



Overview:

“School Lunch” These words may conjure up many images in the minds of students: greasy pizza burgers, mystery meat, chewy chicken nuggets, skinny rib and hamburger patties. At least one school district is trying to change that by going “Veggie.” Now when students at Berkmar Middle School say “School Lunch,” they think: tofu dogs, black bean burgers, and soy chicken patties. Gwinnett County Schools in Lilburn, Georgia, have turned “Vegetarian,” and in the last year alone they have served close to 500,000 vegetarian meals. Today we will focus on identifying the term “vegetarian,” and discover the possible health benefits for those who choose this kind of eating alternative.

Grades: 5-6

Subject Matter: Health and Science

Classroom Activities:

1. **Activity #1** Discover what a vegetarian is, and why people choose to be one. (20-30 minutes)
 - What do all of these famous people have in common: Leonardo Da Vinci, Albert Einstein, Mr. Rogers, Mahatma Gandhi, Plato, and Adam and Eve?
 - They are all vegetarians. What does that mean exactly? A vegetarian is somebody who eats vegetables, fruits, grains, seeds, and usually eggs and dairy products, but not meat or fish.
 - What is a vegan? A vegan is somebody who does not eat meat or fish and also no dairy products or eggs.
 - Are any of you vegetarians or know anyone who is? Why do you think people choose to be vegetarians? Do you think there are good reasons to become a vegetarian?
 - The following resources provide information about what a vegetarian is and why people choose to become vegetarians:
http://www.youngveggie.org/being_veggie.html “Being Veggie”
<http://www.vegsoc.org/nvw/2008/facts.html> This is a good website that provides many interesting facts about vegetarians and health.
<http://www.vegetarian.org.uk/> This is an interactive site allows students to choose various parts of the human body and its systems to see how they are affected by abstaining from meats and fish.

2. Activity #2 “So, What do You Like to Eat?” Interview (20 minutes)

- Have students choose partners and interview each other and jot down the answers to eating habit questions. Before you breakout, discuss some possible questions:
 - What do you normally eat for breakfast (or lunch or dinner)?
 - What influences your eating habits? (are you too busy to sit and eat a well balanced meal, or do you just not like certain kinds of food.....)
 - What are your favorite and least favorite: vegetables, fruits, meats, dairy products?
 - Do you think you are a healthy eater? Would you be willing to give up meat if you knew it would improve your health?
 - Alternative questions: These are statements that could make for some lively discussion. Make the statements and ask the students to respond.
- Share your results and talk about healthy eating habits.
- As an extended or alternative activity, pick a few of the following statements and have students react to them:
 - We are carnivores. We were designed to be meat-eaters.
 - Meat provides valuable protein to make you big and strong.
 - American football players eat a lot of meat. They are big and strong.
 - It’s wrong to kill animals just for food.
 - Beef, chicken, lamb etc taste goooooood.
 - If everyone were vegetarian, the environment would be better.
 - Parents should be able to decide the diet for their children.
 - Einstein, Plato, and Gandhi were vegetarian – we could all be like them without meat.
- Discuss the four food groups and what would be eliminated or limited if one were to become a vegetarian.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_guide_pyramid 4 food groups defined.



3. Activity #3 “Name those fruits and vegetables.” (12-15 minutes)

- Assign or allow students to choose a partner. Each “team” has a pencil and paper.
 - Give students 4 minutes to identify and write down as many vegetables as they can.
 - Give students another 4 minutes to identify and write down as many fruits as they can.
 - Time’s up. Discover who has the most fruits and vegetables on their lists and reward them with the choice of an apple or grapes or a carrot or stalk of celery! (“Wow”, they are going to say !)
 - Other students will be jealous that their classmates just received a carrot or a stalk of celery, so give them a chance to win something for themselves. Ask this question and reward the first correct answer with a broccoli floret: If 500 teens are eating vegetarian and that figure represents 3% of teens, how many are not eating vegetarian?

4. **Activity #4** “Let’s Be Veggies, Too” (15-20 minutes, longer if computers are used)
- Divide students into 5 groups.
 - Pass out copies of this week’s or next week’s school menu.
 - Explain to the class that you would like your school to go strictly vegetarian for one week. Assign each group one day of the week. They are to take the menu for that day and change it to a vegetarian only offering. Encourage them to be creative and conjure up a specialty item that is sure to be a winner! Have them write down a description and the ingredients of their specialty menu item. For an extended assignment, have students go on the internet and check out nutritional information for their menu items.
 - Interactive Home based Assignments:
 - Assign your students to go home and talk with the parent who prepares the meal to see if your family could go “Veggie” at least 3 times in the next week. Ask if you can help in preparing at least one meal by picking out a specialty menu item.
 - Assign students to visit at least one fast food restaurant in the next 3 days and see what is available on the menu that would accommodate vegetarians. See if you can obtain the nutritional information for that vegetarian selection. Compare it to the average “meat based meal” on the menu. Bring that information back to class.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.reacheverychild.com/feature/veggies.html> Food resources for building valuable lesson plans

http://parentingteens.about.com/od/vegetarianteen/Vegetarian_Teenagers.htm Links to recipes and more information on having healthy vegetarian teenagers.

<http://www.vrg.org/essay/lessonplan.htm> Vegetarian resource group lesson plan

<http://www.vrg.org/nutrition/teennutrition.htm> The same group’s resource for teens

<http://www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/veggie.htm> The Veggie Place

<http://www.pamf.org/teen/health/nutrition/veggieteens.html> Vegetarianism in Teens

http://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/nutrition/vegetarian.html Advice for parents and young people about becoming a vegetarian

<http://kidsnutrition.org/consumer/nyc/volW-00e.htm> What vegetarian young people need every day