Healthy Eating in Hartford

During our placements at Moylan Elementary and Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy, we noticed a startling amount of unhealthy eating habits and a lack of knowledge about nutrition. Many children snacked on Doritos or candy bars during the middle of class lessons, and then proceeded to eat processed foods in their own school lunchrooms. Beyond student habits inside Hartford schools, Hartford as a city is plagued with health problems. In October 2012, The Hartford Courant wrote that Hartford is the country’s eighth worst city for providing access to healthy foods for low-income residents. The Courant went on to explain that nearly one in every four Hartford residents live in a federally defined “food desert,” or an area with little access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables (http://articles.courant.com). When this data is paired with the fact that Latino children in Hartford eat nearly seven servings of sweets a day and only three servings of fruits and vegetables, the health situation in Hartford becomes especially startling (http://hartfordfood.org). Our curriculum stems from the belief that students’ unhealthy eating habits are inextricably tied to their local environment. We believe that this unit, which is based on nutritional eating and an awareness of food injustice, will compel students to advocate for their own health and the health of their community.

Our healthy eating unit will be taught to a fifth-grade class of about 20 students at a public elementary school where the student body is predominantly low-income and students of color. According to the Connecticut State Department of Education, 92.3% of the Hartford school district is eligible for free or reduced lunch, and only 7.6% of the district is white (“Connecticut Strategic School Profiles”). This data means that our curriculum unit is applicable to Hartford schools, where we have seen child nutrition fall to the wayside. This unit will take
place during the course of a five-day school week, with one 60-minute class per day.

Objectives:

Our curriculum will be taught over the course of one five-day week, allowing each day to focus on one single objective. This format allows both the teacher and the students to assess progress and achievement on a daily basis. Most of the curriculum’s learning objectives are supported by National Health Education Standards (NHES), which are expectations and guidelines for what students should be able to achieve by Grades 2, 5, 8, and 12. The NHES offers eight major performance indicators (which pertain to any age group), as well as a multitude of age-specific performance indicators beneath its overarching standards. NHES performance indicators are designed to promote health-enhancing behaviors for students of all ages in concrete and achievable ways (“CDC”). Their guidelines ensure that our curriculum is creative and relevant to Hartford without abandoning the nation’s learning goals and standards.

Our learning objectives also relate to Bloom’s Taxonomy, a classification of educational goals based on six levels of cognitive activity. These levels of activity, ordered from lowest complexity to highest complexity, are knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (“Summary of Bloom’s Taxonomy,” Class Reader). Our objectives attempt to mainly explore the more complex learning levels.

Monday’s objective is that students will learn about short-term and long-term effects of healthy eating. This learning objective falls under NHES Standard 1, which states that, “Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to promote health.” More specifically, this objective fulfills the NHES Standard 1.5.4, which says that, “[Students will] describe ways to prevent common childhood injuries and health problems” (“CDC”). By focusing on both the short-term and long-term effects of eating habits, students will have a firmer
grasp on health problems and the implications of those problems on their health later in life.

Tuesday’s objective is that students will analyze the influence of media on food choices. This learning objective is supported by NHES Standard 2, which states that, “Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.” This objective also adheres to the NHES Standard 2.5.5, which says, “[Students will] explain how media influences thoughts, feelings, and health behaviors,” as well as NHES Standard 2.5.2, which says, “[Students will] identify the influence of culture on health practices and behaviors” (“CDC”). The students meant for this curriculum live in a culture of media. Media and its influence on the public is a very relevant topic for 5th graders, because we know from our experience in 4th grade and 7th grade classrooms that students spend a lot of their free time watching T.V. and playing video games. Children are constantly exposed to media and its messages about personal health. This objective also pertains to the fourth level of Bloom’s Taxonomy: analysis (“Summary of Bloom’s Taxonomy,” Class Reader). Our goal is for students to methodically examine junk food advertisements, rather than just simply classify them and recall basic information.

Wednesday’s objective is that students will assess food price injustice in their own community. This particular learning goal pertains less to a specific NHES standard, but instead attempts to address a specific inequality. Food price injustice is a term we coined to describe the price gap in Hartford between relatively expensive healthy food and relatively inexpensive unhealthy food. This learning objective is meant to relate the knowledge students gain in a classroom to its broader purpose in their own community. Hartford is an important city to investigate health issues because there is a lot of opportunity for improvement and change. By helping students learn about issues that are not relevant 100 years ago, but rather, are relevant
now, their education will hopefully become more meaningful. This learning goal also relates to the sixth level of Bloom’s Taxonomy -- evaluation -- because it encourages students to assess, rather than define or memorize (“Summary of Bloom’s Taxonomy,” Class Reader).

Thursday’s objective is that students will learn to value and utilize the benefits of community gardens. This objective pertains to NHES Standard 3, which states that, “Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health” (“CDC”). The community garden we plan to visit, which is affiliated with Trinity College and is very close to its campus, is a trustworthy source of health information and services. This learning objective also relates to NHES Standard 3.5.2, which says, “[Students will] locate resources from home, school, and community that provide valid health information” (“CDC”). The garden is a community resource for valid health data.

Friday’s objective is that students will advocate for personal and school community health. This learning objective is supported by NHES Standard 8, which states that, “Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.” More specifically, this objective also follows the NHES Standard 8.5.2, which says, “[Students will] encourage others to make positive health choices” (“CDC”). Advocating for school community health is a way to encourage others to make good choices for their body. Friday’s objective pertains to the sixth level of Bloom’s Taxonomy -- evaluation -- because it requires students to support a viewpoint and defend that opinion with legitimate facts (“Summary of Bloom’s Taxonomy,” Class Reader).

Activities:

Monday’s activities will focus on a daily lunch journal, a food tasting, a nutrition video, and a healthy eating worksheet. At the beginning of class, each student will be given a journal
for them to record what they eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We do not expect that every student will remember to write down his or her meals that take place at home. However, the food journal is meant to focus on the food served at school in order to ensure that every child has data to compile in the journals. After this introduction, students will take place in a food tasting of healthy snack options. We chose to focus on healthy snacks, rather than healthy meals, because snacks are easier to deal with in a classroom setting. The healthy snacks we plan to sample are Welch’s 100% Fruit Juice, Edy’s fruit popsicles, Sun Chips, Pirate’s Booty puffed rice and corn, and Quaker Chewy Bars. Each of these snacks relates to a comparable unhealthy food: Diet Coke, ice cream cones, Doritos, Lay’s, and Reese’s Cups. During the initial tasting, students will try the foods without seeing the name brand so that their opinions are not initially distorted by a packaging label.

After the snack tasting, there will be a discussion about the short-term and long-term effects of healthy eating. The students will watch a brief video that explains the basics of nutrition: daily food recommendations, a balanced diet, and the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods (http://www.brainpop.com/health/nutrition/nutrition/). This video is an appropriate transition into worksheet the students will also complete, because it gives students background knowledge for the rest of the unit. Next, each student will receive a worksheet that shows an outline of the human body. Throughout the course of the discussion, students will fill in positive effects on the body due to healthy eating, as well as negative effects on the body due to unhealthy eating. This part of the lesson will be a discussion rather than a lecture, because the teacher will ask students to offer their own ideas about short-term and long-term effects of healthy eating before revealing specific facts and data for the students to record on their worksheets.
Tuesday’s activities will focus on a discussion of junk food advertisements. There will be five examples of junk food advertisements for students to view: Diet Coke, Drumstick ice cream cones, Doritos, Lay’s, and Reese’s Cups. These ads also correlate to the original foods mentioned in Monday’s food tasting. The students most likely experience these types of ads every day, whether it be on television, the side of a bus, or on a highway billboard. The advertisements will be hung around the room on large pieces of poster board. The teacher will instruct the students to split up into heterogeneous groups of two or three and to walk around the room, looking at each ad. The students will be told to write at least one idea down for an ad, keeping in mind questions like, “What about this ad grabs your attention?” or “Based on the ad, what kind of impression do you get about this particular food?” When everyone has seen all the ads, the teacher will review with the class the comments that were written about each ad. The teacher will also have a sheet of discussion guidelines that offers other observations about the advertisements to keep the conversation flowing.

With their new knowledge and understanding of the ways advertising affects consumers’ food purchases, students’ will end the class period by creating their own ad for a healthy food. They will have the opportunity to see an example ad created by a previous student to ensure that they understand the expectations for their own work. The students can choose whatever food they like, whether it be one they tasted the previous day or another they eat at home. The goal of this exercise is to allow students to express spatial intelligence. Howard Gardner, author of the Theory of Multiple Intelligence, describes spatial intelligence as the ability to “perceive visual or spatial information, to transform this information, and to recreate visual images.” We believe this learning activity incorporates spatial intelligence because it challenges students to use their brains for other things besides decoding syntax, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics (which
are the core operations of linguistic intelligence) ("Theory of Multiple Intelligences," Class Reader).

On Wednesday, the students will take place in a “shopping on a budget” activity in the classroom. This activity will allow students to compare the prices of junk food and healthy food in order to understand that nutritional options are often more expensive. To begin, the teacher will arrange the classroom in a mock-grocery store format. Each desk will have a different sign with a picture of a healthy or unhealthy food advertising and its corresponding price. The healthy food advertisements that the students created themselves on Tuesday can be used in the exercise. There will be no examples of real food - just photos and price tags. Each student will be given a “Shopping List Worksheet,” which has space to record the names of the food items they select, as well as their corresponding prices.

The goal of this activity is for students to pick out their favorite after-school snacks while also paying attending to those items’ costs. The class will be divided into two groups: the Healthy Food Group and the Unhealthy Food Group. Within each major group, there will be 3 sub-groups composed of three or four students. Each sub-group has a virtual budget of $20. Students in the Healthy Food sub-groups can only “purchase” healthy snack options (without spending more than $20), and students in the Unhealthy Food sub-groups can only “purchase” unhealthy snack options (also without spending more than $20). We would require each sub-group to purchase at least three different snacks, to ensure that students do not only buy the cheapest food in order to finish the activity. After the students choose their food items, they must calculate the total cost of their grocery list, as well as the leftover money they did not spend.

After the sub-groups complete their worksheets, the class will come together to compare results. Each sub-group will share what snacks they chose to purchase, how much money they
spent, and how much of their budget they did not use. This part of the activity will allow the whole class to see the different food options that are available at the grocery store, but also to see the discrepancies between how much food the Healthy Food groups could buy compared to the Unhealthy Food groups. Because the prices of the Healthy Food are higher, those groups will either have less money left over in their budgets, or they will have had to purchase fewer items.

By transforming the classroom into a mock-grocery store, students will get to experience the challenges their families and neighbors deal with every time they go to buy food. This exercise could have taken place in an actual grocery store or corner store, but we believe a classroom setting is more fitting, because it allows for an easy transition into teacher-student discussion. At a location outside of the school, students might be distracted by the food and people around them. Our goal is to keep the class focused on the meaning of the lesson, rather than just the activity. Hartford students are especially fitting for this activity because in Hartford, residents often must sacrifice food quality in exchange for affordable prices. It is this problem, which we define as “food price injustice” in our objectives, that we want students to recognize and experience for themselves. This activity shows students, through a hands-on approach, food price injustice in their own community.

Thursday’s activity is a walking trip to the Trinity College TrinfoCafé garden. First begun by Trinity College Without Borders, this garden was developed in Fall 2011 to engage Hartford youth. TrinfoCafé, which is Trinity’s neighborhood technology center, houses the garden. The first ten plots officially opened in Spring 2012. Today, Trinity College Without Borders encourages community members and public/magnet school students to visit the garden and learn about food security issues in Hartford ("Community Garden").

Because the garden is close to many Hartford elementary schools, the teacher will walk
the class to the garden, rather than drive, in order to emphasize its accessibility. At the garden, students will take place in a brief tasting of the fresh foods grown in the garden. However, the majority of the trip will be spent discussing food stamps and community gardens in the students’ community. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a nutrition program in Hartford that helps low-income households purchase food. In recent years, Connecticut and Hartford legislatures have altered SNAP to make it easier for families to use SNAP benefits at local farmer’s markets. SNAP benefits often increase at farmer’s markets to ensure that families can purchase fruits and vegetables that are traditionally more expensive ("Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program"). We believe it is important for students to share their experiences with SNAP, voice any concerns that they hear from their families or friends, and then learn more about the benefits of community gardens and farmer’s markets. Gardens and farmer’s markets are not only resources for nutritious food, but they are an important place for Hartford residents to come together, discuss their personal food problems, and strengthen the community.

On Friday, students will combine the knowledge gained throughout the week and transform it into a letter to their school principal about school nutrition. The class will begin with a student driven discussion about the daily food journals that the students have been keeping throughout the week. The students will discuss what foods they have been eating, use their knowledge from previous lessons to assess if they have been eating healthy foods or unhealthy foods, and hypothesize why they may have eaten what they did. The teacher will then shift the discussion into a critical assessment of the school lunches, asking the students if the lunch provided for them was the healthiest it could have be and, if not, asking the students for suggestions for change. When thinking about their own school lunch nutrition and possibilities for change, the students will be encouraged to use the knowledge they have gained throughout
the week to support their ideas. Each student will receive letter paper and an envelope. They will be instructed to craft a letter to their school principal expressing their ideas and suggestions for nutritional change. This exercise allows the students to reflect on what they have learned, make suggestions of their own, and creatively combine fact with opinion.

Assessment:

On the days leading up to Friday, we have small ways to evaluate students for each day of work. On Monday, the teacher can look to see if the student completed the healthy eating worksheet. On Tuesday, the teacher can check that every student wrote a comment during the carousel activity and incorporated their new knowledge into the creation of their healthy food ad. On Wednesday, the students are required to finish their shopping list worksheet. On Thursday, the teacher would take note of students’ focus and participation at the community garden, since the field trip is meant to be discussion-based. Students will not receive specific grades for each of these activities – these evaluation methods are simply to help the teacher track student progress leading up to Friday.

The letter the students compose on Friday will be used as the final assessment piece for the curriculum unit. We believe this letter is the most effective way to evaluate student performance because the exercise encourages students to compile their knowledge, craft an original opinion, and support their ideas with fact. These skills cannot be thoroughly demonstrated on a standardized test or fill-in-the-blank homework. A letter is a real-world way to present information in a powerful and meaningful way. The teacher will provide a rubric to all students prior to the activity, so that the entire class understands the assessment expectations. This rubric makes it clear to the students that this assessment is not focused on small grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure issues – but instead on the content of their letter. We believe
that by using a letter to assess the students, students with different intellectual strengths will have equal opportunities to succeed.

Works Cited


Name: ______________________________________

**Daily Food Journal**

**Monday:**

Today for breakfast, I ate: ____________________________________________________________

Today for lunch, I ate: ______________________________________________________________

Today for dinner, I ate: _____________________________________________________________

**Tuesday:**

Today for breakfast, I ate: ____________________________________________________________

Today for lunch, I ate: ______________________________________________________________

Today for dinner, I ate: _____________________________________________________________

**Wednesday:**

Today for breakfast, I ate: ____________________________________________________________

Today for lunch, I ate: ______________________________________________________________

Today for dinner, I ate: _____________________________________________________________

**Thursday:**

Today for breakfast, I ate: ____________________________________________________________
Today for lunch, I ate: _______________________________________________________

Today for dinner, I ate: _______________________________________________________

**Friday:**

Today for breakfast, I ate: ___________________________________________________

Today for lunch, I ate: _______________________________________________________

Today for dinner, I ate: _______________________________________________________


Name: ___________________________
**Tuesday Activity: Discussion of Junk Food Advertisements**

Sample Advertisements and Teacher Guidelines

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**Brand: Coca Cola**

Compare to: 100% juice

- “Always Cool” slogan implies that it is always cool to drink Coke
- Polar bear appeals to a younger audience
- Cool colors in the ad makes consumers think of a cold, satisfying drink


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**Brand: Drumstick**

Compare to: Fruit popsicles

Text on ad: “The sign on the dock said ‘No Running,’ but it didn’t say anything about prize-winning cannonballs…”

- “Forever Summer” slogan associates ice cream with fun and no school
- Models are happy, causing consumers to believe they will be happy if they eat the product

Photo: [http://www.amyfleisher.com/Nestle-Drumstick](http://www.amyfleisher.com/Nestle-Drumstick)
Brand: Doritos
Compare to: Sun Chips

- Dads in dresses makes the chip associated with fun and humor
- Advertises to both kids and adults

Photo: [http://www.northjersey.com/sports/](http://www.northjersey.com/sports/)

Brand: Lay’s
Compare to: Pirate’s Booty

- “Happiness is simple” slogan implies that you will be happy if you eat Lay’s
- Reminds consumers that it is simple to find Lay’s

Photo: [http://parkerwyoung.com/img/p/reeses-ad.jpg](http://parkerwyoung.com/img/p/reeses-ad.jpg)

Brand: Reese’s
Compare to: Quaker Chewy Bars

- “Every day is your birthday” slogan makes Reese’s seem special
- Emphasis on “every day” tells consumers that Reese’s are a snack that can be eaten all the time

Photo: [http://www.admonkey.org](http://www.admonkey.org)
Name: ______________________________

Shopping List
Healthy Snacks Team

Directions: You are given $20 to shop for after-school snacks at a local Walmart. Try to buy as many items as you can without exceeding your budget.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD ITEM</th>
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TOTAL MONEY SPENT: ______________________________

LEFTOVER MONEY: ______________________________
# Letter Assessment Rubric

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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<tr>
<td>States a clear opinion</td>
<td>States a clear opinion with detail</td>
<td>States an opinion, but does not give detail</td>
<td>Does not state an opinion or the opinion is unclear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes suggestions for change</td>
<td>Makes 2 more suggestions for change that are clear and detailed</td>
<td>Makes 1-2 clear suggestions for change</td>
<td>Makes no suggestions or suggestions are unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporates Daily Food Journals</td>
<td>Includes clear observations and relates them to your opinion and suggestions</td>
<td>Includes clear and detailed observations</td>
<td>Does not include food journal observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporates Healthy Eating Worksheet</td>
<td>Includes clear facts and relates them to your opinion and suggestions</td>
<td>Includes clear and detailed facts</td>
<td>Does not include worksheet information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporates food price injustice info</td>
<td>Includes clear facts and relates them to your opinion and suggestions</td>
<td>Includes a clear and detailed explanation</td>
<td>Does not include food price injustice knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporates community garden info</td>
<td>Does not include community garden knowledge</td>
<td>Includes clear and detailed facts</td>
<td>Includes clear facts and relates them to your opinion and suggestions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>