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English Subject Matter Preparation

Research + Lesson Plan

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Food Literacy and Applying Learnings Towards English Literacy

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this project to my Mother (Janet Wirtz) and Father (James Wirtz). Thank you for all of the time and patience you put into my pursuit towards a career within education. I wouldn't have been able to do it without you both and I love you with all my heart. I would also like to thank my dog Teddy for always being by my side and helping me emotionally through the many rough patches endured throughout my life. I would also like to dedicate this paper to my deceased grandparents who I wish could have seen me graduate.

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Project Proposal

1. Andrew Wirtz, Humanities and Communications Major with a concentration in English Subject Matter Preparation.
2. How has food literacy helped shape students' abilities to read and write within the classroom? Food is an important and necessary way in which we as humans fuel our bodies; however, depending on the foods ingested, students may have varying levels of energy and overall health. Considering we all come from different backgrounds, cultures, and economic standings, it may be harder for students to maintain certain standards that promote one's own literacy when it comes to food. I want to focus on how teaching food literacy within the classroom can help improve and promote literacy within students' reading and writing not only within the classroom, but within their daily lives.
3. This project aligns with this course's shared theme of "Food For Thought" meaning to take something into serious consideration. However, I wanted to take a literal approach on the term and seriously consider the way food affects students and their performance within the classroom.
4. The main purpose of this project is to think critically about the foods we ingest in order to improve students' performances within the classroom. By addressing students' food literacy within the classroom, we are able to use real world scenarios in order to hone in on the theme of food and build on students' language proficiency skills such as vocabulary, grammar, free writes, literary analyses, and reading comprehension to engage students towards thinking critically.

5. Working Title: Food Literacy and its Translation into English Literacy
6. This project focuses on how teaching students about food literacy can help them think critically about their own literacy when it comes to reading and writing. Being able to draw parallels between the two can help students make connections between food and the English language. By using the subject of food literacy, students will be able to engage with food on a personal level (considering most people love food) which will lead to more engagement with their reading/writing/grammar skills.
7. I will need to conduct research on food literacy amongst students and how it impacts their performances within school overall. I will also need to do research on students' cultural, and economic backgrounds in order to get an understanding of how certain foods families eat can impact health and performance.
8. In order to meet the standard of expectations for this project, research is key and imperative towards articulating and delivering the information needed to support my stance. Also, providing a well constructed lesson plan will serve me well in meeting the expectation of addressing the needs of adolescent learners within the California education system. I would like to have a draft of my essay within the month of March so I can focus on my lesson plan.
9.
 - a. Week of February 26th: Create project proposal and start conducting research surrounding food literacy and english literacy. Turn in the project proposal March 4th.

- b. Week of March 12th, begin research on food literacy and how it can improve English literacy amongst students.
- c. Week of March 18th: begin draft on capstone project. Try to write roughly 500-100 words for a draft. Submit draft on April 12th.
- d. Week of April 15th: Start drafting lesson plan and try to complete essay draft.
- e. Week of May 1st: Finalize draft of capstone project and rehearse elevator speech on my project.
- f. Week of May 6th: Go over revisions that need to be made then submit the final draft on May 10th.

Research Essay:

Food is a universal language that transcends various boundaries; whether it be cultural, geographical, or socioeconomic status, people are able to communicate and relate to each other through food. As I consider myself a “foodie” (a person who loves food), food is an essential part of my life in the sense that it provides me with a sufficient amount of energy to go about my busy schedule as a college student. Food can also be dangerous, considering if you overindulge, individuals may feel sluggish and tired due to improper nutrition. Improper nutrition can also lead to various health complications such as cardiovascular diseases or even diabetes within certain individuals. I myself have had an up and down relationship with food and consider myself a glutton. Having weighed close to 270 pounds roughly a year ago, I was in a poor state mentally and knew if I continued down a path of binge eating that my health would slowly but surely deteriorate. After some self reflection, I started to change my eating habits and began playing basketball again (a previous passion of mine) and was able to get my weight all the way down to 185 pounds.

Growing up, I never critically thought about whether or not the food my family and I would be ingesting was healthy or not. However, I was always encouraged to eat healthy foods as a child, and would usually oblige considering it was either I eat what is on my plate or don't eat at all. And I am sure that various kids go through the same situations as I did because it is hard to navigate what is healthy and what isn't. On the other hand, there are various children that didn't have the same luxuries as I did where I had parents who not only cared about my health,

but supported me in participating in various sports and activities that I enjoyed. I came from a middle class family where I didn't have to worry about going to school hungry or worrying about my next meal. Sadly, there are young students who don't have many healthy options for food and have to resort to processed foods that don't promote overall well being and health. This can be due to lack of knowledge from kids' parents or it can be due to low income families that simply cannot afford healthier foods considering the healthier foods tend to be more expensive. By taking these variables into consideration, as a future educator, how can teachers incorporate and develop food literacy within the classroom while also improving students' reading and writing literacy skills? Getting students to think critically about real life scenarios such as the food they ingest may also translate into other areas of learning such as getting students to think critically about reading and writing while improving their language proficiency skills.

This paper will address what food literacy is and how it can benefit young students towards improving communication and language skills. I will be tackling the ways food can impact the performance of young students within the classroom in order to display the true importance of a well balanced diet. Then, I will address how to implement this real life scenario of thinking critically about the food we ingest and how it can be applied through the lens of the English language; not only to create a deeper understanding, but to also encourage a well balanced diet within students' daily lives to set them up for success. While addressing food literacy within the classroom, I will be implementing perspectives from Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* to address the problem of the consumption of certain foods among our students and how it can impact performance within the classroom.

Food is a tool that has provided humans with the energy needed to achieve the various goals set in front of each and every one of us. Whether we go back in time to when we were hunter gatherers, or even nowadays where most of the food we eat within the United States is manufactured in immeasurable amounts to serve the masses. Considering it is important that young students need a sufficient amount of energy to work and put in their best efforts towards their academic work, it is imperative that students learn what food literacy is. According to Madalina Adina Coman and Razvan Mircea Chereches, “Food literacy is a concept that ‘empowers individuals, households, communities or nations to protect diet quality through change and strengthen dietary resilience over time. It comprises a collection of inter-related knowledge, skills and behaviors required to plan, manage, select, prepare and eat food to meet needs and determine intake’” (Coman, Chereches). By introducing the concept of food literacy to students, it will help teachers empower students towards making healthier decisions about their diet and the food they consume.

Diet quality within the United States is poor, especially within our school systems where students are being fed highly processed foods throughout public school cafeterias. According to Lenny Bernstein, Lauren Weber, and Dan Keating of *The Washington Post*, “Nutrition experts criticized the addition of ultra-processed options to the school lunch menu. Studies have suggested a link between ultra-processed food — industrially produced using additives that make food hyper-palatable — and obesity as well as chronic disease. The rate of premature deaths linked to obesity more than doubled in the last two decades for people 35 to 64 years old, according to a Washington Post analysis of CDC death records” (Bernstein, Keating, Weber). This sadly isn’t new news for myself because while I was volunteering and conducting my

service learning at Monte Vista Elementary School in Monterey, the students were being fed processed foods to start off their mornings such as pancakes, waffles, and cereals, which are filled with chemicals and additives that aren't ideal for promoting students' health or food literacy. This is concerning considering the United States is a world leader that is supposed to be an example for the rest of the world. But even so, countries within the European Union still provide products with such additives; however, they have to be transparent with their consumers (unlike the United States that just provides a long list of questionable ingredients on many labels of food that we eat. According to Roni Caryn Rabin of the New York Times, "These dyes can be used in foods sold in Europe, but the products must carry a warning saying the coloring agents 'may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children.' No such warning is required in the United States, though the Center for Science in the Public Interest petitioned the F.D.A. in 2008 to ban the dyes" (Rabin) Food literacy starts by reading labels; being able to identify ingredients within the food you eat will help students' food literacy skills. And as a future educator, labels can be a great tool for students to build on their literacy skills as well.

Introducing the idea of food literacy to students is important; however, teachers being able to implement such a task could be challenging considering all students come from different backgrounds, cultures, and economic standings that could stunt the progress of teaching food literacy within the classroom. According to an article from Gaston Arés, "Food literacy undergoes major changes through childhood and adolescence, which encompass physiological, cognitive, and social development, as well as changes in eating behavior" (Arés). Arés identifies the significance of the cognitive aspect that food literacy has on young students' performance in school.

There are varying factors that contribute towards the developmental success of students and their school work, such as building upon their literacy skills. In order to be successful within school, students need a stable home environment where parents are able to provide love and support for their children. There also can be situations where parents overindulge their kids, which can have a negative effect. According to Carol Darling, “Indulgent parenting consists of three main behaviors: (a) providing their children with too much or giving children too many resources, ranging from food, clothes, and toys or gadgets to entertainment; allowing lots of privileges, always making sure the children are being entertained or scheduled for activities” (Darling) I only included the first main behaviors from the quote because certain children are always being told yes to everything and anything they want. When giving in to this type of behavior, there can be serious consequences that can arise. And when food is involved, parents saying yes to their children about the bad foods they want can have a serious effect on children and their health. Sadly, according to Gabrielle Tilley, “Parents of all socioeconomic statuses reported that their children made frequent requests for packaged snacks and fast food. And for good reason — those foods are scientifically engineered to be delicious and addicting.” (Tilley) Although there is evidence that low income families tend to go for these types of foods, all people of every economic class are letting their children indulge in unhealthy eating habits.

A question I ask myself then is, how can future educators like myself translate food literacy and the skills they acquire from that into implementing literacy skills within the framework of the subject of English? By using food as an example, students are able to not only think critically about food consumption and health, but they can also apply their critical thinking

skills and translate it towards learning how to read, analyze, and interpret literary texts that are assigned for potential lesson plans. Literary texts such as Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* initiates students to critically think about the food they eat and interact with on a daily basis. Pollan addresses and explores the natural history of four different types of meals within his novel, such as fast-food, organic food, local food, and foraged food. With the many different topics at hand throughout the novel, there are various terms that can help build upon students' vocabulary and understanding of food and literature. Terminology such as agriculture, farming, hunter-gathering, factory farms, fertilization, and many other terms can be geared towards students in an educational manner in order to build students' vocabulary, while also learning about food and its importance in creating sustainable food practices for years to come.

Within Part 1 of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* titled "Industrial Corn", Pollan states that "The notion began to occupy me a few years ago, after I realized that the straightforward question 'What should I eat?' could no longer be answered without first addressing two other even more straightforward questions: 'What am I eating? And where in the world did it come from?'" (Pollan, 17). As a future educator, these are the questions I want students thinking about in order to build upon their food literacy. Questioning the sources of their food, rather than just blindly eating something without zero knowledge can set students up for a lifetime of questionable eating habits, which could possibly lead to health complications.

If students can think critically this way about the food they ingest, then imagine the way they can think critically about their word choices, their sentence structures and their usage of grammar within their writing. Students shouldn't just use a random word and hope it makes sense within their writing, just as if students shouldn't be eating random foods without knowing

the context of where it came from. This is just one of the instances where we can use what we have learned from food literacy and apply it into our reading and writing for students. Say I go up to one of my students and they're writing about the history of french fries. I start reading what they have written, and one of the sentences states that "I seen a lot of peoples eating they're french fries with ketchup". As a future educator of the English language, I wouldn't walk away without correcting my students because they need to understand and think critically about their grammar errors in order to build upon them to improve. I would encourage them to read the sentence out loud to try to sound out the sentence. If they are still struggling, I would explain why "I saw a lot of people eating their french fries with ketchup" is the correct form of the sentence. To start, "I seen" should be "I saw" or "I have seen" in order to correct their verb tenses. The word "peoples" should be "people" as the plural form of a person (considering they are talking about multiple people rather than just one person. The word "they're" should be "their" considering they are homophones, meaning that they sound the same but have different meanings. "They're" is a contraction and "their" is possessive; so using the term "their" would be grammatically correct.

Getting students to think critically about their reading and writing is a tall task, especially if the students don't care about the subject matter of English. According to Judy Willis and Jay McTighe, "A stimulating question can be an "itch" in students' brains that they'll want to scratch. *Can what you eat prevent zits? Does a fart contain DNA? Is aging a disease? What superpower would you want?* The best hook questions are open-ended. They're meant to stimulate thinking and discussion and to open the door to further exploration. Give students a reasonable amount of quiet thinking time before they answer. Have them do a quick write about

their thoughts and/or engage in a think-pair-share with another student. After this personal engagement, learners are likely to be more attentive to your teaching on the related topic” (Willis, McTighe). Intriguing questions that get students hooked into engaging within a subject is key to being able to provide a positive learning experience that is able to build upon their current interests.

Food literacy is a very important step in the right direction if we want our students to be health conscious about the food that they eat. It is also a good discipline to learn because it can be applied to all aspects of life, considering there are various things we can be more conscious about. Whether it be being conscious about the clothes we wear, the time we spend with people, and even the food we eat; being conscious of our abilities as human beings is what drives us to strive for the betterment of ourselves. In Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, we are shown how food processing and fast-food can be a detriment to individuals and their health. Showing how products that contain high fructose corn syrup and chemical additives can shape our behavior and the way we act on a day-to-day basis in a negative way. Kids today are eating these highly processed foods; whether it be from home, or even through school lunches, students aren't getting the proper nutritional needs to perform at expected levels within our schools. By promoting food literacy, hopefully students will take what they learn from consciously thinking about the food they put into their bodies and apply it towards their schoolwork by thinking consciously about their literacy within the subject of English. By thinking critically about their diction, grammar, and various other aspects of their writing, hopefully future educators such as myself will promote this type of critical thinking amongst their students in order to gain the most out of their education.

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Lesson Plan

Learning Objectives:

The main learning objectives for this lesson plan is to get students to critically think about the food they consume by contextualizing their experiences and to think introspectively about their experiences with food. I will also talk about the effects of certain foods on persons, whether it be positive or negative. I will also be assessing whether students choose to eat healthy or unhealthy and to get them to critically think about how they eat after consuming such foods. Another objective I would like to implement into my lesson would be building upon students' food literacy and how thinking introspectively will initiate students to build upon their own analyses, which in turn will build upon their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. By teaching and encouraging students to think critically, I will be able to cultivate an environment that promotes such practices, which in turn, will manufacture future adults who will be able to build upon healthy lifestyles by thinking and talking about the food they eat.

Materials Needed:

Most of the materials that I will be providing are accessible online and will be implemented through a means such as google docs and slides. I have found that google surveys and other discussion forums that can be implemented through canvas, where students can provide feedback or insight on the subject they have read and analyzed, are materials that are necessary and helpful. The main source I will be using for this lesson plan would be that of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* in order to implement the literary theory of

ecocriticism. Considering this novel touches on nature and food, the theory examines the significant relationship between this piece of literature and nature.

What Could Go Wrong for a Future Educator Such as Myself?

Considering my topic will be addressing food, students may have a mixed reaction considering we all have different relationships with food (some better than others). Taking into consideration that everybody has different bodies and different eating habits, I will provide a trigger warning in order to ensure a safe learning environment for my students. Also, life happens and students may not always show up to school due to personal reasons. Being able to acknowledge such circumstances will only help better prepare me for the reality of teaching on a day-to-day basis. Also, if I may not be able to make it to school for any reason whatsoever, being able to leave the materials necessary for the substitute teacher standing in for me will also be a necessary step in the right direction.

Activity 1:

For the first activity of this lesson plan, I will be displaying a prompt for my students asking the questions “What is your relationship with food?”, “Do you have a favorite food that your parents make?” “Do you think about whether or not the food you consume is ‘healthy?’”, and finally, “What is one food you have always wanted to try?”. My intention for this activity is to engage the students to think and share their opinions on food with their classmates to encourage dialogue amongst the students, rather than just me lecture to the whole class.

Time: 10 minute quick write and then share with the class (volunteers first)

Activity 2:

For the second activity, I will be asking students to break out into discussion groups of 4, and I would like students to share with their group certain vocabulary words they associate with food. Once they share with each other, I will ask each group to share with the class some key words they associate with food by assigning a group leader to present to the class. I would like each group member to share the words they associate with food in which they thought were relevant for the discussion. In doing so, I'm able to get a basis of what the students know and what I will need to provide them with for additional context, such as what the word means and how each word impacts us as people who need food to function.

Time: 10 minute discussion with group, and 30 minute discussion with the class on the words they chose and how each word impacts each student on a personal level.

Activity 3: (Homework/Class Discussion)

For the third activity, I will be asking students to read Part 1 of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* titled "Industrial " and to come to class the next day prepared with a food item from home that has corn or corn syrup within the label. I will be asking students to think about the following questions after reading the chapter. "Did you know how big corn manufacturing is within the United States of America?", "What are some processed foods that you can find within your home?", and "How has this section changed your view on fast food or processed foods?". I will then have students present their food items on what they found within their own homes. This will help build upon their public speaking skills, while also focusing on their diction and word choices in order to concentrate on building better reading, writing, and speaking habits/skills.

Time: 30 minutes for students to present their food of choice for their essay.

Activity 4:

For the fourth activity, I will be asking students to conduct research on a specific food of their choice that they have a strong connection with. Whether it be due to their cultural background, family tradition, or just liking a particular food; this research will correlate with the students' final essay, where I will be focusing on their grammar, sentence structure, and diction within the essay. Considering their research is a foundation for their final essay, for this activity, I would like students to also focus on the language of origin of the food that they have chosen to conduct their research on. Considering that all words have a language of origin, this will make students focus on the etymology aspect of our current English language by displaying the cultural diversity and various cultural words that are shared and implemented within the English language. This activity will help build upon their researching and writing skills.

Time: Will conduct research for the whole class period to give students ample time to collect the information needed.

Activity 5:

For the fifth activity, I will conduct a lesson on grammar, where I will display sentences incorporating the foods students had chosen for their research projects. Each sentence will have a grammatical error; whether it be subject-verb agreement, misplaced apostrophes, run on sentences, sentence fragments, comma splices, etc. Each student will have the opportunity to engage with the various sentences and try to identify why the sentence is grammatically incorrect and provide insight on how they would change it. This will not only improve their writing skills, but it will also improve their final essays by ensuring their sentence structure and grammar are sufficient enough to write without any hiccups.

Time: I would like to conduct this activity for a full class period to ensure students' success in their writing. I will also be available after class if any students are having trouble with their grammar or research.

Some Teaching Strategies that can be deemed useful:

Getting students to interact with a topic can be a challenging and daunting task for a new teacher within the educational system. Some students may not be as motivated as others or as confident either. Nonetheless, it is my job as a future teacher to ensure that my students are engaged with topics that they find interesting and inspiring. Being able to implement a dynamic learning experience for my students in order to gauge their interests will only help myself and my future students going forward. So, how can I implement a topic that is universal in which everybody takes part, where certain traditions and interests within students' lives can be on full display for their peers to appreciate and understand? The answer is, food. There is a saying that some people live to eat, and others eat to live and I and many other people live to eat. Feelings of joy and happiness can surface when discussing food; making food the basis of my lesson plan should ensure that students will engage with the lesson plan, because who doesn't love food?

Another teaching strategy that could be deemed useful is giving the students plenty of time to finish their projects. I have had experiences where teachers or professors will rush a project for the sake of just doing the assignment, rather than learning from the assignment. I will also give the students an ample amount of opportunities to do research and ask questions if needed to resolve any concerns students may have. This will ensure trust between the students and myself, because I always felt appreciated and cared for when teachers would take the time to talk about my work, explain what needs to be done in order for improvements, and to also

provide enough time and encouragement to finish conducting any research and writing.

Sometimes, there is a disconnect between teachers and students where teachers are teaching just for a paycheck, and students are at school just going through the motions because they have to be there. I don't want to give off a vibe that I don't care about my work or students; I believe that as long as I give my students my best effort, then they will do the same.

Getting Started/Assessment

I will start my assessment with my first activity where I will ask the students the displayed questions within the prompt. Getting an idea of the foods they indulge in and evaluating their interest and writing abilities within the prompt will be critical in moving forward with my lesson plan. Assessing whether or not they are excited about engaging with the material is important because I want my students to enjoy the work they are doing. In an ideal world, I would let the students choose the topic; however, for the sake of this project, I will push forward the topic of food literacy and its importance in engaging critical thinking within students. I will then implement the second activity into my assessment to evaluate their public speaking abilities as it will be practice for their research essay presentations at the end of the unit.

Grading

Once the papers are submitted, I will be grading students on their research and outside sources they incorporate into their essays. I will also be grading based on their writing abilities such as sentence structure, grammar usage and mechanics, analysis, and overall quality of writing. For their presentations, I will be giving credit/no credit because I don't want the students to be stressed about being graded about their presentations. Considering everybody has different

comfort levels and abilities with public speaking, this presentation is a means to build on those public speaking skills.

7 Week Lesson Layout for Essay

Week 1:

The first week of the lesson plan will focus on aspects of sentence structure, grammar lessons/activities, and will be conducting close readings on Chapter 3 of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* to get students to think about the food they consume in their own lives while analyzing the text. I will also be making sure students are annotating the text in order to provide meaningful context, while also practicing their research for their essay.

Week 2:

For this week, I will be asking students to share their personal experiences with food. I want students to self-reflect on their eating habits, such as the types of food they consume and how it may or may not be affecting their performance within school and how the food they consume contributes to their overall health. Getting students to think introspectively about the food they consume is important, considering many foods in this country are ultra processed and filled with chemicals and additives.

Week 3:

For this week, I will start to have students conducting the fourth activity within my lesson plan. I'll start off by having students identifying which food they would like to conduct their research on. I'll also continue giving lessons on grammar, sentence structure, and close readings in order to keep students prepared for their research they will be doing for the following weeks to come.

Week 4:

Research week where students will be taken to the library and have a seminar on the different researching tools that are provided by whatever school this would be taking place in. Librarians are key to helping students find what they need in order to fulfill their projects for the end of the unit. I will also be assisting the librarian and students with any questions or needs they may have about the project. Once conducting research I would like the students to start writing their final papers.

Week 5:

Another week of writing/research for their papers. Rough drafts will be due this week in order to see if certain students may need more time or help on their research paper. I will be in the classroom assisting students if needed as well. This is also a great opportunity for peer review where students can read each other's papers and provide each other comments and solutions as to how they can make their research papers better. Peer review is important as well because it gives students the opportunity to practice finding mistakes within their writing in order to improve writing quality and delivery.

Week 6

Research papers are due by the end of the week. If students need extra help or time finishing their research paper, I will allow students to submit their papers before presentations next week. For those who have already finished and would like to submit their papers on time, they will receive 5 points of extra credit for turning in their assignment on time. I have personally had teachers who have hard deadlines and can be, quite frankly, assholes about it. I

don't want to be that kind of teacher and want all my students to succeed, no matter the circumstances.

Week 7

Presentations of their research papers will be conducted throughout the week. Once presentations are finished, I will conduct a pizza party at the end of the unit to celebrate the students and their accomplishments. Considering not every student is aspiring to be a writer, rewarding the class and students on this accomplishment is important for boosting their confidence within the classroom, while also cultivating future educators who may be aspiring to be a teacher.