

Best Practice Vignettes: Family and Consumer Sciences

In Family and Consumer Science, the case study content standard from Learning Area Five can be addressed through a learning activity that includes many best practices:

In Mrs. M's child development class, students learn about theories of development. To begin the unit, they reflect on experiences they've had with children). Students then pose challenging questions they would like to research. They create a plan to answer a question of their choice. The plan includes methods of observation, research, and evaluation. Students carry out the plan by collecting data, reporting findings, making connections to previous learning and posing questions for further research. This lesson includes several best practice principles. It is authentic, cognitive, student-centered, constructivist, democratic, experimental and encourages reflection.

Family and Consumer Science classes at Kasson-Mantorville addressed the resource management content standard from Learning Area Five in a way that incorporated best practice principles.

Lunch count is up! Student descriptions of school lunch, such as "The spaghetti is soggy" "The pizza is greasy" and "This tastes like cardboard" are just memories at Kasson-Mantorville High School ever since the students had a say about the school lunch program. After many years of listening to students complain about school lunches, a collaborative effort was launched between the Family and Consumer Science Department and Food Services Program. Students were given an authentic experience to do something to improve the school lunch program by developing and preparing their own recipes. An elective class, Food Innovations, was created to teach the students how to develop and market new products. The class also gave students the opportunity to work with the food service staff to mass-produce a product.

Students first learned the basics of food and nutrition, as well as product marketing and production. After learning these fundamentals students then, in small groups, developed new food recipes using the USDA guidelines established for school food service programs. Each group submitted a proposal which identified the approximate cost, ingredients, packaging and marketing strategies of their initial recipe. Along with the proposal students conducted a survey and did market research.

Once the FACS teacher and food service director approved the students' proposals the students developed a recipe prototype that contained two ounces of meat or meat alternative per serving with less than 30% fat per serving. The cost per serving was required to be approximately 50 cents.

Students then had the opportunity to prepare their product and serve it to their peers in a lab setting. The students had their peers critique the product after taste test evaluations. After each lab the students tallied the results and prepared a prototype analysis summary, with charts, explaining the information gathered from their peers. Using this information, students created a business plan which included documentation of all their work, estimated costs, marketing and advertising strategies, packaging ideas and results of the taste testing labs. Students had the opportunity to use a wide variety of technology: computers, digital cameras, dietary analysis software, graphic software, and food service preparation equipment to develop and market their products.

The number of students that chose to take the Food Innovations class illustrated its success. It is a class well received by students, parents, and the school's food service staff.

This lesson is authentic, challenging, cognitive, student-centered, constructivist, democratic, experimental and encourages reflection and collaboration.