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March 2020 Participant – Teaching Food and Nutrition for All

I currently teach cooking and food-oriented social studies classes at a high with the two-fold goal to engage at-risk youth to eat better but also explore critical questions about the world we live in. While my relationship to food and eating has changed and transformed quite a lot over the course of my life, food has overall been either a leading or supporting player in how my path through life has unfolded between my native country of Germany and my current home in the United States. In my current understanding I find food to be the perfect medium to create conversations about issues of health, sustainability and social justice and what the common good could look like in a globalized, technological world.

Participating has reconfirmed my perspective that health- and environment-related perspectives on food are incomplete without taking into account social justice as the foundation of how we approach the way our kids (and adults) eat. I have immensely benefited from learning about the history of food and nutrition education and about the frameworks that have been developed in order to help guide the study of food in the classroom and beyond. Having worked in both higher and secondary education as well as in the field of food activism across two continents, I believe that it is essential for research and practice to speak to each other in order for us to successfully transform the way our kids eat.

I plan on using some of the core frameworks and resources to make my food and cooking classes more structured and adapt my existing curriculum in a way that provides students with tools and incentives to explore their own food journeys. My hope is that students will not only learn to eat better but will also get a taste of the importance of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills that we as educators all too often fail to make relevant, especially for at-risk youth.