

Hunger Survey Version 2

Grades 9-12

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Time

1 hour

Materials

Hunger Survey, student copy and answer key (*see attachments*)

Objective

To increase student awareness of the causes of hunger and to dispel common myths about hunger in the U.S.

Procedure

- Give each student a copy of the *Hunger Survey* (*see attachments*)
- Allow the students 15-20 minutes to answer the survey questions
- In small groups allow students to discuss their answers, ask the students if there were any questions with which their group disagreed on the answers.
- Before discussing answers, pass out abbreviated answer sheets to the students. (*see attachments*)
- Read aloud each question and discuss the correct answers (*see attachments*)
- Allow time for further questions and discussion after each question

Possible Actions

- Host a food drive i.e. peanut butter drive or canned tuna drive

Create a fund drive- *see list of fundraising ideas* – or contact The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts for information & resources.

MA DOE Standards

English Language Arts

Anchor Standards

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support the conclusions drawn from the text.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Comprehensive Health

Nutrition

- 3.3 Recognize hunger and satiety cues and how to make food decisions based upon these cues

Mental Health

- 5.2 Apply methods to accommodate a variety of feelings in a constructive manner in order to promote well being

Interpersonal Relationships

- 7.4 Describe the concepts of prejudice and discrimination

Community and Public Health

- 14.6 Describe how local public health departments have developed and implemented policies to keep communities safe.

History and Social Science

Economics

- E.6.1 Explain the basic function of money

HUNGER SURVEY ANSWER KEY (TEACHER'S COPY)

This activity was adapted with permission from Make Hunger History, a "Bread for the World" curriculum.

1. The poverty rate is the U.S. in 2009 was less than it was in 1970.

False.

- The poverty rate in 2009 was 14.3% while the rate in 1970 was 12.6%. There are currently 43.6 million people living in poverty in the U.S.
- A single parent with two children needed only \$17,285 to be considered above the poverty level. The official poverty income threshold does not realistically provide for basic necessities.
- The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts estimates that over 90,000 people receive food annually through its network of agencies. The population of the region is about 800,000. That means nearly 12% of the people need help putting food on their tables.

2. Most people who are poor could work, but don't.

False.

- As a result of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) or commonly called welfare reform established eligibility for benefits through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF program. Poor, able bodied parents must work 20 hours a week if their children are school age, in order to receive benefits and cash assistance. If these adults are unable to find paying work, they are required to perform 30 hours per week community service in order to maintain their benefit payments.
- The regulations and benefits vary in each state. Some states allow for training and educational programs to be substituted for paid work hours. Other states help recipients build their assets while still receiving public assistance.
- In western Massachusetts, 31% of the households that receive food through The Food Bank's emergency network have at least one person working.
- 35% of the food recipients are children less than 17 years of age, who should not be expected to work, and 8% are senior citizens.
- 11.8% of the emergency food recipients in the region get public cash assistance. (TANF or general assistance)

3. People who receive food stamps and public assistance often "cheat" the system.

False.

- Given the statistics above, most people who receive public assistance should not be expected to have the money they need for food.
- However, you may hear arguments about other ways people could get the food they need, or how some people "cheat" in a variety of ways: from taking more than they need to, selling the emergency food they get, or simply lying to get food stamps. There are rigorous programs in place to limit overpayment and fraud.
- The food stamp application in Massachusetts is 16 pages long. Although reforms are being instituted to simplify the process, 36% of those in western Mass getting emergency food said it was too difficult to apply, although they were probably eligible.

- There is growing research to support findings that welfare programs “cheat” recipients as well, through erroneously denied exemptions, or not offering proper assistance in applying for waivers, especially in cases of domestic violence, or providing translation services.

4. Caucasians make up the largest group living in poverty

True.

- 2008 census data shows the following poverty rates: 8.6% Caucasian, 11.8% Asian, 23.2% Hispanic, and 24.7% Black. There are more white people overall in the U.S. population, so the smaller percentage is still a majority.
- However, the numbers need to be examined in context. The disproportionate amount of poverty in the non-white sectors of the population raises issues of racism and economic injustice that need to be more closely examined.
- In western Massachusetts 49.5% of people who receive food through The Food Bank programs are Caucasian, 1% Asian, 26.5% Hispanic, and 19.4% African American. Once more, the racial imbalance in poverty and need is reflected by the fact the total population breakdown of the region is: Caucasian 81.3%, Asian 2%, Hispanic 11%, and African American 5.5%.

5. People can use welfare for more than 2 years

True.

- Federal law sets a 5 year lifetime limit on public assistance (welfare). In the U.S. the poor population is dynamic; low income people often move in and out of poverty and about 5% of the total population is considered chronically poor. There is no clear data on the effect of PRWORA on these trends.
- In Massachusetts, assistance is limited to 24 months within a 60 month period. In other words, there is a 2 year maximum in Massachusetts for every 5 years.

6. The maximum daily allotment of the SNAP (Food Stamp) Program in Massachusetts is \$6.60 per person

True.

- As with welfare benefits, an able bodied adult must fulfill work requirements in order to receive food stamps. The maximum allotment of food stamps is equal to \$2.20 per meal.
- The majority (49%) of those who get food stamps are children. 61% of children who use food stamps live in single-parent households.
- One out of every three people eligible for the Snap Program is not receiving benefits. This is mostly because they do not know that they are eligible.
- Despite myths to the contrary, research indicates that families on food stamps spend their food dollars more wisely than the average family. They succumb less often to the lure of fatty, sugary food and beverages than non-food stamp families. (Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. 1993)

7. Most impoverished households are headed by a single woman.

True.

- Households headed by a woman are often referred to as single parent households, though a man could also be the single parent.

- In 2009 29.9% of female-headed households lived in poverty. This is five times the rate for married-couple families with children.
- 56.9% of households with children under the age of 18 that get food from The Food Bank of Western MA member agencies are single-parent homes.

8. The cost of housing in the U.S. has an impact on why people are hungry.

True.

- Across the country a person has to earn an average of \$14.66 per hour, which is three times the federal minimum wage of \$5.85 as of 6/24/07 to afford to rent a modest two bedroom home. The gap between income and housing costs continues to increase, pushing family budgets to the limits.
- In Massachusetts a minimum wage earner (\$8.00 per hour as of 1/01/08 in MA) can afford monthly rent of no more than \$350. In fact, this wage earner would have to work 125 hours a week to afford to rent a two-bedroom unit.
- In western Massachusetts 25% of households using emergency food are behind on their rent or mortgage, and 31% of the households said that they had to regularly choose between paying for food and the rent or mortgage, and 28% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care. Food is frequently placed last in the budget when faced with increasing household expenses.

9. There is a direct relationship between education and earnings

True.

- Education is commonly considered to be a solution to poverty. Across the nation, in 2009, the poverty rate for individuals without a high school diploma was 24.2% compared to a rate of 3.7% for those with at least a bachelor's degree.
- There are no guarantees that an education will prevent hunger, since 75% of adults receiving emergency food from The Food Bank of Western MA have at least a high school diploma. However the higher the educational level completed the better the options for earning.
- Single mothers with poor educational attainment have a poverty rate of 50%.

10. For able bodied Americans, there is no reason to be unemployed.

False.

- Discrimination plays a role when a poor person applies for a job.
- There are millions of functionally illiterate adults who can't read or write well enough to work in many jobs.
- For families with young children there are additional concerns. Entry level pay in many jobs is less than or equal to the cost of childcare, making it impractical for both parents to work, or for many single parents to work. Many times there are not available openings in daycare programs.
- Economically speaking, the federal government actually counts on a certain percentage of unemployment. If people are afraid they might lose their job to someone who needs a job, they are less likely to ask for more pay. If the pay rate stays low, prices stay low and there is no inflation, which is helpful to people overall.
- In western Massachusetts 31.4% of the households that receive emergency food had at least one working adult.

True or False?

First, decide whether you think the following statements are true or false. Then, in small groups, discuss your answers. Are there any questions about which your group disagreed? Why?

1. _____ The poverty rate in the U.S. in 2009 was less than it was in 1970.
2. _____ Most people who are poor could work, but don't.
3. _____ People who receive food stamps or public assistance often "cheat" the system.
4. _____ Caucasians make up the largest group living in poverty.
5. _____ People can use welfare for more than 2 years.
6. _____ The maximum daily allotment of SNAP (food stamp) Program in Massachusetts is \$6.60 per person.
7. _____ Most impoverished households are headed by a single woman.
8. _____ The cost of housing has an impact on why people are hungry.
9. _____ There is a direct relationship between education and earnings.
10. _____ For able-bodied Americans, there is no reason to be unemployed.

ABBREVIATED ANSWER KEY (FRONT SIDE)

Print pages 7&8 double-sided. Cut, fold, and pass out answers to students in the class. After the students have fill out their individual true/false quiz, have various students read aloud each question and answer. Use the teacher answer key for additional discussion points.

FALSE	The poverty rate in 2009 was 14.3% while the rate in 1970 was 12.9%. There are currently 43.6 million people living in poverty in the U.S.
FALSE	Poor, able bodied parents must work 20 hours or volunteer 30 hours a week, if their children are school age, in order to qualify for federal benefits and cash assistance.
FALSE	Given the statistics in answer #2. Most people who receive public assistance should not be expected have the money they need for food.
TRUE	2008 census data shows: 8.6% Caucasian, 11.8% Asian, 23.2% Hispanic, and 24.7% Black. There are more Caucasians in the U.S., so the smaller percentage is till the majority
TRUE	Federal law sets a 5 year lifetime limit of public assistance (welfare).
TRUE	The maximum allotment of food stamps is equal to \$2.20 per meal. 49% of those who get food stamps are children.
TRUE	In 2009, 29.9% of female-headed households live in poverty. This is five times the rate of married-couple families with children.
TRUE	In Massachusetts a minimum wage earner (\$8.00 per hour) would have to work 125 hours per week to afford rent for a two bedroom apartment unit.
TRUE	Education is commonly considered to be a solution to poverty. In 2009, the poverty rate for individuals without a high school diploma was 24.4% compared to a rate of 3.7% for those with at least a bachelor's degree.
FALSE	Discrimination plays a role when a poor person applies for a job.

ABBREVIATED ANSWER KEY (BACK SIDE)

Cut, fold, and pass out answers to students in the class. After the students have fill out their individual true/false quiz, have various students read aloud each question and answer. Use the teacher answer key for additional discussion points.

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