

# Linking nutrition, growing food and developing cooking skills to improve healthy behaviours.

---

**Matthew Western**

**Published 4 May 2017**

To discuss this case study, please contact us via email [customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk)



**Sharing  
Best Practice**



**Camden**



## Key Points

- Our school recognises the important relationships between nutrition, growing food and developing cooking skills. Linking these areas has helped achieve our aim to change mind sets and help improve healthy behaviours for our school community
  - Delivering a comprehensive practical cooking and nutrition programme, encouraging food growing, establishing our Food Waste Café, promoting sustainability and working closely with our families have been key aspects of our work
- 

## Purpose

### What were your reasons for doing this development work?

Our school wanted to develop a project which would encompass the key aims of supporting the health and wellbeing of children and families and promoting sustainability. In order to do this we have:

- Introduced a planned programme of cooking and nutrition education for all pupils in our school
- Increased the number of opportunities for pupils to cook a range of healthy meals and develop key cooking skills
- Promoted consistent healthy eating messages across a range of curriculum areas and throughout the school day
- Provided learning opportunities for our pupils about the value of thinking and acting responsibly towards our environment
- Developed pupils' enterprise skills through our Food Waste Café
- Fostered a love of cooking in our children, embedded in the introduction of a pizza oven
- Hosted practical parent/child cooking workshops in our Earth Kitchen
- Developed a programme of study, which highlights the interconnected processes of growing, cooking and nutrition

### Who were the identified target learners?

- All pupils in our school

- Specific parents (families for life workshops)

### **What specific curriculum area did you intend to have impact on?**

- Design and Technology (Cooking and Nutrition)
- Global Education (SDG 2015)

### **How were you intending to improve pupil learning?**

### **What were your success criteria?**

## **Methodology**

### **What did you do - what teaching approaches did you use?**

#### **Earth Kingdom Community Playground and Kitchen**

- Active Spaces funding enabled our school to develop the Earth Kingdom Community Playground project to enable pupils to grow, cook and play together.
- The Earth Kingdom includes a garden area, active play space and fully equipped kitchen.
- The pizza oven has been the most recent addition; the integration of this resource in the school community had been supported by Franco Manca, who have sent head pizzaolos to the school to train staff and run after school community events

#### **Training**

- Teaching Assistants, the Design and Technology Lead and the Cookery School Lead attended Cooking and Nutrition in the Curriculum Training delivered by the Camden Health and Wellbeing Team

#### **Cooking and Nutrition Opportunities**

- We delivered mixed year group cooking classes in the Community Earth Kitchen – both as part of the Cooking and Nutrition Programme during the school day and as an extra-curricular activity
- The cookery lessons are on rotation as they are so popular and we have a range of year groups in each class which is great for allowing different ages to mix

- We established a weekly 1 1/2 hour after school cooking club for years 3-6

### **Sustainability/Enterprise**

- Promoting the value of the Sustainable Development Goals among our children has enabled them to prosper into motivated, informed and caring members of the community
- As part of our annual STEAM exhibition, our pupils are supported to set up a pupil-run Food Waste Cafe where unused, nutritious food was donated to create healthy meals and snacks. This involved selling the food to raise awareness of responsible consumption which is aligned to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12. The café which is run on a fortnightly basis has also helped raise valuable funds for food education in school
- Our school has also appointed a Sustainability Task Force with pupils from year 2 to year 6. These pupils applied for the position and other pupils from across the school participate on a rotational basis to support activities to encourage sustainability in our school
- The Sustainability Task Force pupils hold assemblies on food and cooking projects, monitor growth in new class growing beds and support the school gardener with the integration of the new greenhouse.
- The Sustainability Task Force also visits local shops to promote responsible consumption and ask for donations for the food waste café
- Children will be bringing in unwanted nutritious food donations, which will serve as pizza toppings in our 2017 STEAM exhibition. Using our pizza oven to support our SDG agenda has generated excitement in the school
- Strong existing link with local Wahaca branch, who have worked with years 3-5 in the restaurant and cooked with children in the Earth Kitchen

### **What specific teaching resources did you use?**

### **What CPD experiences, materials, research and expertise have you drawn on?**

## **Outcomes and Impact**

### **What has been the impact on pupil learning?**

Through being involved in the Food Waste Café, cooking club and curriculum food technology opportunities, our children are demonstrating a significantly improved understanding of

various key cooking skills eg safe use and handling of knives and building their confidence in a range of previously unfamiliar cooking skills, including beating, whisking, peeling and grating, with some of our older children particularly enjoying learning a range of new pan-skills. The children's confidence in talking about their produce and awareness of allergies and nutritional benefits to parents has been a particularly interesting benefit.

Children involved in food technology opportunities are showing a heightened understanding of the need to maintain a balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle. Our cooking club and Food Waste Care prioritises using familiar and unfamiliar fresh fruits and vegetables in a variety of ways. Many children comment on the sheer amount of new vegetables they have learnt about (squash, courgettes, kale) and how surprised they were to discover that many delicious recipes can be prepared almost exclusively using vegetables (i.e.courghetti). We request that only nutritious foods are donated to the Food Waste Cafe and, as such, children are exposed to a range of healthy ingredients, which they then turn into dishes worth buying! Preparing recipes using a variety of healthy ingredients (which many children may not have at home) has helped to encourage lifelong healthy practices.

Children across the school are bringing in donations for the cafe and a dialogue about the need to use our food produce responsibly though recycling unused food has opened up. Our children enjoy talking about and promoting awareness of where our unused food goes, the dangers of not keeping an eye on our carbon footprints and how we can make a more sustainable change through cooking. Many children in the junior building speak with insight about Sustainable Development Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption.

Specific children, who often find controlling their behaviour to be a challenge, thoroughly enjoy the kinesthetic experiences cooking club and the food waste cafe provide them with. We have also seen that SEN pupils with low self-esteem find the accomplishments made in the school Earth Kitchen to be a highly rewarding experience – where they can excel as skilled, passionate and informative cooks.

The cookery lessons are on rotation as they're so popular and we have a range of year groups in each class which is great for allowing different ages to mix. With the successful and popular recipes we use in cookery club, the children are also now compiling their own recipe book to share throughout the school.

## **Evidence of impact on pupil learning**

- Increased numbers of pupils participating in extra-curricular cooking and growing activities as evidenced by monitoring of attendance
- Positive feedback from pupils, parents and teachers about the range of cooking and growing opportunities in the school
- Increased knowledge, confidence and skills of pupils to cook healthy meals and grow food.

- Enhanced awareness of SDG 12 – responsible consumption and how it will shape of futures

## **What has been the impact on teaching?**

### **Evidence of impact on teaching**

## **What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?**

### **Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership**

## **What is the crucial thing that made the difference?**

- Ensuring that our cooking and growing project is aligned with the whole school agenda to support the health and wellbeing of children and families and promoting sustainability has helped ensure its success
- Support provided for the project from the Senior Leadership Team
- Sufficient allocation of curriculum time in order to deliver a comprehensive, planned programme of cooking and nutrition education
- Providing food technology opportunities in a creative context (food waste café/Wahaca workshops/pizza oven) has vastly heightened children's engagement and intrigue

## **What would your next steps be?**

- Widen our after school food-technology opportunities so that more pupils can participate. We are also considering how our new pizza oven can be incorporated into these new opportunities
- Staff to attend the Family Kitchen Training delivered by the Camden Health and Wellbeing Team to further enhance our cooking offer to children and their families
- Additional staff to attend the Cooking and Nutrition in the Curriculum Training delivered by the Health and Wellbeing Team to ensure consistent messages are delivered throughout the school
- In the 2016-17 school year we will trial using a food technology questionnaire to establish a baseline of our children's knowledge, understanding and experiences of

cooking and nutrition education. At the end of the academic year, another assessment will take place to further evidence impact and identify areas for development

## Sharing Practice

### **If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where should they start?**

- Support from Senior Leadership and sufficient time allocation is key to successfully delivering a planned cooking, nutrition and growing curriculum in school
- Ensure that your teachers have the confidence to deliver your cooking and nutrition programme. –The Health and Wellbeing Team at Camden are able to provide free practical food education training for your staff
- Introducing pupils to the idea of a Food Waste Café as a means of recycling, reusing and reducing through assemblies and Global Goal learning was key to gaining support for the project. This helped ensure the Café's success once it was officially trialed at our annual STEAM exhibition and then implemented on a regular basis
- Consider making contact with local organisations to help support your work. Bringing in and visiting external organisations, such as our local Wahaca branch, who also support our mindset, has been incredibly beneficial

### **What would be the essential elements to include?**