

TTCD Lesson Plan (11): What is a Food System?

Unit: Food Systems	Grade(s): 5-12	Class Size: 5-30	Lesson Duration: 20 minutes	Location: Classroom, Gym, MPR, or Outside
Topic(s):	Food systems, food justice, identity and belonging			
Student Prerequisites:	N/A			
Essential Questions:	• In what ways are we a part of the food system? • What other systems are we a part of? • Why is it important to know about the “journey” our food goes through?			
Student Objectives:	1. Students will begin to understand the concept of the food system. 2. Students will understand that they play a role in the food system. 3. Students will understand that the food system does not function the same for all people.			
Standards:	Cultural Standards: C.3: Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to actively participate in various cultural environments by: attain[ing] a healthy lifestyle through which they are able to maintain their own social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being D.6: Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning by: engag[ing] in a realistic self-assessment to identify strengths and needs and make appropriate decisions to enhance life skills.			
Local Context:	Students are encouraged to reflect on their own awareness of the food system they are a part of. <i>As a facilitator, it is important to keep in mind the social and economic barriers people face when it comes to accessing healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food.</i>			
Vocabulary:	System: a set of interdependent parts forming a complex whole; a set of principles or procedures according to which something is done Food system: the journey that food travels from field to fork and beyond, which includes growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing. It includes the inputs needed and the outputs generated at each step Food Security: the state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of safe, affordable, and nutritious food Food Justice: a person’s right to affordable, nutritious, fresh, and culturally			

	appropriate food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community Spectrum: used to classify something, or suggest that it can be classified, in terms of its position on a scale between two extreme or opposite points
Dena'ina language words:	
Materials:	• Pieces of paper that state “I am confident about this” and “I have no idea” • Masking tape
Instructor Prep:	• Place the “I am confident about this” and “I have no idea” signs at opposite ends of the space, so that students can form a straight line between them. • Use masking tape (or chalk, if outside) to draw a line on the floor between the two signs. • Read over the “What is a food system?” statements and identify which ones you will use today.
Introduction:	Explain to the students that we are about to do an activity to help us identify what we already understand about our food system, or food systems in general. Explain that we are not experts in this topic, and in fact there are many barriers that try to prevent us from understanding where our food comes from, what processes it goes through, and where our waste ends up. That is why it is okay to not have all the answers, and it is important for us to try to learn more! To start, ask students: • What do we know about food systems? • Do we feel that we are able to influence our food systems?
Directions:	1. Explain to the students that you will read out a series of statements, which they are to consider, and then decide whether or not they agree. 2. Point out the two opposing extremes: the signs stating, “I am confident about this” and “I have no idea.” The line between two extremes is called a spectrum. Once a statement is read, students are to stand at some point along the spectrum on the line of tape. Explain that there is no right or wrong position, though it can sometimes take a lot of courage to acknowledge when we don't know something. 3. Read each of your chosen statements out loud, allowing room in between some statements for discussion. At times, you might encourage some students to share their reasoning for standing at a certain place on the line. Encourage the group not to praise or criticize any of the students' positions, rather, encourage them to reflect on their own awareness. Here are some sample statements, but you might come up with some of your own.

	• I am aware of where my food comes from. • I know where my food is grown. • I play an important role in my local food system. • I know who grows my food. • I can grow my own food. • I know where my food is grown. • I can find a place to grow my own food. • I know where I can buy fresh produce. • I am aware that certain foods are more expensive, depending on the food and where it came from. • I know what foods my ancestors ate. • I can eat the same foods my ancestors ate. • I know how my food got here. • I know the difference between fresh food and processed food. • I am aware of what influences my eating habits. • I can change my eating habits whenever I want.
Wrap Up:	Ask a few reflection questions to the group, writing down a few words on the board for each answer that is shared. • Was it easy or difficult to determine where you fell on the spectrum? • How did it feel if you were not familiar with a topic? • Were there any statements in which <i>everyone</i> was confident? Do we think this is generally true for most people, or is our group unique? • Were there any statements in which <i>no one</i> was confident? Do you think there may be a lack of general information available? Are certain things somewhat hidden from us as consumers, such as where certain foods come from? • If we wanted to learn more about these topics, how could we start? <i>Evidence of Learning:</i> Have students respond in writing (or orally) to one or more of the following prompts: One thing I learned about myself and what I know about food systems is that _____. One thing I learned about my community and food systems is that _____. One question I still have about food systems is _____.
Lesson Adaptations:	Try some more advanced statements for older students, such as: • I am aware that where a person lives can determine whether or not they have access to healthy food. • I am aware of the opportunities to inspire others and serve as a youth leader in my community. If the space is not conducive to the spectrum method of answering, you could have students stand up if they are confident, and sit down if they do not know. Similarly, students could show confidence by holding up a number of fingers, or by using their “thumb-ometer.”

Extensions:	• This activity is intended to precede the TTCD Lesson “Journey from Field to Fork” • Invite a community member or elder to speak to the class about traditional and ancestral foods of the region • Share the video Aparna Pallavi- What Foods Did Your Ancestors Love? and discuss some of the suggested questions.
Reflections:	How did it go? What did students understand most/least? What would you change about instruction or lesson plan?
Resources Used:	This lesson was adapted from the Cornell Garden-Based Learning program “Project S.O.W. (Seeds of Wonder): Food Gardening with Justice in Mind” Lesson 3.2, originally written by Christine Hadekel and Marcia Eames-Sheavly. https://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/lessons/project-s-o-w-seeds-of-wonder-food-gardening-with-justice-in-mind/unit-3-sowing-seeds-of-curiosity/3-2-where-do-you-land/