



Lucia Ferrante, Science Teacher, Port Chester Schools, NY

March 2020 Participant – Teaching Food and Nutrition for All

I joined the course for a number of reasons. Firstly, I had been saddened, watching the daily news reports on the Covid-19 pandemic. I was pleased when my district sent the notice about this course. I know that it would take my mind off the bad news televised daily, as well as provide a vital piece of missing information that I see as pivotal in our fight against this and every virus or pathogen. What news reports and medical staff have overlooked is for people to support their bodies' own immune function with behaviors that provide for optimal health. Secondly, I am quite passionate about teaching food and nutrition to young people. I have extensive background in my experiences with food from being raised in an Italian household, addressing weight concerns from overeating too many carbohydrates in the typical Italian diet, growing food in home gardens since childhood, studying biological sciences and researching health, becoming a vegetarian, studying eastern medicine, becoming a proprietor/chef and winning the 10 best eateries in Vegetarian Times' Restaurant Olympics, distributing prepared vegetarian foods to food coops, cafes, health food stores and fitness centers across the tri-state and upstate NY areas, teaching food justice and ecological sustainability as a science teacher to high school students and farming on my 14-acre farm with my farmer son and his family. I have recently become quite interested in exploring the human body's optimal immune function. This has brought me full circle back to the basics: growing my own whole, organic foods and supporting local agriculture. My grandmother used to tell me that she left the farm in Italy to come to America for a better life, I have learned that living close to the land and our food sources actually IS the better life! Lastly, I continually seek out professional development opportunities to enrich my teaching practice and knowledge for the enrichment of young learners. I strive to help students benefit by good food and nutrition knowledge for their optimal health, academic success, food equity and social justice.

I am learning critical information and current research in the field of food and nutrition



education through direct instruction from Dr. Koch and the teaching assistants, as well as different perspectives from the insights and reflections of the staff and my classmates. I am particularly interested in the history of food and nutrition teaching. The history really reflects the trends of the times and the social climate. Victory gardens of old have had a resurgence, as people recognize the need to sustain themselves and their families, in this difficult time of shortages. I have resorted to making my own soap, shampoo, conditioner, hand sanitizer, ketchup and more scratch food preparation than ever before. In addition, I have seen the effects of food programs in New York City pilot programs that make me hopeful that optimal food and nutrition education can be provided for all students in light of recent study results. I am further hopeful since the evidence is overwhelming – too overwhelming for any governmental administration to reverse the tide of food equity and justice for all.

This course, Teaching Food and Nutrition for All, has been a comprehensive analysis of the history of food and nutrition education throughout modern history in light of the social and political policies that govern its implementation. It has examined the movement from eating real food, to eating more highly processed foods with the onset of the industrial revolution to the return to the basics - the knowledge that eating real wholesome food is the solution to the growing health crises in our world. It is with these goals of health, equity and food and social justice, that food education has been conducted. Food and nutrition initiatives that have been launched in schools have provided concrete evidence to the effectiveness of such programs in meeting these goals for all. The course provides a hands-on approach to delivering that education to students so that they might make the necessary changes in their thinking about food, their relationships to it and their ultimate food choices for themselves and their families - creating the social change and mainstream shift that is vital if we are to sustain the planet for all life.