Participatory Research with High School Students

• 4-Day Unit
• Participatory Research Project:
  • Students develop survey and interview questions
  • Conduct peer-to-peer surveys and interview their food service director
  • And analyze and discuss the results
How are schools part of the food system?

“Farm to School”

✧ Potential Markets for Area Farms
  ✧ Assessing what it would take to get more fresh food from local farms into the cafeteria

✧ Health and Wellness of Students
  ✧ Assessing student’s food environments, their access to nutritious food, and what food and food-related lifestyle choices students are making.

✧ Education
  ✧ Education about the food system - health, nutrition, agriculture, economics, current developments, culture, history, community and place.
“Food Environment” Surrounded by Agriculture
Columbia County Schools

Valatie (Ichabod Crane)

New Lebanon

Germantown

Chatham
“Food Environment”
Surrounded by unhealthy food, advertising, etc....

What is your food environment like?

Hudson School

Pizza Hut

Fairview

McDonald’s
Hudson and Taconic High Schools

Taconic High School
580 Students
23% Eligibility for free or reduced lunch

Hudson
635 Students
46% Eligibility for free or reduced lunch
Participatory Research: Developing Questions

✧ Two Research Teams – Food Director Interview and Peer-to-Peer Survey

✧ Taconic conducted 145 Peer-to-Peer Surveys

✧ Hudson conducted 274* Peer-to-Peer Surveys
Participatory Research: Conducting surveys and analyzing results

Peer-to-Peer Surveying
Participatory Research Results: Lunch

What’s for lunch?

(Yet 82% in Hudson and 63% in Taconic say they don’t like the food)

Hudson: What would you prefer to eat for lunch?

- Fast food
- Lunch from home
- School lunch
How often do you eat fast food?

What’s does this say about the different food environments in Hudson and Taconic?

What impact does a food environment have on healthy choices?

Hudson: How often do you drink soda?
Participatory Research Results: Eating Fruits & Vegetables

Do you eat a fruit or vegetable with your lunch at school?

- Yes
- No

Taconic
Hudson
Do you feel the food offered in the cafeteria is healthy?

Participatory Research Results:
Perceptions of School Lunch

Yes

No

Taconic

Hudson

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
How many nights a week do you eat dinner with your family?

- A few (0-2)
- Some (3-4)
- Most (5-7)

Taconic
Hudson
Student Knowledge About Food and Farming

How much do you know about where your food comes from?

Have you ever worked on a farm or helped out in a garden?
Would you like to have a school garden and help grow your food?

- Yes: Taconic (40%) and Hudson (60%)
- No: Taconic (60%) and Hudson (40%)
If you could change something about the school lunch, what would it be?

Can we give the kids in our community more exposure to different, fresh, healthy foods?