The following is a unit prepared for a sixth grade class around the National Council for the Social Studies thematic strand of “Production, Distribution, and Consumption”. The unit is designed as a “big question unit”, in that it attempts to develop an organizing framework around a central open-ended question. This question is designed to encourage students to research information and ideas, and establish self-knowledge through the topic. The central topic for this unit is “food” and the question is “Food; what are you being served”.
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**Big Question**

- “Food; What are you being served”

**Sub-Questions**

**Production**
- Where is our food produced?
- Who produces our food? What is their role?
- What are the different ways we produce food?

**Consumption**
- How do we decide what to consume?

**Distribution**
- Does everyone have enough food to eat?
Rationale for Using a “Big Question Unit”

Social studies is not an objective discipline, it is a process which is subjective and full of debate. Because of this there is great potential within social studies education for personalization and the promotion of civic skills. Unfortunately, many students’ experience with social studies is limited to the study of rote knowledge which revolves around the limited perspectives of those people and groups in power.

One method to go beyond this style is through the use of “big question units”. A big question unit is one which is designed around a central question which encourages students to think critically about various perspectives on an issue. Although rote knowledge can be incorporated into a big question unit, the reason to utilize this technique is to move to higher levels of Blooms taxonomy.

Rationale for Topic

This unit has been developed around the central topic of food. Furthermore, this unit will be considered through the lens of the NCSS thread of “Production, Consumption, and Distribution”. For many students, experience with food is limited to that which arrives prepared on their plate or comes sealed in a box. This unit will attempt to reveal the full breadth and scope of food. Students will be presented with the opportunity to study the different methods for food production, the different roles involved in food production, what influences our decisions relating to food, and issues of hunger and food scarcity. These issues will facilitate the study of many different aspects of social studies, and encourage students to reflect on their impact on this expansive and palpable topic.

Rationale for Questions

A question which would illuminate some of the background information and issues of food was, admittedly, difficult to come up with. In considering questions, I wanted a question which was open ended and would prompt exploration. Of the several I considered, I decided that “Food; what are you being served” was the best because it alludes to the other issues that often arrive with our food. The sub-questions, or side dishes, were easier to come up with. These were developed to correspond with each area of “production, consumption, and distribution”. While sub-questions were designed to lead towards more concrete answers they still encourage research and consideration of different sides of the story, and ultimately, different values.
**Duluth Standards**

**Geography**
- The student will use basic maps skills including; longitude, latitude, compass rose, keys and legends
- The student will interpret special purpose maps

**Minnesota History**
- The student will describe how technology and world events have affected groups of people and farms

**Health**
- The student will predict how media influences the selection of health products
- The student will demonstrate effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills to enhance health

**State Standards**

**Geography**
- Students will create a variety of maps to scale.
- Students will compare and contrast the differences among a variety of maps and explain the appropriate use of projections, symbols, coloring and shading, and select maps appropriate for answering questions they have.
- Students will make inferences and draw conclusions about the character of places based on analyses and comparison of maps, aerial photos, and other images.

**Economics**
- Students will explain how a market economy answers the questions of what gets produced, how it is produced, and who receives it, and how it differs from other economic systems.
- Students will understand the concept of scarcity and its role in decision-making.
- Students will apply a decision-making process to make informed choices.
- Students will compare and contrast the concepts of competition and monopoly and predict consequences of each

**Government and Citizenship**
- Students will identify people who have dealt with challenges and made a positive difference in other people’s lives and explain their contributions.

**NCSS Standards**
- Production, Consumption, and Distribution
- People, Places, and Environment
- Science, Technology, and Society
Goals

- Students will understand basic map features including: longitude and latitude, compass rose, keys and legends
- Students will interpret special purpose maps
- Students will analyze the costs and benefits of different systems of production
- Students will develop an understanding of the different roles involved with food production and the quality of life associated with those roles
- Students will evaluate their decisions relating to food and reflect on what influences their choices
- Students will consider hunger issues relating to production and consumption

Objectives

- Students will create a map which demonstrates the origins of the food they eat over the course of a single day
- Students will share their maps in small groups and extract conclusions based on their findings
- Students will work in groups and research in order to distinguish between various food production techniques: [organic vs. non-organic] [family vs. corporate farm] [local vs. transnational]
- Students will work in groups and research in order to summarize the occupational lives of various people involved in food production and harvest: [family farmers, migrant workers, corporate farm CEO’s, advertisers]
- Students will evaluate their dietary choices and consider the impact of advertising on their dietary choices
- Students will research food scarcity, and collect a comparison of relative production/consumption by nation
- Students will understand the causes of hunger and be able to identify steps that can be taken to reduce poverty and hunger
**Rubric: Food Big Question Unit**  
**Teacher: Tom Albright**

**Student:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production Techniques</strong></td>
<td>The student can identify that there are a variety of methods of food production and articulates that there are costs and benefits associated with each technique</td>
<td>The student can identify some of the various food production techniques and can articulate the costs and benefits of some of the techniques</td>
<td>The student can identify the various food production techniques and can articulate the costs and benefits of each technique</td>
<td>The student accomplishes an exemplary analysis of the various food production techniques, can articulate the costs and benefits of each method, and shows evidence of application of understanding</td>
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<td><strong>Production Roles</strong></td>
<td>The student can articulate some of the various roles involved in food production and demonstrates a recognition of various perspectives</td>
<td>The student can articulate the various roles involved in food production and demonstrates an understanding of some of the various perspectives</td>
<td>The student can articulate the various roles involved in food production and demonstrates an understanding of their various perspectives</td>
<td>The student conducts research into a variety of the different roles involved in food production, demonstrates empathy for the various roles, and offers solutions to potential conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consumption</strong></td>
<td>The student articulates some of the components of a healthy diet and can identify examples of advertising aimed at impacting dietary choices</td>
<td>The student can articulate the components of a healthy diet and demonstrates an understanding of the goals of advertisers</td>
<td>The student can articulate the components of a healthy diet and demonstrates a reflective understanding of the impact of advertising on their dietary choices</td>
<td>The student can articulate the components of a healthy diet, demonstrates a reflective understanding of the impact of advertising on their dietary choices, and is motivated to make personal and social changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>The student conveys an understanding of the existence of hunger at both the local and world level</td>
<td>The student can articulate the prevalence of hunger in the local and world community</td>
<td>The student can articulate the prevalence of hunger in the local and world community, as well as areas and groups that are most impacted, and demonstrates an awareness of some of the causes and potential solutions</td>
<td>The student can articulate the prevalence of hunger in the local and world community, can identify areas and groups most impacted, and demonstrates an understanding of the underlying causes as well as potential solutions to hunger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Comments:**
Lesson Plan One:
What Are We Eating? Where Does it Come From?

Introduction: The teacher will start the lesson by asking students what they have eaten within the last 24 hours. After compiling the list on the chalkboard, whiteboard, overhead, etc, the teacher should ask students to make observations and inferences about the list in a think-pair-share method. This is an opportunity to conduct pre-assessment of student perspectives and knowledge of food.

Procedure: After completing the think-pair-share the teacher will explain that students will be conducting observations and research of their own dietary intake in order to learn more about their food choices and the source of their food. The teacher should explain that students will keep as complete a record as possible of their food intake for 24 hours using the data chart provided (worksheet 1.1a). On the backside of the worksheet students should make predictions about where their food will come from and also which food groups their diet will fall into (worksheet 1.1b).

This first portion of the lesson will take place outside of the classroom and will require student’s to record information about their diet over a single day. After students have collected the necessary data, the teacher will explain that students will identify where their food came from on a United States map. The teacher should explain to students the various components of a map. The creation of the map can be done either inside or outside of the classroom.

Once students have completed their maps, students should be organized into groups of four. Students should present their maps to their group, and then, as a group, make observations and inferences by comparing and contrasting their results. Once students have had a chance to work within their groups the teacher can have the students share their results as a class. The teacher should then summarize, or explain (depending on student responses), that our food comes from many different places. Additionally, our food has not always come from the same place-this could be an additional lesson plan within the unit if time is available.

Evaluation: Students should be evaluated in this lesson based on:
- the completeness of their data chart
- if worksheet predictions/reflections were justifiable,
- use of proper map symbols
- the accuracy of their map
- participation during group time.
Worksheet 1.1

Name: ____________________________ Date: _________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the food?</th>
<th>Where did it come from?</th>
<th>Which food group is it?</th>
<th>How many servings is it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Pre-observation
What are the places you think your food comes from?

What types of food do you think are most common/least common in your diet?

Post-Observation
How did your prediction compare to your results regarding where your food comes from?

How did your prediction compare to your results regarding what types of food you ate?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The student will record information on their diet from a single day</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student listed all of the food eaten over a day, classified some of it into food groups, and identified a few of the origins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student listed all foods eaten over the day, classified most into food groups, and identified the origin of some of the food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student listed all foods eaten over the day, classified all of it into food groups, and identified the origin of most of the food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student listed all foods eaten over the day, classified all of it into food groups, and identified the origin of all of the food - both production and processing where appropriate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The student created a map illustrating the sources of their food</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The student identified with occasional accuracy the origins of their food on a map and included a few map symbols</td>
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<tr>
<td>The student accurately identified the locations of some of their food on a map and incorporated some map symbols</td>
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<tr>
<td>The student accurately identified the locations where their food originated and varied labels according to food type, and used some map symbols</td>
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<tr>
<td>The student identified the location where their food was produced and processed, used symbols to differentiate food types on the map, and included all relevant map symbols</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The student interpreted results effectively</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The student discussed the information they found but did not make inferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>The student demonstrated in one source the ability to infer information from their data</td>
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<tr>
<td>The student demonstrated, through group interaction and worksheet, the ability to infer information about food production from their data.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student demonstrated, through group interaction and worksheet, the ability to infer information about food production from their data, and made comparisons between different people’s results</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total-----&gt;</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Comments:**
Lesson Two
Who Produces Our Food? What is Their Role?

Introduction: The teacher will ask students what they learned about the sources of their food from the first lesson. This will allow students an opportunity to refresh their knowledge, and will allow the teacher an opportunity for assessment. The teacher will ask students what they know of how food is produced. After students finish sharing what they know about agriculture production, the teacher will explain that they will be researching the lives of farmers and migrant workers. The teacher can then read the book *Amelia’s Road* by Linda Jacobs Altman.

Procedure: Once it has been explained that students will be researching the roles and daily lives of farmers and migrant workers, students should be divided in half between those researching migrant workers and those researching small farmers. The teacher should explain that students will be able to choose the method to demonstrate their understanding of their research subjects, for example; essay, realistic fiction story, diorama, dramatic play, etc. Students should then begin researching. If adequate materials or time is not available, resources can be chosen ahead of time from the resource list (appendix 1).

Once students have completed their projects (this will likely require time outside of class), students should be split again into their research groups. The students will then take turns sharing their projects. First one group will set up their projects throughout the room and teach their counterparts about their research findings, and then the groups will reverse roles. This can be arranged similar to a science fair, allowing students to wander through and explore various projects. After students have finished teaching and exploring about agriculture roles, students should fill out worksheet 2.1

Assessment: The teacher should assess students based on:
- ability to demonstrate their understanding through their project
- accuracy of information conveyed in project
- productivity and attitude in completing lesson
- their completion of worksheet 2.1
Worksheet 2.1

Post Project Assessment

What did you learn through your project?

What did you learn through the other group’s projects?

How could the lives of the people you learned about be improved?

How could this lesson be improved?
Lesson Three
What Are the Different Ways We Produce Food?

Introduction:
The teacher should remind students that they have examined what they eat in a given day, where their food comes from, and what the lives of some of the people who produce our food are like. The teacher will explain that students will now examine the different ways that food is produced.

Procedure:
The teacher will ask students to revisit their list of foods they ate in one day. The teacher should ask students to try to write out the complete process for producing one food item on their food list using worksheet 3.1. The teacher should then give a basic overview of the difference between organic and non-organic agriculture. Students will then research further information on the pros and cons of organic food.

If time is limited the articles “Organic Food Gets a Boost” and “Pros and Cons of Industrial Agriculture” can be passed out. These articles, especially the article on industrial agriculture might need to be broken up and “jigsawed” by students. Students should then be organized into groups of four and discuss organic and non-organic food using the “Six Thinking Hats” method articulated by Edward de Bono (see Resource Page). During and after the group discussion students should work to complete worksheet 3.1

Once students have discussed in their small groups, the teacher should facilitate a large group discussion. Students should explain which articles they read, what the articles said about the pros and cons of different food production, and what they personally decided.

Assessment: The teacher should evaluate students based on:
  ▪ did the student appropriately consider issues from different perspectives during discussion.
  ▪ did the student offer justifiable answers on worksheet 3.1
  ▪ did the student interact appropriately during group discussion.
Worksheet 3.1

How is Our Food Produced?

Describe as best you can the complete process of producing a single food item you ate?

What are some of the pros and cons of organic food?

What are the pros and cons of industrial agriculture?

What type of food production do you support? Why?
Lesson Four
How Do We Decide What to Eat?

Materials:
- Magazines and newspapers that can be cut up

Introduction:
Facilitate a discussion on what it means to advertise a product and why people advertise. Ask students if they have a favorite advertisement or a least favorite advertisement.

Procedure:
Pass out magazines and newspapers to students. Preferably the materials have an abundance of food related advertising, but not all advertisements in this exercise have to be food related. Have students work in pairs to peruse the materials and cut out ads which they believe attempt to shape our opinion about food. Have the pairs choose at least one ad each and then fill out the analysis chart.

Once students have completed their analysis charts, form them into discussion groups of 4-6 students to compare the results of their analysis. After students have been allowed time to share and discuss their analysis charts lead a large group discussion. Explain to students that some ads attempt to disseminate information which there is near consensus on, such as the dangers of smoking, and other ads attempt to convey certain values and products which are not necessarily healthy.

Assessment: Students should be assessed according to:
- Quality of critical analysis demonstrated on analysis chart
- Ability to retrieve information from an advertisement, as demonstrated on analysis chart
- Appropriate interaction with classmates during discussion times
**Analysis Chart**

What person or organization is the source of the ad?

What audience do you think the ad is trying to reach?

What kind of opinion or action are they hoping to get from readers?

Can you determine from the ad what other views people might have on this subject? Explain.

Do you recognize any advertising techniques you've seen in other advertisements? Explain.

What attention-grabbing and/or persuasive words did the advertisers use?
Lesson Five
Does Everyone Have Enough to Eat?

Materials Necessary:
- World map overhead
- Candy, approximately 225 pieces
- Large bowl

Introduction: This lesson takes place in two parts. The first will demonstrate the relative distribution of food in the world. The second will examine why people go hungry. The teacher should begin by holding up a large bowl full of the candy and asking the students if they would like to have a snack.

Procedure: Divide students into three groups to represent high, middle, and low income people of the world. Group one should consist of about 17% of the class. The second group should have about 25% of the students, and the third should consist of about 58% of the class. Students can be divided based on where they sit in the class to illustrate that hunger is most prevalent in certain parts of the world.

Once groups have been divided the teacher should begin dividing candy among the students. Group one students, the richest, should receive about 25 pieces each. Group two students should receive 3 or 4 pieces of candy each. Group three students should receive 1 piece of candy for every six students. Allow students to react and express how they feel. It might be best not to explain before this point what the lesson is focusing on.

Explain that what you have created is a representation of food distribution in the world. Facilitate a discussion on student reactions. Questions might include: “how did it feel to be in group 1”, “how did it feel to be in group 3” “is this distribution fair” “if you lived like group 3 lives, what do you think are some of the other things you would not have?”. The teacher should then give each student a country that matches their income status and then have students locate their country on a map. An overhead world map should be displayed with students shading in their countries. Each of the three groups should choose a single color for all of their group’s countries.
Lesson Five Continued

The second portion of the lesson will be devoted to looking at why hunger exists. Have students take the hunger quiz, explain that the quiz will not effect their grade. Allow students to grade their own papers. Go over the answers with students. Have students fill out worksheet 5.1 to demonstrate what they have learned about hunger. As a group, discuss what can be done to reduce hunger now that the sources have been identified. As an exercise in persuasive writing students could be asked to write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper or to an elected official.

Assessment: Students should be assessed on:
- Understanding demonstrated through their answers on worksheet 5.1
- Group participation
Worksheet 5.1

**Hunger Worksheet**

What have you learned about distribution of food throughout the world?

What are some of the reasons people live in poverty and struggle with hunger?

What could you do to help people who are hungry?
Hunger Quiz

True/False

1. There are hungry people in the United States of America.
2. Only homeless people are hungry.
3. The U.S. Government spends more than 25% of its money to help poor people in other countries.
4. There isn’t enough food for everyone in the world.
5. Children who go to school hungry have a hard time learning.
6. Sometimes if children don’t get enough food go blind.
7. People who are hungry are usually lazy and just need to get a job.
8. Kids can’t do anything to eliminate hunger
9. Not very much food is wasted in the United States of America.
10. Hunger is not a very big problem.
11. More people are hungry in the United States of America than in any other rich country.
Hunger Quiz Answers

1. There are hungry people in the United States of America.
   a. TRUE: One in ten people in the U.S. live in houses that cannot always afford enough food to eat.

2. Only homeless people are hungry.
   a. FALSE: Many people who are hungry are not homeless. In fact low wages and high housing costs often force people to choose between having a home or having enough food to eat.

3. The U.S. Government spends more than 25% of its money to help poor people in other countries.
   a. FALSE: The U.S. spends less than 1% of its budget to help hungry people in other countries.

4. There isn’t enough food for everyone in the world.
   a. FALSE: There is enough food to feed everyone. People go hungry because of the unfair distribution of food.

5. Children who go to school hungry have a hard time learning.
   a. TRUE: Children who go to school hungry are more likely to fall asleep during class and more likely to have a hard time concentrating.

6. Sometimes if children don’t get enough food go blind.
   a. TRUE: Vitamin A is found in foods like carrots and milk. A lack of vitamin A causes approximately 250,000 children to go blind every year.

7. People who are hungry are usually lazy and just need to get a job.
   a. FALSE: Many families with hunger issues work but are not paid enough to make ends meet. Many people in the United States are not paid enough to afford shelter, food, and basic medical care. Many workers in other countries earn less than 1$ per day.

8. Kids can’t do anything to eliminate hunger.
   a. FALSE: Kids can do A LOT to end hunger. Kids can; organize a food drive, write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper sharing what they know and how they feel, write a letter to their member of congress and ask him/her to do more to end hunger.

9. Not very much food is wasted in the United States of America.
   a. FALSE: More than one/fourth of all the food produced in the U.S. is wasted, either at grocery stores, restaurants, or in homes.

10. Hunger is not a very big problem.
    a. FALSE: More than 800 million people in the developing world face persistent hunger. In the United States, 31 million people live in homes that struggle with hunger.

11. More people are hungry in the United States of America than in any other rich country.
    a. TRUE: The percentage of children in poverty in the United States is triple the rate of any other rich country.
Resources

Articles:
- Organic Food Gets a Boost
- Food Security Learning Center (excellent database)
- Costs and Benefits of Industrial Agriculture:

Books:

Audio:
- CBC Production “What Happened to the Family Farm”:
  http://archives.cbc.ca/IDCC-1-69-1720-11831/life_society/family_farm/

Websites:
- PBS Farming Series: http://www.pbs.org/ktca/farmhouses/
- Pros and Cons of Organic Food
- Pesticides: http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/
- Hunger Issues: www.kidscanmakeadifference.org
- Migrant Workers:
  http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000429.shtml
- Farming:
  http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000315.shtml
- Cesar Chavez: http://www.ufw.org/history.htm
- Health, Diet and Food Choices:
  http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000097.shtml
- How to Use Maps:
  http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000116.shtml
- History of Farming:
  http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000761.shtml
- www.factoryfarm.org
- Family Farm Life:
  http://www2.kenyon.edu/Projects/Famfarm life/tier2.htm
(Resources Continued)

- **Hunger Information and Lesson Plans:**
  [http://www.bread.org/howtohelp/church/sundayschool.html](http://www.bread.org/howtohelp/church/sundayschool.html) This great site includes facts and teaching ideas. However, this is a religious site so some content might need to be filtered for a public school.

- **Media Influence:** [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm)

- **Other:**
  - **Ed De Bono Homepage:** [http://www.edwdebono.com/](http://www.edwdebono.com/)
  - **Summary of the 6 Thinking Hats:** [http://cispom.boisestate.edu/murli/cps/sixhats.html](http://cispom.boisestate.edu/murli/cps/sixhats.html)

**Reflections and Additional Ideas:**
Unit:
- The teacher could also, under the theme of “consumption”, do a lesson on what foods a healthy diet consists of. I didn’t include this because the standards show students should know this already.
- It would have been helpful to have completed a fact sheet to include as an appendix including information such as how much is spent on advertising to children, how many ads kids see in a day, the percentage of food that is organic...etc.

Lesson 1:
- The teacher might have to explain that food which is processed in one spot (for example Minnesota), might actually be grown somewhere far away

Lesson 2:
- I would have liked has students also study what it is like to run a corporate or factory farm but information was very difficult to find.
- At the end of worksheet 2.1 I included a question about how the lesson could be improved because I think it’s important to ask for student feedback both to improve lessons in the future and to make students understand that their opinions are important

Lesson 3:
- Students could go to a large grocery store such as Cub Food and a small Co-op to compare the amount of organic foods available as well as prices. This could be assigned for outside school or done as a field trip.