Christina Pateras October 16, 2011

Studio 5

In studio five with Professor Ron Eglash, we attended our second trip at the Charter School in Troy, NY. We came to the school to preform our first set of prototypes and second round of tests for the students. The purpose of going to the school was to get a collective approval or disapproval about our project ideas. My partner, Courtney, and I went to test our ideas about cooking with fractions with the sixth graders. Our ideas presented included a short demonstration for cooking a pizza, and 2 worksheets. One worksheet was about algebraic mathematics which included word problem about measurements a user would ordinarily have to make while cooking or baking. The other worksheet was a quick survey that asked the students about their favorite foods and how much they cooked at home.

The first survey was designed to see what the students knew healthy dieting, if they could identity healthier foods from a list of various foods, and what experience they have had in the kitchen. The second sheet was a math worksheet that included math problems that involved cooking measurements that were added, subtracted, multiplied, or divided. The third sheet tested what they knew about cook terminology; this asked about measurements such as pints and teaspoons. In general, we found that the students had difficulties with the math worksheet. They did not know nearly as much as the teacher expected them to know. The students had a lot of trouble dealing with simple mixed number and finding common denominators. They all enjoyed filling out the healthy foods survey and like to tell us about their experiences with food and their activities in the kitchen. They proved to not know too much about the cooking terminology. They had all heard of the terms however they did not know the conversions, such as converting gallons to pints. We did not expect them to know a lot about this but we just wanted to make sure in case we decide to use this is our project. In order to keep the students attention, we had them work on the survey individually and then the math sheet together in pairs or as a group. Then we had them take a break and make pizza. Then, once they were done making the personal pizzas they worked on the third sheet. This gave them the energy to work on the third sheet.

One of the questions on the survey asked students to list their favorite foods. The most common answers were tacos and pizza. When we explained that we were going to make pizza the groups of students seemed to be very excited about the fact that we were making their favorite snack that they could easily make on their won at home. In order to make the students participate and complete the worksheets we had them compete in a competition of who could get it correct the fastest. The students were excited about this competition and filled out the food worksheets orderly and accurately.

We hypothesized that the students would not know much about cooking in general, however in some aspects we were proven wrong. We had assumed that they most likely do not do a lot of cooking at home. I was surprised by the amount of cooking the students do for themselves at home without much assistance. Several students told us that they cooked most of their meals or helped their family members cook dinner. I did not expect so many students to be comfortable cooking with an oven or stove. When I asked the students what they cooked I got many similar answers; such as cookies, mac and cheese, pasta, and frozen foods. We also assumed that they may not be educated on healthy eating habits or healthy food. From the worksheets, we wanted to figure out exactly what they knew about healthy eating and cooking terminology. Going into this activity, Courtney and I figured that many students may not be interested in eating healthily. We were also proven wrong about this and we felt that many students were interested in being taught about healthy cooking and eating.

After this, as promised we moved on and made the pizzas that required sauce, a flat bread, and cheese. For the pizzas, Courtney and I walked the students through the process and instructed them step by step. We brought in our own microwaves, and one by one the students put their pizzas in for 30 seconds. After the cheese cooled down, the children were given the chance to eat. All of them loved their pizzas and wanted to make more. We brought a microwave with us so that the students could heat up their pizza and melt the cheese on top of it. The goal of the pizza making was to get the students excited about something and keep their hands busy. We used the pizza to test how well the children were with responding to directions. They were very willing to listen to us and did not fight over the utensils at all. Also, in a sense, we used the pizza to distract them, just as we did with the drawings during the first visit. I felt that the students opened up more about their eating habits and health patterns when they were occupied making pizza.

The students loved having something that was hands on where they were able to complete something on their own without that much help. I believe that this visit gave them a sense of independence and gave them more courage to cook at home. A lot of the students asked where they could buy the ingredients so that this could be their new after school snack. I think that rewarding children when they did something correctly was a success and kept their interest even after we had completed making the pizzas. Also, I found that if student receive personal attention or help they were more driven to work on the given task. I noticed that when I recognized them for getting a problem correct they were excited and had energy to continue on with the worksheet. These children all seemed to be very interested in our project, which allows Courtney and me to move further with our cooking idea for the final project.