Sugar in Our Lunches

Lesson 4

**Purpose:** To demonstrate to students the correlation between single use plastic (which can’t be recycled) and unhealthy food (high sugar content).

This lesson should be done before snack time so lunch kits are full.

**Materials:**

\*a bag of sugar

\*teaspoons

\*used Ziplock bags

\*chrome books

\*student lunches

**Procedure:**

1. Discuss single use plastic and how it cannot be recycled. It often helps to collect the single use plastic that is in students’ lunches for a week before this activity. Then, bring it out to show students how much single use plastic one class has generated in a week.

2. Have students open their lunches and add up the number of single use plastic pieces in their lunch kits. If students feel comfortable, they can share this amount with the class. A discussion about why there is so much single use plastic in lunches today could also be valuable.

3. Students use nutrition labels on packaging or google search the sugar content of their lunch items. They should keep a running total. It is important that students know that they are only adding up the free sugar. See below for terms and a list of ingredients synonymous with sugar. Juice is considered a free sugar.

**Note:** It is also important to discuss sugar in terms of fruit. It is great to eat an apple or berries, etc. because actual fruit contains fiber which the body needs. However, eating too much fruit is also hard on the body. Juice is a less healthy option because it lacks fiber and is also made up of more than one serving of fruit.

4. Once students have the total grams of sugar in their lunch, they need to convert this into teaspoons.

**Convert grams to teaspoons (5 grams = 1 teaspoon)**

5. They measure out the number of teaspoons of sugar in their lunch and put them in a Ziplock bag. Students then write the amount of sugar (in grams and in teaspoons) on the outside of the bag. I staple these bags onto a bulletin board in the hallway. It’s a startling visual.

6. Discuss the World Health Organizations recommendations around sugar.

**WHO 5-10 teaspoons of free sugar 25-50 grams of sugar**

7. Discuss the correlation between single use plastic and sugar. Discuss how we could reduce this type of packaging. This discussion leads us directly to the second half of our unit in which we teach students to make homemade healthy snacks.

Terms

Free Sugar

\*any sugar added to a food or drink. Or, the sugar that is already in honey, syrup and fruit juice.

\* Information on Sugar

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition/sugar-salt-and-fat/free-sugars>

The website below has a list of free sugars that often appear on package labels.

<https://sugarscience.ucsf.edu/hidden-in-plain-sight/#:~:text=There%20are%20at%20least%2061,and%20rice%20syrup%2C%20among%20others>.