

## **TEACHER'S RESPONSE TO CO-INQUIRY ON THE COOKING PROJECT:**

### Deciding on the Cooking Experience and the Recipe:

I see that many people have questions about how the cooking experiences and recipes were chosen. At a teacher co-inquiry meeting, the problem of how to decide what to cook was discussed in great detail. After considering a number of possibilities and in consultation with the children, in the week prior to the cooking experience, at the morning meeting, children made suggestions and voted on what they would like to cook.

### Recipes Used

All the recipes came from the parents. So multiple recipes were brought in for each cooking experience. We encouraged the children to try and compare the versions with different ingredients and combinations to see how well each worked and how the taste changed. For example, several families had different recipes for chocolate cake and we tried them all!

### Following a Recipe:

We encouraged discovery and exploration in making the recipes. When recipes were not followed, the children were able to observe the results and learn from their mistakes. The children soon understood that some ingredients must be carefully measured and cannot be left out while other parts of the recipe can be adjusted by adding other ingredients such as fruit, nuts, chocolate etc.

### Children's Cooking Ability:

During the project, the children observed different chemical reactions by adding or not adding ingredients and finding out what would happen. Children became very skilled in making predictions as their experience increased.

Sabrina amazed us with her abilities during this project. She not only knew the ingredients and steps for making tortillas but also how to adjust the recipe in obtaining the proper consistency for the dough.

### Choosing to Participate:

All the children in the classroom wanted to take part in the project but some children wanted to cook everyday while others did not. Everyone got to eat what was made regardless of whether they participated or not.

### Grouping

The children chose their groups during the project. Because a major goal of the project was building relationships and a sense of community, choosing groups for the children would defeat the purpose. We did not want to separate children who did not get along with one another. Children chose their own groups based on their interests: prepping the food, writing the recipe or setting the table. The children also taught the recipes to each other as they became familiar with it.

#### Improving Cooperative Behavior:

At the conclusion of the project, we found that cooperation among the children had significantly improved. Negotiation skills also improved. For example, two children who had constantly bickered over “being first,” “doing it “my way” at the beginning were able to work together more successfully by the end of the project. We also found that the cooking project created a closer bond between the teachers and our families.

#### Other Areas of the Curriculum:

This project naturally extended to other areas. For example, in their dramatic play, children would play restaurant or grocery store. They liked to make recipe signs in their pictures. In dramatizing the grocery store, children sold food. Children also enjoyed writing books about their favorite food, etc.

#### Project Development:

For the first few weeks of the project, children experimented only with flour and water and then began adding oil, sugar, etc. to discover what would happen. Because we have an all day program, children would prepare some of the more involved recipes in the morning and then cook (or bake) just before naptime. The children would eat their creations for afternoon snack. Over a five-month period, the class made about 18-20 recipes.

#### Family Participation:

Together, children, parents and teachers worked in partnership during this project. Almost all of our families came into the classroom to participate in cooking. Families brought in their favorite recipe or a recipe their child liked to make best. Our families were very interested in the project and were willing to help in any way possible. Parents would come in to the classroom and work with the children and show them different techniques and procedures such as how to make egg rolls.

#### Diversity:

Children brought in a variety of recipes. The children in my classroom have diverse cultural backgrounds and some are English learners. Our children with special needs also participated in the project. The teachers asked the children about their favorite foods to cook at home, at their grandparents, babysitter, etc. We did not tell the children or parents to bring in a recipe from their culture. All children were able to be successful with support from the other children and the adults.

#### Assessment:

We used observation, documentation and a required measure to record and assess children’s learning during this project. We listened carefully to the children, made written notes, photographs and video of their interactions with each other to examine their social relationships, cooperative behavior and learning progress that occurred over time. As a state funded program in California, we use the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) System. Some of the DRDP skills children learned during the cooking project included: