

Chapter 3

The Food Supply

Students and the Food Supply

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

Kelsie, knowing some children die of starvation or suffer from malnutrition and constant hunger, has long worried about the food supply. At one time she did not think she had the resources to help prevent hunger or food shortage. She says, “I know now that I can do more than I thought I could before. I now feel I have great power to change the world.”

Kelsie learned about positive action through the garden-based science project at Pulaski School in Chester, Pennsylvania. With a group of students, she maintains an organic garden on school grounds. Under the guidance of their science teacher, students work the garden with some help from senior citizens in the community. Students donate the garden’s produce to a center where it is used to feed the homeless and needy in their community. “I feel better about myself as a person knowing I can do something for somebody else,” says Kelsie.

Not only do these students feed the needy, but they also use an environmentally safe method to grow their food. Students provide superior, safe, pesticide-free produce grown without polluting the air, land, and water. Zaima, one of the students involved in the project, is proud of using gardening methods that protect the environment. “We need to work together to take care of the soil, the water, the air,” she says.

Instead of using chemical fertilizers, students compost all wastes from the garden. The Chester students do not use pesticides because they can leave toxic residues behind. Instead, they use nontoxic methods to control garden pests. For example, they set up bird feeders to attract insect-eating birds. They even use bacteria to fight pests. “We spray *bacillus thuringiensis* on plants for cabbage moths and some other insects,” explains Teresa, another student. These bacteria do not affect human beings. They live in the intestinal tracts of insects in the larva stage, causing the larva to stop eating and die.

Like the students in Chester, students at a local high school in Los Angeles, California, avoid pesticides on their organic garden. “When we see insects, we just take them off,” says Ebony, a student at the school.

“I have seen more insects in other people’s gardens than I do in ours, and these people use pesticides,” adds another student. “It’s good to see kids working together without chemicals to grow vegetables that are safe to eat.”

The organic garden at Crenshaw High is a corporate project conducted by Food from the ’Hood, and founded, owned, and operated by students with help from their biology teacher.

“We decided from the beginning that we want to give back to the community,” says Ebony.

Food from the ’Hood gives back to the community in several ways. Members sell organic produce, providing a source of pesticide-free food. At their school, they provide safe, healthy snacks by selling packaged organic vegetables picked moments before they are sold.

In addition, Food from the ’Hood contributes 25 percent of the produce for distribution to the needy. According to one student, “There are no words to describe what you feel when you see a hungry child or family get food, especially healthy food. The least I can do is help these young kids get a decent meal whenever I can.”

Proceeds from sales go into a college education fund. Student workers earn credits for time spent working in the garden or running the business. They will withdraw the money earned when they enter college. To date, the program has awarded nearly \$200,000 in scholarships.

Food from the ’Hood is not only helping to brighten the futures of the hungry, but it is also shaping those of the students involved. Cheryl has completely changed her plans for the future since joining Food from the ’Hood. “This project has opened my eyes up,” she says. “I never dreamed of owning a business before. Now I know I am going to own my own business as an adult. This project has shown me an environmentally friendly business can make a profit *and* contribute to the community. We grow food, feed the hungry, and still leave the land healthy.”

(Continued on next page)

Thinking Critically

1. How does organic gardening reduce waste in landfills?

2. Would you pay high prices for organic produce? Explain.

3. Explain how projects, such as those described in this activity, can help students feel better about themselves and change their goals for the future.

4. How can you apply what you have learned from this article in your own home, school, or community?

For Further Study

- ◆ Investigate the effects of pesticide use. Are the effects of pesticides limited to the plants on which these chemicals are used? Explain your findings in a brief report and share it with the class.
- ◆ Research integrated pest management. What are some of the methods used to control insects? Summarize your findings in a brief, written report. Submit your report to your teacher.
- ◆ Investigate local food stores to find out what types of organic produce are available and where they are sold. Compare the prices of organic food with prices of nonorganic produce.
- ◆ Investigate three local, national, or global organizations that supply food for those in need. How do they distribute food? To whom do they distribute it? If possible, find out how many people can be fed for a specific dollar amount. Summarize your findings in a brief report and share your findings with the class.