Section 8: Dispelling Hunger Myths

Lesson Description
Students will examine myths and understand realities that people who are hungry face.

Materials Needed
Computer to access online articles or print outs.
Hunger Facts Quiz

Preflection
What are some of your thoughts about people who are hungry or use food support like SNAP (food stamps) and food shelves.

Hunger Myths and Realities

These myths and realities were compiled by our partner, Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank. You can review them with your students to discuss some of the common assumptions about people who receive assistance from food shelves, the government, or other charities.

Myth:
People are too lazy to work, they should just get jobs.

Reality:
Thirty-two percent of households utilizing food shelves and soup kitchens report at least one working adult in the home. Unfortunately, their average wage is $8.39 per hour which doesn’t allow their family to cover the basic need of food, shelter and clothing. In fact, Jobs Now Coalition reports that a family of four, with two working parents needs to earn $10.21 per hour each just to cover basic needs.

Our growing population of the elderly cannot simply “get a job” and go back to work. Many seniors have worked hard all their lives to find that social security doesn’t cover the cost of prescription medications, health care and their basic needs.

Myth:
Childhood hunger doesn’t exist; just look at the obesity rates for children in the U.S.
Reality:
Obesity has become a serious public health problem among American children. The problem affects children from upscale suburbs, to inner cities and to remote rural areas. Unfortunately, the cost of eating healthy—purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables for example—is far more expensive than food high in fat and calories. Families trying to stretch their incomes often find it easier with carbohydrate-rich foods.

Myth:
There are plenty of programs out there to take care of the hungry, you don’t need my help.

Reality:
Food stamps, WIC, MAC and NAPS exist to supplement a family’s food resources, but they aren’t enough. We rescue and distribute food that might otherwise go to waste to provide a safety net to those who may not qualify for federal programs or who may need extra assistance.

Myth:
Hunger and poverty are brought on by people’s own personal failure.

Reality:
In today’s economic climate we’re seeing people we have never seen before. Nationwide, lost jobs and unemployment have sent people to food shelves, soup kitchens, and our programs to cover their basic need for food.

Activity 1
Take the Hunger Facts Quiz attached to the lesson. Discuss the Hunger Facts Quiz using the answer sheet to learn the facts about hunger.

Activity 2
Go to Feeding America’s “Real Stories” page to read stories about real people who have struggled with hunger. What myths do these stories debunk?

Reflection/Discussion Questions
• What do you know now that you didn’t know before exploring hunger myths?
• What surprised you?
• How can you share this knowledge with others to combat misinformation and false assumptions?
Hunger Facts Quiz

1. There is no hunger in a country as rich as the United States.  True or False

2. Assistance programs and food shelves have taken care of the problem of hunger. True or False

3. Only homeless and jobless people need emergency food. True or False

4. SNAP (food stamps) is not intended to supply a family with all the food they need every month. True or False

5. Hunger is only a big city problem. True or False

6. We can’t have a hunger problem and an obesity problem in the U.S. at the same time. True or False

7. Hunger is a problem for senior citizens. True or False

8. Government is taking care of the hunger problem. True or False

9. There is enough food to feed the world. True or False

10. Resolving hunger means just ensuring people have enough to eat. True or False

11. Only droughts and other natural disasters are to blame for hunger. True or False

12. Hunger exists when food is available in shops and markets. True or False

13. All of the world’s hungry live in Africa. True or False

14. Hunger is one of the most pressing global issues. True or False

15. There is nothing we can do to help hungry people. True or False
Hunger Facts Quiz Answers

1. **False.** One in seven people in the United States does not know where their next meal is coming from.

2. **False.** The Map the Meal Gap study, commissioned by Feeding America, found that Minnesotans are still missing 100 million meals each year.

3. **False.** Food banks and emergency food providers continue to serve more working poor families than ever. Fifty percent of the people that receive food from emergency food providers are children and seniors.

4. **True.** SNAP is a supplemental food program that is intended to increase a family’s budget to purchase nutritious food.

5. **False.** Hunger strikes people in rural, suburban and urban communities. The highest food insecurity rate is in rural Clearwater County (14.2 percent). The food insecurity rate for Hennepin County, where Minneapolis is located, is 11.8 percent.

6. **False.** Hunger is not about calories; it is about securing an acceptable, healthy, safe food supply for a family and knowing it is there day after day. The causes of obesity are separate, yet obesity is linked to malnutrition which can be caused by lack of access to healthy, affordable foods.

7. **True.** Many seniors still struggle on a fixed income. Medical expenses frequently use up a large chunk of their budget. As of 2009, there were almost 1 million seniors in the U.S. who were going hungry because they could not afford to buy food. Another 5 million seniors in the U.S. faced the threat of hunger. In recent years, hunger rates have more than doubled for poor seniors in the country, and it is likely to get worse as the older population is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population.

8. **False.** Cumbersome application processes, transportation and confusion about eligibility often hinder participation in assistance programs. People with food shortages are turning to the non-profit, charity network when they need help.

9. **True.** There is enough food in the world today for everyone to have the nourishment necessary for a healthy and productive life. Inefficiency and unsustainability are barriers to equitable food distribution around the world.

10. **False.** Hunger also involves the type of food you eat. Good nutrition means having the right combination of nutrients and calories needed for healthy development. It’s especially important for infants, pregnant women and young children.

11. **False.** Nature is only one factor when it comes to hunger. The proportion of food crises that are linked to human causes has more than doubled since 1992. War and conflict are often at the heart of today’s worst food crises.

12. **True.** People can go hungry even when there’s plenty of food around. Often it’s a question of access—they can’t afford food or they can’t get to local markets.

13. **False.** Of the world’s nearly one billion hungry people, over half live in Asia and the Pacific. Hunger is also a relevant issue in the United States, where 50 million Americans are food insecure.
Hunger Facts Quiz Answers

14. True. When populations are hungry, economies suffer, people fight, and farmers can't grow their crops effectively. We need to tackle hunger to be able to resolve environmental, economic and security issues.

15. False. There's plenty you can do. What are some of your ideas?

Information gathered from the following sources:
World Food Programme -- wfp.org
Meals On Wheels Association of America -- mowaa.org
Food Bank Council of Michigan -- fbcmich.org