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Building a Just and Sustainable World

EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LITERACY

Images, photos, and pictures stimulate the mind. For the viewer, they offer a chance to connect and question. They also offer potential for play and imagination, and pulling the observer into purposeful messages.

Most often, newspaper and magazine readers take a quick scan of or glance at photos and their captions. With this YES! lesson plan, you and your students can luxuriate—and pause—to truly understand an image, its message, and why it's interesting (or not).



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Step One: What do you notice? (before the facts)

Ask your students to make sense of the photograph by trusting their instincts of observation and inference. In doing so, the photograph offers possibilities and interpretations beyond a typical reading where the reader glances at the picture to reinforce their interpretation of the picture's title or caption. Do not introduce any facts, captions, or other written words outside of the image. You may hear: metal cans of some kind of liquid, a hand, lettuce, a cafeteria.

Step Two: What are you wondering? (thinking about the facts)

After you've heard what your students are noticing, you'll probably hear the peppering of questions (What's that liquid? Is this a cafeteria? Whose hand is this?). That's curiosity or wonder—the intermixing of observations and questions. This is a good time to reveal the photo's caption, accompanying quote, and facts about the actual situation. Watch how the conversation shifts from what they believe to be true to discerning the facts about the photo.

Photo caption:

More than 10 years ago, Brazil's fourth-largest city, Belo Horizonte, declared that food was a right of citizenship and started working to make good food available to all. One of its programs puts local farm produce into school meals. This and other projects cost the city less than 2 percent of its budget. In the photo, fresh passion fruit juice and salad as part of a school lunch.

Photo facts:

The photo is in an elementary school cafeteria. On the table are: silver canisters filled with fresh passion fruit juice; colorful trays of salad ingredients, including arugula, beets, and tomatoes; a metal bowl of chopped kale.

In Belo Horizonte, all school children eat for free. In the United States, school children qualify for free or reduced lunch if they meet federal guidelines on household income and family size.

Brazil's federal food policy on school lunches requires

that 70% of the budget be spent on natural or minimally process foods. This means no canned or frozen products, nor packaged cookies. Whole or fresh foods are purchased from local farmers.

Belo Horizonte offers local family farmers choice spots of public space to sell their produce directly to urban consumers. In exchange for the use of these prime locations, the city requires farmers to drive produce trucks to poor neighborhoods on the margins of the city on weekends so everyone has access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Belo Horizonte has three *Restaurante Popular* or *People's Restaurants* that serve 12,000 or more people each day for the equivalent of less than 50 cents a meal.

The cost of these efforts is less than 2 percent of the Belo city budget—about a penny a day per resident.

Step Three: What next? (jumping off the facts)

Learning more about a photo leads to bigger questions and an opportunity to discuss broader issues and perspectives.

What kind of food does your school cafeteria serve? Where do you think this food comes from? If you had the opportunity to decide your school cafeteria's menus, what would you offer?

How much hunger do you believe exists in your community? How does your community feed its hungry?

More resources around the image

Read the article:

The City that Ended Hunger

www.yesmagazine.org/yes4glappe

For a penny a day per resident, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, makes sure everyone is fed. What's most startling? It's easy.

Thank you to educator Barry Hoonan for contributing to and shaping this lesson.