

Food for Thought: My Plate

Enrichment Works

Our Mission:
Enrichment Works
creates and presents
theater to inspire
learning.

Classroom Connections

Synopsis

M.C. Vendor, a vending machine, is popular at school where students listen to his rap ("Come and Get It") and buy his sugary snacks and soft drinks. In gym class, though, he has trouble keeping up. The coach admonishes him for being inactive when he ought to exercise at least 30 minutes every day and for selling unhealthy snacks to children when he could set a better example. M.C. visits a doctor who makes a grim diagnosis ("Sneakasnackitis") and refers him to a nutritionist. M.C. feels guilty about contributing to the epidemic of childhood obesity and early onset diabetes ("I Feel Like Junk"). After learning from a Registered Dietician about the nutritional benefits of following the "My Plate" guidelines, he decides to re-stock himself with healthy snacks and, to raise the money for his new supplies, goes on a television game show called "Meal or No Meal." With help from the students in the audience, M.C. Vendor correctly answers every question about nutrition and fitness, wins the game, and comes back to the school stocked full of healthy foods.



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About the Artists

David Hunter Jr. (MC Vendor) received a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Hampton University. He has won Best Voice Over and Best Supporting Actor awards from the Northern VA Theatre Association. David is also a Poet/Spoken Word Artist and the author of "Pen In My Hand."

Norman L. Berman (Composer) is a former resident composer of A Noise Within Theater in Glendale. He composed *Strider* on Broadway and conceived and directed *Unsung Cole*, a musical revue. Previous Enrichment Works scores include the original *Food for Thought*, *A Doggone Musical* and *The Money Mon\$ter*.

Abraham Tetenbaum (Director) holds a BS from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and an MFA in Playwriting from the University of Minnesota. Mr. Tetenbaum has written for Broadway ("Crazy He Calls Me") and network television ("Sisters"). He is currently the Editor of Publications for the American Film Institute.

Danielle Vernengo (Female Lead) was a series regular on TV's Heartbreak Café and played a leading role in Keenan Ivory Wayans ON UPN. She holds a BA in Theatre from Cal State Fullerton and a multiple subject teaching credential from National University. Danielle has worked as a teaching artist at Gary Spatz' The Playground and High Touch High Tech and Destination Science.

Ian Patrick Williams (Book & Director) won an Emmy for his play, *Bleacher Bums*. He studied acting at the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago and was a member of the Organic Theater Company. As an actor, he has appeared in numerous films and TV shows, including *NYPD Blue*, *Profiler*, *Fres*, *Prince of Bel Air*, and *Seinfeld*.

Discussion and Writing Questions

- What steps do you follow to be healthy?
- How do you know if a food is healthy?
- What kind of information can you get from a food label?
- How does what you eat affect how much energy you have? What types of food are best for giving you energy and keeping you healthy?
- Why is it important to exercise?
- What changes can you make in your current diet and routine to be healthier?

Vocabulary Words

- Calorie
- Cavity
- Carbohydrate
- Diabetes
- Ingredient
- Nutrient
- Nutrition
- Obesity
- Protein

Project Ideas

- Design your own vending machine. Use drawings and pictures from magazines to fill it up with healthy choices. Explain why you selected each food.
- List the different ways TV commercials persuade you to buy different foods and drinks. Write a commercial that will get kids to want to eat healthy foods. Perform it for the class.
- Learn about food labels. What information is listed on the labels? Which nutrients should you eat more of? Which nutrients should you eat less? Collect nutrition fact labels from different foods. Use the information on the labels to sort them into groups of healthy foods and unhealthy foods. List your reasons for your choices. What information did you use? Is it easy to decide which foods are best for you?
- Find out how much sugar is in your favorite drinks and treats by reading food labels from sodas and snacks. Locate the total grams of sugar for each. Be sure to check the serving size. How many teaspoons are in each of your items? (Four grams equals one teaspoon.) Measure the total amount of teaspoons of sugar into a plastic bag. Is that more or less than you thought? Discuss your findings as a class. Which snacks and drinks have the most sugar? Which have the least? Also, research the different types of sugars in food as described on food labels. List the different names for these sugars and define which is the most harmful? Which is the least harmful?
- Refer to the My Plate diagram and information at ChooseMyPlate.gov. Use a paper plate to make your own version of My Plate. What items would go in each section? How much is a portion?

Resources

Websites:

<http://myplate.gov/>
<http://www.nourishinteractive.com/>
<http://www.superkidsnutrition.com/superkids-nutrition-health-educator-headquarters/>
<https://theweightofthenation.hbo.com/>
<http://www.letsmove.gov/>
<http://kidshealth.org/kid/>
<http://www.cachampionsforchange.cdph.ca.gov/en/index.php>

Booklist:

[Eat This Not That! For Kids!: Be the Leanest, Fittest Family on the Block!](#) by David Zinczenko and Matt Goulding.
[Portion Size Me: A Kid-Driven Plan to a Healthier Family](#) by Alexandra Reid, Marshall Reid
[The Vegetables We Eat](#) by Gail Gibons
[The Monster Health Book: A Guide to Eating Healthy, Being Active & Feeling Great for Monsters & Kids!](#) by Edward Miller
[Good Enough to Eat: A Kid's Guide to Food and Nutrition](#) by Lizzy Rockwell

Contact Us

Enrichment Works

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Standards and Learning

Enrichment Works is a theater company whose productions are designed to inspire children to learn by creating an emotional connection to educational subjects. “Food for Thought: My Plate” uses the Theater Content Standards of California to provide a positive theatrical experience. Performers interact directly with students and ask them questions about the topic of the play, in engaging musical ways as well as inviting students to perform specific physical activities and dance steps with the characters onstage.

Visual and Performing Arts Connections

1.0 Artistic Perception

Students will process, analyze and respond to sensory information through the language and skills unique to a theatrical presentation. They will learn theatrical vocabulary such as actor, costume, playwright, character, etc. They will analyze the elements of *Food For Thought: My Plate* by identifying who, what, where, when and why of the story. Students are engaged through direct address by the actors, participating in call and response songs and exercises led by the actors.

2.0 Creative Expression

Students participate in the performance of *Food For Thought* through call and response, audience interaction and executing dance moves. Students will be asked to help tell the story by participating in the game show portion of the musical. Pre and post-performance activities provide the students the opportunity to apply the skills of an actor through informal presentations.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Food For Thought will help students understand the importance of eating healthy foods and staying fit by watching how it affects MC Vendor. They will learn about the “My Plate” and “Let’s Play” health initiatives and also about the importance of knowing how different foods affect their health. They will learn the risks associated with obesity and eating a poor diet.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Students will respond to, analyze and derive meaning from theater arts. *Food For Thought* uses audience interaction so that the students get excited about eating healthy foods and staying fit. The the play allows students to maintain a high level of emotional connection to the character MC Vendor and his story. Following the play, students participate in a Question and Answer session where they can criticize and query the actors/characters about the content of the play or the artistic choices made in this production. Students are given the opportunity to express how they felt as a participating during the performance. Post performance activities provided through study guides, are available to help students understand the character’s journey and events in the play.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Activities are provided to the teachers to help them encourage students to connect what is learned in *Food For Thought* to other subject areas and also their daily lives. Students can see how theater communicates pertinent health information. Through hands-on approaches including drawing, writing and acting, students can explore concepts in other subject areas (e.g. reading food labels for information, health and nutrition) to learn how theatre can communicate content from other sources.