It’s common knowledge—the way to any adolescent’s heart is through his or her stomach! “Menu Magic!” provides this route while helping eighth graders review the power of adjectives. Students eat up this project that promises to deliver the opportunity to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate while giving students the chance to work in cooperative groups. All in all, it’s an appetizing way to get kids focused on descriptive writing.

The “Menu Magic” project begins with a review of adjectives. Students copy rules that we’ve reviewed into their language notebooks. Next, we discuss the descriptive role adjectives play in language as we attempt to explain to a friend what we thought of a recent class, sports game, movie, or book without using any adjectives. Then, we talk about all the places we see adjectives in everyday writing, ending up with a look at restaurant menus. After this brief review of adjectives, I then present the directions for the “Menu Magic!” project on a detailed assignment sheet (see Figure 1) and show the students the evaluation rubric (see Figure 2). An easy extension of this project would be to let students bring to class one of their menu creations as we create a classroom smorgasbord of menus and food.

To actually see how well students enjoyed the project, I asked one student, Bethany, to write a reflection of the activity. In part, she wrote:

*Everyone honestly seemed happy to be doing this project. Our team planned and then assigned each other the homework, which was for us to each create a part of the menu...*
SMITH WITH HICKEY | Menu Magic!

Your mission (which you must choose to accept) is to create with your cooperative group members the most interesting, delicious, scrumptious, mouth-watering, tantalizing, colorful, tasteful, tempting restaurant menu you can imagine!

You must complete each of the following items to receive full credit:

1. Design a colorful, interesting cover.
2. Include a game or puzzle for the back cover of your menu to entertain children.
3. Write an interesting story detailing how your restaurant began. You may include photos/drawings of the original owners!
4. Include at least 20 adjectives that appeal to your sense of taste to describe menu items. Use at least 10 additional adjectives for the remainder of the menu.
5. Include the following items:
   a. appetizers
   b. soup(s) of the day
   c. salads and/or salad bar
   d. entrees/main dishes
   e. side orders (which may include breads)
   f. beverages (non-alcoholic, please!)
   g. desserts
6. Earn bonus points by including the following:
   a. Chef’s Specials
   b. Special(s) of the Day
   c. Early Bird Specials
   d. Dieter’s/Lo-Cal Specials
   e. Vegetarian Specials
7. Consider creating a menu targeted at one of the following specific groups:
   a. bankers
   b. doctors
   c. firefighters
   d. hula dancers
   e. parents
   f. plumbers
   g. skateboarders
   h. surfers
   i. teachers
   j. teens
8. Try creating a menu for a specific type of restaurant.
   Ideas to consider include:
   a. Sandwich Shoppe
   b. Waffle House
   c. Ice Cream Saloon
   d. Crepe Shop
   e. Sausage Hut
   f. Avocado Pit
   g. Pizza Palace
   h. Hamburger Haven
   i. Seafood Shanty
   j. Yogurt Bar
   k. Onion House
   l. Steak Stop
9. You must include realistic prices for all items on your menu.

As you can see, “Menu Magic!” helps students think about adjectives. They will probably never peruse a restaurant menu in the same way again after they’ve created their own menus. More important, they’ve learned about cooperation, planning, and descriptive writing. Not bad for a week’s worth of schoolwork!

Figure 1. Assignment sheet for Menu Magic! project

Figure 2. “Menu Magic” evaluation rubric

EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful completion of all required items</td>
<td>____/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective usage (underline or highlight adjectives)</td>
<td>____/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatness</td>
<td>____/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>____/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling, grammar, and punctuation</td>
<td>____/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>____/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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This descriptive menu used lots of tantalizing adjectives.

This team incorporated the restaurant's theme and history into their cover.

This team knew what kids like to eat and what they like to do while waiting for it.

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