



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2011 Volume IV: Energy, Environment, and Health

Farm Wars: Old MacDonald versus the Factory Farm

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.04.03
by Octavia Loyd-Oliver

Many teachers of mathematics are faced with a dilemma in the classroom: How do I make this lesson relevant and interesting? Students are constantly bemoaning the importance of this or that mathematical concept and wondering why they need to know it, anyway. Numeracy is as important as literacy, but generations of students may dread math because they do not connect its usefulness to everyday life.

If the way to a teen's heart is through his stomach, it might also be the path through which we can get him to think about math! Students need to understand that algebra is the mathematical explanation of everyday life. Food is so much more than something you grab at the market or drive-through. The manner in which it is produced, distributed and consumed has everything to do with the seminar topic of *Energy, Environment, and Health*.

The White House has been promoting local farming. Food co-ops, farmers' markets and even backyard gardening have all been a part of the First Lady's agenda. The intent of this unit is to utilize math to examine and explain the costs associated with the production of food at the local level and nationally. Not everything we buy can be produced locally, but many of the things we enjoy are available just down the road!

Although math is the primary application of this unit, it can be used in many different subject areas, including in a collaborative effort with science, social studies, history, economics, political science and English.

(Recommended for Mathematics, Environmental Studies and Science, grades 9-12)

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>