The Hungry Games: Tackling Wicked Food Problems at Black River Public Schools through a New Experiential Project Term Course

Danielle L. Lake

Grand Valley State University, lakeda@gvsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lib_otherpubs
THE HUNGRY GAMES: Tackling Wicked Food Problems at Black River Public School through a New Experiential Project Term Course

Angela Aumaugher (Black River Public School Teacher); Megan Kupres (F 14 “Food Matters” Student); Michelle Haapala (W 14 “Wicked Problems of Sustainability” student); Tona Ambrose (GVSU Charter Schools Office); Anne Marie Fauvel (Affiliate Professor, Liberal Studies); Danielle Lake (Assistant Professor, Liberal Studies)

Abstract
Join us in the fight against overly processed foods—may the odds be ever in your flavor!

In the winter of 2014, a team of students from Lib 322 “Wicked Problems of Sustainability” identified the food system and its impact on children as a wicked problem, initiated a community partnership at Black River Public School (a K-12 GVSU Charter School in Holland, MI), and posited the development of an interdisciplinary, experiential project term course then designed by students in Lib 342 “Food Matters.” This new Black River course, “The Hungry Games,” will be piloted this spring to engage middle school students in experiential learning in order to foster understanding and empower agency in response to our current food system.

GVSU Courses

LIB 322: Wicked Problems of Sustainability
Sustainability, as a wicked problem, is an intractable, on-going and high-stakes issue. This course engages students in participatory research on the inextricably linked dimensions of sustainability, such as economics, environment and social equity. Students will work with community partners to address specific interdisciplinary problems of sustainability.
- Students conducted research, assessed issue, established community partner, developed initial action plan and crafted draft course.

LIB 342: Food Matters
An interdisciplinary exploration of the relationship between food systems and the food we consume everyday. Analysis of competing information and integration of evolutionary, historical, socio-political, cultural and environmental factors shaping our current food systems lead back to the basics of nutrition, agricultural practices and equitable food accessibility.
- Students conducted interdisciplinary research on food pedagogies, created course proposal, garnered approval for course, developed and revised curriculum with community partner.

The Hungry Games

Why should we care?
Where does our food come from?
Nutrition
Field Trip: Eighth Day Farm
Food Waste
Reflection & Synthesis

Students’ Perspective:
- Collaborative “chain”
- Models teaching-by-doing
- Professional Development
- Real-world skills
Community Partner Perspective:
- Generate new ideas
- Integrate multiple perspectives

GVSU Charter School Staff:
- Creative collaboration come to life
Instructor Perspective:
- Real-world relevance
- Empowerment & Reciprocity
- Integration & Innovation
- Bridge seminars, courses, instructors

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED???

Reflection & Synthesis

Food Waste
Field Trip: Eighth Day Farm
Nutrition

The best thing about the partnership?

Students’ Perspective:
- Access to & limitations of “expert” knowledge
- Empowerment through action; collaborative skills; Networks

GVSU Charter School Staff:
- Innovation happens through motivation and collaboration
- Students’ work exceeded expectations

Instructors:
- GVSU students rock!
- Time limitations of the traditional semester
- Collaboration needs to be taught & practiced

WV 2015 Project Term. The purpose of “The Hungry Games” is to develop food literacy and expose students to the corporate and industrial take-over of the food system.
We have provided an overview of our research, design and collaborative process, a sample curriculum and an idea for the final project that instructors can use to develop in students, the knowledge and tools to be active and critical consumers of food. “The Hungry Games” curriculum explores the following four themes: 1) Why should we care? 2) Where does our food come from? 3) Nutrition, and 4) Food Waste. Lastly, the program incorporates a variety of hands-on activities including a Brown on making green smoothies and a field trip to Holland’s Eighth Day Community Farm. Time proved to be a primary limiting factor in the development of this program. It is hoped that this program will prove successful enough for a second installment, so that these food issues can be further developed.

Results: A New Middle School Course and a GVSU Student Publication

http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/wickedproblems/12/