

Activity 1.7 Local Food Pyramid

Overview: Students will explore their school garden and research/interview local producers (farmers, ranchers, value added producers) to find out if they can reach a balanced, local diet according to the food pyramid.

Lesson Background: The food pyramid is one example of how to eat a nutritionally balanced diet. The Food Guide Pyramid illustrates the research-based guide to daily food choices developed by the USDA. The Pyramid is an outline of what to eat each day. It's not a rigid prescription, but a general guide that lets you choose a healthful diet that's right for you. There are many different recommendations on how to lead a healthy, balanced life, which includes both eating well and exercising. Several scientists have discussed different opinions on how to live a healthy lifestyle outside of the USDA food pyramid. That said, the food pyramid has evolved with time and new research on nutrition. In 2005 USDA launched a new food guidance program called "My Pyramid", giving people a website that can help people calculate their personal healthy food choices based on their age and activity level.

Grade: 5th Grade & Beyond

Objectives: 1) To incorporate and create awareness around healthy nutrition in student's daily lives, 2) to understand a balanced, nutritional diet that follows the food pyramid, and 3) to develop an awareness around local food options.

Time: 3-4 class periods of 45 minutes

Materials: Food Journal Worksheet, Posters, Markers, Blank Food Pyramid Worksheet, List of local producers

The Food Guide Pyramid emphasizes foods from the five major food groups. At the base of the Pyramid are foods from grains. The second level includes two more groups of foods that come from plants—vegetables and fruits. The third level of the Food Guide Pyramid has two groups of foods that come mostly from animals. Each of these food groups provides some, but not all, of the nutrients you need. Foods in one group can't replace those in another. No one food group is more important than another—for good health you need them all. The small tip of the Pyramid shows fats, oils, and sweets. These are foods such as salad dressings and oils, cream, butter, margarine, soft drinks, candies, gelatins, jams and jellies. These foods provide calories, but few or no vitamins and minerals. ¹

Most important is that people eat REAL food, and shift the focus from nutrients to real food, meaning less processed and the majority of ingredients are easily identifiable. It is also important to consider eating foods from local, regional and small farmers. Investing in local foods is positive for people's health and also works to re-build our local economies. A local food based approach is becoming

¹ http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/cnak_2Youth.pdf

more and more necessary as the natural resources such as oil run out and climate change impacts the price and availability of food.

Activity:

1. Ask students to keep a food journal for five days and encourage them to do it with their family. (see attached worksheet)
2. As students fill out their food journal ask them to identify the foods/meals they are eating within the food pyramid. They may have questions and have trouble differentiating which part of the food pyramid the foods they eat belong. Encourage them to ask family members, other students or you if they have questions.
3. After a week of creating awareness about the food pyramid and the foods people eat, students will create their own local food pyramid. Split students into group of 3-4 (even though this is a group project, all students will record their findings during this lesson). After a review of the food pyramid, give all students a blank copy of the food pyramid (see attached worksheet).
4. Take all groups outside to the school garden and ask students to record how many items from the food pyramid can be found in the garden.
5. Students should record their findings in the appropriate blank boxes of the food pyramid. Record what foods you found, where you found the food, and how it fits into the food pyramid. (either write the name of the food or draw a picture)
6. Most likely, the students only found items that belong in the vegetable and fruit groups. Tell the students to research local (within our local community or the greater Colorado area if needed) producers, call or write them to find out if they produce the other pieces of the food pyramid. Challenge the groups to see which group can find the most local products to fill in the other parts of the pyramid. Visit http://www.sustainableswcolorado.org/mesa_verde_guide for a list of producers in our region.
7. Once the students have found local sources for all parts of the food pyramid have each group create a local food pyramid group poster representing their findings with drawings and writings. (What foods did you find, where does that food come from, how many miles did it have to travel to be on your plate and how many servings of each group of food is recommended daily?) Display group posters in your classroom as a reminder of healthy eating habits and where the students can find healthy foods locally.
8. Discuss with students the importance of eating healthy, and diversifying their eating habits.

Extension:

1. At the beginning of the year talk with your students to see if there is interest in growing as many items as possible from the food pyramid in the 5th grade garden.
2. Plan a meal with your students with as many items from the food pyramid that you can find in the 5th grade garden plot.
3. For extra credit, students can visit a local farmers market and take notes of local farmers and products that fit into the food pyramid.

Name _____

Food Diary

Fill in below the foods you eat (breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks—including what you drank) and the food group where it belongs.

Day 1

Breakfast:

Food _____

Food Group _____

Lunch:

Food _____

Food Group _____

Dinner:

Food _____

Food Group _____

Day 2

Breakfast:

Food _____

Food Group _____

Lunch:

Food _____

Food Group _____

Dinner:

Food _____

Food Group _____

Day 3

Breakfast:

Food _____

Food Group_____

Lunch:

Food_____

Food Group_____

Dinner:

Food_____

Food Group_____

Day 4

Breakfast:

Food_____

Food Group_____

Lunch:

Food_____

Food Group_____

Dinner:

Food_____

Food Group_____

Day 5

Breakfast:

Food_____

Food Group_____

Lunch:

Food_____

Food Group_____

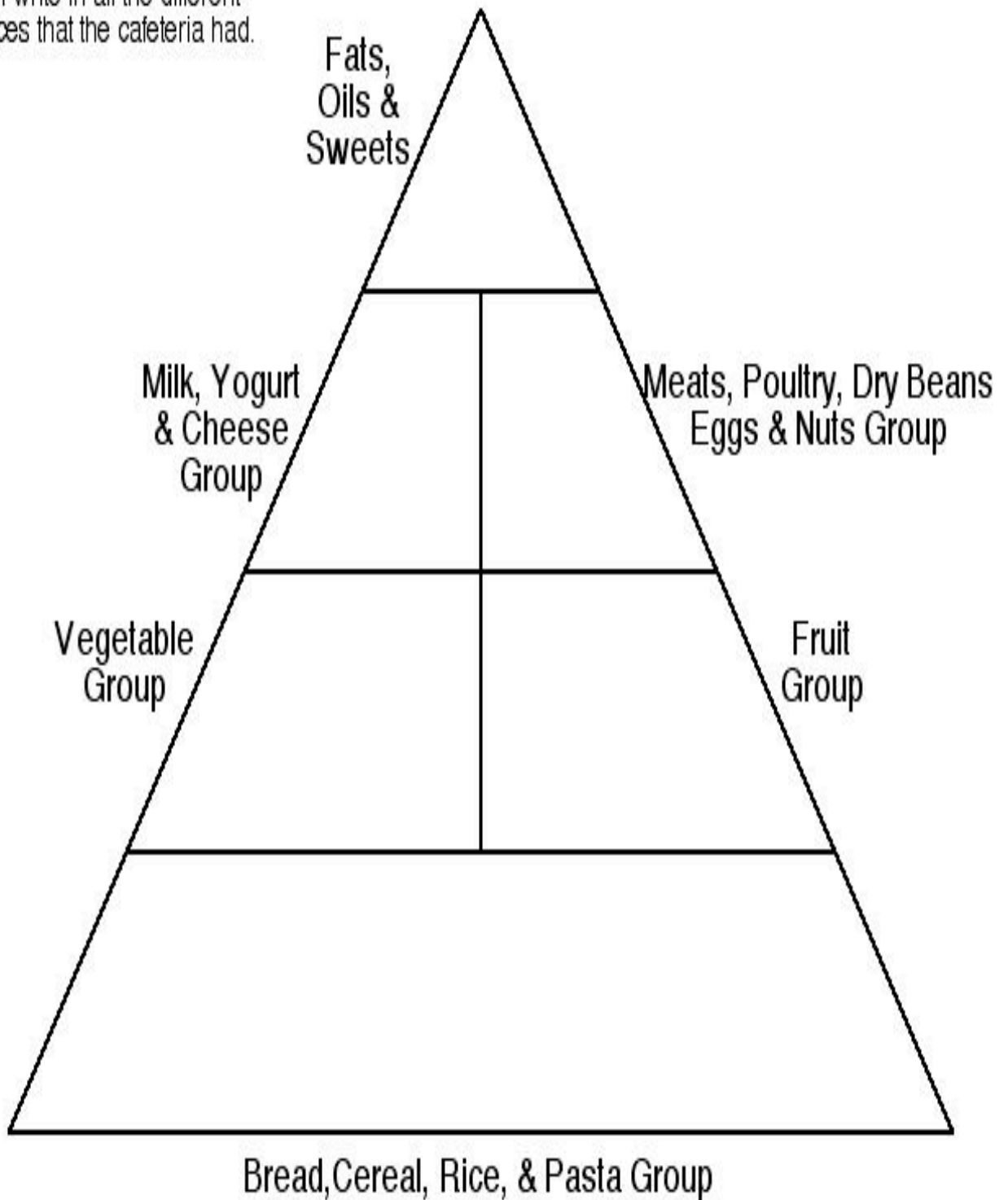
Dinner:

Food_____

Food Group_____

Date:

Each day after breakfast and lunch write in all the different choices that the cafeteria had.



<http://www.schools.pinellas.k12.fl.us/educators/tec/Gramlich/BlankP.jpg>