

Nutrition Unit/[MAKE](#)

Need to teach your upper elementary students about nutrition? Here is a unit/[MAKE](#) that you can follow, tweak, or integrate into the awesome work you are already doing! I'm going to present this portion of the resource in the form of a "How To" piece.

The Lens

Each of us is guided by a set of standards relevant to our grade level. These standards come from [curriculum guides](#) that spell out for us what we are supposed to teach. At the end of the day, regardless of our opinion about these guides and the pace with which we are supposed to teach...we are accountable for being able to "point at" what we are doing, to our administrators, and name it by saying things like, "Look at what we are doing during our Science block today," or "Here is how we are using our Literacy block of instruction for the next 3 days." Think of the standards we are bound by as linguistic lenses, language that our administrators use to better "see" that we are teaching and students are learning. Here are the standards that help "MAKE" this clear...

North Carolina Essential Standards for Science

4.NPA.2-Understand the importance of consuming a variety of nutrient dense foods and beverages in moderation.

4.NPA.3-Understand the benefits of nutrition and fitness to disease prevention.

Common Core Science Standard

4.L.2.1-Understand the benefits of vitamins, minerals and exercise.

Time Frame

The amount of time spent on this unit will vary based on the manner in which you teach. If the goal of the Intersections Project is to inquire into the "intersection" of science and literacy, it makes sense that each be integrated with the other versus thinking about them as separate entities. Outside of the walls of school science and literacy are organically integrated; not just with each other but with a wide array of other disciplines. The structure or formal nature of school separates the sciences and literacy under the premise each needs a certain amount of time in order for students to "master" their concepts and/or skills. This is not the space to take up an argument

against or for that thinking. Rather, I felt that it needed to be acknowledged, knowing full well that many of you (like myself) have to both navigate as well as negotiate with relevant stakeholders (administrators, curriculum coordinators) how the instructional day is managed. That being said, I used my Literacy instruction block and Science block to complete Phase I of the unit/MAKE and my Science block to complete Phase II (see below).

The How/Phase I/Formal

Here is a general, 30,000 ft view of how to implement this unit/MAKE. I am purposely staying “up here” out of respect for my audience. You will not learn as much about the content (Nutrition) as much as you will come [to a better understanding of the complexities](#) inherent in what we do daily along with seeing [why attempting something like this matters](#).

Steps for launching Phase I of this unit/MAKE include;

1. Immersing your students in a variety of literature related to nutrition. I decided to focus the reading on informational, non-fiction text. This was a pragmatic move on my part and included things like traditional textbook readings, information from the website titled: [Choose My Plate](#), as well as other [Health related articles focused on nutrition](#). Of course, if you wanted to, you could pull from alternate sources like [Food Inc., what is happening nationally with low-income black males](#), or just for fun, seek out some [interesting fiction](#) that is “food-based.” The choices are endless.
2. Have your students [take notes](#) about what they learned as a result of their reading. This strategy is very engaging and really taps into a strength of children at this age; their need to be social!
3. Have your students write about then discuss how the [concept of change](#) (defined here as the choices one makes regarding his/her dietary choices) can be positive or negative. You could have the students use the strategy that I have linked to in step #2 or a shortened version of it which is called a double-entry. In a double-entry, one page of notebook paper is used, two columns, “From teacher...” and “From me...” After the students have written, you could have them share their thinking using a “back-to-back” strategy where the students get into pairs, stand back-to-back with one another, turn and, based on your prompt; “The person wearing short-sleeves...”for example, starts first.

The How/Phase II/Informal

Here again I will stick to being general, staying at 30,000 ft. As you read through the steps below I would like you to think with me about how something as [familiar](#) as a collage can be repurposed into something more than what it appears to be. The key to this assignment is its intent. When the intent is to challenge students to re-present that which they have experienced “we” (educators) are re-imagining what we think is possible, from children, from their position; as student learners.

Steps for launching Phase II of this unit/MAKE include...

1. Gathering person-made materials like old magazines, construction paper, glitter, markers, scissors, pipe cleaners, glue, ribbon, colored pencils, etc.
2. Challenge students to MAKE a collage re-presenting the concepts and ideas they read, wrote about and discussed in Phase I in a way that shows evidence of the generalization "Change can be positive or negative." [Why is this different](#) than any ordinary “I can do this tomorrow” collage assignment?
3. Encourage students to reflect on their own MAKE, this can include what they want others to notice, what they enjoyed most about the MAKE and why, and how their MAKE shows others what they learned. When we ask students to reflect in this manner, we are asking them to re-present not re-produce.
4. Provide students with the opportunity to share their work with each other via a gallery crawl. In my class, I had each student place their MAKE on their desk along with the reflective writing mentioned in step #3. The students were then given sticky-notes. Along with their pencils, they rotated around the room, getting 3 minutes at each table to view, read then comment on the work of their classmates using the sticky-notes. When the rotations finished the students went back to their seats to read what others had said about their work.
5. Provide students with the opportunity to share aloud what they learned from the comments their classmates left for them. The JOYFULNESS of the experience will shine in this moment for students because of what they were prompted to reflect on in step #3. Students will synthesize what others found interesting in their work, question things they did not understand, and make connections with fellow classmates.