

FOOD & SUSTAINABILITY: WHY FOOD MATTERS

BLS Youth CAN has always been associated with saving the planet from the effects of climate change and “greening” things. But I’m guessing that up until now, most people haven’t associated us much with food. But this year BLS Youth CAN has been focusing on sustainable living as a whole way of life, and realizing that sustainability includes having sustainable eating habits and purchasing. Earlier this year we did some research about the topic and filmed a video for the “Real Food Video” contest in we had to fill in the blank, “real food is...” Some students came up with, “real food is local” and, “real food is sustainably grown” but my favorite phrase was, “real food is eaten by real people.” To me it meant that everyone, including students like us, are taking the actions necessary to make sure that our eating habits are sustainable.



Our video also featured facts about the food industry in America, pointing out the ridiculous number of food miles the average meal travels to get to your plate (1,500),

using catchy slogans (food for thought, eat wisely), and fun costumes (a cow costume that we’ve used to promote the idea of eating less meat, adding in a bit of humor to make the message more palatable!) View at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1L2s3HC2VI>



After submitting our Real Food contest video entry, we found that we were in the top four finalists eligible for the online voting competition part of the competition. Unfortunately, we only had four days to get people to vote for us, and were beaten by a 6th grade video with singing broccoli! We found out that although we didn’t win because we didn’t have enough votes for our video, the judges said they liked ours best, and said that they would send it to Michelle Obama! We showed the video to alumni on May 8th for the Alumni weekend, and they were very interested that BLS is starting to think about teaching about sustainable habits with food.

We took the information that we learned in making the Real Food video and used it to inform our decision to serve organic, vegetarian food from a local business at our annual Youth Climate Action Summit. City Feed & Supply in Jamaica Plain was the

perfect choice. They specialize in local and organic products and have a variety of bagels, muffins, and sandwiches that work well for a huge crowd of people. My personal favorite was the “Farmer’s Lunch”, which was made up of Extra sharp cheddar cheese, grain mustard, mayo, sliced granny smith apple, pickled green tomato, and red leaf lettuce on a baguette. There was also a tomato & mozzarella sandwich and a hummus & havarti sandwich.



Enjoy Food? Want to win \$100?
What would
YOU
Put in School Lunches?



Now's your chance to Choose!
To enter, propose a menu for a cafeteria lunch that:

- Can easily be prepared in a school kitchen
- Incorporates sustainably grown local ingredients
- Meets nutritional standards (*The Institute of Medicine*)
- Is DELICIOUS!

Promote your menu on a poster with your name & HR
Contest entry forms in 025
Submission Deadline Friday April 9
Voting In Lunches Thursday April 15
Sustainable Habits with Food!
www.blsyouthcan.org

I was also really proud of the creative ideas Youth CAN came up with this year to try and raise awareness among the rest of the student body at BLS about the connections between food and sustainability. For example we held a school wide contest for a dream lunch menu that had to have local, sustainable, healthy food. We offered a \$100 prize and the

chance to have the meal cooked for the whole school at lunch. All three lunches voted, and Will Osborn, an 8th grader won the grand prize!

Finally, I'm really excited about plans we have for the fall to hopefully start a farm to school program here at Boston Latin School, and bring locally grown food into our cafeteria lunches. We also want to plant an outdoor garden in some raised beds where we can start to grow some food that would be served in the cafeteria, and put up a greenhouse so we can extend the growing season. Wouldn't it be cool to walk into lunch and see a sign in the front of the cafeteria that said: Red Lettuce In Today's Lunch Grown In the BLS Greenhouse!?!?"

In June we had a meeting with City Sprouts, a community non-profit organization that helps schools with outdoor gardens growing food for the cafeteria and we visited a really cool garden at the Morse School in Cambridge to get some ideas for our own. We also were invited to a food services food tasting in June, where four BLS Youth CAN members weighed in on proposed cafeteria lunch choices! Next year are planning new contests and awareness campaigns to get the BLS student body thinking about and excited about sustainability and food. For example we want to start a waste-free lunch



program to go along with the zero-sort recycling program we're implementing in the fall.

Why waste free lunches? Because, "As Americans we have come to depend on the many convenience products that are available to us, and nowhere is this more evident than in the school. Much of the trash we generate comes from the packaging on the food we buy, and lunch foods are no exception. In fact, it has been estimated that on average a school-age child using a disposable lunch generates 67 pounds of waste per school year. That equates to 18,760 pounds of lunch waste for just one average-size elementary school. <http://www.wastefreelunches.org/>

Our waste free lunch project will educate and challenge students, parents, staff and administrators to know more about where trash

ends up and how we as individuals can reduce the amount of trash we generate. The goal will be to significantly reduce the amount of packaging and disposable waste in our school lunches. We'll also have more contests about creating healthy local lunch menus, estimating food miles, and more. We even applied to a program that matches schools with a local chef to design interesting meals.

Another really exciting thing we're planning is participating in the Real Food Challenge, and use their Real Food, a tool to track institutional food purchasing. Though designed for colleges and universities, this tool can be used by any institution, such as a hospital, corporation, or municipality. The website



encourages students to use this tool as a platform for discussion and action with dining services and administrators. It's a great way to get an inside look at dining service operations, to keep tabs on campus purchasing, and to make a quantitative goal for getting more real food on campus! Several of us are going to a summer training hosted by the Real Food Challenge in August.

Over all I feel that the way we focused on food this year truly reflected a main attitude of Youth CAN: Live healthy and Sustainably! I think we began to teach people to pay attention to what they do with food and think about how it impacts their body and the earth. Know where your food comes from, know how it is grown, know what's in it and whether or not it's good for you, and know who and what it supports (or harms) when you buy it! I'm even more excited about our plans for next year!

Lydia Burns, Class III

