

The Power of Education

Teach Teal: Food Allergy Awareness

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Artwork Credit: 4th Grade Students

"From now on I will check the ingredients." "From now on take food allergies seriously." "From now on I will wear teal for food allergies." "From now on..."

In my Girl Scout Gold Award Project, I created a curriculum to teach fourth and fifth graders about food allergies. I had the opportunity to teach thirty-five fourth graders as my first group of students to learn through this program. Over the course of just three days, the students learned a multitude of new information, new vocabulary, and more! Most importantly, students built the skills of empathy, compassion, and respect using this program. The students were taught by their teacher for the first two days and I taught the lessons for day three. On the day I taught, the first activity I had them participate in was naming the top nine allergens, filling in the blanks for

where a few were missing. When I asked who wanted to fill in the first blank, hands immediately shot up. I knew at that moment that these students were so eager to learn and that they had learned a lot with their teacher the previous days.

During the lessons, I asked questions and allowed the students to chime in on the paragraphs we read. After reading paragraphs, asking questions, playing the “Quiet On Set” game I created for this program, and more, we did the final activity, Teal T-Shirts, an activity that allows students to design their own food allergy awareness shirts. This activity allowed students to express their creativity and show their knowledge of food allergies, many of them including phrases such as “Stop food allergy bullying” or “Be kind” on their shirts. I was beyond impressed with how much they had learned.

One thing that I did in my project was I created a Pre-Survey to see what students already knew before starting the curriculum. One question included a picture of a teal ribbon and asking students to identify what it is and another question asked if it is okay to bully someone with food allergies. Many of the students had no idea what the teal ribbon meant in the survey and a few believed food allergy bullying was okay. By the end of the project, both the Post Survey and the “From Now On Activity” the fourth grade teacher administered and surprised me with allowed me to see the students’ growth. Almost every one of the fourth graders drew a teal ribbon on their “From Now On” papers and several of them chose to write about not bullying

someone with food allergies. Additionally, many students wrote detailed responses of why food allergy bullying is wrong on the Post Survey. These results show just how powerful education is. The students grew not only in their knowledge but in their character, now recognizing why food allergy bullying is wrong and how they can show empathy and compassion to someone who is different from them.

Education does not just teach facts, it teaches character. Of course, the fourth graders learned the top nine allergens and that 32 million people in America have life-threatening food allergies but they also learned a new way of seeing the world and treating those around them. These students learned compassion, empathy, respect and more. While these morals cannot just be taught by a textbook and should be practiced, reading about it is one way to start. After I taught them, many students told me that they liked the stories included in the curriculum from students with food allergies because they helped them learn about people with food allergies. These stories allowed the fourth grade students to see from a different perspective and start to think about as well as practice empathy and respect. The stories they read from real students included the students' names, hobbies, favorite things, and age so that the fourth graders could relate to these people who appeared on a paper in front of them or were read aloud by the teacher. As the students connected to the stories, one even mentioned how they played sports like one of the students; they were building the skill of empathy. Despite not meeting these

students who were in the book in person, the fourth graders built empathy through recognizing the challenges the students in the stories faced and feeling for them. Teach Teal guides students to understand that we should respect and care for all people because everyone is going through a challenge of their own.

Through my Girl Scout Gold Award Project, the power of education was demonstrated as students proved that they could learn not just facts but a way of living in just three days. I am so proud of what these fourth graders accomplished and I hope that more students around the world are able to use my curriculum to do the same.