

Why Eat Organic

Grade 6-8 Lesson Plan

Focus Question

What is each person's responsibility for environmental stewardship?

Purpose

The learner will develop an awareness of organic/sustainable foods as an alternative, earth-friendly way to eat. This lesson encourages the learners to evaluate their choices when they and their families purchase food products. Students identify how organic/sustainable foods contribute to their health as well as the health of our world.

Duration

One 50-minute class period

Learner Objectives

- Compare and contrast organic/sustainable food products to conventional food products.
- Identify the benefits of eating organic/sustainable food products.
- Identify the “opportunity costs” involved in purchasing organic/sustainable food products as opposed to conventional food products.
- Define and articulate how environmental stewardship, common good, responsibility, and social action are involved in purchasing organic/sustainable food products.
- Develop a persuasive statement

encouraging others to purchase earth-friendly and health-friendly food products.

- Plan an Earth Day Event that promotes environmental stewardship and personal health.

Materials

- A variety of fruits and vegetables representing both organic/sustainable as well as conventional products (Keep price tags on, if possible.)
- Online access with projector (or student on line access)
- Downloaded copies of Why Buy Sustainable? for each learner. (See Bibliographical References)

Teacher Preparation

Prior to the start of this class period, obtain some fruits and vegetables from a local food store (celery, carrots, apples, bananas, etc.). Purchase two of each item--one organic, one non organic. Keep price tags on or record the purchase price of each item.

Instructional Procedures

Set out the fruits and vegetables so students can see them clearly, or walk around the seated students with the foods on a tray. Ask the class if they see any differences between the two packages of celery or the two apples or other pairs of foods. Students may notice

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some small differences in appearance, but they may not think there is much difference between the two. Tell the students that the big difference between these fruits and vegetables is related to how they were grown. Write the words ‘organic’ and ‘sustainable’ on the display board.

Have the learners share their prior knowledge of these words. Define organic as “without employment of chemically formulated fertilizers, growth stimulants, antibiotics, or pesticides.” Define sustainable as “a method of using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged.” Help the learners make a connection between these two words. (Sustainable methods of farming produce organic foods.)

Have the learners share why they think organic foods might be better to eat than non organic foods. Record their ideas on the display board.

Distribute the article entitled “Why Buy Sustainable?” Have the learners read this article and compare it to the list of their ideas recorded on the display board. Discuss the comparisons.

Write the costs of each purchased fruit and vegetable on the display board. If necessary, have the students convert the prices to obtain price per pound so they can compare the prices. They will find that the organic foods are more expensive.

Wash your hands before cutting up the foods. Have the students taste the different fruits and vegetables. Discuss the differences in price and taste.

Explain the “opportunity cost” of buying one or the other: When they purchase the more expensive food, they lose the opportunity to spend that extra money on something else.

When they purchase the less expensive item, they lose the benefits of the organically grown food. Buyers have to decide if the benefits of buying organic outweigh the extra cost.

Have them respond to the question, “Why might a consumer choose not to buy sustainable/organic agriculture products?” Be sensitive and nonjudgmental about choices families make.

Write the following words on the display board: environmental stewardship, common good, responsibility, and social action. Have the learners share what they know of these words and guide them as they define them.

Environmental stewardship is the care and responsible management of the environment.

Common good involves individual citizens promoting the welfare of the community (even if they must sacrifice their own time, personal preferences, or money) to work together with other members for the greater benefit of all.

Responsibility is being answerable for one’s actions or the actions of others. Social action is the process of doing or acting for the general welfare of all.

When the students understand these terms, split

them into groups of three. They are to determine how do these three words relate and propose a persuasive statement that argues in favor of organic food that also displays their understanding of environmental stewardship, common good, responsibility, and social action.

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After each group has shared its persuasive statement, open a group discussion by asking the learners with whom they would like to share this message and why.

Assessment

Assess the learners based on their classroom participation and group work.

Extension

Have the learners explore in more depth why organic/sustainable food products typically cost more than conventional food products (see: <http://www.organicconsumers.org/organic/costsmore082405.cfm>).

Go on a field trip to a store to “comparison shop” for organic and conventional groceries. Have them take notes on costs, appearance, availability, and other information provided by the store. When they return, have them write an analysis of the cost of buying organic. Challenge them to consider the “opportunity costs” to the environment and to their health. Assign groups of students to different food aisles (produce, meats, dairy, grocery, soaps). Have the learners locate the specialty grocery stores in their community that carry organic/sustainable agricultural products. Many of these stores are identified in the following site: <http://www.greenpeople.org/healthfood.htm>

Have the learners create a menu for a meal and tally its cost in two columns: organic ingredients/nonorganic ingredients. They can use store fliers, trips to the store with family members, and the internet to obtain prices.

Have them compare the cost of preparing the meal with organic ingredients and with nonorganic ingredients. The following website is rich with information and ideas

to explore: Sustainable Table. “Why Eat Well?” <http://www.sustainabletable.org/intro/whyeatwell/>

Bibliographical References

- “Great Nutrition Resources for Children.” Guide to Nursing Schools. <http://www.guidetonursingschools.com/library/childrens-nutrition>
This site is full of up-to-date facts, information and activities for different ages, and links to interactive sites.
- Organic vs. Conventional: What Do the Experts Say? <http://www.cnn.com/2007/HEALTH/diet.fitness/04/13/cl.organics/index.html>

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Common Core Standard Suggestions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

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