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Midwest Food Connection Challenges Kids To Eat Locally-Grown Foods

by *Virginia Pearson, Educator, Midwest Food Connection*

Remember "playing store" when you were a kid? One of your friends was the store owner who sold stuff and somebody else was the shopper who had infinite amounts of cash to buy everything in the store. As in most childhood play, the idea was to act like big people, exercise some power and figure out how the real world works. Acknowledging that most kids readily slip into their imaginations, Midwest Food Connection has created a new lesson that engages primary age students in a game of make-believe in order to teach the advantages of eating locally-grown food.

In the lesson children volunteer to play roles as apple grower, truck driver, grocery store owner and shopper so we can chart the travels of an apple from an orchard in Washington State to a table in Minneapolis. It gets pretty silly as the actors take on their roles and ham it up. Usually the class clowns are the first to get into the act. I send the farmer off to the far corner of the classroom with an apple and a sign that says Washington State. The store owner sets up the Minneapolis store right near the circle of kids and orders the shipment of apples. Now the farmer hires a truck driver to deliver the apples half way across the country (and the classroom) to the store. As you can imagine, the truck driver makes truck noises and of course stops to buy gas along the way which for some reason is hilarious to the audience. Meanwhile, the shopper is waiting with a dollar to buy the apple. And once that apple is delivered and purchased the store owner must pay the grower who must in turn pay the driver. With a dollar's worth of quarters the class decides who should get what.

Then we play the game again with a local farm and everything changes. The farm is closer to the grocery store so the truck driver has a shorter trip and doesn't use as much gas. Well, you can guess the lesson points out things are much better for the farmer who gets more of the profits and better for the environment because less gas is used by the truck. We also talk about the benefits to the shopper who gets fresher, better tasting apples.

There in the classroom, you can just watch the light bulbs going off over the kid's heads.

Teachers love this lesson because it requires students to use math, engage in critical thinking while having fun learning about an environmental issue.

I give kids a chance to taste our wonderful Minnesota apples while I tell them my assignment for the next week. It's a challenge. Find or buy, and ideally taste, one locally grown fruit, vegetable or product before I return for the next week's lesson. That lesson begins with the children telling the class what they found and how they knew it was locally grown.

If you're a co-op shopper with a son or daughter attending a local school receiving our lessons this fall, this will be an easy assignment and one you won't feel guilty helping your child complete! Midwest Food Connection, with funding from The Wedge and other area coops, offers lessons in natural foods and sustainable farming practices in elementary schools throughout the metropolitan area. To learn more about MFC visit our website. Midwestfoodconnection.org

We are open Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. and Saturday & Sunday, 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. | [Contact Us](#) | Phone: 612-871-3993

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