



Welcome to Focus on Food

Introduction

School nutrition programs can play a pivotal role in the health of children. Last year, over 5 billion lunches were served as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP); in California alone, this number was over 500 million. Recognizing the important role that schools have in student health, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 resulted in the most significant changes to the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP) in decades. Many of the changes were focused on improving the healthfulness of the meals served, by requiring whole grains and increased amounts and variety of fruits and vegetables.

Focus on Food is a nutrition curriculum designed for school nutrition program staff (such as servers, cooks, and nutrition assistants) to learn more about how the school nutrition meal pattern requirements are connected to health and nutrition. Our goal with this curriculum is for school nutrition staff to understand that they have the ability to improve student health and empower staff to encourage students to choose and consume healthier options in the lunchroom. The lessons are designed to assist learners in gaining an awareness of general nutrition recommendations, while allowing them to discover connections between these recommendations and the importance of school nutrition program requirements. A key component of each lesson is applying the knowledge gained to the daily lives of the learner, whether at the workplace or at home.

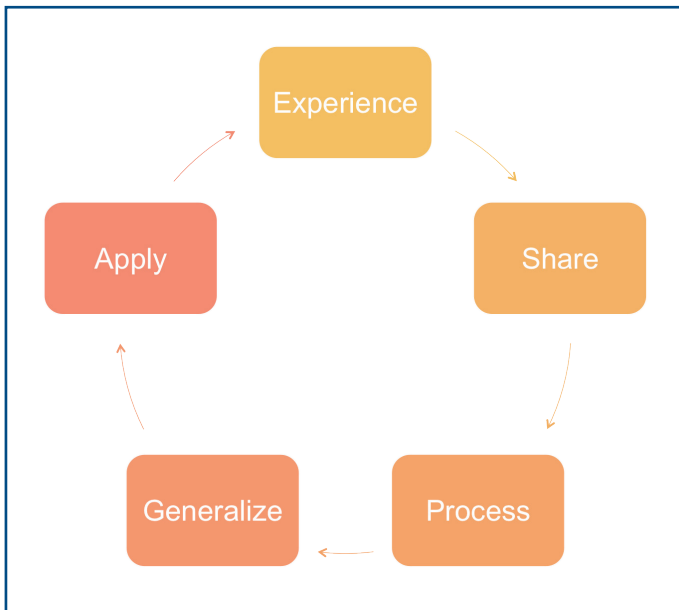


Getting Acquainted with Focus on Food

Teaching and Learning Strategies

The activities in the *Focus on Food* curriculum were designed using learner-centered methods, in particular, the 5-step Experiential Learning Cycle by Pfeiffer and Jones (1983): Experience, Sharing, Processing, Generalizing, and Application. Experiential learning is grounded in the idea that experience is essential to learning and understanding.

Specifically, experiential learning involves a recurring sequence of three distinct steps: 1) an experience (“Experiencing”) that involves learner exploration; 2) a period of discussion and reflection (“Sharing, Processing and Generalizing”) where learners share their reactions and observations, process their experience, and make generalizations to



real-life examples; and 3) an opportunity to apply (“Apply”) new knowledge and skills in an authentic manner, which helps learners deepen and broaden their understanding (it helps learning last!).

Inquiry is a teaching and learning strategy that engages learners in activities requiring observation and manipulation of objects and ideas in order to construct knowledge and develop skills. Inquiry is grounded in experience, focuses on the use and development of critical thinking skills, and targets the learning and application

of specific content knowledge. In addition, inquiry starts with a question; effective questioning strategies are critical when facilitating inquiry-based learning. Open-ended questions or prompts promote learner inquiry and are considered more effective than closed-ended questions or prompts.

Experiential and inquiry-based learning may be uncomfortable for your learners, but this is actually a good thing because we learn more when we are outside of our comfort zones. It may be tempting to try to explain to your learners step-by-step how to solve a problem, but by allowing them to struggle and try different methods provides more opportunity to learn.

Overview of Lessons

This curriculum consists of ten lessons that emphasize different concepts. The lessons are sequenced so that foundational concepts are discovered first, and then built upon with more advanced concepts as they continue through each lesson.

Lesson 1: Nutrients in Action

In Lesson 1, participants are introduced to the concepts that different foods provide different nutrients and different nutrients perform different functions in the diet. The importance of variety is emphasized as well. In the learning activity, participants analyze a week of lunch choices for three students. The student lunch choices are compared and contrasted and participants discuss how the choices impact the nutrient intake of students and what this might mean for their growth and health.

Lesson 2: How Does Your Food Measure Up?

In Lesson 2, participants explore the differences between portion and serving sizes, and how the Nutrition Facts Label can be used to compare foods. In the learning activity, participants are given a variety of food items and are asked to serve themselves a portion of that food. Using Nutrition Facts Labels, they compare that amount with serving size for that food and make observations.

Lesson 3: Get Your Move On

In Lesson 3, participants learn about the many benefits of physical activity and that breathing rate and heart rate will differ depending on activity intensity. Participants are given a set of cards with different physical activities and are asked to organize them based on different criteria. Then participants engage in light, moderate, and vigorous activity, calculating heart rate and breathing rate for each level of activity.

Lesson 4: MyPlate – Foods for Life

Once participants gain an understanding of nutrient needs and physical activity in the previous lessons, Lesson 4 explores how MyPlate recommendations differ depending on gender, age, and activity level. Participants are given cards that describe hobbies, activity level, and age for a character. They identify the recommendations for their character and design a day's meals and snacks for their character.

Continued on following page

Lesson 5: Increasing Plant-based Foods in School Nutrition Programs

In Lesson 5 participants learn about the benefits of increasing plant-based foods in the diet. The activity asks them to modify a recipe by either swapping out animal foods for plant-based foods or by adding plant-based foods. They then observe the resulting changes in the nutrient profile.

Lesson 6: Nutrients of Concern

In Lesson 6, participants dive deeper into the differences in nutrient recommendations between males and females and children and adults by exploring nutrients of concern. Participants use clues to identify different nutrients and then recommend changes to a character's diet to help them meet his or her nutrient needs. The activity closes with a discussion in which each group shares their character's food choices and the changes they've decided to make.

Lesson 7: Understanding Influences on Food Choices

Lesson 7 shifts gears a little bit to focus on how an individual's food choices are influenced by a variety of factors. Participants review food choices characters have made under a variety of circumstances and then brainstorm on flip chart paper environmental and individual factors that might have influenced the character's choices.

Lesson 8: How Smart is Your Lunchroom?

Lesson 8 builds on the previous lesson with an exposure to how school nutrition staff can use Smarter Lunchrooms Movement principles to encourage healthy behaviors. Participants create a plan using Smarter Lunchrooms Movement techniques to increase sales of a menu item in a school. As part of the plan, they create a poster to promote the menu item using art supplies.

Lesson 9: Nutrition and Academic Success

In Lesson 9, participants explore the connection between good nutrition and academic success. In the activity, participants create a skit to address a school community member's concerns about school lunch using information about how school meals contribute to a student's nutrient intake and various aspects of academic success.

Lesson 10: Working Toward Wellness

Lesson 10 ties together everything they've learned in the previous lessons through the lens of School Wellness Policies. Participants learn about creating a school environment that promotes student health, well-being, and ability to learn by designing their ideal wellness policy.

Using Focus on Food

Each lesson consists of a hands-on activity, a brief lecture, and one goal setting activity. The goal setting activities provide the participants with the opportunity to take what they have learned and apply it to independent, real-world situations in the workplace or at home. This application of knowledge is a critical step of the learning process. Here's what you'll find in each lesson.

Background Information

This section provides facilitators with a brief overview of the subject matter and provides examples to help explain the importance of the topic. This information is for the facilitator's use, and is not intended to be shared with participants.

Concepts and Vocabulary

Facilitators are provided with a list of defined concepts and vocabulary to be discovered by the participants during their exploration and completion of the activities. The list should not be provided to the participants. At the end of each activity, facilitators should ensure that the appropriate terms and concepts have been discovered by or introduced to the participants.

Learning Activity

Each lesson consists of a learner-centered activity in which the majority of learning takes place. More detail on what you will find in each learning activity can be found on page 8.

Expanding Knowledge

Through the activity, participants will discover or be introduced to most of the concepts of the lesson. The Expanding Knowledge section of each lesson consists of 5 to 15 minutes of lecture using PowerPoint slides to reinforce the concepts that have been learned, and to expand on these concepts with more detail and information.

Goal Setting

Following Expanding Knowledge, each lesson has a short Goal Setting activity. This is a key part of the learning cycle, as it allows participants to reflect on what they learned, and how it can be applied in their own lives.

Newsletter

Each lesson has an accompanying newsletter designed to reinforce the concepts learned in the activity in a fun, user-friendly format.

Activity Format

1.1: Learning Activity

Overview

In this activity, participants will explore how different foods provide different nutrients, the importance of variety in the diet, and how different nutrients perform different functions in the body. To discover these concepts, each group receives a handout with a list of student meal choices for a week. Next, using a sheet with information on three nutrients, participants are asked to analyze the student meal choices. The groups then share which of these nutrients the students did or didn't obtain using flip chart papers displayed around the room. This is followed by a class discussion of participant observations and patterns they noticed when analyzing the student's nutrient intake using the menus provided.

Getting Ready

Time Required
65 minutes

If using all lesson components (Learning Activity, Expanding Knowledge, and Goal Setting), the entire lesson requires approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Materials Needed

Materials provided to the participants

- For Each Group of 2-4 Participants
 - Flip chart paper
 - Markers, pens, or pencils
 - Student Lunch Choices (Activity Sheet 1-B)
 - Las Llamas Middle School Lunch Menu (Handout 1-C)

For the Facilitator

- Student Lunch Choices KEY (Handout 1-E)
- Optional:
 - Lesson 1 (PowerPoint)
 - Computer
 - PowerPoint Projector

For the Class

- Nutrient Labels (Lesson Material 1-D) (Printed on sheets of adhesive mailing labels, 1" x 2 1/8", such as Avery 5160)
- Prepared flip chart paper with student names and days of week. (See Facilitator Resource 1-F for instructions)

For Each Participant

- Nutrients in Action (Handout 1-A), one copy per participant
- Optional:
 - Student Lunch Choices KEY (Handout 1-E)

For the Class

- Nutrient Labels (Lesson Material 1-D) (Printed on sheets of adhesive mailing labels, 1" x 2 1/8", such as Avery 5160)
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- Prepared flip chart paper with student names and days of week. (See Facilitator Resource 1-F for instructions)

Overview: This section provides a brief description of the concepts to be learned and the activity.

Getting Ready:

Time Required: Each module includes an estimate of the time needed to complete the activities. The actual time required for the activities will vary based on the level of learner interest, size of the group, and the setting in which the activities take place.

Materials Needed: A list of the materials needed to complete the activities is provided for facilitators. Many of the materials are provided in the appendix of each lesson, indicated with ***bold italics***. These are identified as either a ***Handout*** (provides information), ***Activity Sheet*** (to be completed over the course of the activity), ***Lesson Material*** (material included in the curriculum that requires additional preparation) and ***Facilitator Resource*** (information or instructions for the facilitator).

Preparation

Handouts

- Make copies of the following handouts:
 - Nutrients in Action (Handout 1-A)***, one copy per participant.
Facilitator Tip: To encourage group work, it is recommended that you provide one copy per group to complete the activity. It may be helpful to verbally explain that they will only get one copy per group and that taking turns reading aloud is recommended. At the end of the activity, distribute the ***Nutrients in Action*** handout to each participant as a take-home resource.
 - Student Lunch Choices (Activity Sheet 1-B)***, one per student per group.
 - Las Llamas Middle School Lunch Menu (Handout 1-C)***, one copy per group.
 - Optional: ***Student Lunch Choices KEY (Handout 1-E)***, one copy per participant.

Other Materials

- Print one or more copies of ***Nutrient Labels (Lesson Material 1-D)*** enough for each group has a set. This should be printed either on adhesive mailing labels or on paper (refer to ***Lesson Material 1-D*** for additional instructions).
- Prepare one flip chart for each of the students in ***Student Lunch Choices (Handout 1-B)***. Each flip chart should have the following information:
 - Student name across the top;
 - Days of the week listed on the left-hand side; and
 - "At the end of the week, what nutrients are missing?" written near the bottom.Refer to ***Suggested Flip Chart Layout (Facilitator Resource 1-F)***.

Activity Set-up

- Hang the prepared flip chart papers around the room. Spread them apart to reduce congestion during the activity.

Classroom Set-up

- Organize the class into small groups of 2 to 4 participants.
Facilitator Tip: These groups can also be used in *future lessons*.
- Provide each group with a sheet of flip chart paper and markers, pens, or pencils to answer opening questions/prompts.

Optional

- Before participants arrive, connect laptop to projector. Load ***Focus on Food Lesson 1*** (PowerPoint).

Lesson 1 - Nutrients in Action

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Preparation: This list describes what needs to be done by facilitators to prepare for the activity, how many of each of the materials to prepare, and what tasks need to be completed prior to the beginning of the activity. These are broken down by Handouts, Other Materials, Classroom Set-Up, and Optional.

Opening Questions/Prompts

Small Group Discussion

- Say: Let's get started with Lesson 2 - How Does Your Food Measure Up? (Slide 1) To begin, I'd like everyone to discuss some opening questions within your group. Once you've discussed the prompts within your groups, we will come back together as a class and discuss your thoughts and responses as a whole. (Slide 2)

The first prompt I'd like you to discuss within your groups is:

- Explain what you know about serving sizes. (Slide 3)
Facilitator Tip: Explain to participants that they may write their answers independently or assign one person in their group to write down everyone's thoughts. It may be helpful to explain to the class that they will learn more about these topics throughout the lesson.

- Do: Allow 2 to 3 minutes for groups to discuss the prompt. Repeat with the remaining prompt:
 - Explain what you know about Nutrition Facts Labels. (Slide 4)

Class Discussion

- Say: As a class, let's discuss what you talked about in your groups. What were some of your thoughts on this phase? Explain what you know about serving sizes? (Slide 4)

- Do: Allow about a minute for participants to share their thoughts on this topic with the class. Repeat with the remaining prompt:
 - Explain what you know about Nutrition Facts Labels. (Slide 4)

Facilitator Tip: This sharing phase is a great opportunity to begin to build rapport with participants. Some statements and questions to help engage participants at this phase are: "Tell me more about that!"; "What do you mean by..."; "Did anyone else write this?" At this stage, don't correct misconceptions. Instead, make note of them, and if they are not corrected organically through the lesson, address them briefly at the end of the lesson.

Lesson 2: How Does Your Food Measure Up?

Slide 1

Opening Questions

Slide 2

Explain what you know about serving sizes.

Slide 3

Explain what you know about Nutrition Facts Labels.

Slide 4

Lesson 2 - How Does Your Food Measure Up?

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Procedure (Experiencing)

Introducing the Activity

5. Say: Now that we've completed our opening discussion, we'll start on the activity for this lesson. (Slide 5) This activity involves portion sizes.

- You will receive a worksheet to fill out with your group as part of this lesson.
- Each group will walk around the room to each food station. Choose one member of your group to portion out the amount of each food that you would typically eat in one sitting. (Slide 6)

6. Do: Provide each group with:

- One copy of the *How Does Your Food Measure Up?* (Activity Sheet 2-A)
- One paper plate
- One paper bowl
- One paper cup

Facilitator Tip: If it is a large class, asking for volunteers to help distribute materials.

If any of the foods are not safe for consumption (e.g. unwashed grapes), inform participants of this.

Visiting Food Stations and Completing the Worksheet

7. Say: Now that you have your materials, you can begin! You can start at any station, just please make sure that there is no more than two groups per station at any given time.

8. Do: Allow a few minutes for all groups to portion out their foods. While they are doing this, distribute to each group:

- One set of measuring cups
- One set of measuring spoons
- One set of Nutrition Facts Labels (Handout 2-B)

9. Say: For the next step in this activity, you will use the measuring cups and spoons, and the Nutrition Facts Labels to answer questions on the worksheet. (Slide 7)

10. Do: Allow several minutes for participants to portion their foods and complete the worksheet.

86 Lesson 2 – How Does Your Food Measure Up?

Procedure (Experiencing): This is the part of the curriculum when the participants experience and complete the activity itself. It is highly recommended that facilitators read the procedure in its entirety before implementing with the participants so that the activity flows smoothly. It is important for participants to record their observations, ideas, and other thoughts during the procedure on the flip chart paper provided, as this is an important part of the learning process.

Optional PowerPoint slides have been prepared for major steps in each activity to be used for participant reference while completing the activity. These slides do not include full descriptions of each step of an activity. Facilitators should use the full descriptions included with each step in this Facilitator Guide

Activity Wrap-Up (Sharing, Processing, and Generalizing)

11. Say: As a class, let's discuss your observations. (Slide 8)

12. Do: Follow the group's line of thinking, and if necessary, ask more targeted questions.

- Explain what you observed when comparing the Nutrition Facts Label serving size versus the portion size your group measured.
- Explain what you observed about the amount of food your group portioned and how the portion size affected the calories and nutrients.
- Explain why knowing the Nutrition Facts Label serving size might be useful.
- Explain what you know about the serving size listed on the Nutrition Facts Label.

Facilitator Tip: If there are any misconceptions remaining in this phase of the lesson, you should address these now.

Concept and Term Discovery/Introduction

Over the course of the activity, participants should be able to identify the following concepts:

- A portion is a subjective amount of food that someone chooses.
- A serving size is a standardized amount of food listed on the Nutrition Facts Label to use as a reference when determining the amount of calories and nutrients consumed, or to compare and contrast similar food products when making purchasing decisions.
- The serving size listed on the Nutrition Facts Label is not the recommended amount to eat.

The following key vocabulary terms should be discovered by participants or introduced to them: density (of food), measurement (of food), Nutrition Facts Label, portion, serving size, and subjective.

87 Lesson 2 – How Does Your Food Measure Up?

Activity Wrap-Up (Sharing, Processing, and Generalizing): Following the procedure, there is a period of reflection, during which time the participants come back together as one group and share their observations with each other. This phase provides participants an opportunity to communicate their findings, listen to what others discovered, consider the various thought processes, and learn from each other. It helps to solidify what the participants have learned throughout the course of the activity.

Concept and Term Discovery: At this point of the activity, most of the concepts will have most likely already been discovered or defined by the participants. However, some concepts may have been missed or poorly understood and need to be clarified; additionally, technical terms may need to be introduced to the participants.

Making the Curriculum Work For You

Activity Fidelity

It is strongly encouraged that you follow the procedures closely the first time you use the lessons in this curriculum to get a feel for the flow and how each of the components of the learning activities contribute to the experiential learning process. In particular it is recommended that adequate time be allotted for participants to proceed through each step in order for learning to be maximized, including Sharing, Processing, and Generalizing.

Using Lesson Modules

The full curriculum is intended to take approximately ten hours to deliver, however not every program has the time or the interest in delivering the full curriculum. For those programs, we suggest choosing a selection of lessons that focus on a subset of concepts to meet the needs of you and your staff. The following are suggestions for different lesson modules.

Focus on Nutrition: Lessons 1, 2, 4, and 6

Encouraging Healthy Choices: Lessons 7, 8, and 10

Living a Healthy Life: Lessons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Promoting Wellness: Lessons 1, 3, 9, and 10

Reflection for Facilitators

Reflection isn't only important for learners, it's also important for facilitators. In particular, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. While they may sound similar, they serve different purposes. Reflection-in-action involves drawing on one's experiences and knowledge to think critically and make decisions on your teaching while you are teaching. Reflection-on-action on the other hand, takes places after the lesson has concluded. Teaching is an experiential learning process, and reflection-on-action involves reflecting on the experience of teaching and in order to continuously improve. One way to do is this through recording what worked well, and what could be improved. Included in the appendix for this chapter is a "Plus/Delta" example you can use to reflect on what worked (plus) and what could be improved or changed (delta) (*Facilitator Resource W-3*).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who was this curriculum designed for?

A. This curriculum is intended for school nutrition program staff, such as nutrition assistants, servers, cooks, et cetera.

Q. Why “facilitator” and not “instructor”?

A. We refer to the person leading the class as a facilitator because they are facilitating learning, rather than instructing participants on what they should know. The facilitators are there to guide participants and help them learn using the resources provided.

Why aren't there learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson?

A. Instead of learning objectives at the beginning of the lesson, this curriculum has concept and term discovery at the end of the lesson. The reason for this is to allow for a more natural discovery of the terms and concepts over the course of the lesson, with facilitators guiding the participants towards these if they aren't discovered by the end of the lesson.

Q. Can I summarize what they should have learned at the end of the lesson?

A. The Sharing, Processing, Generalizing phase of each lesson serves this purpose. The learners should be describing the concept, with the facilitator affirming it.

Q. What is an ideal size for the class?

A. A smaller class between 12 and 24 participants is ideal. While it is possible to use this curriculum with a larger class, more time will be needed for each lesson, and it starts to become difficult to facilitate learning for everyone the larger the class gets. Past experience has shown that with larger classes, some groups start to fall behind, while others race ahead and start to become bored waiting for other groups to catch up. It can also mean that the facilitator(s) are unable to spend the necessary amount of time with each group to foster learning.

Q. Why is group size important?

A. It is recommended to have small groups of three to four participants to maximize teamwork. When groups start to get larger than that, it can result in small groups within a group, or one person becoming more isolated within the group.

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USDA Professional Standards Suggested Crediting

The following table provides suggested crediting for each lesson in the *Focus on Food* curriculum.

Lesson	Time*	Key Area	Key Topic	Objective
1: Nutrients in Action	1 hour and 15 minutes	Nutrition	General Nutrition – 1300	1320 – Understand general nutrition concepts that relate to school meals, such as whole grains, sodium, etc.
2: How Does Your Food Measure Up?	1 hour	Operations	Serving Food – 2200	2210 – Identify/serve portions of food items according to USDA school meal pattern requirements and diet restrictions.
3: Get Your Move On	45 minutes	Administration	Human Resources and Staff Training – 3400	3450 – Foster employee health, safety, and wellness.
4: My Plate – Foods for Life	1 hour	Nutrition	General Nutrition – 1300	1310 – Relate Dietary Guidelines and USDA food guidance (such as MyPlate) concepts to the goals of the school nutrition programs.
5: Increasing Plant-based Foods in School Nutrition Programs	1 hour	Nutrition	General Nutrition – 1300	1320 – Understand general nutrition concepts that relate to school meals, such as whole grains, sodium, etc.
6: Nutrients of Concern	1 hour	Nutrition	General Nutrition – 1300	1320 – Understand general nutrition concepts that relate to school meals, such as whole grains, sodium, etc.
7: Understanding Influences on Food Choices	1 hour	Nutrition	Nutrition Education – 1200	1220 – Integrate nutrition education curriculum with school nutrition program, utilizing the cafeteria as a learning environment.
8: How Smart is Your Lunchroom?	1 hour	Communications and Marketing	Communications and Marketing – 4100	4160 – Create an environment that engages students to select and consume healthy foods with minimum waste, including Smarter Lunchroom techniques.
9: Nutrition and Academic Success	1 hour	Communications and Marketing	Communications and Marketing – 4100	4150 - School and Community Communication
10: Working Toward Wellness	1 hour	Communications and Marketing	Communications and Marketing – 4100	4110 – Develop strategic plans and marketing plans that reflect program goals and enhance interaction with stakeholders.

*Estimated time includes total time needed to complete all components of the lesson.

Open-Ended Questions

Use the cards below as handy reference for sample open-ended questions and prompts.

Observing

- Describe what you know about...
- Explain what you observed when...
- Tell me what happened when...
- What did you notice about...
- Tell me more about that...
- What do you mean by...

Making sense of what happened

- Based on what you observed, what do you think about...
- How did you decide to go about...
- Using what you know, explain...
- Explain your thoughts about...
- What do you mean by...
- Would you tell me more about
- What do you already know about...

Reasoning

- Imagine...
- Suppose...
- Predict...
- If..., then...
- How might...
- Can you create...
- What are some of the possible consequences...
- What if...
- What do you think would happen if...
- Is there another way to...
- How might you do that differently?

Observing

- Describe what you know about...
- Explain what you observed when...
- Tell me what happened when...
- What did you notice about...
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Making Sense of what happened

- Based on what you observed, what do you think about...
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Reasoning

- Imagine...
- Suppose...
- Predict...
- If..., then...
- How might...
- Can you create...
- What are some of the possible consequences...
- What if...
- What do you think would happen if...
- Is there another way to...
- How might you do that differently?

Plus/Delta Reflections

Lesson #: _____

+ Things that worked well	Δ Things to be improved

Things to consider

- Questioning: Open-ended or closed?
- Learner-centeredness: Who is doing the bulk of the work?
- Constructivism: Are the students figuring it out?
- Materials: are they appropriate?
- Room set-up
- Time management
- Other