Christina Pateras November 3, 2011

Studio 5

On October 31, 2011 the studio 5 class went to the charter school for their third visit with the students. The purpose of this visit was to gain further knowledge about the final prototype so that the groups could focus on a single problem. When my partner Courtney and I attended the school we made an effort to connect with the students in an upbeat way and did not try to drill information out of the students. We came into the classroom trying to engage the children in our project and to get them involved by conducting group work. We had noticed that through our other visits by giving the students individual worksheets, they were easily discouraged when they were not able to answer the questions.

In order to keep their attention we thought introducing group work would be a better approach. To do this, we asked the group certain questions about the foods they ate and cooking at home. From this information we were able to figure out their interests and we were able to narrow down our topic. After they answered our questions we “rewarded” them by allowing them to play online cooking games. The students thought we were giving them a break while in fact we were collecting more information from them. They were all given a laptop to share with another student, and then the two students were allowed to choose a game off of the cooking website we showed them. After they played the game we asked them what they liked/ didn’t like about the game and what they wish it did instead.

The groups of children were very excited to see us; however they were expecting food like we had for them last time. We explained to them that instead of us giving them food this time we were allowing them to have fun by letting to play the computer games. The questions we started with were all about healthy foods. We originally gathered from past visits that they were not very knowledgeable on healthy food, but this wasn’t the case this time. We asked them what foods they ate for a healthy snack and the common answers were ants on a log and peanut butter and jelly. We also asked what unhealthy foods they snack on and we got answers like cookies, cake, boxed snacks, and chips. In our earlier visits they didn’t have a distinction between the two. They somehow learned, either through our project or their lives at home, that there is a strong distinction between healthy and not healthy items. We asked about their favorite items to cook and we received answered mostly about baked goods, whether it be pies or cookies or cakes. One of the most valuable questions we asked was “What is your favorite meal; breakfast, lunch or dinner? And what is your favorite food item to eat for that meal?” We got a variety of answers however a few that were often repeated were: pancakes and waffles for breakfast; turkey clubs and Subway for lunch; barbeque chicken, tacos, spaghetti for dinner; and for dessert the students preferred chocolate foods and muffins. This information helped us greatly because we realized that the kids had a better understanding about healthy diets than we originally gathered. Originally we were trying to incorporate the food pyramid and other ways to explain healthy foods to them. They children obviously had favorite foods that were healthy (who doesn’t?) but they realized that this wasn’t the healthiest option available. We were pleased to find out that the children didn’t eat out that often which helps cut down the calories of the meal. They told us that they normally don’t go out and prefer not to. The children preferred to eat their home cooked meals. However one answer that stood out to Courtney and I was when we asked one child about when they go out to eat/ where she goes, she replied “we only go out to eat when my mom gets paid.” Although this answer didn’t have a significant impact on our project, it caught us off guard and allowed us to appreciate our financial standing. The information we did get out of this answer was that the children would need a recipe that had inexpensive ingredients that their families could easily by for them. Although in our cooking games the children would not actually be cooking, they are encouraged to try the recipe at home in order to experiment with measurements hands on.

From this we moved on to the computer games. We allowed the children to choose whatever cooking game they wanted. This allowed us to keep track of the children’s’ interests without actually quizzing them about it. This served as an “undercover survey” and kept the kids more involved. The students were mostly drawn to the really colorful and flashy games. These stood out on the main page of the website, as they had the most contrast to the black background and the more plain games. They were also attracted to the games were they made sweets, and had heard of the recipe. I asked the students if they make the foods on the game when they are at home and I only got one student that said no. The sweets pulled them in more because these were some of the students’ favorite foods. Also they did a lot more baking at home than they did cooking, so they were more familiar with this. The kids also told us that they prefer hot foods as opposed to cold foods, so they were drawn to the games that included putting the item in the oven or on the stove. They told us that most of the games were boring and there was no prize at the end which they were expecting to be there. Most of the games just had the final product of whatever you were making. We thought that we would include some sort of celebration at the end in order to counteract this feeling. Also we decided to use a game that provided step by step instructions for the students and guided them through the game. There were some games that just gave the students a free for all and didn’t instruct them on how to make the food. The kids were easily distracted and discouraged and would go back and choose a different game. By providing guidance it allowed them to make the item properly and continue the game until the end.

This visit to the school allowed us to finalize our game idea quite easily and provided us with the guidance on where to move from here. We decided to solely teach the students about measurements in cooking and experimenting with fractions. The final prototype of our project will be further explained on Monday during our presentation.