

Sharing the culture of food production

Michele Whaley, West High School, Anchorage

Materials

- laminated copies of the questions blown up to post on the board
- magnet or other means of attachment
- magnet board
- Russian Federation exchange or immigrant students

Objectives

Students will compare food production and procurement in Alaska and the Russian Federation.

Students will compare food production and procurement within Alaska.

Students will develop understanding and appreciation of differences

Alaskan students will meet children from another culture.



This project presented by Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom



through funding from the Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium and the USDA. For more information, visit

www.agclassroom.org/ak
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Introduction

All the high schools have exchange students assigned to them for part or all of a school year. Often these students experience difficulty when speaking to groups because there is so much to share and yet it is hard to focus on any particular area. This plan will assist students to present some information about their culture, while learning about Alaska and Alaskans. The lesson will give Alaskans an opportunity to hear a variety of viewpoints about food and consumption within their own classroom or school. The lesson is also a means of better integrating not only exchange students but also immigrant students.

Directions

Prepare a set of large-print signs with the list of statements. They should be completed so that they will attach to the board in a classroom, but not be so large that they will not all fit on the board. It may be best to create them on card stock or other heavy paper, laminate them, then attach magnets so that they can be put on a magnetic board (typical for most classrooms in the ASD).

Also print out pictures of people gathering mushrooms and berries, families canning salmon or bottling berries, of family gardens, of Russian dacha gardens, of large Alaska gardens, of an American grocery store, of a Russian bread store, vegetable and meat market, and an open-air market, Laminate them and place magnets on them.

The exchange students introduce themselves and tell the students that they have noticed that there are some big differences in the way that Americans get their food as well as what's available to Americans and Russians, especially in the winter. They draw a set of Venn diagrams on the board, marking them for "Russians," "Alaskans," and "both." Then they begin to read the statements, one by one.

In each case, they call on students to discuss where the sign should be placed in the Venn diagram. Pictures are also placed into the Venn diagram appropriately after discussion.

As the lesson progresses, it may become clear that many of the topics can be considered typical of both regions. The Russian students themselves may admit to wide variety, even in Russia, and the Alaskan students may notice that there are regional and cultural differences even in their classroom.

As a culminating exercise, students should write a short paragraph telling the visitors what surprised them during the presentation. The visitors can write the same assignment. If there is time at the end of the lesson, students can read them aloud. Otherwise, the exchange students can give theirs to the host teacher(s) and the students can hand them to the exchange students as a way of letting them know what each side learned.

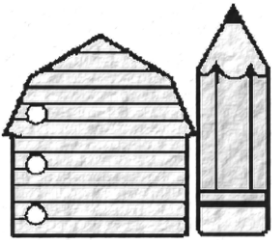
Suggested grade levels
5-12

Alaska Content Standards

World Languages: 2.1, 2.2, 4.2, 5.1

History: A6, A 9, B3, B4, D1, D6

English: A4, D1, D4, E1, E4



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Michele Whaley teaches Russian at West High in Anchorage.

Statement list

In the late summer, we spend many hours bottling and canning fruits and vegetables.
 We get our vegetables and fruits at the store.
 We buy our vegetables and fruits at an outdoor market.
 We have a garden in which we grow vegetables and fruits.
 There are farms in our region that provide us with much food in the summer.
 Our family has grown fruits and vegetables together for generations.
 Our family gathers berries and mushrooms in the forest to preserve for the winter.
 Our family makes jams and jellies.
 We have berry bushes in our yard.
 We have close ties to our land.
 We have to travel more than half an hour to get to our garden/farm.
 We take measures to protect our earth by restricting pesticides and recycling.
 Many farmers use greenhouses to extend the growing period.
 We grow tomatoes inside our house.
 We start seedlings for our garden under special lights in our house.

Websites

Dacha: What does it mean for a Russian?
<http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/asebrant/life/dacha.html>
 Why did I go to Siberia?
<http://www.alaska.net/~egropp/russia1.html>
 Crop profile for mixed vegetables in Alaska
<http://pestdata.ncsu.edu/cropprofiles/docs/AKmixedvegetables.html>
 Alaska Crop Map
<http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/cropmap/alaska/alaskatotals.html>

Variations

This lesson outlines an exchange between students familiar with Alaska and those familiar with Slavic cultures. The same method could be used to look at food production and consumption among other groups.

Discussion Points

- There are marked similarities and differences in food cultures. What causes the differences (traditions; productions methods; processing techniques; lack or availability of processing facilities; climate; topograph; religious beliefs, etc.) and similarities (basic needs; migration; climate; topography; media and advertising, etc.)?
- Agriculture is important in every culture. How is the image of a farmer differ from region to region? Are farmers more respected some regions than others?
- Subsistence farming means feeding one's own family. Production farming means earning money selling a crop, often in a family farm. Corporate farming refers to very large farming operations that employs multiple outside workers. Discuss how the prevalence of each type of farm affects agriculture in various regions, countries or states.