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The Cultural Move: Impact of Mexican Migration on Today's American Food

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Introduction/Rationale

Beef burritos for lunch today, a typical Wednesday lunch for students at my elementary school in Richmond, Virginia. Often the students have burritos, nachos, tacos, beans and rice for lunch. I always wonder do these students realize the history behind these types of dishes in today's food options. Students often learn about the different cultures that have migrated to the United States of America but when you ask them do you know the different things that Latinos, particularly Mexicans, have contributed to us, many times it is an unanswered question. It would be important to focus on Mexico because there is rich historical connection often forgotten today. The United States is historically composed of diverse populations of people from many countries. In particular, U.S. covers land that prior to 1848 used to be Mexican territory and people of Mexican origin have migrated throughout the country for a couple of centuries, introducing us to their culture and traditions.

Latino cultures are made up of many different aspects that include food, clothing, traditions, and history as seen across the Caribbean and North, Central, and South America. These different cultures begin to become apparent in the Spanish curriculum during the second grade because the students are beginning to learn more details on the traditions of these Spanish-speaking countries. It is an appropriate age level because the students are a little older and will be able to retain and relate the information to their surroundings. Most times my students struggle to recognize the diversity outside of their environment and feel that they can only relate to the culture that is represented in their families and communities. However, during Spanish instruction my students are introduced to Latino cultures that are similar and different to the culture that they live in. The students are then able to relate what they have learned from the Latino cultures and history, and are able to compare and contrast it to their own background. It is then that students are able to realize the impact that Latino cultures has on not only their way of life but also the American culture.

Food is one of the main points that allows student to see how integrated the cultures are in their society. Many students do not make the connection and realize that many foods that were introduced to this country years and years ago were by immigrants that traveled to many areas and brought their traditions and cuisines from their native countries. Most students believe that Latino food consists of Taco Bell and are not aware of the rich Latino food options that are available to them in the Richmond Community. The reason being that most

students are not able to tell the difference between Americanized Latino food and authentic Latino food and that the ethnic Latino restaurants are in a part of the city that my students and their families do not go around frequently. The students learn that these immigrants come to the United States for many distinct reasons, whether they were looking for better opportunities or need to leave their country due to a civil war. They came to this country and brought a small piece of their heritage to share and today we can see the impact they have had.

By guiding students in learning about the Latino culture will allow student to grasp the different traditions that each culture has to offer. They will be able to make connections by asking questions and using their background knowledge of the material that they are learning. One example would be when I tell my students about when my mom migrated from El Salvador to the U.S. she left everything behind. She had to find a new way of living by adapting to the American culture because she could not bring spices or seeds but brought a wealth of knowledge on how she would be able to continue to create the Salvadorian dishes that she treasured. She was able to discover techniques to replicate the Salvadorian cuisine by using her skills and the resources available to her to prepare food that came from her native country. She would go out to different markets and grocery stores to find ingredients that were similar to the ones she knew and used them to make the dishes from her home country. One of the dishes she prepares is one of the traditional foods from El Salvador, the well-known *pupusas*. Pupusas are corn tortillas filled with a distinct melted cheese or cheese mixed with pork or beans. It is served with "curtido", a mixture of cabbage, carrot, salt and vinegar and some tomato sauce over it. She would make these for the family often and especially during the holidays. This is a typical tasty Salvadorian dish that is very common in many Latino restaurants around the United States. Just like this dish there are many more dishes that immigrants from Latin American countries have introduced to the United States of America.

It is important for students to be able to recognize different cultures that are in their community; specifically one that they interact with on a daily basis. Language learning, in particular, enables students to connect with non-Anglo cultures. This unit has been designed to be taught during Spanish instruction, and conducted in Spanish. It is specifically aimed for a second grade curriculum but can be used with multiple grade levels. Throughout the unit, students will be using different visual aids and readings to gain a better understanding of what immigration is and the diverse population that exist in the city. The students will be learning more about the various types of Latin American cuisines and comparing and contrasting them in order to be able to identify the food and its specific country of origin. The students will use this information to relate to them and how it has impacted the United States.

Demographics

George Washington Carver Elementary School has preschool to fifth grade level students. It is located in Richmond City with a population of 500 students. Carver and most of Richmond City is heavily populated with African Americans. The overall student membership is 23,775 and 80% of that population is African American.

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The schools in Richmond city also have a dense population of African American children. According to the 2010 census there were 561 African American students that make up the population in the schools of Richmond City. There has also not been much change in racial makeup of the population in the communities

throughout the city. Many of our students at Carver Elementary come from Jackson Ward and Gilpin Court neighborhoods, which is at the heart of Richmond City. My school, George Washington Carver Elementary School, is located very close to Virginia Commonwealth University and we are very close to the campus and some of the surrounding housing is made up of college students. Many of the houses in front of our school consist of older people who do not have children. The only way that we would be able to have more of a diverse racial population would be by having an integration method and bringing over students from other areas of the city.

Most of the neighborhoods in the Richmond City area are public housing projects, which were made for the dense population of low socioeconomic families that are in the area. Therefore, most of the students at Carver Elementary come from low socioeconomic home environments and from the public housing project, such as Gilpin Court. Many of these students come to school not ready to learn because their basic needs have not been met before coming to school. This hinders the students from being active learners; which creates a challenging task for the students to get homework done and find after school assistance at home. Most of our students are on free lunch services and participate in a backpack program, which provides the students with food items for the weekend. This program is a meaningful piece of background knowledge, which allows students to relate to the unit because they understand the value of food and do not take it for granted. This can help facilitate good discussions about how food is very important in our daily lives.

Even with those struggles students are expected to go to school, meet state standards and pass standardized test. In our schools the students have a full day of reading, math, science, and social science. The students also receive daily forty-five minutes of an extracurricular activity throughout the week, which includes art, music, library, computer or physical education. I am the Spanish teacher and teach them forty-five minutes of Spanish once a week. Coming in to teach them Spanish can be challenging at times because of the high learning demand and academic goals that need to be met. The best instructional method for these students has to be attention grabbing and interactive. It is also important to incorporate hand-on activities and involve technology tools for the students to be able to explore and solve problems. They have better understanding of the concepts with visual aids and demonstration of what they are learning. Teaching this population of students can be very challenging but very rewarding.

Objectives/Rationale

Burritos, tacos, beans, rice and tortillas. When you and your students hear that what do you think of? I know that when I ask my students, someone instantly says Mexican food. Everyone loves food and has some type of personal connection to food. My students often times identify these foods as some of the common foods that we see today from Mexican culture. However, many times we label these foods as "Mexican foods" but in actuality, we do not know how they became known as Mexican food or if they are truly "Mexican Foods". We teach our students about Latino cultures and traditional foods but the real question is do we give the students the understanding of where this food originated. Many times our students do not realize that what we see today has history behind it and we do not spend enough time exploring and discovering how this came to be. Many times we do not emphasize who brought these foods to this part of the world and how these people migrated here and came to this country and were able to introduce us to their traditional foods and culture. Their presence has given us some of the cuisines that we enjoy and see today.

One of the topics in the second grade curriculum that we discuss and learn about are the foods from different Spanish speaking countries including El Salvador and Mexico. We will focus particularly on Mexico and El Salvador because about 47% of the immigrants are of Mexican and Salvadorian descent that comprises current Latino migration to the United States. These students are to develop the awareness of traditional foods that Mexican and Salvadorian families eat and prepare at home. We discuss how some of these foods have been introduced and become accepted and are commonly eaten in the United States of America. Throughout the year we also discuss the different foods that are consumed or available in those countries as well.

It is important for our students to learn and understand how throughout the years we have seen waves of Latino migration come and move throughout the United States. The waves have had different impacts around the country. We also need to be mindful that at one point in history some of this land was not United States territory. The States known as Texas, California, and New Mexico used to be apart of the Mexican country. However, when Texas declared its independence from Mexico and asked to be annexed by the United States in 1845; a conflict was sparked which led into the U.S.- Mexican War. The war ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in which the United States then annexed both California and New Mexico. ² Although the first known immigration movements from Mexico to the United States did not occur for another 70 years. When people first emigrated from Mexico in 1910, there was a large concentration of Mexicans near the border. Then, in the 1920's, many of the Mexicans went from a temporary stay to a permanent stay in the United States. These families had to adapt to the new environment and learn to mobilize and take advantage of the opportunities being offered. However, in 1965, there were new laws that were being introduced that made restrictions, which minimized the movement between the borders of Mexico and the United States, which today is seen as border control. Although we see an increase in border control we see how the demand for labor allows Mexicans to continue crossing the border. ³ Although we see a focus on Mexican immigration at the time, there is also immigration from other Latin American countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala. The immigration movements have occurred in waves and as Gregory Bart Weeks and John Robert Weeks stated, "From 1940 to the present, the number of immigrants has risen each decade, and each decade the percentage of those immigrants who are from Latin America has risen." ⁴

In the unit I have a range of activities to help my students not only learn the material but also have a better understanding of the material and comprehend how it is relevant to what they are learning. One of the activities that I will conduct with my students is having my students view and discuss a timeline of Latino immigration to the U.S., specifically looking at Mexico and El Salvador. I will be able to show students the beginning of border implementation between Mexico and the United States that took place due to the Treaty of Guadalupe and Hidalgo in 1848, which then later began the commencement of the Mexican migration that began in the 1910, and the Salvadorian migration that began in the 1940's. The students will then be able to identify how the movement shaped certain geographical areas that have a lot of Mexican and Salvadorian based restaurants and immigrants. They will also be able to identify the reasons why the immigrants decided to stay in certain regions such as employment opportunities that allowed them to establish a new community. The students will be creating some of the typical dishes these families would eat and how it would compare to an American dish. The students will be able to see how there is a connection to the different trends that are seen today that were adopted into today's known Mexican food. The student's will be exploring and connecting pieces from the past and how it is history that has created what we know and understand in today's stories.

Richmond's Latino Communities

The city of Richmond demonstrates how segregated neighborhoods can be, but each of these neighborhoods has contributed to Richmond. According to the "Latino Diversity Guide," "The number of Latinos living in the Richmond Region has increased by 300 percent in the last twenty years." ⁵ Although there has been a growth in the Latino population it is only felt in very distinct areas such as Midlothian neighborhoods, where these population of people live. Due to this the schools are not very diverse and appear to be segregated by race when in actuality this occurs because the Latino communities live about three miles away from the African American communities. Therefore, it would be logical to see a small percentage of students in the Richmond city schools and why according to Richmond Public Schools overview, Hispanics only make up nine percent of the student population. ⁶ This goes to show that students may not be aware of the different groups of Latinos living in Richmond. Most of the students are not able to get out to these different neighborhoods and do not realize that not only does the ethnicity and race of the people change but also local stores and restaurants.

About three miles in a southeast direction from my student's neighborhood there is a large Latino neighborhood known as "Mobile Home Parks" ⁷. Going the opposite direction there is a predominantly white neighborhood known as the "Fan". It is important to realize how crossing over one street can be a totally different neighborhood and thereby changing the culture that is seen depending the area that one may be in. When you go through the neighborhoods you will see how the location and commercial buildings change. Specifically we want to focus on the Latino community. In Richmond there are multiple sub groups of Latinos; such as people from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Chile, Argentina, and many more but two groups that we will discuss will be immigrants from Mexico and El Salvador due to the high populations of immigrants that come from those countries.

There are many Salvadorian families that live together and share same traditions and foods. These immigrants are coming from the smallest country in Central America. These immigrants coming from El Salvador have a very diverse population background including blacks, Indians, Hispanics and North European and the native tongue is Spanish. ⁸ The overall population has low standards of living and recently there has been an increase in violence due to gang wars causing many to flee. Here in Richmond these immigrants are living in communities where they have established their homes and everyday lives. In these neighborhoods you can see "The Latina" a store with products imported from El Salvador and other Latin American countries. There are also family restaurants that have the typical Salvadorian dishes. Some of the dishes that can be found are pupusas, tamales, beans, rice "empanadas", tres leches cake, soups and stews. A typical Salvadorian breakfast consists of scrambled eggs with vegetables, cheese, fried plantains, mashed beans and tortillas. ⁹ Some of the typical drinks can be horchata or en salada, which is a juice that has fresh-diced fruits. These are some of the typical Salvadorian foods we see in these restaurants. It is great to see that Salvadorians continue to practice and share these foods with this country. It gives all types of people the opportunity to enjoy the Salvadorian cultural food experience. The typical breakfast that is described can easily be compared to an American breakfast and we see the foods that are similar and the ones that are more unique to the Salvadorian breakfast.

Just like the Salvadorian continues to practice homeland traditions, we see in the Richmond Latino community there are also Mexican traits that are unique. Peter Standish and Steven Bell both believe that the United States has a unique way of integrating other cultures in the American culture when they state, "No other country among them has so actively traced its cultural origins though so dramatic a history to such deep

roots; none has so thoroughly fused European and non-European cultural influences; and none has made the Indian element so central a part of its official culture." This is one of the reasons it is known as a mestizo nation and has various mestizo dialects but Spanish being the most common dialect used. ¹⁰ Mexicans have been migrating to the United States for many, many years and has been one of the top Latino groups to populate here. Seeing the growth and movement of people it has increased the number of Mexican restaurants we see throughout the city but especially in close proximities to the Salvadorian restaurants.

Today we see two types of restaurants that are associated with Mexican food, the authentic Mexican restaurant and Tex-Mex restaurant. The main difference between these two is that Tex-Mex is driven with the authentic Mexican style but infused with American products for example, fajitas or burritos. ¹¹ Those dishes are not what you would see commonly cooked in Mexico. Some of the typical authentic Mexican foods are tortilla, tamales, beans, salsa, rice, chiles rellenos (stuffed green peppers), menudo (soup), ceviche, tres leches, corn, avocado and chocolate. They are also known for their tacos but a "real Mexican taco" according to Standish, " is not hard but made with a small, soft, warm, corn tortilla, folded in half over what is usually some kind of sliced meat filling" and garnished with chopped cilantro and onion and topped with a slice of pineapple and spoonful of spicy chile sauce. ¹² These are some of the typical foods that you would find in Mexican restaurants in the U.S. and many times will be improvised with American ingredients to meet customers' expectations.

Both of these Latino groups make up some of the Latino community populations in Richmond and share similar foods and language. Some of the foods that they have in common are tortillas, tres leches cake, beans and rice. Although they share these foods it is important to understand that they have different preparationsthat reflect traditional Salvadorian or Mexican cooking. Both of these cuisines attract all kinds of ethnic groups to eat it and try to cook it at home. You do not just see the Latino community going to the restaurants but other people throughout the city come to eat pupusas or tacos. Giving the students the background of these two cultures can make them more aware of the difference between the two Latino sub groups. They will have a better understanding that they are two different countries and the importance to recognize that they each share common ideas but can have distinct taste. Not all food from Latin America should be classified as "Mexican food".

These are just two of the many Latino sub groups that exist in the Latino community in the U.S. but the idea is for the students to be able to make a connection and see that there is diversity within the Latino population. The student's can also become aware of how close to their home environment there is such a wide range of diversity within all the cuisines. Having the knowledge of other cultures can influence the students to explore and be able to broaden their thinking and curiosity of what these foods taste like and where these people come from. Both Mexican and Salvadorian restaurants serve beans and rice but trying them, they would see that they have a slight difference in taste. They can see the importance of knowing more about their city and what they are surrounded by. This can be a way they can relate their neighborhoods restaurants and typical food they eat to what other cultures eat.

Immigration/Migration History

We see in *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles*, by George J. Sánchez that there was a massive move of individuals and families crossing into the United States, that Mexico lost ten percent of their total population during the waves of immigration that took place from 1910, to the present date. It also tells us that the United States put in place Americanization programs to change ways of the Mexican eating style. The American government wanted Mexicans to give up frequent consumption of rice and beans and replace tortillas with bread. There were many changes that they try to make on these immigrants. Many of these changes were part of their customs but by the 1930s this had come to an end. With this movement we saw that fried foods, beans, rice, and tortillas were typical foods that were introduced to America by the Mexicans immigrating into the U.S. ¹³ Some of the Mexicans were already living in parts of the United States that were yet to become states.

During the 1920's there was a growth of movement of Mexican immigrants to the United States. Many of the immigrants were crossing the border to come to an area with a better economic opportunity; during those years which the males did much of the migration. "First, young single men came who hoped to relieve their family's dire economic situation in Mexico. Married men formed a second group of migrants who desperately needed to help their families by working in the United States and sending money home to their wives and children. Finally, some males arrived in the United States in family groups, either as children or as heads of households who brought their entire families with them." ¹⁴ For Mexican men, it was a great responsibility to provide money to the family and be the strong pillar to make the move to this country. Once in the U.S., many hoped they could provide their families with a better living and someday go back or try to make enough money to bring their families across the border. Many of these immigrants went to Texas, Arizona and California. We saw the growth of Mexicans in these states because of the job opportunities and liberties of being able to go back home because they worked in seasonal labor and at times would come if they needed extra income. ¹⁵ It was significant to see how the Mexican immigration had this flexibility but also how they eventually had to leave things behind and begin a new life in the United States.

Mexican immigrants also moved to the north because they would have higher income. Having public transportation like the railroads or streetcars made it easier for these immigrants to move around. When the workers got to the north they experienced a higher cost of living but were not earning enough money. Therefore, they began rethinking the choices they had made and decided to move out there. ¹⁶ The number of immigrants that moved that way, were much fewer compared to all the Mexicans that were settling in the southern part of the country. The ones that were making a move would try to recreate the motherland atmosphere.

Mexican immigrants coming over had easier access and fewer restrictions to coming to this country and working compared to other immigrant groups for example the Asian immigrants. The United States Congress passed an immigration act where Europeans could not enter through Mexico unless taking test similar to ones that were administered at Ellis Island. ¹⁷ Mexican immigrants were exempted from this process until 1921. In 1942, the Bracero Program was introduced and used as the first form of regulating the Mexican migration. This program allowed Mexicans to come to the United States to work for a certain amount time before they were sent back to their country. The Program was most beneficial for the United State during World War II when there was a need for workers because of the lack of men that had gone off to war. It specifically helped the agriculture industries with seasonal workers that worked in the southern west states and were provide

both housing and transportation. In the 1950's we began to see a large wave of undocumented immigrants coming into the U.S. because of the border patrol to control the people coming into the country. This phenomenon began close to the ending of the Bracero's program, which came to an official end in 1964. The number of Mexican immigrants has drastically increased through the years that by 2004 there were eleven million Mexican immigrants in the United States. ¹⁸ Especially in recent years the Mexican population has increased even more, according to the 2010 census it has been recorded that 307.8 million people (16.7%) who live in the United States and are classified as Hispanic which include all Latino sub groups. ¹⁹

With the waves of Mexican immigrants there have been millions of people that have learned and adapted to some of the American styles and patterns. According to Lacy and Odem, "The adoption of U.S. cultural forms and practices, even if blended with Mexican cultural forms and practice, indicate that Mexican immigrants are being incorporated into U.S. society", and being mainstreamed into the new things they are being exposed to. ²⁰ Mexicans were able to learn more about the ways of this country and they were able to introduce and practice their own typical celebrations and cook their homeland foods.

Just like there were Mexican immigrants coming to the United States there were also other Latino groups leaving their motherland and looking for better opportunities. Some of those countries were El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Just like we had seen in the Mexican migration, more Salvadorian and Guatemalan men were coming to the United States and we also saw similar patterns with these immigrants going to locations that had other Latinos already established there. They too were limited to the types of jobs they could obtain. Since many of them had limited language and work skills they had limited job opportunities and many times ended up being exploited by their employers. ²¹ They had to be satisfied with what they could obtain for a job since they came to this country open minded to whatever opportunity they would encounter.

The Salvadorian migration also occurred in several different waves that were provoked due to certain events that occurred in El Salvador. The journey from El Salvador to the United States is a long and dangerous journey that could take several months. Therefore, in order to make this journey travellers need a smuggler or a "coyote" in order to show them the way and make sure they can travel safely. The path from El Salvador to the United States travels from the starting point El Salvador then to Guatemala through Mexico and finally crossing the Grande River. They then are supposed to go through immigration however, there are some that do not and enter the country illegally. Although, another way that people are able to come to this country is by applying for a visa in order to come to the United States. Whichever way people decide to come to the United States; before making this journey people really think about whether they are sure about the risk they are about to take by completing this journey or having their families complete the journey. However, there are times when people felt that they needed to escape from their native land in order to find a better life than the one they already had.

The first wave of migration occurred in late 1930's and during World War II to meet the United States wartime labor shortage. During this time there was the commercialization of coffee in both Central America and the United States. It was also the beginning of a time when work opportunities became more prominent. It was also during this first wave of immigration when the upper-middle-class or upper class business people were the majority of the population of people that were traveling to the United States. The second wave transpired from the 1940's to the 1950's. During this time period the number of Salvadorians, were middle class citizens from El Salvador, out-numbered the Mexicans in San Francisco, California. It was also during 1940 that women began migrating to the United States as well. They were considered pioneers because it was believed that women were supposed to let their husbands or other male family members go to the states and earn money to send it back to them. However, instead women began travelling to work in Washington D.C. and were the

ones earning money to send to their families. ²²

The third wave of the Salvadorian migration began in the early 1970's. During this time period the country began to experience a political unrest that escalated into the outbreak of Civil War in 1980. The population that was leaving the country also changed from the upper-class level to the working, lower middle, and middle classes that left the country. As the situation in El Salvador worsened people continued to flee the country and migrate to the United States. In 1986, the United States government allowed immigrants to apply for amnesty under the Immigration Reform Control Act (IRCA) as a way to help the refugees. ²³ The end of the Civil War in 1992, brought another wave of migration. Due to the number of refugees that were continuing to come from El Salvador; the U.S. Congress granted temporary status program to all Salvadorians. This program was extended several times to help the refugees escaping the war but came to an end in 1994 just two years after the end of the civil war. The war's aftermath left behind a broken country that could not provide its citizen with the most important thing, safety. El Salvador was left in ruins and the waves of violence that were an outcome of the war continued to affect the country in negative ways by the creation of gangs. The country was also unable to help give their citizens a form of income due to the high unemployment rate and also the underemployment. The fifth wave occurred in 2000 and continues to this day. It was onset by the devastating earthquake that took place in 2001. This Earthquake caused the American government to re-establish the temporary status program to help the victims of the earthquake that were migrating to the United States. This program was again extended until it came to an end in 2007. ²⁴

The journey that immigrants from Mexico and El Salvador have to endure is full of obstacles and hurdles that they must overcome in order to begin a new life. People leave their families and homes behind in order to travel to a new country in hopes for new opportunities that will be able to give them a better life. Both the Mexican and Salvadorian migration occurred in waves that were onset due to certain events that were going on in the country that aligned with the immigration policies that the United States was creating at the time. However, the main difference between the Salvadorian and Mexican migration was the type of people that were emigrating. Throughout the waves of the Mexican migration there was a consistence of different socioeconomic groups that were emigrating through both illegal and legal means. Whereas, the Salvadorian migration began with only people from high socioeconomic groups were immigrating to the United States using legal methods. However, as the migration waves continued the lower socioeconomic groups began coming to the United States using both legal and illegal means instead of the upper socioeconomic groups. In a way the voyage that the Mexican and Salvadorian took was similar but at the same time different.

Cultural Influence On The United States

Today we are driving down the street and we see a typical fast food restaurant, Taco Bell. On the menu they have items like nachos, quesadillas, tacos, burritos and an extensive menu of many foods similar to these. We have seen how there are many restaurants with Mexican influenced cuisine, either an authentic Mexican restaurant or a Tex-Mex restaurant. Throughout the years we have witnessed a flow of diverse Latino sub groups. These groups, which consist of countries from Central America and the country Mexico, have introduced their culture and traditions to the United States.

With the range of Mexican and Latino foods that were introduced to the American culture we find some of the more common foods today in chains like Taco Bell. It is not limited to their menu as stated in *¡Que vivan los*

tamales!, but that ingredients and technique can change. ²⁵ Like Taco Bell many other companies have grown with these different ethnic types of foods. Americans have adapted to it and now it is not only a cultural connection but also more business oriented. In *We Are What We Eat* by Donna Gabaccia states that by the 1980's Americans were eating fast foods nine times a month spending plenty of money. ²⁶ People of all background were going out to eat and many times a tourist would prefer to go to a chain restaurant like Taco Bell verses a small family owned restaurant. "Eating homogeneous, processed, mass-produced foods is no more, or, less, American enjoying the multi-ethnic mixtures of particular regions." ²⁷

It has grown to be big business today with fast food and processed food companies. Many of the corporate productions are not founded by a Mexican or Salvadorian but by Americans that have Americanized Latino food into a commercial variation of what is known as Tex-Mex. These foods have become what most Americans believe to be authentic Mexican or Latino food. It is the demand for these supposed ethnic food that have been Americanized that people want. These leading ethnic foods that have been desired, according the American Frozen Food Institute and AC Nielson Mexican, have been made into frozen entrees that came in second place for the most sold in grocery stores in 2001. ²⁸ According to Jean Ford, in the *Latino Cuisine and Its Influence on American Foods*, demonstrates that there is a process in which the original food have become an Americanized industry. Some of the specific foods that have been commercialized and are found in the frozen food section of a grocery store or in many home freezers are enchiladas, burritos quesadillas, taquitos and chimichangas. ²⁹ These food items can be served at restaurants but the demand of people wanting to make them at home has led to the growth of these being read-to-eat items. So now a days people can go to a store and buy one of these Latino influenced items and skip the process of making it at home.

Food is an important factor to history, and teaching students how immigrants have influenced history and how we can relate to the way we perceive things today. The emphasis that food has is important to life and make meaning of it first, is ideal for students to realize we need food to survive. Then making the connection and realizing that there are different foods and that we have many choices when we choose to eat. There is American, Indian, Chinese, Ethiopian, Mexican and many other types of cuisines. Different immigrants that traveled to this country and shared the cuisine and culture within the United States made these choices for us. Many times these foods were Americanized by using some of the spices but then adding American ingredients and giving it a twist still keeping the principal of the ideal dish but adding something to it or combing it with other foods. For example in Mexico they may just serve some chiles rellenos (stuffed peppers) but here we would combine a dish and serve it alongside with beans, rice and eggs. The important part is appreciating the food and where it originated.

Although we associate with all these types of Latino foods there is more truth to what we call "Mexican food" than what meets the eye or in this case — the mouth. Many of these foods that are made today are processed and tweaked a little to change some features of it. Many Mexican families go to the market and prefer to buy fresh foods and prepare the food more natural. "Mexico gave us tomato and the avocado, it gave us corn and chocolate (an indulgence of the Aztec nobility)." ³⁰ Having these indigenous crops in our markets, came from when agriculturalists would expand into the United States and plant these plantations. ³¹ We are able to experience the fresh ingredients of many different cuisine because they are not only imported to the United States but are also grown here to allow for the American culture to expand and embrace other individual cultures that have had an impact on the American society.

Many restaurants today, serve typical "Mexican food" and do not necessarily need to be labeled as a Mexican restaurant. Some of the foods like burritos, carnitas, huevos rancheros, enchiladas, and rice are almost

universally available in restaurants and we do not have to go look for a Mexican restaurant. ³² The idea here though is to value the opportunity to have these foods influenced by the Mexican culture. These foods were made by immigrants that adapted their native cuisines to the ingredients that were available to them so that they could have a little bit of their precious culture with them. As the Mexican cuisine increases throughout the country it has cause for flank steak to double the price that is usually used in fajitas. ³³ So we see the economics behind the cultural food. As demand and popularity of the different dishes increases the price in the supply also increases which shows the impact that the Latino cuisine has.

One ingredient that has been around for a long time and has been used as the base for a majority of the Latino cuisine is corn. Corn is a very important vegetable that the Mexicans brought to U.S. and has become a very big part of our diets. The corn was planted by Native Americans and then was adapted by Mexico and other Central American countries. Corn is also used to make the dough for the tortillas, which is a very important part of a Mexican or Salvadorian meal. Tortillas have also been altered to make other dishes such as pupusas or empanadas. In most Latin American countries it is traditional for all women to know how to make tortillas by hand. Therefore, traditionally making tortillas by hand is a very powerful skill in a Latina women but now there is access to food processing machinery that take from the labor it takes to make the tortilla. ³⁴ Many times we can see that tortillas does not require a specialized individual to make these but can be produced in large quantities for the needs of tortillas either for purchase at the grocery store or restaurants.

Our ultimate focus is for the students to understand that Latino food has not always been present in the cuisines of the country. Before the American government would try to make sure that the Latino immigrants were taught to be as Americanized as any other American that had be born and raised in the United States. However, over the passage of time the influence of the Latino cuisine has been more and more present. Today in the United States we are able to see how there has been influence of what Mexican food is by the marketing. However, not all food that sounds Spanish is "Mexican food". There are many differences in cuisines between the multiple Latino subgroups. "In the Southwest, Americans who traveled there both before and after the region was annexed to the United States expressed interest and amazement at the Mexican food they discovered." ³⁵

Overall the Latino population takes pride in cooking and making food at home. Cooking a typical dish at home with the spices and fresh vegetables creates a tasty meal for any family. Like "in Mexico, the hungrier the cook, the tastier the food." ³⁶ Our students will see the appreciation for food and how history has shaped the way we see "Mexican food".

Essential Questions

1. *Where are the countries in the Western Hemisphere that speak Spanish?*
2. *Where is Mexico and El Salvador?*
3. *What is an immigrant?*
4. *Where did immigrants come from and how long ago?*
5. *What are typical foods in Mexico and El Salvador?*
6. *What influence have these typical foods had in the United States?*

Strategies

Making meaning through pictures, maps and graphs

One of the strategies that the students will be using is observing and reading into the pictures. They will be looking at pictures to interpret the meaning of what an immigrant is and telling a story from their inferences. They will use their prior knowledge to seek clues and picture sequence to get a better understanding of what immigration is and what some immigrants have gone through to migrate to another country. They will need to be able to comprehend that the man in the story is packing his bags and leaving his home and moving to a far away place. It is important that the student's look for details that will help them broaden their understanding of what it is to be an immigrant.

The students will be using map skills to read the legend and be able to find different geographical points on the graph. The students will need to be aware of where Central America is to find Mexico and El Salvador. The students will also need to be able to identify the location of the state they live in. This is an important strategy to be able to read a map and locate themselves on it. They will use the legend to identify what the different colors on the map represent.

Like the maps the students will also be reading graphs and interpreting what the graphs mean. The students will have to refer to the legend and find what the lines and points on the graph represent. The students will need to be able to interpret the graph and see the growth of the Mexican and Salvadorian immigration in the United States. They will use the graph to also see that the number of Mexican immigrants was much larger the number of Salvadorian immigrants.

All these are important strategies the students will need to have for a better understanding of what immigration is and the growth of immigrants throughout the centuries. The students will also have the ability to see the diverse demographics in the surrounding neighborhoods and how close these populations of people live to my students.

Understanding cultural differences

The students will be making connections among the Latin American countries, in particular Mexico and El Salvador. The students will be able to identify that although these are Spanish-speaking countries they do have unique characteristics that can be seen in the different cuisines. The students will be able to list different foods that are both common and different among these countries. I will use the food books they create to monitor their understanding of foods they record for each country. The students will need to label and later use the food book for the group project to make restaurant menus. This will demonstrate that the students are using the cultural foods being learned in their work.

This is a key strategy because the students need to be able to realize the importance of diverse cultural foods. They should appreciate how it has influenced many of the dishes we see today in restaurants, at school and at home. They will have an appreciation for the different cultures and be able to identify foods that can be associated as "Latino foods".

Comparing and contrasting

Another strategy that will be used is comparing and contrasting. The students will need to know how to use a

Venn diagram and be able to use key concepts learned in previous lessons. They will need to use reading skills to look at the three different local restaurants menus. The students will need to be able to distinguish the similarities and differences among the menus and identify some of the authentic foods. The students will need to use the Venn diagram to see the similar and different foods among the restaurants.

This is an important strategy to use because the students should be able to look at these menus and target key concept that I am trying to get the students to understand. The students will have a graphic organizer that will list the foods but also that show how these countries can have similar but yet different cuisines. The students will be able to make connections to different foods we have discussed throughout the unit. This strategy will help the students highlight the main idea of the unit.

Classroom Activities

These activities are for students to understand what immigration is and how it connects to them. The students will also be learning more on their surrounding neighborhoods and who surrounds them. They will then explore the histories of Mexico and El Salvador and the typical foods they eat. The students will have a better understanding of how these immigrants have influenced and brought native foods and traditions to the U.S. We will also explore different Latin American restaurants and see how these foods can also be found in popular fast foods like Taco Bell. The overall idea is for the students to realize the importance of change over time and how food is important and shapes what we eat today. This will expose second graders who have limited to no knowledge of immigration especially the Latino migration into the city surrounding them.

Some of the activities will be whole group and lead to discussion. There will be multiple visual activities to give the students the ability to see and interact with the different books, maps and restaurant menus that will be used throughout the instruction. Individually the students will be creating a food book where they will record different foods discussed and learned about that represent the two main countries we are covering. The students will also be working in small groups to compare and contrast three different Latin American country restaurant menus. The students will also be using their creativity to recreate a menu based on the menus we have looked at.

Classroom Activity 1

The lesson will begin with the students being asked to draw what an immigrant looks like. Then we will look at a children's book, *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. Although this book is not directly connected to Latino migration history it would be a great book to illustrate what immigration is and how immigration is a shared experience amongst many people from many countries. This will be used to assess and see what the students know about immigration. This is a picture book with no words. Since this lesson is conducted in Spanish the students will be able to create a storyline and see what they think is happening in the story. We will look at the pictures in the book and have the students point out what they see and what they think is happening. These ideas will be listed on a poster board and later used to reference back to what it means to be an immigrant.

The students will go back and look at their drawing of an immigrant and compare to the man in the story. Then the students will define what immigration is and how it was illustrated in our story. They will discuss how there are many people in our country but also in our city that are immigrants. The students will use the

pictures from the story to have a better understanding of what immigrants do, like leaving their homes and trying to find a living once they arrive to their destination. Then we will talk about how there are immigrants all around us and within our community and surrounding neighborhoods. This will lead to discussion of two subgroups of Latinos that we will focus on that are in our neighborhoods, Mexican and Salvadorians.

Classroom Activity 2

In the next lesson we will begin by introducing an online map that shows countries where Spanish is spoken as the primary language around the world. The link to the map is under the student resource section. The students will be looking at the world map and discuss what they see. We will explore the map and see the regions as a whole group where Spanish is the primary language pointing out North and Central America. Then we will move to the U.S. and Richmond so that the students have a sense of progression of scale.

We will then look at a Racial Dot Map online that shows the 2010 Census Bureau. You will find the link in the student resources section. This will be great visual aid for the students to see the breakdown of racial groups, Whites, Black, Asian, Hispanic and other race. We will see that the United States is predominantly White but that there are areas where there are dense populations of other races. We will be looking at U.S. and then zooming into Richmond, Virginia. The students can use this to locate their state and then zoom in to their city and see what the demographics looks like around them and how diverse their surroundings are.

During this lesson using the online map, we will begin by looking at the whole map and identifying and labeling with a sticky note specific locations. First where does the United States border with Mexico and then locating Central America. Once finding Central America we will discuss how all these countries have people that migrate to the United States and who speak Spanish but have different foods and traditions. With a star we will identify Mexico and El Salvador the countries that our main focus will be on. Once we have identified these countries we will locate our state Virginia and zoom in to the Richmond area and label approximately the area where our school is located. The students will get to examine the map and discuss with a partner what they observe and take note about the patterns and trends they see in the Richmond area. The students will share what they learned about looking at the map and as whole group point out patterns we see. We will then point out the Latino populated area and how close it is to the student's school and neighborhood. This will allow the students to see that there are Spanish-speaking communities and that they are mainly concentrated in one area.

Once the students have looked at the map and see the demographics in the city we will discuss how two of the countries that populate that area are, Mexico and El Salvador. I will then read *Corn/Maize* by Doreen Gonzales, which will introduce them to the importance of corn in the Latino Culture. This book allows students to have an understanding of how vital corn can be to not only the indigenous Latino population but also to the Latin American population and their communities. The students will think about how they use corn and if they eat corn at home. This will lead to the conversation of what other foods they eat and what influence it has had in dishes we see today in restaurants.

Classroom Activity 3

The opening for this lesson will be a YouTube video Chocolate: Uno, dos, tres and the students signing along. The link is in the student resource section. It is an easy song for the students to sing and follow along. Then we will discuss how cacao has been cultivated in Mexico and other Central American countries and main ingredient for chocolate. We will then go and look at Mexico on the map and we will discuss how families and individuals have traveled into the United States throughout the centuries and we will then look at the graph

shown below, showing the waves from the 1849 to 2000 and the increase of Mexicans coming into the United States. The students will see how there has been a great number of Mexicans coming into the country after the Mexican revolution, the Braceros program and families migrating to the U.S. for better opportunities. Once we have looked at the graph and discussed some of the waves we will begin talking about what have these immigrants brought to this country. The students will work together to think of some of the traditions they have learned about or heard about. Then I will give the students some picture of Mexican foods, menudo, ceviche, chiles rellenos, rice, beans and also foods that have been Americanized for example a burrito or a fajita. The students will have a good understanding of what some typical native Mexican dishes are and what today we see in a Tex-mex restaurant.

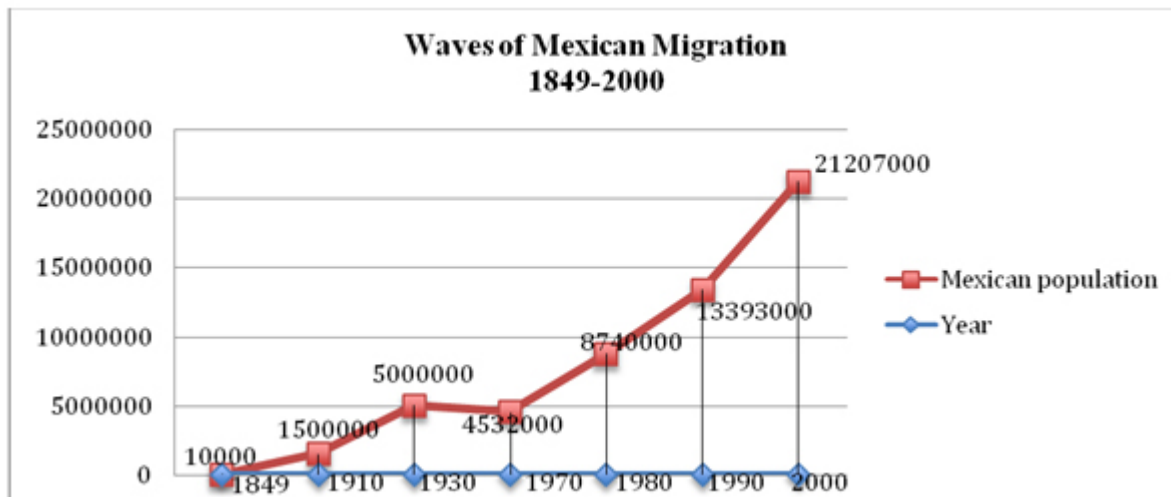


Figure 1: Graph of Mexican population ³⁷

The next lesson will begin with a study on the Salvadorian immigration waves on a graph shown below and they will be able to compare it to the Mexican immigration waves graph and see that there has been fewer Salvadorians migrating compared to the Mexicans. It will show that there has been a drastic increase of immigrants from both countries but a greater amount of Mexicans coming into the United States. Then we will list and see pictures of the typical foods Salvadorians eat which are pupusas, tamales, carne asada (grilled steak), horchata (milk and cinnamon based drink) and other dishes. We will then watch a YouTube video called "Cooking with Kids: How to Make Pupusas for Children - Weelicious," that will show the students and easy step-by-step video on how to make the popular pupusas at home with a parent. The link to this video is listed in the student resource section.

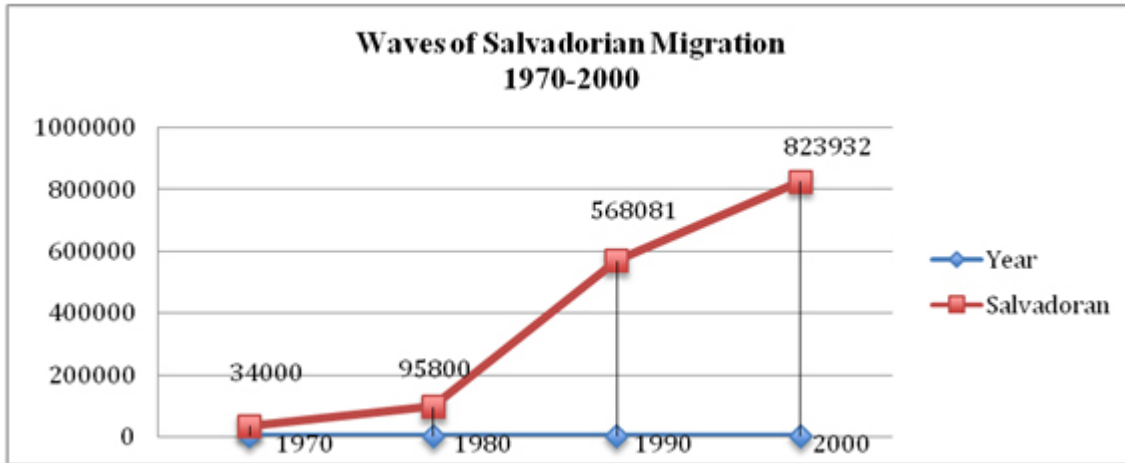


Figure 2: Graph of Salvadorian population ³⁸

The students will make a food book and will be able to use the video to make a page for a pupusas step by step to take home. The students will continue to add to the book as we learn and list foods and draw pictures that are "Latino foods". The students will be able to take it home and see if they have any of these items at home. With these lessons the students will have a grasp of the waves of Mexican immigration and the foods we see today at restaurants. This activity can be done with any countries of your choice but for this unit our focus is these two countries.

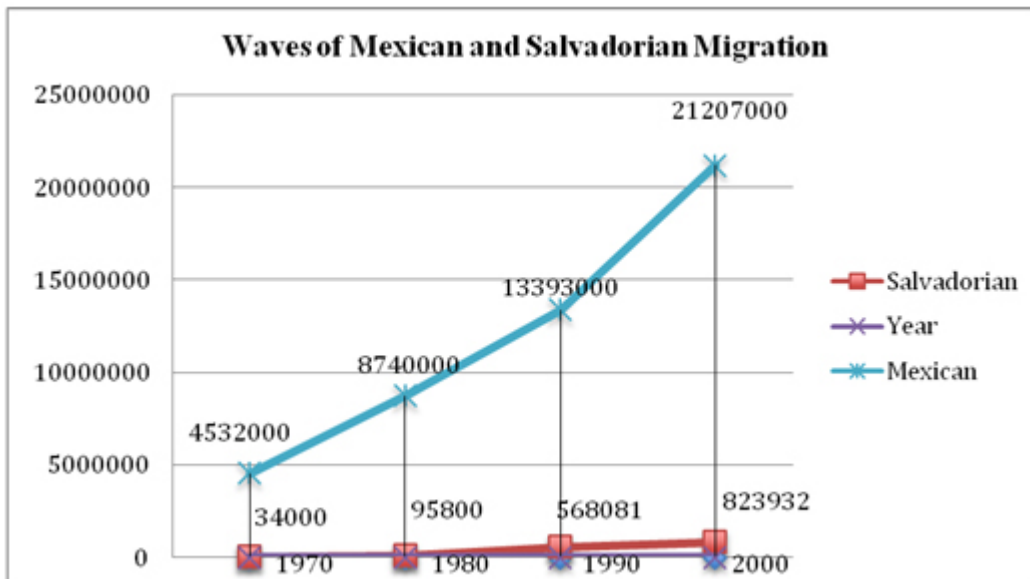


Figure 3: Graph of Mexican and Salvadorian population ³⁹

Classroom Activity 4

The students have discussed the typical Latin American dishes and foods that are common today in the United States in the previous lesson. The students will see pictures taken of the front of three local Latin America restaurants and labeled with the type of Latin cuisine used, a Mexican menu, a Cuban menu and a Salvadorian menu. Then the students will compare the three menus from these local restaurants. The students will work in groups to compare and contrast the menus and record their findings on a Venn diagram. They will see that some of the menus have similar foods like rice, beans and meats used but not necessarily cooked the same

way. The students will also find that there are differences between the three cuisines. Once the students have had a chance to look over the menus they will share with the class their findings and be posted on a poster board. The students will see that although these three restaurants have Spanish-speaking people and classified as Latin America food they each have unique dishes they cook.

The students will then work in teams to create a menu for their future Latin American restaurant. The students can use the food book they have from the previous lesson and the menus that they used in this activity. The students can brainstorm at home and work together in class to make a list of the dishes and using pictures to put together the menu. Once they have drafted their ideal menu they will be put it together and decorate their final menu and present it to the class.

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