

Wellness Success Story Summary

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Details of wellness success story: ALC staff from Health, Science, English, Social Studies, Technology and Art collaborated to develop an interdisciplinary course to address student's eating habits – “Fast Food Nation.” Students read the book – “Chew on This” to learn about the consequences of fast food; heard relevant community speakers to learn about food marketing and sales, ethics, social justice and the benefits of becoming vegan or vegetarian, etc.; viewed and discussed the documentary – “Super Size Me”, analyzed their own diets, food labels and fast food menus in order to make healthier food choices; investigated health hazards such as E-Coli bacteria; studied CAFOs (confined animal feeding operations) to determine the costs to society and the economy; generated food ads to demonstrate the elements of persuasion; created a pop art piece illustrating our fast food culture and participated in a celebration of learning to reflect on their learning. “Fast Food Nation” generated much interest and 53 students completed the course, many of them making positive changes to their diet as reflected verbally and through survey results.

Why this initiative? ALC staff developed this thematic project to address student need and interest. This course was relevant as most of the students eat fast food and junk food and need to be encouraged to make healthier food choices. Content was strengthened by collaborating with various content areas and community speakers.

How to measure success? 53 students successfully completed the course. All participated in a celebration at the conclusion of the course - creating games, ads, food, songs, poetry, music and costumes to reflect on their learning. 44 completed a survey, responding to the question: “How have you changed as result of taking this class (your thinking, behavior, eating)?”

30 responded with positive changes to diet and fast food consumption. This means that 68% of the students surveyed make healthier food choices. This is clearly a wellness success story. Survey results included the following student comments:

“I eat less fast food and watch what I eat.”

“When I think about what I want for dinner or what to make for my family, I always think of what would be healthy and well balanced.”

“Yeah, I am going to eat way less fast food now.” “I think twice before eating fast food.”

“I notice what I eat more often and watch my food intake. I make sure to stay active.”

“I don't just think of fast food as food – it's not good for you.”

“Heart disease runs in my family, so I'm starting to eat better.”

“I stopped eating fast food and drink much more water.”

“Every time I go to a fast food place, I think what they do to cows.”

“I know where the food I eat comes from now.”

“I've chosen to eat healthier and try not to eat out - especially at McDonald's.”

* Permission given to include story on wellness web page.