

How did the students become inspired to pursue the project. What were the highlights? Did you have any challenges?

As an IB Candidate School, we have a requirement for all students in the 5th grade to participate in Exhibition. This year we decided to do our Exhibition on the theme "Food and Society." Exhibition is a project where the students create their own topics, and research a topic, based on the theme, they are interested in. The students, in groups of 3-4, must write a central idea and 3 lines of inquiry based on their topic. They must write a research report, create an artistic representation of their topic (it could be through drama, dance, art, or music), give a presentation on their topic (every student must speak), and finally, they must create an action plan, and do something to better their community and the world around them. The students chose topics ranging from "bees," "artificial sweeteners," to "school lunches."

This project took us 6 weeks, and had many moving parts. The students had mentor teachers, and met with them once a week to discuss their project. They also had to interview first hand sources. Every group was able to interview someone in their chosen topics industry. It was a valuable process that helped our students become empowered and excited about learning. It was very hard having 10-11 groups of students constantly working and buzzing around. It felt like an 11 ring circus. It was also difficult finding first hand mentors for a few groups. Especially the harder topics like "Food Advertisements."

There were 100+ students participating in Exhibition in groups of 3. As well as our entire staff. We had 32 groups of students who completed their own action plan, and took action around their community. They ranged from creating travelling plays and teaching younger students about eating healthy to writing an article for the Vista Press. We even had students plant lavender at our school to help the bee population grow. There were 32 service learning projects that helped our community understand what the true meaning of food and society is. I personally saw my students grow too. They were able to make better and healthier choices at lunch. I also saw younger students looking at the food labels to see how much sugar they were consuming.

The best part of the whole experience was when our SpEd student who were once in a mild/moderate class spoke for their entire presentation. All last year this one student cried everyday at school, and was so fearful she didn't participate in the yearly grade level performance. However, after going through this whole experience, she proudly said her presentation to a packed audience on the night of Open House and our Exhibition presentations. Though she still struggles with reading, writing, and math, what she learned through this experience was confidence, and she will take that with her to middle school next year.



Presenting their knowledge through a song.

Raising Money for the Water Project. The money went to building a well at a school in Kenya.



Tie dying to raise awareness for animal cruelty.



Creating booklets to raise awareness of the dangers of food dyes.



Planting lavender around campus to provide bees with nourishment.