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Studio Field Trip Assignment

Second Ethnographic Investigation

On Tuesday October 11th we went back to the ACC School to test our first prototypes with the kids. Christina and I are working to create a cook book that is designed specifically for children and to help them learn about healthy eating habits and how to cook healthy snacks for themselves at home. The recipes within the cook book will require the user to solve a math equation in order to know how much of a given ingredient to cook with. The math problems will be created around a 6th grade math curriculum, mainly including multiplication, division, and fractions. An example is below:

**1 cup of flour + (½ cup of flour x 2) + 1 cup(s) of flour = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

We brought several items with us when we went to the school. First, we brought three worksheets for them to fill out. The first worksheet was a quick survey for them. The survey was designed to see what knowledge the students had about healthy eating, if they could identity healthier foods from a list of given foods, and what cooking instruments, such as an oven, could they use at home. The second sheet was a math worksheet that included math problems like the one above. The third sheet tested what they knew about cook terminology. For example, we asked them how many quarts were in a gallon or how many teaspoons in a tablespoon. We found that the students had little trouble with the math worksheet and enjoyed filling out the first survey, but when it came to the second sheet, they lost interest. Many students did not know the cooking terminology we were testing them on and once they realized they did not recognize a majority of the information of the third sheet, they lost interest. 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. Once they were done making pizza they then worked on the third sheet. This gave them the energy to work on the third sheet. I found that if student receive personal attention or help they were more driven to work on the given task. I also noticed that when I recognized them for getting a problem correct they were excited and had energy to continue on with the worksheet.

We hypothesized that the students would not know much about cooking. We assumed that they most likely do not do a lot of cooking at home. 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, I figured that many students may not be interested in healthy eating or healthy foods. As it turns out, I felt that many students were interested in being taught about healthy cooking and eating, especially when it involved them cooking on their own and gaining that independence. When they felt that they had control over the topic, they became more engaged.

I was surprised by the amount of cooking these students do for themselves individually at home. Several students told me that they cooked most of their meals on their own and some students told me that they often cooked for their families. 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. Most commonly students said they cooked cookies, mac & cheese, pasta, soup, frozen pizza, and other frozen foods. 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 with them they got very excited. I explained to the students that this was an easy snack they could make at home. Many told me that they would want to make the pizza at home.

Making the pizza in the classroom was very simple. It required sauce, a flat bread, and cheese. Christina and I 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. In a sense, we used the pizza to distract them. I felt that the students opened up more about their eating habits, life styles, and health patterns when they were occupied making pizza. At the beginning of the morning, I was interested to see how the students would share the materials we brought. We had one bowl of sauce and I was curious to see if they would fight over the sauce or share. Some groups did fight over the sauce and others came up with a way of passing the bowl of sauce down the table and sharing. When there were friends within a group, students were less likely to share and more likely to fight over the materials.

The students loved having something hands on to do. Cooking gave them a **since** **[sense]** of independence and power. I felt that the students were very proud when they were talking about what they could cook at home. Cooking gave students a sense of control and when they felt in control, they were more likely to engage in the activities and participate. Figuring out a way to reward students for solving the math problems correctly is a problem we are facing. We do not want to sugar coat the activity, but at the same time, we want them to have incentive to solve the math problems. One of the goals of the cook book is to allow students to cook on their own wit the foods they have at home. We want students to be able to create healthy snacks and meals from the foods they have at home. Another issue we face is the availability of healthy foods, such as foods and vegetables, the students have at home.

**You did a nice job describing your project and the reactions the children had to it. I agree the degree to which this was “sugar-coating” was a problem -- its basically just creating ordinary word problems and rewarding them with a treat for it. Grade = B+.**