

njpac
arts
education

**schooltime
performance
series**



**maddi's
fridge**

teacher resource guide

about the performance

Maddi's Fridge is a story about two best friends. One day, Sofia finds out that Maddi's fridge is almost empty and there's not enough food at home. Maddi asks Sofia to keep it a secret. Sofia promises, but she feels worried and wants to help her friend. She tries sneaking food from her own home to bring to Maddi, but that turns out to be a messy task. Eventually, Sofia realizes that to be a good friend, she will need to break her promise and tell her mom about Maddi's situation. Will they still be able to be best friends?



cultural connections

Childhood food insecurity is a persistent issue across the United States. In 2023, nearly 18% of U.S. households with children experienced food insecurity. This translates into millions of young people facing uncertain access to the meals they need. Teachers across the nation have sounded the alarm: about 74% report students arriving at school hungry at least once a month.

In 2022, approximately 13.2% of children in the state of New Jersey — roughly 262,000 young individuals — lived in food-insecure households. Moreover, since 2018, the state's child food insecurity rate has climbed, from around 11.3% to 13.2%. Recognizing the urgency, in January 2024, NJ Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation expanding free school meal eligibility under the Working Class Families Anti-Hunger Act, dramatically increasing access for students whose household incomes reach up to 224% of the federal poverty level.

Private food banks and soup kitchens play a vital, though limited, role in filling the gaps families face. The Community FoodBank of New Jersey and its network of 800+ partner pantries, soup kitchens and mobile sites provide millions of meals to vulnerable children and their families.

Continued efforts across policy, education and community support remain essential to ensure all children in New Jersey — and across the nation — have the food security they deserve.

Childsplay's production of *Maddi's Fridge* brings these statistics to life by showing the impact of food insecurity through the eyes of children. Sofia and Maddi's story personalizes the data, making audiences feel the weight of the issue not just as numbers, but as lived experiences of friendship, compassion and resilience. By connecting a nationwide crisis to an intimate tale between two best friends, the play helps young audiences — and their families — understand both the challenges of hunger and the power of community in addressing it. In this way, the cultural connections highlighted above are not abstract facts, but deeply tied to the emotions and lessons presented in the show.



vocabulary

Actor

A person who performs as someone or something different from themselves, usually on stage in a play, on television or in the movies

Articulate

To speak clearly

Character

People, animals, items or creatures in a story that can think, feel or move

Dairy

Food and drinks that contain, or are made from, milk

Gesture

Movement of part(s) of the body

Food insecurity

Inconsistent access to enough healthy food for an active life

Friend

People you enjoy spending time with, who make you feel happy, safe and included

Fruits

The part of a flowering plant that has seeds and can be eaten

Grains

A type of grass that has seeds that can be dried and turned into flour to be eaten. Popular grains are wheat, rice, corn and oats

Project

To speak loud enough to be heard

Promise

Committing to doing something

Protein

One of the main nutrients found in foods. Popular sources of protein include meat, fish, eggs, beans and nuts

Setting

Where a story takes place

Skit

A very short play, usually performed in a casual space

Vegetables

The leaves, stems, flowers or roots of a plant that can be eaten. Root vegetables such as carrots and sweet potatoes grow underground. Spinach, lettuce and cabbage are popular plant leaves that can be eaten. Asparagus is an edible plant stem, while broccoli and cauliflower are flowers

inspired learning for the classroom

		Teacher Focus	Student Activity	NJ Student Learning Standards
P	Prepare	Discover what your students already know about this art form, topic or type of performance. Read the book or share the read-aloud video of <i>Maddi's Fridge</i> with your class. Then show them the teaser trailer for the performance and have a short discussion about what things they think might be different between the book and live production. Further explain what they will see at a theater and why it's important. This can be accomplished by sharing images, vocabulary, videos or context that might help them appreciate the performance more fully.	Read-Aloud Video (English) Maddi's Fridge by Lois Brandt Read-Aloud Video (Spanish) La Nevera de Maddi by Lois Brandt Short explanation of food insecurity Food Insecurity Explained for Kids Teaser Trailer Maddi's Fridge About <i>Maddie's Fridge</i> Author's Website	English Language Arts NJLSA.SL1, NJLSA.SL2, NJLSA.R2 Visual & Performing Arts Anchor Standard 7
E	Experience	For some students, this may be their first time in a theater. Review audience etiquette and go over expectations for arrival and departure from the theater. Before watching the show, provide a discussion question for them to consider during the performance. Optional: At school, let students share a one-word answer to a prompt about how they feel (eg. which TV character do you feel like today? If you were a texture, what texture would you be?). After the field trip, ask students the same question and let them explain why they feel the same or why they feel differently.	Ask the following discussion questions: 1. Encourage students to notice how the actors use their bodies, faces and voices to tell the story. What are the problems the characters are trying to solve in the play? 2. Look for the different ways friends and family members help each other in the play. What makes someone a good friend? When have you done something to help a friend or family member? When has a friend or family member done something to help you?	NJ English Language Arts NJLSA.SL2, NJLSA.SL3 Visual & Performing Arts Anchor Standard 7, 8 Social & Emotional Learning Competencies Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision Making
R	Reflect	Give students a moment to think about their answer to the discussion question you introduced in the experience section. Then allow them to share their response out loud with the class. Next, have students reflect on the skillset of the performers they saw in the show. Go around the class and have each student fill in the following statement: "I can already _____ like the performers did, but I can't _____ yet!" After everyone is done, remind them that with enough time and practice, they can accomplish anything they set their minds to.	Have a class discussion about what problems are trying to be solved in the play. Challenge them to think through the themes of friendship, hunger, healthy food choices and accomplishing hard things as you feel is appropriate. Share and write down the students' ideas about what makes someone a good friend. If possible, share examples from the play of ways that Sofia and Maddi were good friends to each other. Then, ask a few students to share some of the ways they noticed characters helping each other in the play. Have students speak to a partner or in a small group about the ways that they have helped or been helped by others in their lives.	NJ English Language Arts NJLSA.SL1, NJLSA.SL2, NJLSA.SL4, NJLSA.W4. Comprehensive Health & Physical Education 2.1.2.PGD. 2, 2.1.5.PGD.1 Visual & Performing Arts Anchor Standard 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 Social & Emotional Learning Competencies Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills
F	Focus	Use this time to review the vocabulary section and complete the <i>SchoolTime</i> activity sheets.	Maddi's Fridge Activity Sheets	Comprehensive Health & Physical Education 2.1.2.PGD. 2, 2.1.5.PGD.1 Visual & Performing Arts Anchor Standard 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10
O	Originate	After reviewing vocabulary, write a class poem about the performance, where each student adds a line. Once the poem is complete, read the poem as a class three times with each student saying the line they wrote. Before each repetition, give them a prompt to inform how they deliver their line (eg. say it like you're excited, scared, angry, etc.). Optional: To reinforce learning from the focus section, encourage students to incorporate all the vocabulary words.		Visual & Performing Arts Anchor Standard 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 Social & Emotional Learning Competencies Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills
R	Rehearse	Have each student draw their own picture inspired by the show and their class poem. As they are working, use this time to walk around and ask them each about what they are drawing, the materials they are using, and what inspired them.		Visual & Performing Arts Anchor Standard 1, 2, 7, 8, 10 Social & Emotional Learning Competencies Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills
M	Mix it all together!	Allow each student to present their artwork and discuss why they drew what they did, giving them an opportunity to express themselves visually and verbally. Between presentations, allow two or three students to describe their reactions to the artwork that was presented. Encourage them to use phrases like "It reminded me of _____" or "It made me feel _____" rather than describing the art as good or bad. Once everyone is done presenting, put the artwork up on the wall with the class poem to complete your students' poem gallery.		Visual & Performing Arts Anchor Standard 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 Social & Emotional Learning Competencies Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills

curriculum standards

English Language Arts
NJSLSA.R2
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

NJSLSA.SL1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJSLSA.SL2
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NJSLSA.SL3
Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

NJSLSA.SL4
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

NJSLSA.W4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Comprehensive Health & Physical Education
2.1.2.PGD.2
Develop an awareness of healthy habits

2.1.5.PGD.1
Identify effective personal health strategies and behaviors that reduce illness, prevent injuries, and maintain or enhance one’s wellness

Social Emotional Learning Competencies
Relationship Skills
Relationship skills: communicating effectively

Responsible Decision Making
Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school; Identifying solutions for personal and social problems; Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts; demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness

Self-Awareness
Integrating personal and social identities; identifying one’s emotions; Linking feelings, values and thoughts

Social-Awareness
Taking others’ perspectives;
Showing concern for the feelings of others

Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1
Conceptualizing and generating ideas

Anchor Standard 2
Organizing and developing ideas

Anchor Standard 3
Refining and completing products

Anchor Standard 4
Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.

Anchor Standard 5
Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation

Anchor Standard 6
Convey meaning through presentation of artistic work

Anchor Standard 7
Perceiving and analyzing products

Anchor Standard 8
Applying criteria to evaluate products

Anchor Standard 9
Interpret intent and meaning

Anchor Standard 10
Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.

additional resources

NJPAC
About NJPAC
njpac.org/about

NJPAC’s Arts Education programs
njpac.org/arts-education

NJPAC’s David G. Berger Master Class Series
njpac.org/berger

Maddie’s Fridge Activity Sheets
njpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/MaddiesFridge_ActivitySheets.pdf

Websites
CFBNJ | Feeding America Study Finds a 22% Increase in Food Insecurity in New Jersey
cfbnj.org/feeding-america-study-finds-a-22-increase-in-food-insecurity-in-new-jersey

DOH NJ | New Jersey State Health Assessment Data
doh.nj.gov/doh-shad/indicator/summary/FoodInsecurity.html?PrinterFriendly=x&utm

About Food Security in New Jersey
nj.gov/foodsecurity/food-security/about

78% of Teachers Say They’ve Spent up to \$100 of Their Own Money To Address Student Hunger
parents.com/survey-shows-how-teachers-are-addressing-student-hunger-11700367

About *Maddi’s Fridge*
loisbrandt.com/about-maddi-s-fridge

Feeding America | Child Hunger Facts
feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/child-hunger-facts

My Plate | Kids
myplate.gov/life-stages/kids

Videos
Maddi’s Fridge By Lois Brandt Read Outloud (English)
youtube.com/watch?v=XNeQCBOJYe4&ab_channel=CuteBooks4Kids

La Nevera De Maddi by Lois Brandt Read Outloud (Spanish)
youtube.com/watch?v=l4n25JvTmHM&ab_channel=HistoriasCuentos

CBC Kids| Food Insecurity Explained For Kids
youtube.com/watch?v=YfRtUgn7GRk&ab_channel=CBCKids

*Maddi’s Fridge*Teaser Trailer
youtube.com/watch?v=Y0DIKeDORqw&ab_channel=ChildsplayTheatre

Saturday at the Food Pantry by Diane O’Neill Read Outloud
youtu.be/c-kr5s_lw5Y?si=gAZnzARankBrpKKW

Child Food Insecurity Report on NBC Nightly News: Kids Edition
youtu.be/RkRs73b0Enk?si=ezVODjamuzkEyyJ5

Kids Respond to Child Hunger
youtu.be/OwluOVJAn-0?si=5cj6U8UwzLVOweDh

Kids Ask Dr. Friendtastic | Friendship Advice
youtu.be/VszmHcFg_Dk?si=iEIBzqoeH8WKI-It

Books
Maddi’s Fridge written by Lois Brandt, illustrated by Vin Vogel. 2014

Saturday at the Food Pantry written by Diane O’Neill, illustrated by Brizida Magro. 2021

bring the arts to your school

In-School Residencies

NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development

Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

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+ deceased