



SNAP Challenge Classroom Lesson

Imagine if you only had \$6 to spend on all of your food for an entire day. No extra money for snacks, no dinner out, and no skipping the grocery store because you're tired. This is the reality for millions of Americans who rely on SNAP—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—to put food on the table. In today's activity, you'll take on the SNAP Challenge: planning meals on a limited budget. By stepping into this experience, you'll begin to understand the tough choices families face every day and reflect on what it means to live with food insecurity.

Materials:

- Grocery store flyers (or online grocery websites)
- Calculators or devices for budgeting
- Paper/worksheets for planning meals
- USDA MyPlate or nutrition guideline handouts
- Reflection journals or writing paper

Time Required:

1–2 class periods (45–90 minutes)

Step 1: Introduction (10 minutes)

Briefly explain the SNAP program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). Share the average SNAP benefit (~\$6 per person per day, varies by state and year). Ask students: "What would you eat if you had only \$6 for the entire day?"

Step 2: Group Challenge (20–30 minutes)

Divide students into small groups (3–4). Give each group a budget: \$18 for 3 people for 1 day (or scale up for multiple days). Using flyers or websites, students create a 1-day meal plan:

- Must include breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- Must stay within budget.
- Must consider nutrition balance (protein, carbs, fruits/vegetables).

Step 3: Nutrition Check (10 minutes)

Groups compare their menus to the USDA MyPlate chart. Discuss what nutrients might be missing. Highlight trade-offs: processed vs fresh foods, quantity vs quality, etc.

Step 4: Discussion & Reflection (15 minutes)

- What foods did you leave out that you normally eat?
- Was it hard to create a balanced diet on this budget?
- How would this affect someone's health over time?
- How might food insecurity affect school, work, or family life?

Step 5: Extension (Optional)

Invite an IFPN representative to speak to your students about food insecurity in Morris County.
Run a Food Drive at your school

Assessment

Group presentation of meal plan & budget. Short reflective writing assignment: "What I learned from living on the SNAP budget."