

UNIT THREE: GRADES 6 - 8

LESSON ONE: Learning about Hunger



The GOALS of this lesson are to:

- understand the extent of the hunger problem in Massachusetts (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- understand the meaning and use of statistics documenting the hunger problem in the state (MATH)
- learn about the network of nonprofit organizations that respond to the hunger problem (SOCIAL STUDIES)

This lesson has three components: a **DISCUSSION** of the Hunger IQ Test to better learn about hunger; an **ACTIVITY** which reinforces the lessons about hunger; and a **RESEARCH PROJECT** which will teach students about the role that local nonprofit organizations play in responding to hunger.

DISCUSSION

Distribute a written copy of the Hunger IQ Test (Appendix E) and have students take the test. (Alternatively, you can have the class take the test as a group.) Assure the class that they will not be graded on whether they get the correct answers to the quiz. Discuss the answers to the quiz, especially where students were surprised by the correct answers. Put particular emphasis on challenging some of the stereotypes about hunger and emphasize that hunger results from circumstances which could happen to any individual or family, including their own.

Discuss what can be done to respond to the hunger problem documented in the Hunger IQ Test. Talk about the responsibility that each individual in society has to make his/her community a better one, and how undertaking this responsibility not only helps the community, but makes each person who helps the community feel good about him/herself.

ACTIVITY

Choose one or more of the following activities which reinforce the lessons of the Hunger IQ Test.

Have students administer the Hunger IQ Test to others, such as their parents, other kids in school, their neighbors. At the next class, have students report on which questions were answered incorrectly most often. What does that tell the class about common misconceptions about hunger?

Have the students do math exercises that help them to get a feel for the magnitude of the hunger problem, using the numbers provided in the Hunger IQ Test. For example, if there are 14,000,000 emergency meals served every year to the 600,000 hungry people in Massachusetts, how many emergency meals does each person get, on average? (About 23, leaving a lot of meals that the hungry person needs to get from another source.)

Ask the students to come up with other ways to measure the extent of the hunger problem.

NOTES



RESEARCH PROJECT

Have students (or student teams) research efforts to help the hungry in their community. You may want to divide up the assignments: what is done at the federal, state and local levels. Have students be prepared to report back their findings during the final lesson as a basis for discussing what the class might want to do about hunger.



The GOALS

of this lesson are to:

- build an understanding of the role that government plays in responding to the needs of the hungry (SOCIAL STUDIES, POLITICAL SCIENCE)
- learn and appreciate how our country has responded to hunger at different points in our history (SOCIAL STUDIES, HISTORY)
- conduct and report on the results of a group research effort to look at hunger policy at a particular point in American history (RESEARCH, WRITING, PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS, POLITICAL SCIENCE)

LESSON TWO: Research Lesson on Historical Changes in the National Response to Hunger

This lesson has two components: a **RESEARCH PROJECT** which should be assigned to small groups in advance of the lesson; and a **DISCUSSION** of what each group learned and what the class as a whole learned from the project.



RESEARCH PROJECT

Assignment: Give this assignment a week or two in advance of the lesson. You may want to allow class time to do the research in small groups prior to the class discussion.

Divide the class into small groups so that you have at least one group researching each of the following time periods in American history: the New Deal, the War on Poverty, present Congress. Assign each group research on what national hunger policy was during each of the three periods. Have the groups address the following questions:

- What historical and economic factors made this a time period when the government decided that it was an appropriate time to take a fresh look at hunger policy? What other social policy changes was the government considering at the same time?
- What programs to assist hungry families were in existence before this period began?
- What programs were created during this time? Why did the government think that these programs would help? Did they?

Have each group prepare a written report of what they learned. Have them also prepare to present their findings back to the class, with different members of the small groups presenting different parts of the research.



DISCUSSION

Have each small group report their findings back to the full class, beginning with the New Deal and working up to the present Congress. After all of the reports have been presented, discuss:

- How has hunger policy changed over the course of American history?
- Has our country gotten better at feeding the hungry? What did we learn as a result of implementing hunger policy at each of these periods?
- What was the same and what was different about hunger policy at different times in our country's history?
- What challenges should Congress be thinking about with regard to hunger policy in the future?

LESSON THREE: Buying Food on a Budget, Part I



The GOALS

of these two lessons are to:

- learn about the relationship between hunger and poverty and develop an understanding that hunger results from a lack of sufficient income (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- build understanding and empathy for the hungry
- learn first hand about the challenge of juggling limited dollars to purchase nutritious food and the other necessities of life (MATH and BIOLOGY)

The first lesson consists of a **DISCUSSION** and **ACTIVITY** to lay the groundwork for the role-playing **ACTIVITY** of buying food on a budget in the second lesson. A final **DISCUSSION** in the second lesson summarizes what was learned.



DISCUSSION

Have the class create a weekly food budget for a typical family of four living in poverty. They should base their budget on an annual income of \$15,600 (poverty level for a family of four). Remind them of the following information from the Hunger IQ Test:

- Average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the city – \$1,048
- Weekly day care costs for an infant – \$200

Brainstorm monthly expenses like utilities, transportation, clothing, etc.

Discuss the difficulty faced by many families in having enough money to buy food. This includes both families who work as well as those who are out of work. Explain that many families simply do not have enough money left to buy enough food after paying their other living expenses.



ACTIVITY

Divide the class into three or four small groups, each of which works with the weekly food budget created in the previous discussion. Add to this budget one quarter of a monthly food stamp allotment for a family of four (\$120). Remind the group that this is the maximum allotment, and that this family might actually receive less food stamps. Have each group determine a weekly food budget based on food stamps and family income.

Ask each small group to collect and bring supermarket circulars to the next class.

LESSON FOUR: Buying Food on a Budget, Part II

ACTIVITY

Divide the class into the same small groups as before. Have a copy of the Food Pyramid available to remind the group about how to plan nutritious meals.

Assign the following tasks to each group:

- Create a shopping list of nutritious foods for a family of four for one week
- “Purchase” the food on the list, using the prices in the supermarket circulars
- Come up with ideas for how to make each food dollar go as far as possible

Provide the following basic prices for items not included in supermarket circulars, reminding students that if they see an item on sale in the circular, they can “purchase” it for the lower price.

- Gallon of Milk – \$2.50
- Dozen Eggs – \$1.50
- Loaf of Bread – \$1.75
- Jar of Peanut Butter – \$1.75
- Pound of Margarine – \$1.50
- Jar of Spaghetti Sauce – \$1.50
- Box of Spaghetti – \$0.50
- Box of Macaroni and Cheese – \$0.50

DISCUSSION

Once the small groups have completed their shopping, have each small group report back to the class on how the process went. Discuss the following:

- How much did you have to spend each week on food? Did that seem like enough before you began the assignment? Was it enough?
- What strategies did you use to “stretch” your food dollars? How well did these strategies work?
- If you couldn’t afford all of the foods that your group wanted to buy, what kinds of foods couldn’t you buy? Did you notice that it is particularly difficult to purchase healthy food with limited money (e.g. fresh produce, lean chicken, etc. is more expensive than chips and hot dogs)? This is why poor people can be overweight, but not receiving the proper nutrition.
- What kinds of government programs and policies or private programs would be most helpful in “stretching” food dollars?

LESSON FIVE: Learning Through Community



The GOALS

of this lesson are to:

- develop an awareness of hunger and of places hungry people can turn for help, such as a soup kitchen (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- build concern about, empathy for and identification with the hungry in our own and other communities
- emphasize that we all have a role to play in reducing the amount of hunger (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- give students an opportunity to take action against hunger within their own community
- learn how good it feels to make a difference in fighting hunger and building a better community

This lesson has two components: a **DISCUSSION** about what the class has learned over the past few classes about hunger and how they might make a difference in addressing the issue; and brainstorming/planning a Community Service **ACTIVITY** which the class can undertake.



DISCUSSION

Have students report back on the research they undertook as part of Lesson One about the role that local nonprofit organizations play in responding to hunger. Briefly review what students learned through the Hunger IQ Test, and through researching historical changes in the national response to hunger. Remind students of the day-to-day challenges that a poor family faces in trying to eat on a budget, as demonstrated in Lessons Three and Four.

Discuss the importance of the individual in solving society's problems like hunger. What can each person in the class do? What can the class do as a whole?



ACTIVITY

The following are suggested activities, one or more of which the class can undertake as a community service project.

Have a speaker from a local food pantry or soup kitchen or from Project Bread talk with the class about hunger and what their organization is doing to combat hunger. The speaker may want to brainstorm with the class about a future project they could undertake together.

Plan a visit to a local food pantry, soup kitchen or feeding program. If possible, arrange a visit which allows enough time for the class to actually pitch in and help — either shelving groceries for a food pantry (perhaps groceries that they have collected) or serving a meal.

Have the class make posters to put up in the school encouraging students to participate in the Walk for Hunger. Encourage the students to include sentiments about why this is important: “We can make a difference,” “We want to help others who don’t have enough to eat.”

Have a student and/or teacher who has participated in the Walk for Hunger in the past talk about the experience and encourage other students to participate this year.

NOTES

Organize a food drive. Have the class determine the most appropriate local program to receive the food that is collected.

Organize an Oxfam-like hunger banquet in which participants draw lots to determine how much food they get to eat. Charge admission to the banquet and donate the money which is raised to a local feeding program.

Launch a campaign to increase student use of school breakfasts/lunches. Meet with school officials to determine the best strategy for achieving this goal.

Evaluate the extent to which the school, school district or community wastes food. Develop a plan for more efficient use of the food and/or distribution of extra food.

Using the research already done by the class, produce a PSA (Public Service Announcement) for the local cable television channel on resources for hungry people.

Investigate the local farmers' market and volunteer to help build a connection between the farmers' market and efforts to feed the hungry in the community.