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*March 2020 Participant – Teaching Food and Nutrition for All*

Feedback from our students is a crucial part of being a teacher, even if it is not directly communicated. Knowing a student's experience with food gives us insight on preparedness to learn [from them]. If a student is hungry or concerned with their next meal, how can focus be placed on the multi-tasking of learning? This course has taught me terminology to understand student experiences with food to a depth that I have not thought about prior. Food insecurity can be crippling to a child. Not knowing if a meal will be present or not having proper nutrients to maintain the development of their young minds and support their physical growth, all play a part in the child's success in the classroom. Schools have played a huge role in the attempt to combat this problem, but work still needs to be done. While a child may see food as simply a source to satisfy hunger, empowering them to know about types of foods and the benefits of fruits and vegetables is key.

When I began this course I thought, well, kids are recipients of food at this point. They are not able to make the choices of what foods are entering the home. However, after course readings, I have the new understanding that what is taught about food at this age shapes future interaction. When we "inspire" and "motivate" students to make good nutritional choices for themselves, we are investing in their futures.

After this course, I will look at my school environment in a new way. While we have great programs in place like the option for breakfast, free water at lunch, salads as a daily option, and a monthly food dispersion, we can still make more changes to benefit our students, such as additional fresh food options and curriculum promoting nutrition and its importance. As educators, our role does not simply end when a child can read a word or perform a math strategy. We are here to promote the "whole" child, shaping their minds and advocating for their physical well being.