

Hunger at Home

Summary

Problems and policies related to hunger in local communities.

Background for Teachers

Hunger at home is a problem which needs to be a concern for people in all communities, not for just the few it directly affects.

People from the United States have so much more food than those from other nations that we often feel all of the people in the United States are automatically well-fed. That is not true. Many U.S. citizens suffer from malnutrition. There are two major reasons for this:

First, people may be too poor to buy food or too ill to procure it. We do not have to look very far to find people so poor that they have no food. An account written by a woman in Boston ([A STATEMENT FROM A BOSTON WOMAN](#)) is a good example.

The second major reason for malnutrition in the United States is that people make poor decisions about what they choose to eat. The foods their bodies need are available and the individuals have money to purchase them; but, for some reason, they make poor choices and malnutrition is the result. This is illustrated in [SAMUEL'S STORY](#).

Instructional Procedures

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

OPTION #1

As an introduction, put up a sign (or wear it as the students enter the classroom) which says "HOMELESS, I WILL WORK FOR FOOD" Discuss their reaction. If possible, bring in a speaker from the local homeless center or county welfare committee.

Read [A STATEMENT FROM A BOSTON WOMAN](#). Let students speculate individually, or put them into groups with a recorder and let them brainstorm what might have caused the woman to be in a situation where she has no food or can get no food.

Possible answers:

Some people are incapable of taking care of themselves (mentally ill, old, uneducated, etc.)

Some people, even though they work, do not have enough money to buy nutritious food.

There is a lack of a family support network for people who are temporarily or permanently without homes and/or income.

Alcoholism, drug addiction, and other illnesses may keep people from obtaining or ingesting food.

Many people need help from welfare but are not eligible for it. For example, you have to have held a job to be eligible for welfare. If a young person needs help and has never had a job for any reason, whether it is his/her fault or not, he/she cannot get welfare. (Usually anyone with a dependent, minor child can get welfare.)

VARIATION: Have students, in small groups, spend volunteer hours at the homeless shelter (if available) or some other location to help them with their awareness of homeless or low income people. Have students organize a food drive for the local food shelter or have a volunteer speaker from a local food shelter talk to the class.

NOTE TO TEACHER: You might need special permission for students under 16 years of age to participate as a food server.

OPTION #2

Read [SAMUEL'S STORY](#). Divide students into groups and use a cooperative learning strategy to

brainstorm actions that individuals and families can take to help the hungry in their community.

OPTION #3

Organize a class committee to work with the teacher on planning a field trip to a homeless shelter or have a resource person from the Division of Family Services (or County Welfare Committee) or other agencies come and speak to the class.

OPTION #4

Do a FOOD LINE with students role playing the homeless and hungry.

TEACHER PREPARATION:

Prepare students for this experience by discussing the plight of the homeless in the United States and specifically at home in their own community.

Ask the students to bring cans of food - specifically canned soups and vegetables - for homeless shelters. Give them extra credit for their willingness to help others. NOTE: Some of this donation will be used for the [FRIENDSHIP SOUP](#), the rest will be taken to a homeless shelter or other location of need.

The day before the lab, assign students to bring their own utensils and containers to eat with.

Ask them to carry them around and keep track of them all day.

Hang a sign on the classroom door saying "SOUPLINE FOR THE HOMELESS".

Cover tables with newspapers.

Have volunteers dress as a destitute person and stand by the door and around the room with signs saying "Homeless - will work for food", or "Homeless - help me feed my family", or other appropriate phrases. These volunteers can be student aids or FCCLA members. The teacher may also dress for the occasion to help create the atmosphere of a homeless shelter.

At the beginning of the class, have the students line up outside the classroom door to be served the FRIENDSHIP SOUP. For those students who forgot their utensils, give them the empty cans and a plastic spoon or fork to use. Pass them out a slice of bread (day old) to eat with the soup.

While students are eating, show the movie "Curly Sue" and have them complete the worksheet, [CURLY SUE](#). Discuss their reactions to the movie. Other appropriate movies might be a recent news story on the homeless plight in your area or a PBS production on "hunger in America".

After they finish eating, have the students find someplace outside the foods lab or home economics department to clean their containers.

NOTE TO TEACHER: The movie "Curly Sue" can be checked out from the public library utilizing their public viewing rights. This is a good activity for junior high level. A variation for high school students could be to show TV news clips on homeless people or show an overhead of news clips from newspapers or magazines.

As with any activity students do outside the classroom, it is good policy to inform the administration what you plan on doing and what you have assigned the students.

OPTION #5

Have the students plan a project that the class members can carry out to help fight hunger in the local community. Have the students brainstorm ideas. Some possible ideas are:

- Campaign in the newspaper

- Give food instead of asking for treats at Halloween time

- Collect food for "Sub for Santa"

- Collect food for local food bank

- Plan and serve a meal at the homeless shelter

- Make "Friendship Stew" or "Friendship Casseroles" for senior citizens, the homeless shelter homebound citizens

- Other

NOTE TO TEACHER: Students could choose any of these projects as extra credit verified with a written report from parents.

OPTION #6

Students may want to learn more about organizations dealing with food policy issues. The following agencies are good sources of information. Students can search the web or write as teams, groups, or individuals.

- [Bread for the World](#)
 , 50 F St NW, Ste. 500, Washington, D.C. 20001
- [Oxfam America](#)
 , 26 West St, Boston, MA 02111
- [Food Research and Action Center](#)
 , 1875 Connecticut Ave NW, Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20009
- [The Hunger Project](#)
 , 2015 Steiner St., San Francisco, CA 94115
- [Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy](#)
 , 398 60th Street, Oakland, CA 94618

OPTION #7

Have students do an internet search of recent newspaper articles from your area on the subject of hunger. Students will individually or in groups give an oral or written summary of the article. This is an excellent way for students to find out what issues specifically are at play in your community with regards to hunger and homelessness.

OPTION #8

Discuss local access to food. Do people have food stored for emergencies? Do people rely 100% on local grocers for food? See study by Utah State Extension on access to food in various Utah communities.

NOTE TO TEACHER: Options 5 and/or 6 would make an ideal activity for integrating FCCLA into the classroom.

Bibliography

- *Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies*
 , Eva Hamilton, Eleanor Whitney, FrancesSizer. 4th Edition, West Publishing Company, 1988.
- *Samuel's Story*
 by Maxine Rowley, Ph.D., Home Economics, Family Science Department, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602
- *Curley Sue*
 , check out movie from the public library utilizing their public viewing rights.

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