

## Food and Education II: The *Shokuiku* in English Project

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### Introduction

In July 2005, the Japanese government passed the "Fundamental Law of Food Education" (食育基本法). This unique legislation is an attempt, particularly on the part of the Ministry of Education (MEXT), to change what is seen as out-of-balance eating habits among Japanese youth (Iwamura, 2003). Childhood obesity, high sodium diets, and a general imbalance of nutritional intake are addressed by the law, which also tackles social issues such as children eating alone (孤食) and behavioral problems brought on by diet. At the end of 2004, MEXT released the first series of educational materials for elementary and junior high school students, as well as guidelines for educators. Although reception to the law has been generally positive, there are numerous concerns as well. Teachers wonder where food education fits into the existing curriculum, as there is no *shokuiku* (food education) class at the moment. Others have questioned the necessity of a law, pointing out that eating habits should be determined by the family and not legislated from above. Another criticism is that food education, as defined by MEXT, is superficial: it does not adequately address the full range of food (Komori, 2005).

While the recent *shokuiku* law places primary importance on individual health, there is a grassroots *shokuiku* movement in Japan whose history is deeper and goals more ambitious (Sakai, 2004, p. 12). This broader, community-based *shokuiku* movement has connections to critical education, and links can be made to Dewey's (1915; 1938) experiential learning, Freire's (1970) model of education as cultural action, and various agrarian activist movements in Japan, the United States, and elsewhere. In activities ranging from including more local foods in school lunches to providing students hands-on agricultural experiences, the *shokuiku* movement stresses that a healthy diet creates not only a healthy body but a healthy community

and a healthy environment.

Until recently, *shokuiku* activities in Japan have been primarily a part of the elementary school curriculum. In an attempt to introduce *shokuiku* into a post-secondary curriculum, the *Food and Communication* (食とコミュニケーション) class at Keiwa College was created in April, 2004. In this third year English class, students study about global and local food problems in English. The course covers such topics as genetic modification, BSE (Mad Cow Disease), food self-sufficiency, the World Trade Organization's role in local food supplies, and organic agriculture. Local food culture is also investigated. Although the language of the class is English, the focus of study includes Japan and Niigata; the goal is to give students the language they need to express their own "food reality" to the world.

As part of *Food and Communication*, we have begun the *Shokuiku in English Project*. This volunteer project aims to take what we study in the classroom and create easy-to-understand *shokuiku* materials and lesson plans for local nursery and elementary school students. Then, students enter the community as volunteer teachers in local schools and public spaces, using their own original educational materials to conduct English classes for children. The first pedagogical assumption is that there is a natural connection between local education, English education, and *shokuiku*. The second assumption of the project is that asking students to teach something is the best way to ensure that they themselves have mastered it. By providing our students the opportunity to become volunteer community teachers, their own confidence in both their English skills and their understanding of food is increased. They move, ideally, one step closer to what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire calls "engaged subjects," actively taking part in the creation of their own history (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

Our first public presentation took place on September 20, 2004, at Saruhashi Elementary School in Shibata. We did an 80-minute lesson on ramen for about 140 fourth grade students. The second presentation was at *Machi no Eki* on July 16, 2005. *Machi no Eki* is a community space in the downtown shopping district of Shibata. Opened in October 2004, the space is available for local and college events, providing a convenient place for communication and interaction. By creating a classroom in a public space like *Machi no Eki*, parents, children, college students, community members,

and city office employees have an opportunity to come together in an informal, casual atmosphere shaped by an educational theme but not necessarily dominated by it.

In *The Long Haul*, educator and civil rights activist Myles Horton advises all teachers engaged in social projects to "start where you are" (Horton, 1998, p. 129). Horton maintains that in any successful educational endeavor, especially one involving social change, teachers and students both should start from where they are in the world, not where they want to end up. Asking students to start where the teacher wants them to end up tends to create frustration for both parties; asking students to start where the textbook expects them to be may create alienation and indifference. Students' social environment, culture, and economic situation should be the source of the syllabus. In the *Shokuiku in English Project*, we attempted to do just that: start where we were, as students in Shibata, Niigata, as learners of English, as citizens who are faced with the difficult questions: Where does our food come from? Who made it? How was it made? The goals of local education and food education lie very close together, and can be augmented with English education. In this essay, three student-created lessons from the *Shokuiku in English Project* will be introduced and discussed.

### **Lesson 1 : *Where does it come from? (Food Mileage)***

Japan's food self-sufficiency rate has hovered around 40 percent for the past 6 years, despite government mandates that it should be increased. In practical terms, this means that 60 percent of the average Japanese person's calories comes from abroad, using another country's labor and natural resources. At the start of the *Food and Communication* class, we asked of this food the three essential questions of *shokuiku*: "Where does it come from? Who made it? In what conditions was it made?" In the course of the class, we discovered that, while easy to ask, these seemingly simple questions are quite difficult to answer. At the same time, the asking of these questions is the first step in becoming what American farmer and poet Wendell Berry calls a "responsible eater" (Berry, 1990, p. 150), a person who can eat with full awareness of the human, animal, and environmental cost of his or her food.

The globalized industrial food system has effectively created a wall between consumers and their food. When we eat at a franchise restaurant, a hamburger shop, or a convenience store, we are shut off from the people and places behind our food. Whether the food we eat is safe for us, whether it was created in a manner that is environmentally sound and sustainable, and whether the farmer who worked to produce the food has been fairly paid and provided a safe working place: these questions remain unanswered and unanswerable, while consumers abandon their responsibility to the companies which provide convenient food services.

The *Food and Communication* students tackled these questions by first looking at their own daily eating habits. Choosing three foods they commonly eat—our college cafeteria daily special, ramen, and *onigiri*—they attempted to track down the place of origin of every ingredient. After many hours of Internet research, telephone calls to company information numbers, and interviews with cafeteria staff, a set of three ingredient maps was produced. Students were quite surprised to see the number of countries involved in the production of one meal: for example, the average daily special lunch set from our cafeteria was found to include food products from ten different countries.

Next, we considered the *food mileage* of each meal. Food mileage, the distance a food travels from the place it is produced to the place it is ultimately consumed, has become a useful way of measuring the impact human eating habits have on the environment. Not surprisingly, Japan has the highest food mileage rating in the world (Food mileage, 2004).

To introduce the concept of food mileage to young children, students in the *Food and Communication* class started from the question, "Where does a McDonald's cheeseburger come from?" Researching this using the Japanese McDonald's homepage and other sources, they found that the beef comes from Australia, the cheese comes from New Zealand, and the bread comes from wheat grown in the US and Canada. Only the lettuce comes from Japan, and part of that is imported as well. Examining the rest of the McDonald's menu, they found that the chicken in the McNuggets comes from China, the fish in the Fillet 'o Fish comes from Russia, and the potatoes in the French fries come from the United States: the basic McDonald's menu requires food from seven different countries. Of course, this problem is not

unique to McDonalds; it is typical of all stages of the industrialized food system, including convenience stores, large supermarket chains, family restaurants, and fast food chains (Lehman and Krebs, 1996, p. 122).

Students then calculated the food mileage for the cheeseburger. By calculating the distances from chief production areas to Niigata, they found that the food mileage for Australian beef is 7798 km, New Zealand cheese is 8812 km, and American wheat is 10,029 km. Food mileage for other ingredients such as ketchup and pickles was not calculated. For the beef, cheese, and bun alone, students discovered that a McDonald's cheeseburger travels 26, 639 km before it is eaten. The calculation of food mileage in this exercise was simplified for easier comprehension; proper food mileage is determined by multiplying the total yearly amount of imported foods (weight in kilograms) by the total distance traveled. Using this formula, Japan had an annual food mileage of around 900 billion ton/km in 2003. To put this figure into perspective, during the same time period both South Korea and the United States had ratings of around 300 billion ton/km (Food mileage, 2004).

The lesson for children was divided into three parts: vocabulary practice, a map exercise, and a quiz. First, using picture cards, the various ingredients of a McDonald's menu were introduced: *hamburger, cheese, fish, chicken, potatoes, lettuce, tomato, wheat, and bun*. In the second part of the lesson, the children looked at a large map and were asked in English, "Where does it come from?" Using the picture cards and the map as visual aids, simple English sentences were produced. Sometimes, children were given multiple choice questions; for example, "Where does McDonald's fish come from? (a) China; (b) Niigata; (c) America; (d) Russia." Students held up lettered cards to indicate their answers, and magnets were used to mark the answers on the map. After all the ingredients were located visually, children were asked, "How does it come to Japan?" For example, "How does Australian beef come to Japan? (a) The cows swim; (b) It comes by special cow-copter; (c) It comes by airplane; (d) It comes by boat." When the answer, It comes by boat, was revealed, students progressed further by asking, "How does a boat move?" In seeing that all the imported food coming to Japan needs much gasoline, children could start to grasp the basic concept of food mileage and begin to realize the environmental cost of their daily eating

habits.

English is promoted as an international language, yet much English education in Japan seems to be focused on a small section of the world: affluent members of "native" speaking countries. Using food mileage and the simple question "Where does it come from?" students are immediately engaged in the world and with the world through the food they eat every day. Our food habits show our responsibility and obligation to all the world's people and nature.

As David Peaty (2004) has pointed out, English education, and particularly English education which also addresses global issues, cannot effectively start with an abstract problem, with a country or a group of people who are far removed from children's daily lives and experiences. To do so is to imply to students that English belongs to another place and another people, not to them. Students who are not used to thinking beyond their own lives are faced with the double challenge of approaching this strange, new place in an equally strange, new language. On the other hand, through *shokuiku* it is possible to start where students truly are and move forward from there, one step at a time.

In Niigata, children and students live among food and agriculture. Our college and our community are literally surrounded by rice paddies, bean fields, and small vegetable gardens. At the same time, our college is also surrounded by the food most college students, young families, and children eat: family restaurants, ramen, McDonalds, franchise restaurants and 100 yen sushi shops. Both contain mysteries; both are separated from our understanding by walls that can be overcome with *shokuiku*.

By starting English education from what children had for breakfast or lunch *that day*, it is more likely that they can join in and follow along. Thus, one guideline of *Shokuiku in English* is to start with either the food that children love to eat, or the food that surrounds them and is an integral part of their community. From that point, we can begin to see the surprising connections we have with countries around the world whose names we may never have heard before, and whose farmers' faces we have certainly never seen.

## Lesson 2 : *Why is amazake sweet? (The Mysteries of Traditional Food Culture)*

Fermentation is a central part of Japanese food culture; particularly in the cold northern prefectures, fermented foods were a key to survival during the long winter in the days before electricity, and having a supply of salt-preserved foods was a matter of life and death. Takeo Koizumi, professor at Tokyo Agricultural University, has called fermentation the "symbiosis of humans, microorganisms, and nature" (Koizumi, 2004). Indeed, the fermented foods of any culture represent a distinctly localized solution to the question, "How can we preserve our food? What can we eat when our food sources are cut off?" *Natto* and *miso* in Japan, sauerkraut in Germany, blue cheese in France, *tempeh* in Indonesia, *kinema* in Nepal, all spring from a unique interaction of the bacteria and climate of a place and the humans who live there.

One of the highest achievements of Japanese fermented food culture is sake, an alcoholic beverage made from malted rice. Although commonly referred to as "rice wine" in English, this is in part a misnomer, as the brewing process of sake is far more complex than that of wine. Chemically, it would be more correct to call sake a "rice beer," since, like beer, it is brewed from malted grains, but still enough differences remain to defy easy classification according to European alcohol making standards. In this sense, sake is unique and untranslatable.

Fermentation and the manipulation of microorganisms are two of the foundations of Japanese food culture. Koji (a spore of the *Aspergillus oryzae* bacteria) is an essential element in making sake, amazake, miso, and *iizushi*. As well as enabling a chemical process (*saccharification*, or the conversion of starch into sugar), it is a cultural process as well. Although beer relies on basically the same chemical process, the cultural details are different, depending on the environment, climate, available materials, and local knowledge/wisdom. Sake made from rice and koji is a particularly Japanese solution to the problem of how to produce fermentable sugar from a starchy grain. Amazake (甘酒), a drink made from rice and koji, is popular among Japanese of all ages. Though the Japanese name contains the Chinese character for alcohol (酒), it is in fact entirely non-alcoholic. Chemically, it is an unfermented mash of rice, water, and koji. While it

contains no sugar or other sweetener additives, the taste is sweet. This food mystery became the focus of lesson number 2 : *Although it doesn't use sugar, why is amazake sweet?*

The main challenges of this lesson were ( 1 ) how to make traditional Japanese food culture immediate and interesting and ( 2 ) how to make the difficult chemical process of malting understandable to young children. At first, the students themselves had to investigate the nature of *koji*, how *koji* works, and how malting is essential to the creation of Japanese sake.

To appeal to children, my students chose to emphasize the inherent *drama* of the malting process: a outsider (*koji*) infiltrates a quiet community (rice), starts a revolution (cutting starch chains and creating sugar), and sets into motion a massive change. Students created the heroic character of Koji-kun, a kind of bacterial Ninja crusader modeled after popular children's TV characters such as Power Rangers. The rice's long starch chain was represented by three students holding a large paper banner bearing the word "Starch." As a narrator told the basic story, "Koji is mixed with steamed rice...", Koji-kun came to life, brandished his plastic sword, and swiftly cut the starch chain into individual pieces. After the banner was cut, the three starch actors were separated, and each revealed a secret sign on his chest with the word "Sugar" on it. The propagation of the *koji* and the subsequent rise in temperature were shown by the four students dancing and spinning around.

The young children in the audience were visibly entertained by the mini-drama, their eyes focused especially on Koji-kun. After the drama, children were given free cups of fresh *amazake*, prepared the previous day by one of the students in the class.

The purpose of this lesson, besides introducing some basic English vocabulary, was to show that food culture is exciting and naturally dramatic, that there are many interesting mysteries in the food we eat every day, and that anyone can understand the chemical processes which produce our unique food culture.

Watching the students' *koji* role play, the hidden, secret world of bacteria blown up to human size was like having a giant microscope in the classroom. By seeing bacteria such as *koji* in a human incarnation, children could more strongly feel the "symbiotic" connection that Koizumi speaks of.



If a teacher were to begin from the technical term *saccharification*, most students would lose interest quickly. Making *amazake* is not a dry, chemical, difficult process; it is as dramatic and exciting as any superhero story. Just as ordinary people change into Red Ranger, Blue Ranger, Yellow Ranger on children's programs, the process of fermentation involves equally exciting changes in ordinary ingredients.

Of course, this entire story could not be told in English at first. But the main vocabulary was introduced in English: *starch, sugar, sweet, cut, rice*. While students' vocabulary power was being built, their knowledge of food science and Japanese food culture also expanded. All of it is connected to a beverage that many young people know and enjoy, so that next time they drink it, they may remember the story of Koji-kun and some of the English they learned that day.

### **Lesson 3 : *What is yummy? (Flavor and color)***

Food critic, chef, and *shokuiku* advocate Yukio Hattori notes that the average Japanese consumes 90 different kinds of chemical food additives a day, and that the average convenience store *o-bento* (boxed lunch) contains as many as 30 kinds of additives (Ito, 2003). The problem with food additives is that when they are combined (as they are in the human stomach), they form new chemical compounds; in other words, mixing additives A, B, and C can produce a new chemical, D. Although individual additives are tested and approved for human consumption by the government, these "recombined" additives are completely untested. While many combinations are harmless, a number of combinations are known or suspected carcinogens (Yamada, 2003, p.52). By ingesting such large numbers of additives with no assurance that the results are safe, consumers are in effect being treated as guinea pigs.

Another problem arising from the over-consumption of chemical additives is the loss of taste sensitivity. Hattori claims that a constant diet of flavor enhancers such as MSG has been shown to decrease the tongue's sensitivity to subtle flavors (Ito, 2003). Hattori laments that children have less and less exposure to the "real taste" of raw ingredients. There are a variety of reasons for this, including the separation of children and farming areas, the use of dangerous agrichemicals, and the rise in processed food consumption.

Hattori recommends letting children pick a tomato from the vine and eating it there, in the garden, or digging a potato, boiling it, and eating it as is with no salt and no butter.

The *Food and Communication* students, after reading an interview with Hattori in English, decided to make a lesson plan based on taste, color, appearance, and the complex psychological concept of "delicious." As the audience was to be young children, they decided to use the English word "yummy," a children's word for delicious. The lesson explored the question, "Why do we think that some foods are delicious and some foods are not?" At the same time, students sought to discover how much children know about the real, natural flavors of food.

First, children were taught the English names for common seasonal fruits and vegetables in Shibata. As the *Machi no Eki* presentation took place in summer, the vocabulary included *eggplant, cucumber, lettuce, watermelon, and corn*. Next, children were asked to close their eyes and hold their noses; with their senses of smell and sight cut off, they were then fed bits of watermelon. "What is it?" our students asked. Of the ten students who participated, only three identified the mystery food as watermelon. Many others suggested cucumber or apple.

The students then held up a nice, ripe watermelon. Children immediately responded with, "*Oishisou!*" and "*Tabetai!*" Students introduced the phrase, *It looks yummy* (adding looks to the previously taught yummy and using an eye gesture to convey the meaning). "But why do we think it looks delicious? We haven't seen the inside yet. Can we eat the outside?" the students asked the children. Of course, we do not know, but our eyes tell us, from size, shape, and color, that the inside is *very possibly* delicious. So "yummy" does not begin and end with the tongue: it is actually a combination of all five senses, and in fact the tongue alone is sometimes not an accurate judge of flavor.

Students learn that flavor is sensed through the tongue, which can detect 4 or 5 distinct flavor sensations (*umami* is the fifth). But the concept of "delicious" or "yummy" goes much deeper than this: the eyes' perception of color and shape, the nose's perception of smell, the ears' perception of sound (the satisfying thump of a ripened watermelon, for example), all contribute to the idea of "delicious."

Of course, processed food and fast food companies exploit this psychology of flavor to engineer appearances and sensations that are entirely disconnected from actual contents. Unfortunately, this results in processed foods containing many unnecessary artificial colors and flavors. This complex notion of *delicious* also affects the attitudes of consumers who choose only the best shaped, most perfectly colored vegetables at the supermarket. Our way of looking at food can be easily manipulated and distorted: while misshapen vegetables do not taste noticeably different from their perfect counterparts, and most farmers will attest that slightly insect-chewed cabbage actually tastes better than the pristine one, consumers continue to cling to a idealized image of vegetable and fruit beauty, the one that triggers in their minds, "It looks delicious!" and "I want to eat it!"

In the second part of the lesson, students did an English taste test with the children. Five children sat in front of the room and were blindfolded, while five "assistant" children were given plates with 4 bite-sized pieces of food: lettuce, strawberry, cucumber, and avocado. For the test, the assistants placed one piece of food into each of the blindfolded student's mouths. At the count of three, all five children were asked to say what they had just eaten in English. Cucumber and strawberry were successfully guessed, while lettuce was identified as cabbage by three of the children and avocado was simply met with grimacing faces. The point of this part of the lesson was to ask, "Do you know the real taste of seasonal foods?" and, "Can you say them in English?" Our belief was that by combining vocabulary practice with a real physical experience, students will retain the new words more effectively.

In the last part of the lesson, the ingredient label from a popular children's candy was blown up to poster size and shown to the children. Although the label was in Japanese, not English, it was nevertheless difficult for children to read: the chemical names of additives and artificial colors were strange and complicated. My students asked, "Can you guess from this label what the food is?" Some children guessed that it might be a kind of candy, because "sugar" appeared on the label. When the answer was revealed, children (and several mothers as well) were surprised to realize they know so little about what is actually in the snacks they are eating every day. My students' simple advice to the children and their parents: "If you can read and

understand the label, you can eat it. If you can't, put it back on the shelf."

### Conclusion

Hattori writes that while education in Japan has traditionally been based on three pillars: intellectual education (*chiiku*), moral education (*tokuiku*), and physical education (*taiiku*), the potential of *shokuiku* lies in the fact that it encompasses all three (Hattori, 2004, p. 7). *Shokuiku* represents a truly integrated educational approach, a pedagogy combining disparate subjects and classes into a meaningful whole that students can find in their community, and that they can participate in immediately.

Our *Shokuiku in English* Project is simply a first step. Ideally, *shokuiku* would be included in math, social studies, science, biology, home economics, and physical education as well. Going further, *shokuiku* could serve as the medium to link these topics, so that students have the sense that what they learn in math class is connected directly with social studies, which is again connected to sports. Students could realize that what they are eating in their school lunch or *o-bento* has direct bearing on English class or geography class. Finally, they could feel the direct connection between the education they are receiving, their local community, and their responsibility both as community and world citizens. A student thus empowered can truly become a Freirean maker of culture, a fully involved, fully educated participant in all stages of his or her life, a responsible eater and thus a responsible human, capable of showing deeper compassion.

The *Food and Communication* students were challenged to find the point where difficult but important food talk intersected with the world of children: their interests, their level of understanding, what moves them, excites them, makes them laugh, or provokes them to further inquiry. By becoming teachers and lesson planners, the students had to make sure they completely understood the topic; their education continued while they prepared their lessons and materials. At the same time, their English ability was put to practical use, not as students in a classroom, but as teachers in a community space. By seeing that young children were listening to them, repeating after them, and participating in activities the students themselves had developed, their sense of responsibility as English speakers was amplified.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire asserts that the goal of education is to produce "makers of culture," students who emerge fully human and ready to take their places in their own history—as complete participants (Freire, 1970, p. 48). Natural farming advocate Masanobu Fukuoka makes the same point when he writes, "Culture always originates in the partnership of humans and nature" (Fukuoka, 1978, p. 138). Food culture is a particularly important place for participation—indeed, food culture cannot survive without makers. Food culture is not created by consumers but by producers; it is a history of farmers, small-scale food processors, and traditional households actively engaged in the production of their own food. In other words, identity emerges not from the *consumption* of a cultural product but from the production of it. If the knowledge and skill necessary for production are lost, then the culture itself is lost.

For example, *Koshihikari*, a nationally famous Niigata rice, cannot be understood without knowing the history of production and cultural innovation which led to its breeding and successful growing. Contrary to its image today, Niigata was historically a poor place for growing rice. Vintage photographs show Niigata farmers knee deep in swampy mud as they plant rice which would often fall over and rot before harvest. Only through the prolonged efforts, hardships, and failures of researchers and farmers did *Koshihikari* emerge. To eat it today assuming that it has always been so is to be alienated from one's own culture. This is one reason why *shokuiku* can be thought of as a kind of participatory education: it must be *done* to be understood. Takeo Komori, writing in the *Japan Agricultural News*, made the same point, arguing that the preservation of a food culture, of any traditional food, has no meaning unless children can prepare the food themselves—simply *consuming* is not enough (Komori, 2005).

Food education cannot be limited to dietary intake choices; it should encompass the entire symbiotic life cycle of food and consumer, from seed to sprout, sprout to flower, flower to fruit, fruit to consumer, consumer to waste, waste to compost, compost to soil, and into the soil the next seed. Wendell Berry (1990, p. 117) writes that eating is an "agricultural act," just as much as planting a seed, tending a plant, or harvesting a grain crop is. There is no one who is fully separated from the cycle of life; there is no one who does not participate. Even the passive consumer who has never been on

a farm, never planted rice, never plucked away a green caterpillar winding its way toward the heart of a young cabbage, participates by eating and producing waste. The first step to becoming an active participant is to take responsibility by asking, What is going in my mouth? And how am I disposing of my waste? Particularly, am I returning to the soil that which can be returned? Do I understand that the waste I produce plays a vital role in creating the proper conditions for the next generation of my food?

From responsibility comes further commitment and curiosity. The engaged, active, responsible eater begins to wonder about the food he or she is eating. Children ask, "Why is *amazake* sweet? Why are pickles salty? What's in my potato chips beside potatoes and salt?" This is the problem-posing beginning to a genuine, deep *shokuiku*. Behind such simple inquiry lies an entire culture, a traditional knowledge base of *making*, and the history of a people who have survived by successfully negotiating with the living things of a particular place.

Similarly, the idea of English as a global language has the negative potential to create in its wake a "culture of silence" (Freire, 2000, p.34) in which language instruction is inadequate to express the true feelings of the students of a community. English education in Japan which does not allow for the expression of Japanese cultural values, and English language textbooks which do not address rice farmers and other producers are creating a culture of silence, where the things most immediately available in a child's life are abandoned in favor of things which are expressible, globalized products of convenience. On the other hand, an English education starting from where children are, from where they live, from what is closest to their hearts, can provide in English a unique voice that can only originate from one place. An English education that begins from Shibata city, Niigata prefecture, in the northern part of Japan, and that takes into account all the unique cultural features (human history, human innovation) attached to these places, has the potential to create children who know where they have come from, where they are, and where they want to go. Freire states that, "*consciousness of and action upon reality are, therefore, inseparable*" (Freire, 2000, p. 40). As participants in the industrial food system, we are largely unconscious eaters: we live unaware of where our food came from, who made it, how it was made, and what is in it. According to Freire, this

results in a state of inaction or, rather, self-contained consumer action. Conversely, students who are aware of where their food came from, of who made it, become people who are capable of true action. Through *shokuiku*, teaching itself can begin to retrace its own essential, local roots.

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