

Tupper Homework Club: A Community-Based Experiential Learning Project

UBC Land, Food and Community II, Group 22

Executive Summary

We are a group of UBC students that worked with Tupper Homework Club to help introduce nutrition education into this after-school program offered at Charles Tupper Secondary School in Vancouver, BC. The overarching goal of our project was to have a positive impact on student's eating-habits as well as provide guidance to encourage a lifetime of healthy eating. Our proposed research question was: what are some tasty, nutritious, and economical recipes for snacks that participants at Tupper Homework Club are interested in eating? Maintaining a balance between nutrition and budget, while also keeping recipes tasty was our main focus. We planned recipes and activities that could be carried out at Homework Club in three different sessions. We asked the high school students who participated to fill out surveys after each session and also took into account feedback from the school coordinator and program administrators. Interestingly, in the data collected from our first session, more than 50% of the students preferred unhealthy foods such as pizza, bacon and Nutella. This showed us the importance of exposing students to healthier food options from the start. We gained very positive feedback about our veggie dip and mac and cheese recipes in our second and third sessions. Students were willing to try something new and ended up really enjoying the new (healthy) change. Moving forward, we recommend that Homework Club incorporate more nutritious foods substituting healthy alternatives into common recipes, introducing students to new, culturally appropriate foods and encouraging nutritional-learning at home as well as in school.

Introduction

Homework Club is a popular after-school program held every Tuesday and Thursday at Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School. It is a community tradition that has been running for 12 years with the support of Hillcrest Centre and Little Mountain Neighborhood House. During Homework Club, snacks are provided for students while they complete their homework or socialize. Some students help prepare simple snack recipes to serve with volunteer and teacher support. Here is a link to a systems diagram which illustrates the inputs, outputs and interactions of key actors in Homework Club, Charles Tupper Secondary and the surrounding community:

<https://prezi.com/oehn2xyne9dv/charles-tupper-secondary-school-homework-club/>

Charles Tupper School puts a lot of effort into promoting healthy eating. It has a cafeteria that provides students with cheap and delicious meals, and it has vending machines that sell healthier snack alternatives such as baked chips and fruit juice. Despite these school-based interventions to promote good nutrition, children still face influences outside of school that impact their eating-behaviors, such as the media and the prevalence of fast-food restaurants located close to schools, which promote the overconsumption of high-fat and high-sugar foods (Evans et al., 2006; Massey-Stokes, 2002). Homework Club usually serves peanut butter and jam sandwiches, granola bars or vegetables and dip which are relatively healthy snacks. Homework Club organizers at Charles Tupper indicated to us that they want to make snacks more varied and interesting while still keeping snacks healthy. The shortage of nutrition-experts at the school and lack of time were barriers for them to achieve their goal.

This is where we, as LFS 350 students at the University of British Columbia (UBC), were asked to assist Homework Club in order to incorporate new snack recipes that were healthy, fit the school's budget and were snacks students enjoyed eating. This Community-Based

Experiential Learning (CBEL) project was important for Charles Tupper's Homework Club, as it was the first time that the program incorporated new, healthy recipes and also the first time that they partnered with UBC students.

Objectives and Research Question

In order to guide our research we looked at three main aspects of snack recipes which we chose to test at Homework Club: student preference, nutrition and affordability. The objectives of our CBEL project at Charles Tupper were to:

1. Find out students' snack preferences
2. Make modifications to existing snacks by incorporating nutritious and diverse ingredients
3. Ensure recipe ingredients were affordable and accessible for the school within their budget

By suggestions from our community partner, we decided to supplement each of our recipes with a related nutrition activity or educational poster to get students thinking about the importance of eating a variety of healthy foods. The inquiry question for our CBEL project was: what are some tasty, nutritious, and economical recipes for snacks that participants at Tupper Homework Club are interested in eating



Methods

We carried out our research during three different school visits on Wednesdays: October 14th, 21st, and November 4th 2015. During each visit we brought the school a recipe and a related nutrition-activity. We adhered to the school's budget of \$60 per session to purchase recipe ingredients and supplies before each session. All ingredients were bought from nearby grocery stores, prioritizing local, fresh, and low cost ingredients. We tried our best to buy appropriate portions to serve 50 students (the average attendance at Homework Club) to avoid extra costs for the school and to avoid food waste. We used the school's kitchen to prepare recipes. Students who helped prepare the recipe on Wednesday helped lead the nutrition/food-related activities during Homework Club the next day (Thursdays). We collected our results from surveys given to students who participated in the activities at Homework Club and tried the recipes, as well as from email feedback from community members. The purpose of our surveys was to get a better idea of student food preference and their thoughts about the recipes and activities we used.

Session 1 Methods

During the first session on October 14th, we chose to introduce a chickpea salad sandwich recipe to Homework Club. Two group members, Kelly and Shirley worked with some student volunteers on Wednesday prepare the sandwich filling, which was made into sandwiches at



Homework Club the next day (see Appendix for *Recipe 1* p15). A simple poster was also made by our group to show students the comparison of nutritional values of peanut butter and chickpeas, which served as sandwich fillings (see Appendix for *Activity 1* p16). During this session we

left surveys (with open-ended questions related to the recipe ingredients and student preference) for student participants at Homework Club to fill out (see Appendix for *Survey 1* p15). We also asked our community partner for qualitative email feedback. We used our findings from this session (see *Session 1 Results*) to inform our recipe and activity for our next session.

Session 2 Methods

Our second session on October 21th 2015 was improved by adopting a recipe idea from our community partner which incorporated more familiar foods for students: chips and dip (see Appendix for *Recipe 2* p17-18). Leftover chickpeas from the previous week were used as the main ingredient in our hummus dip. We also adjusted our surveys by asking students ‘yes or no’ questions to make data collection easier for both students and ourselves (see Appendix for *Survey 2* p19). Two group members, Vita and Ya, prepared dips on Wednesday together with student volunteers. The student volunteers also helped prepare the blind milk-tasting activity and presented the activity the next day during Homework Club (see Appendix for *Activity 2* p18). After Homework Club took place that week, we received completed surveys from our community partner as well as the outcomes of the milk-tasting activity. All the qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed (see *Session 2 Results*) and used to inform our recipe and activity for our last school visit.



Session 3 Methods

During our last session on November 4th, we used a modified macaroni and cheese recipe (see Appendix for *Recipe 3* p19). To make the recipe healthier we added broccoli, low fat milk, whole-wheat macaroni and used a reduced amount of cheese. Group members, Lucy and Sharon, prepared the food with 7 student volunteers. For this session our group made a poster, which was a plate with four sections for four food groups: grains, fruit and vegetables, dairy and meat. The poster was provided to our community partner and simple instructions were given on how to present the poster to Homework Club (see Appendix for *Activity 3* p19). No survey was used for third session. A wrap-up email from our community partner was used as data for this session and analyzed qualitatively.

Results

Figure 1 shows the different data collection techniques we use in this project including surveys and email feedback, over the course of three sessions.

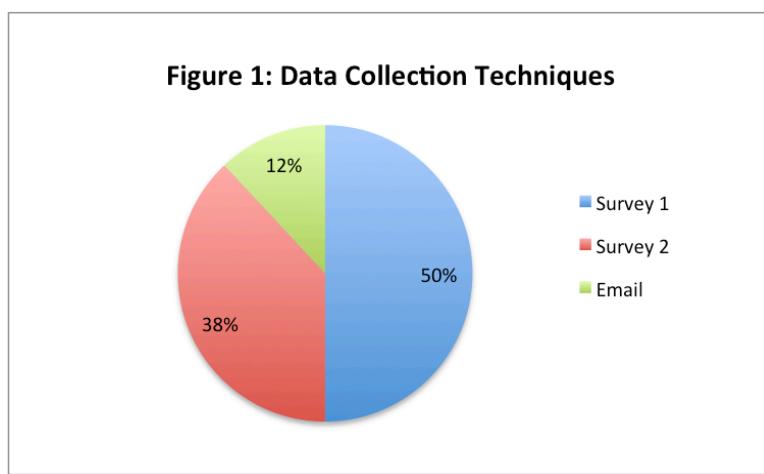


Figure 1: Data Collection Techniques (n = 34)¹

¹ n is the sample size, which in this case is the total number of surveys and emails

Session 1 Results

Seventeen students participated in the first survey designed to find out students' food preferences. We found that 59% of students chose relatively unhealthy food like pizza, bacon, and Nutella as their favorite food (Figure 2). When students were asked whether they liked the chickpea salad sandwich recipe, 94% said no and 6% said they were unsure (Figure 3).

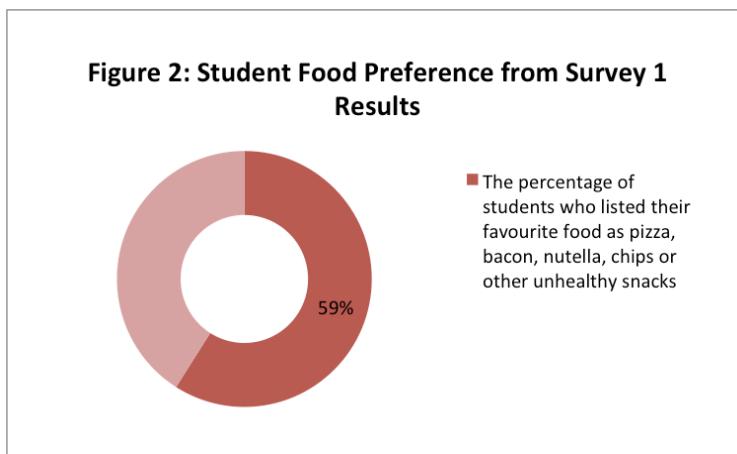


Figure 2: Student Food Preference from Survey 1 (n = 17)²

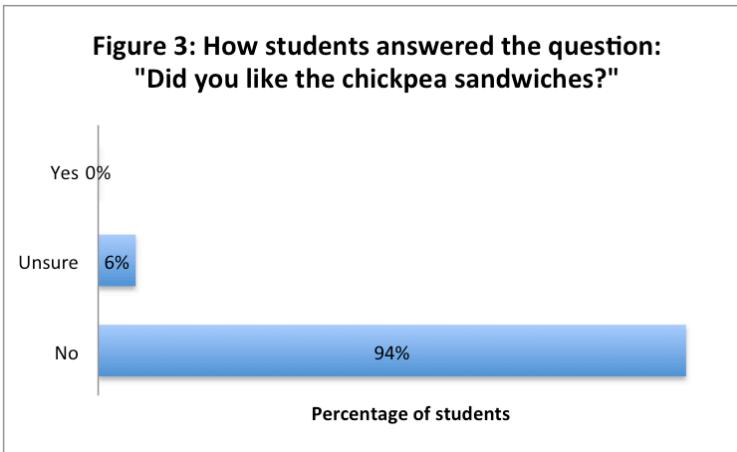


Figure 3: Students' Feedback on Chickpea Sandwiches from Survey 1 (n = 17)

² n is number of students surveyed (sample size)

Session 2 Results

From our second session's survey we found that 77% of students liked or were neutral to the new hummus and tzatziki dips (Figure 4) while, interestingly 46% agreed that the new dips are better than ranch dip that is usually served with veggies as a snack at Homework Club (Figure 5).

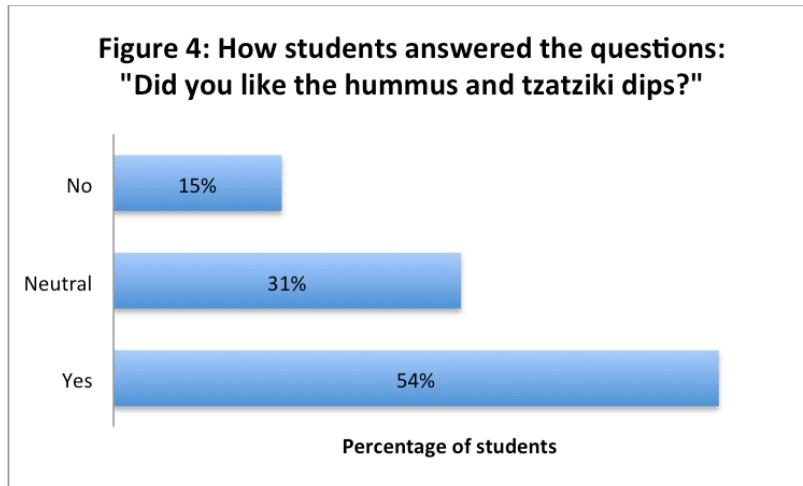


Figure 4: Students' Feedback on Hummus and Tzatziki Dips from Survey 2 (n = 13)

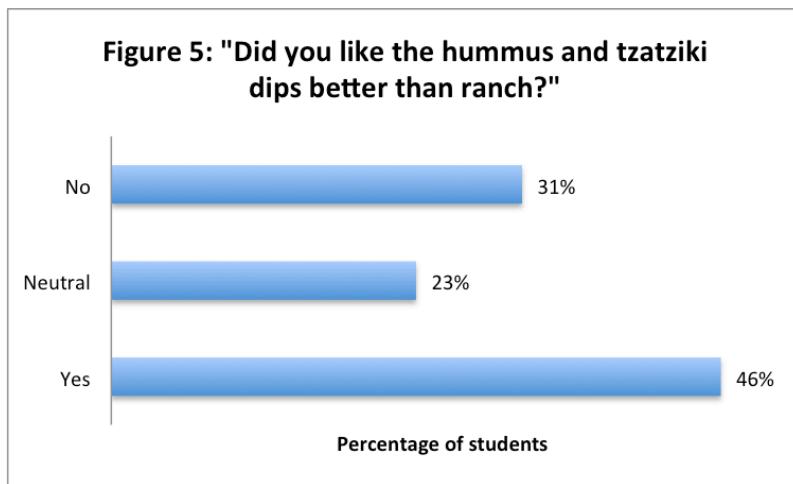


Figure 5: Students' Preferences for New dips compared to Ranch dip from Survey 2 (n = 13)

38 students, or 76% out of an average of 50 students, participated in blind milk taste test in the second session (Figure 6). But, only 26% of student participants filled out a survey during this session (Figure 7). The participation rate for the activity was notably higher than the survey-completion rate.

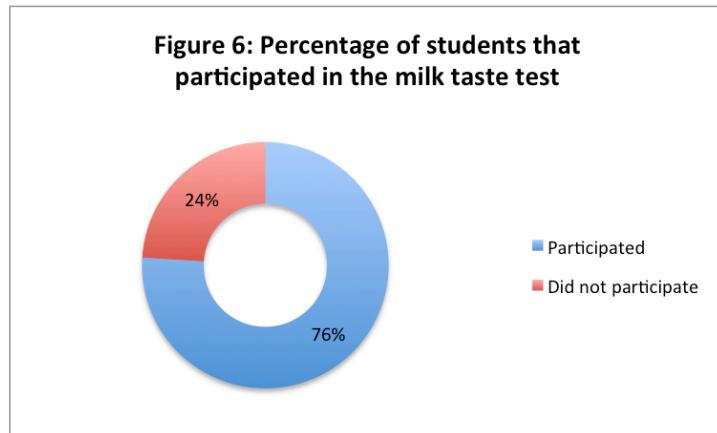


Figure 6: Students' participation rate in milk taste test (n = 50)

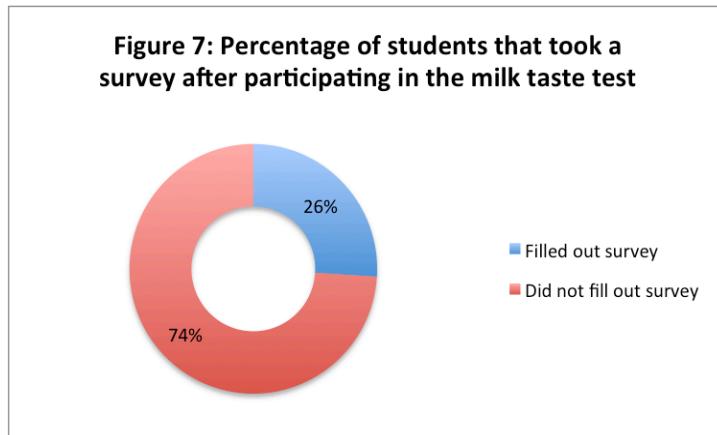


Figure 7: Students' participation rates for survey 2 (n = 50)

Session 3 and Qualitative Results

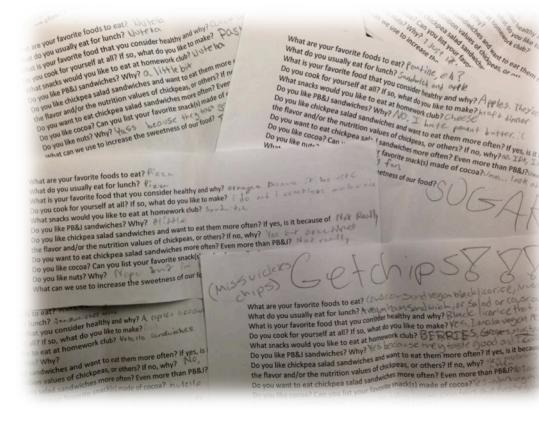
The qualitative feedback from session 3 shows that the “mac and cheese was a hit” and students were very engaged in the food group game activity (Teri Corcoran, personal communication, November 23, 2015).

Discussion

All our results highlight student preferences for our recipes and activities. Going back to our inquiry question we feel like we addressed student preferences well in our methods, but we had no ways of testing nutrition or affordability besides the fact that we kept our recipes relatively nutritious and affordable. Time and scope limitations kept us from being able to test detailed nutrient content in foods and budgeting aspects of this project.

Session 1 Discussion

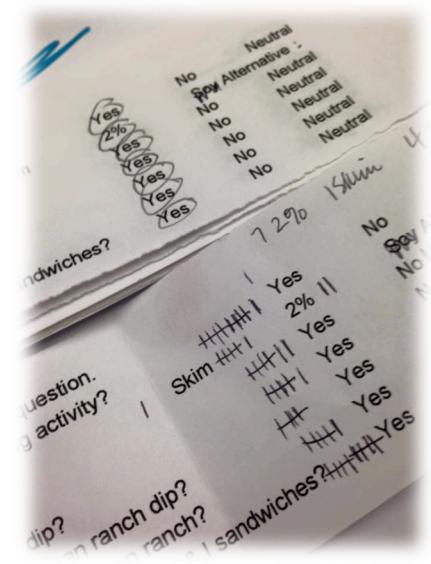
The answers to our first survey, which asked students about their favorite foods, clearly indicated that many students in Tupper's Homework Club favour Nutella, pizza and chips - energy-dense and unhealthy snacks. We thought that chickpeas would be a healthy and interesting sandwich filling to substitute instead of peanut butter or Nutella, which Homework Club usually serves. However, compared to PB&J sandwiches, most students did not like the taste of chickpea sandwiches, which caused lots of leftovers after session 1, even though posters were exhibited to show how many nutrients the sandwiches contained. These findings showed us that even if we proved to students how nutritious a food was, it did not guarantee that they would eat it. We found that most students were hesitant to try new recipes and valued the tastiness of the food over its nutritional value. These findings inspired us to alter our future recipes to have healthier alternatives while still keeping the food tasty. In accordance, there is research that shows that nutritious recipes seem to be more acceptable among adolescents when partially changing the foods that students are familiar with (Sadeghi and Marquart, 2010).



Session 2 Discussion

Hummus and tzatziki dips with chips were used as healthy homemade-dip recipes for the second session, instead of store-bought ranch dip which the school usually serves. Not surprisingly, the hummus and tzatziki dips with vegetable and baked rice chips were extremely popular. We found that although students were hesitant to try the new dips, they were more

comfortable with trying the new dips with a familiar snack like chips. Also, during the blind taste-test activity in session 2, we noticed that many students participated in the activity but very few actually filled out a survey. This may have been for a variety of reasons such as time or lack of motivation, despite us making an easier to fill out ‘yes/no/neutral’ survey. It shows how our data collection methods may have resulted in skewed results and not been representative of the overall student perceptions of the recipe.



Session 3 and Qualitative Feedback Discussion

According to our community partner in email feedback, our final recipe in session 3 (mac and cheese) was popular and fit our intended criteria of being tasty and nutritious for students and economical for the school. Allowing student volunteers to prepare snacks with UBC students during all sessions and the two workshops, as peer support activities, effectively encouraged students to become more interested in learning nutritional knowledge and familiar with healthy dietary behaviors, in line with other academic research (Wang et al., 2014). This was shown through evidence of the increasing willingness of students to participate in the activities and give feedback after the workshops.

Challenges and Success

We encountered some challenges during this project in the areas of transportation and limited time. Transportation was a big problem because most of us did not have access to vehicles. It was difficult to bus to grocery stores and carry all the food back to Tupper, which Kelly and Shirley did in session 1. Even with a car in session 2 and 3, we found it difficult to ensure we were getting the cheapest prices for the ingredients we were buying because we did not have the time compare prices across different grocery stores in the area. What's more, we were disappointed that we could not show up at the Homework Club on Tuesdays and Thursdays because of our course conflicts at school. These challenges created a barrier for us to bring all the big ideas we wanted to implement for Homework Club into practice.

We now realize that our initial goals for this project were too big in that we tried to tackle the idea of implementing a nutritional focus to Homework Club from too many angles. Still, we are glad that we were able to explore the broad impacts that taste, nutrition and economics play in the implementation of after-school nutrition programs. A surprising highlight was the engagement of English Language learners (ELL) in the cooking group who “gained unique experiences to build on friendships and to take on leadership roles in presenting workshops and challenging their classmates” (Teri Corcoran, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Among all the positive feedbacks given by our community partner, “the greatest learning from this project was that we might be able to achieve a food program like this in the future” (Teri Corcoran, personal communication, November 23, 2015). This could be regarded as the most successful achievement we had throughout the project, despite all our challenges; that by providing food and nutrition assistance as well as education, we gave our community partners insight towards possible approaches to promote nutrition among Tupper students.

Conclusion

This collaboration with Tupper Homework Club was a great experience for all of our group members to get involved in a community project. Through the course of our project, we realized that implementing a school nutrition program is a long-term commitment that involves many inputs and support. Optimally, nutrition should be the main focus however it can be difficult due to student attitudes, taste preferences and school and community limitations. We found that students respond well to nutritious recipes that incorporate familiar foods, such as in the case of our chips and dip recipe. We also learned that by running activities alongside recipes, students can be encouraged to try new foods in a fun way, such as in the case of our blind milk taste-test.

Suggestions

Building upon our findings, our main suggestion is to have parents involved to extend the nutrition learning outside of just the school. It can be as simple as brainstorming healthy lunch ideas to gaining hands-on experience preparing easy after school snacks. This way students are connected to nutrition knowledge and thinking in their daily life. We thought it would be a great addition to incorporate culturally friendly foods or even exotic foods that students don't see often. Potentially having the BC Fruit and Veggies Program be more substantial in the school can help reduce the cost of getting fresh fruits and veggies and add another nutritious option to the nutrition program. Another idea is to form partnerships or have sponsorships from nearby grocery stores or supermarkets that can help lower the food budget. An unexpected question that emerged for our group from this project was: how can school nutrition programs better support newcomers to Canada?

References

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Appendix

Recipe 1 - Chickpea sandwiches

Ingredients:

- ½ onion (can replace with bell pepper for a lighter flavor)
- 1 celery stalk
- 1 can chickpeas
- 2 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp dried dill weed (optional)
- some salt & pepper

Method:

1. Chop onions and celery stalks; mix them in a bowl.
2. Drain and rinse chickpeas, and mix with onions and celeries in the bowl.
3. Add other ingredients and thoroughly mix everything.
4. Cover the bowl with food wrap and keep it in the fridge.
5. **Always use a new spoon or knife to spread the mixture on your toast.**

Survey 1 - Open-ended questions for high school students

What are your favorite foods to eat?

What do you usually eat for lunch?

What is your favorite food that you consider healthy and why?

Do you cook for yourself at all? If so, what do you like to make?

What snacks would you like to eat at homework club?

Do you like PB&J sandwiches? Why?

Do you like chickpea salad sandwiches and want to eat them more often? If yes, is it because of the flavor and/or the nutrition values of chickpeas, or others? If no, why?

Do you want to eat chickpea salad sandwiches more often? Even more than PB&J?

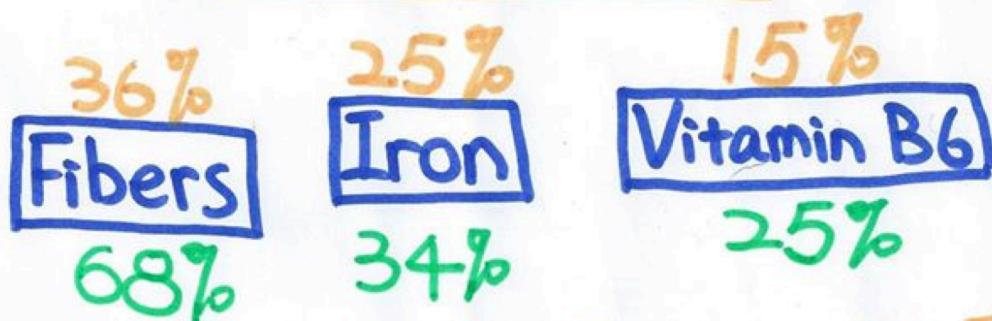
Do you like cocoa? Can you list your favorite snack(s) made of cocoa?

Do you like nuts? Why?

What can we use to increase the sweetness of our food?

How much do they contribute to our NUTRIENT INTAKE?

100g PEANUTS



% Daily Values are based on a
 $8400 \text{ KJ} = 2 \text{K Calorie}$ diet.

Recipe 2 - Hummus and Tzatziki Dips

Hummus dip:

<http://www.inspiredtaste.net/15938/easy-and-smooth-hummus-recipe/>

- One 15-ounce can (425 grams) chickpeas, also called garbanzo beans
- 1/4 cup (59 ml) fresh lemon juice, about 1 large lemon
- 1/4 cup (59 ml) homemade Tahini (it's easy to make)
- Half of a large garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for serving
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon kosher salt, depending on taste
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 to 3 tablespoons water
- Dash of ground paprika for serving

1. In the bowl of a food processor, combine tahini and lemon juice. Process for 1 minute. Scrape sides and bottom of bowl then turn on and process for 30 seconds. This extra time helps "whip" or "cream" the tahini, making smooth and creamy hummus possible.
2. Add the olive oil, minced garlic, cumin and the salt to the whipped tahini and lemon juice mixture. Process for 30 seconds, scrape sides and bottom of bowl then process another 30 seconds.
3. Open can of chickpeas, drain liquid then rinse well with water. Add half of the chickpeas to the food processor then process for 1 minute. Scrape sides and bottom of bowl, add remaining chickpeas and process for 1 to 2 minutes or until thick and quite smooth.
4. Most likely the hummus will be too thick or still have tiny bits of chickpea. To fix this, with the food processor turned on, slowly add 2 to 3 tablespoons of water until the consistency is perfect.
5. Scrape the hummus into a bowl then drizzle about 1 tablespoon of olive oil over the top and sprinkle with paprika

Tzatziki dip:

<http://natashaskitchen.com/2013/10/10/tzatziki-sauce-recipe/>

- 1/2 English cucumber, peeled
- 16 oz (2 cups) Cold plain Greek yogurt
- 4 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1/3 cup chopped dill
- Juice of 1/2 a lemon
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp black pepper

Activity 2 - Blind Milk Taste-Test Activity

Check for allergies (milk, soy) before starting the taste testing.

- skim, 1%, 2%, soy milk, goat milk, chocolate milk, lactose free milk
 - Cups for milk samples
1. In a classroom ask: How many different kinds of milk have you tried, i.e., skim, 1%, 2% or whole? What kind of milk is your favorite?
 2. Using a show of hands, record how many students like each type of milk (no milk, skim, 1%, 2%, and whole). Record it on the board.
 3. Identify each type of milk on the bottom of the cups using random 3-digit codes (record both the type of the milk and the 3-digit code on a piece of paper) and pour milk for each person to taste. Be sure to cover the milk jugs when pouring or pour behind a screen so that students cannot read which milk is being poured.
 4. Explain that this will be a “blindfold taste test.” This means that we will be tasting milk without being able to see if it is skim, 1%, 2%, etc.
 5. Ask kids to taste each sample of milk, and without looking at the bottom of the cup, place their favorite on a table.
 6. Now look at the bottom of each cup to see what was preferred. At the end of the taste test, count up the total preferences for each kind of milk and determine preference % for each. Compare these results with the first preference survey. Were there any changes? Were any students surprised at their picks?

Survey 2 - Yes/No questions

Please circle your answer to each question.

Did you enjoy the milk taste-testing activity?	Yes	No	Neutral
What was your favourite milk?	Skim 2%	Soy Alternative	
Did you like the hummus dip?	Yes	No	Neutral
Did you like the tzatziki yogurt dip?	Yes	No	Neutral
Do you like hummus dip better than ranch dip?	Yes	No	Neutral
Do you like tzatziki dip more better than ranch?	Yes	No	Neutral

Recipe 3 – Healthy Macaroni and Cheese

The ingredients are as follows: (serving 4-6)

1 cup elbow macaroni
4 cups water
1/2 cucumber
2 hard-boiled eggs, diced
1/2 cup celery, diced
1/2 cup carrot, grated
1/2 cup cheese, grated
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1 tsp lemon juice

Activity 3 - Food Groups Poster

As an activity students could categorize pictures of different foods into the four food groups on the plate.



Critical Reflections

“K”

The CBEL project is an awesome experience for me. The CBEL project provides me with an opportunity to collaborate with community members and other LFS students to solve the real food system issues by applying theoretical nutrition knowledge into practice. During the CBEL project, I learn that we can think out of the box when it comes to problem-solving. For example, we can focus on the assets that already exist in the issues instead of looking for what is missing and this is perfectly illustrated by the asset-based community development (ABCD) method. Moreover, I find flexible learning sessions very useful as they enable me to connect and interact with the community members and help me identify synergies and tensions between academic and community-based approach. Also, group work is essential for success of this project. There are many uncertainties in the learning environment and collaborations with group members which recognize and mobilize unique abilities and skills possessed by each group member, effectively provide a platform for everyone to contribute their ideas to problem-solving of the project. What's more, having online platforms, such as blogs, makes my learning more valuable and enjoyable. Blogs are fantastic as it provide me with an online platform to share my thoughts, experience and future plans of the project with community members and help me receive feedbacks and comments in an easier and faster way.

“L”

The CBEL project was a completely different learning experience for me. It was very much like a roller coaster ride with expectations, disappointments, compromises and resolution. What we had envisioned for our first visit to the community led to disappointment, as the outcome was way below our expectation. I think this was a learning curve for my group and I.

Not everything (usually nothing) will go according to plan and that was a major challenge as we had to adapt and make compromises with the community partner. Being able to actually leave the academic environment and participate in a community project was a very valuable experience. I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with our partner and learning more about issues and factors that influence the successfulness of a school nutrition program. Also I found it to be especially helpful when we utilized flexible learning. The course load was more manageable as we were able to use that time to connect with our community partners in person. Having an online platform to share the progress of our project enhanced the experience because of the feedbacks and comments we received along the way. The biggest thing I learned from CBEL was that working with others in a group setting can really transform a thought into a complex idea and finally have it turn into reality. Although it might not have been the original vision, there is the possibility that it will turn out to be even better than what we expected.

“V”

Participating in this CBEL project at Charles Tupper Secondary School was a fun yet challenging experience. It was fun to meet some of the secondary school students and cook with them, and it was great to meet with community leaders and teachers. However, one of the aspects that was challenging about this project was a lack of time. We are a group of busy university students with many other commitments, so it was hard to find the time to meet with our community partner, commute to Charles Tupper from UBC, grocery shop and plan our visits. One of the ways we approached this problem was to split up the visits between the six of us in the team; two people went to the school for each of the three visits. This worked well in some ways, but also made it more challenging to communicate with each other and be consistent with our community partner, which as frustrating for us as I am sure it was for them. In the end, I

think my group discovered just how complex implementing a school nutrition project can be. Overall, I learned a lot, not just about the community project, but about how to work alongside my team members. I learned a lot from my teammates because they are all Food Science or Nutrition majors except for me, so they had a lot of relevant knowledge to contribute to this project.

“S”

From the day I chose to do this CBEL project, I had a lot of expectations on it. Although the reality brought up a lot of challenges for us, as a team we've found solutions to overcome the difficulties. CBEL project creates a really good opportunity for me to connect what I've learned in class to the real world and help me to develop the team working skills. The experiences I gained from this project reminds me of the sunflower narrative being discussed in class, which we start our proposal as a beautiful sunflower and experience collapse during the process. I've learned that it is always a good thing to discuss the methods with someone who has more experiences on doing community project like our TA and instructors. I also learned how to think from our community partner's perspective instead of just focusing on the project. The experiences that TAs shared in class with their own research project helped me a lot. It made me realized that it is normal to experience some difficulties because we learn the most from our challenges. This project gives me an overlook before conducting any research or community projects in the future. I think the most important skill I learned from this project is to identify what is working or not working and builds from there. The key to success is to learn and adapt.

“Y”

Participating in this CBEL project at Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School through our LFS 350 course was an adventure for me. Unlike LFS 250 where my group members and I only got to do a bread making workshop once in an elementary school with all details sorted out by our course instructor, LFS 350’s CBEL project is a completely new experience. In this CBEL project, our group actually built a project from scratch together. This was really a challenge to our team and we had to work coordinately and efficiently for the project to work. I like the way that flexible learning sessions were given in LFS 350 as this allowed me to have more time to actually do some hands-on work in a real-world setting. I learnt that it is important to consider other stakeholders’ perception like students and community partners from this project. Knowing what they like or dislike first is important as project rejection could occur if we try to push something they don’t like to them. The feedback from our teaching assistant through Connect website and email as project progressed help us a lot by giving us a lot of useful suggestions and guidance in a timely manner. Overall, I think this project is a memorable experience for me.

“S”

At first, I wanted to do this CBEL project because I thought I know about nutrition and cooking, and that I had the ability to incorporate my knowledge into this project. However, the reality is crucial – teenage students were not as passionate for nutritious foods as I thought, and this brought our group lots of difficulties in encouraging them to consume nutritious but bland foods. Fortunately, through academic researches as well as consistent communication with community partners and TAs, we learnt effective approaches and somehow achieved our goals. Among all the things this project has taught me, I regard being creative and taking advice from professionals with different expertise as the two most helpful aspects. Besides, the great

teamwork experience made me enjoy the process. Overall, I personal view to this project is that having the interest in it is fundamental and essential, and never giving up trying is the key to success.