

Food Waste and Recovery Efforts at Lincoln High School and Southeast Community of San Diego

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Introduction

The issue that this research project first sought out to tackle was food waste and recovery efforts at Lincoln High School, a local Southeast High School of San Diego, with an emphasis on capacity building for youth through a community youth development framework. The question driving this research project was how can Lincoln High School serve as a model for the larger San Diego Unified School District encourage healthy and sustainable food choices and practices that would in essence reduce food waste at the local campus.

In identifying food waste issues and seeking alternatives and strategies to tackle the issue, it was important to incorporate the voice of the students. Students working at the school garden that was already established at Lincoln High School expressed an interest in initiating a composting effort, Richard Winkler, a key member of the San Diego Food Systems Alliance was able to support the students in this endeavor by providing resources and guidance to start a small pilot composting project.

With the help and support of the San Diego County Communities for Excellence (Cx3) Project Coordinator, Karen Bahena, and Community Health Promotion Specialist, Juanita E. Garcia, we were able to initiate some field work at Lincoln High School. This fieldwork encompassed raising awareness and informing students about food waste and recovery. The next step was the development of an internship and recruitment of students interested in working on food waste on campus. Furthermore, myself and the partnerships at the San Diego County developed a plan to conduct a food waste audit at Lincoln High School and obtain an industrial scale.

Further fieldwork in Southeast San Diego involved networking and working with a local nonprofit in Southeast San Diego, UrbanLife Farms, and I will be teaching a class during the summer, on institutional racial projects that have led to food insecurity amongst minority groups and work with students to develop a youth action research.

Materials and Methods

The approach undertaken in this research effort was centered around networking with leaders and organizations in Southeast San Diego in order to establish familiarity around work that was already happening and where I could focus my research and fieldwork efforts.

Partnerships with UrbanLife Farms coordinator, Amanda Jordan, and San Diego County Project Coordinator, Karen Bahena and Richard Winkler was key in efforts undertaken.

The development of a food waste internship and recruitment of students at Lincoln High School and UrbanLife Farms.

- Internship Application Link
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1hNI9IYgC016tYcTh7j87YTxl5ehm_gkZzqf7RGiIHuo/viewform

Development of school food survey to identify primary reasons for food waste on campus, and to seek an understanding of opinions about school lunch overall.

Plan to conduct food waste audit.



Conclusions

Despite the challenges and shortcomings of this research project, it has been a unique learning experience. This project has been an effort at extending resources and learning opportunities for students in Southeast San Diego and Lincoln High School. Through this project, I was able to gain knowledge and networks that will enable me to keep investing efforts around food.

Future Goals

My future goals are to work with UrbanLife Farms and the San Diego County in Southeast San Diego and Lincoln High School in the fight against food waste.

Furthermore, I will seek to finish off the plans of this research and conduct the food waste audit at Lincoln High School, as well as complete the school lunch survey data.

During the summer, I work with UrbanLife Farms in developing a youth-led action research, and teach students about different aspects of food justice.

Results and Outcomes

The outcome of my research project and fieldwork served to generate awareness and conversation amongst students, teachers, and staff at Lincoln High School. This project faced many challenges, despite the extensive strategies and plans to initiate the Food Waste and Recovery Internship at Lincoln High School.

Further challenges were faced at the administrative level, and thus the school food survey and food waste audit were not approved by deadline of this research project. A very limited amount of school lunch surveys completed by students were collected at UrbanLife Farms, and did not suffice to extract informative data.

UrbanLife Farm and I will be partnering over the summer through their internship program to teach students about institutional racial projects that have led to food insecurity amongst minority groups and the development of a youth-led action research project.

Literature Cited

- https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1hNI9IYgC016tYcTh7j87YTxl5ehm_gkZzqf7RGiIHuo/viewform
- Joshi, Anupama, and Robert Gottlieb. *Food Justice (Food, Health, and the Environment)*. N.p.: MIT, 2010. Print.
- <http://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/how-we-work/securing-meals/reducing-food-waste.html>

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Project Goals

The goals of this project were to inform and raise awareness around issues of food, food waste, and food recovery. Furthermore, another goal was to gain knowledge about some of the work around food already happening outside of UCSD and in communities like Southeast San Diego, where food insecurity is a predominant issue.

- Identify and recruit students seeking to make a change.
- Develop an internship that would support youth leadership.
- Conduct a school food survey.
- Conduct a food waste audit
- Network and work with local organization, UrbanLife Farm, to assist in their fight for sustainable food practices.

