are the most overweight at 25.2% and African Americans at 19.4%.³
• Overweight children face greater risk for type II diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, asthma, and psychosocial problems (Surgeon General, 2001)
• Contributing factors to obesity among youth of color relate to the limited access to fresh, affordable, and healthy food⁴

Standards Connection

The topic of food quality has several standards connections:

U.S. History
• CA standard 11.1.4: “Examine the effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction and of the industrial revolution, including demographic shifts and the emergence in the late nineteenth century of the United States as a world power.” Slavery influenced the diets of African Americans and the food choices that they have that still are present today. Westward expansion and reservation life also influenced the diets of American Indians resulting in high incidences of diabetes.

• Standard 11.2.1: “Know the effects of industrialization on living and working conditions, including the portrayal of working conditions and food safety in Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle.” This allows students to understand how the first regulations of food quality began.

• Standard 11.57: “Discuss the rise of mass production techniques, the growth of cities, the impact of new technologies…”

• Standard 11.6: “Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.” Students will understand the National School Lunch

¹ CDC: Medical Cost of Obesity $75 billion, Associated Press 1/21/04
² ibid.
³ Latino Health Issues, Fact Sheet. County of Los Angeles, Dept. of Health Services, Public Health, 2003
Program, serving schools nationwide, as a product of the New Deal and response to the conditions of the Depression. It is also a program of the United States Department of Agriculture. The basis of the program is that all students must have access to a nutritional meal to ensure effective learning.

• Standard 11.9.1: “Discuss the establishment of the United Nations and International Declaration of Human Rights, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and their importance in shaping modern Europe and maintaining peace and international order.”

The International Declaration of Human Rights: established by the United Nations in 1948 has declared in Article 25: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” This draws upon the fundamental belief of the National School Lunch Program that the well being of students in schools is largely based on access to nutrition.

International Monetary Fund & World Bank: the premiere organizations for financial assistance to developing countries worldwide. However, these lending agencies are also considered to be one of the primary contributors to world hunger and poverty, as developing countries must adhere the rigors of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP’s) as a condition for lending assistance. SAP austerity measures require countries to: 1) devalue national currency 2) increase interest rates 3) reduce government spending 4) raise taxes 5) lower tariffs 6) privatize public enterprises 7) reduce real wages 8) shift agricultural and industrial production from domestic use towards exportation. The advantages and disadvantages of SAP’s should be discussed.

• Standard 11.9.7: “Examine relations between the United States and Mexico in the twentieth century, including key economic, political, immigration, and environmental issues.” The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 created a high level of economic integration between the U.S. and Mexico for mutual economic benefits leading to significant impacts on the economy, politics, immigration, and environment. Some data indicate that it has resulted in negative consequences such as the destruction of domestic economies of Mexico, resulting in increased immigration to the U.S. and the loss of manufacturing jobs in the U.S.
• Standard 11.1.5: “Discuss the diffusion of the civil rights movement of African Americans from the churches of the rural South and the urban North…” The Black Panther Party initiated some of the first breakfast programs in November 1968 before the implementation of the national School Breakfast Program in 1975. The Black Panther Party breakfast program was part of their Ten-Point Program. Huey Newton of the Black Panther Party stated, “It is necessary for our children to grow up healthy with functional and creative minds. They cannot do this if they do not get the correct nutrition. That is why we have a breakfast program for children.”

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Kathleen Cleaver helping with Breakfast.  Boy enjoying meal from the Black Panther Party Breakfast Program

World History

• Standard 10.10: “Students analyze instances of nation-building in the contemporary world in at least two of the following regions or countries: the Middle East, Africa, Mexico and other parts of Latin America, and China.” Discuss the impacts of U.N. imposed sanctions on Iraq including deaths and malnourishment. In reference to the effects of U.N. sanctions, a UNICEF survey revealed, “...if the substantial reduction in child mortality throughout Iraq during the 1980s had continued through the 1990s, there would have been half a million fewer deaths of children under-five in the country as a whole during the eight year period 1991 to 1998.”

6 Iraq surveys show “humanitarian emergency.” Accessed 1/23/04, 10:37 AM
Cesar Chavez Life Connections

- Cesar Chavez maintained a vegetarian diet- "Kindness and compassion towards all living things is a mark of a civilized society. Racism, economic deprivational, dog fighting and cockfighting, bullfighting and rodeos are all cut from the same defective fabric: violence. Only when we have become nonviolent towards all life will we have learned to live well ourselves."
- Farm workers’ role in harvesting food for the country and the conditions under which they did so.
- Cesar Chavez organized against pesticides in fruits and vegetables.

Cesar Chavez Values

- Service to Others – Service that is predicated on empowering others; engendering self-help, self-determination, and self-sufficiency versus charity
- Determination – Determination that is characterized by an attitude that with faith, steadfast commitment, patience, and optimism, human beings can prevail against all odds

Journal Topics

1. What were the effects of slavery on African American health and diet? What were the effects of reservation life on American Indian health and diet?
2. What were the goals of the Black Panther Party (BPP)? Why was the breakfast program an important part of the BPP’s goals?
3. What is your opinion of the role of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in ending or contributing to world hunger?
4. What type of project would you recommend the class to work on? Why would the project be effective?

Step 3

Plan Project

Discuss the Journal Entries from Step 2. Write down the possible projects that students identified in their Journal entry on the classroom board. Different project ideas can be combined that may enhance the project. Discuss the feasibility of each idea and the effectiveness of the project in addressing the topic. Identify the best project idea with the class. Below is a day-to-day guide to the Cesar Chavez Food Quality and Food Choice Project.

www.unicef.org/newsline/99pr29.htm
Teacher Logistics

- Contact school administration and present the project idea
- Contact school officials, elected officials, food services, and cafeteria manager for final presentation

Student Activities

The Cesar Chavez Food Quality Project consists of three components --- survey construction, survey distribution, survey analysis, and final presentation. Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Union conducted similar surveys of farm workers to assess their needs.

Day-to-Day Planning Guide

Day 1

Determine the survey goal
- What do we want to know from students and teachers?

Select a sample
- The size of the survey sample population will require consideration of realistic timetables and available resources for the project. The amount of persons to be surveyed, general location, and boundaries of the community are all important considerations.

Make the questions
- Break students up into small groups or have students do an individual brainstorm of possible survey questions.
- Keep it simple: persons you survey may not want to be bothered by long tedious surveys
- Questions should be thorough and focused so that it will be easy to analyze the data after administering the survey.
- There are different types of questions that can be included in the survey: 1) Open-ended 2) Multiple-Choice 3) Ratings or Rankings 4) Linkert-scale (i.e. Strongly Agree_ Agree_ No Opinion_ Disagree_ Strongly Agree_)
- Write questions on the class room board and narrow questions

Day 2

Test the survey
- If possible, test the survey to determine if questions make sense and are understood by persons to be surveyed. Pair students to test survey or it review before entire class on overhead projector. (10-30 minutes)
Day 3

Administer the survey
- Students can administer survey outside of class or during classroom time
- If survey is administered during classroom time please notify teachers beforehand
- Students should remember to be courteous when administering the survey. Mention the purpose of the survey and thank participants for their participation.

Day 4

Analyze the data
- Determine the best way to aggregate data (computer/Excel, graphs, tally)
  Students can partner with another student and tally results on a tally sheet or computer.
- Develop graphs of survey data to clearly illustrate survey results

Day 5

Share and use the results
- Share results with entire class.
- Decide who should be informed of the survey results and select student volunteers to prepare a presentation of results to relevant decision-makers.
- If the proper equipment is available, teach student volunteers how to use PowerPoint and share results with school decision-makers either after school or during class time.
- Receive feedback from decision-makers on possible food improvements

Reflection

Day after Service Reflection: Assign a journal entry reflection on their service activity. After the journal activity, hold a structured reflection activity where students read some of their journals and provide other guiding questions.
Journal Entry
1. How effective do you believe the service activity was?
2. Did you enjoy it?
3. Share any other thoughts and feelings about the service activity.
4. How is the service activity connected to the life work of Cesar Chavez?

Sample In-Class Questions for Reflection Activity:

• How effective do you believe the service activity was?
• How do you feel about your role in the project?
• Did the class work together well as a team?
• How could the service be improved?
• What did you learn by performing the service activity?
• How successful was the project in improving food quality?
• Do you feel more aware about food quality and nutrition?
• Do you care about the nutritional quality of your food?
• Are you more likely to monitor the nutritional value of the food you eat?

Food Resources

*Historical influences on African American and American Indian Diet

Slavery in America
http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/resources/gw_diet.htm

Soul Food – Historical information from the motion picture “Soul Food”
http://www.foxhome.com/soulfood/index_frames.html

History of Soul Food
http://www.jimworks.com/Trinas/history.htm

American Indian and Minority Health
http://www.traditionalhealth.org/corpmission.html

*School Lunch Program
National School Lunch Program

National School Lunch Program History
http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/AboutLunch/ProgramHistory.htm

*Global Issues and Institutions

Universal Declaration of Human Rights
http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

World Bank
http://www.worldbank.org

International Monetary Fund
http://www.imf.org

Global Exchange- details of Structural Adjustment Programs and impacts
http://www.globalexchange.org

*Civil Rights Movement

http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/calheritage/panthers/

BPP Breakfast Program, California Heritage Project
http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/calheritage/panthers/serve.htm

*Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers

Cesar E. Chavez Foundation
http://www.cesarechavezfoundation.org/

United Farm Workers
http://www.ufw.org/
http://www.ufw.org/paper.htm - pesticide use in agriculture

No Grapes (Video) – the effects of pesticides on farm workers and consumers.

*Other Resources

Latino Health Issues – Fact Sheet
http://www.lapublichealth.org/spa7/docs/LatinoFactSheet.pdf
Center for Food and Justice – Occidental College
http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/index.htm

The Persistence of LA’s Grocery Gap
http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/resources/Supermarket%20Report%20November%202002.pdf

Los Angeles Fresh Food Access Guide
http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/RESOURCEGUIDE.pdf

No Junk Food
http://www.nojunkfood.org

South Gate High School Food Choice and Food Quality Survey
The purpose of this survey is to determine the food preferences of students at South Gate High School in the cafeteria and in the school’s vending machines. Results of this survey will be distributed to School Officials and Food Services representatives.

1. Are you satisfied with food served at South Gate High School? (Please check one)
   - Yes ____
   - Partially satisfied ____
   - No ___
   - I don’t eat school food ____

2. How would you rate the food at school?
   - Not good_____
   - Average_____
   - Good_____
   - Excellent_______

3. Would you like to see the food in the cafeteria change?
   - Yes____
   - No____

4. What foods do you NOT like from the cafeteria and would like to see changed?

5. What kind of new foods would you like to see served in the cafeteria?

6. What food from the cafeteria do you like?

7. How healthy do you think your diet is?
   - Unhealthy___
   - Healthy____

8. Do you think the food served in the cafeteria is healthy? If not please explain.
   - Yes____
   - No____

9. What type of healthy food should be served on campus?

10. Do students eat healthy at school? Yes____ No____
11. Are you aware of the reasons why junk food and soda will be banned?

   Yes____  No____

*Please Note*: Unhealthy junk food and soda will no longer be offered in vending machines in all schools in the LAUSD, the following questions address the snack and beverage options available that meet new school district nutritional guidelines. Your voice can influence what is placed in the vending machines!!!

12. How often do you buy snacks or drinks in the vending machines?

   Frequently_____ Occasionally_____ Not Often_____ Never_____ 

13. Of the following options, which snacks would you prefer to see in the school’s vending machines? (some snacks listed are types of snacks, not necessarily brands)

   **Snacks- (check off top 5 choices)**
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Snacks</th>
<th>Check Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Granola Bars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretzels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail Mix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked Doritos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked Lays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chex Mix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oatmeal Raisin Cookies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Bars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Fruits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Tarts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrigrain Bars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Crackers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Heat” Hot Spicy Peanuts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn Nuts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Peanuts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereal Bars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile y Limon Havas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Of the following options, which beverages would you prefer to see in the school’s vending machines?

   **Juices- (check off top 5 choices)**
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Juices</th>
<th>Check Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tropical Peach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry Blaze</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Grape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Juice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiwi Strawberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Juice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberry Banana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangerine Scream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemonade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Passionfruit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boysenberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Mango</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangerine Papaya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watermelon Strawberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mango/orange/pineapple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatorade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Would you be interested in a fresh salad and fruit bar option at school?

   Yes____       No____