

PROFRESHIONALS

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**RESEARCH PROJECT &
FINAL REPORT**

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DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION

The ProFreshionals is a group of students that works with Project EAT, a project of the Alameda County Office of Education. We work at San Lorenzo High School, home of the Rebels, in the San Lorenzo Unified School District. What we wanted to do was make a change and difference in our school and community about what they're eating and what they know about food. We wanted the students and people of the community to learn new ways of eating healthy and the benefits of it.

FACILITATOR STATEMENT

A ProFreshional is just what the name suggests – a hybrid of professional and Fresh, a Pro at eating, thinking, and being Fresh. The 10 students that made up this year's group we had so many issues they wanted to focus on and were pressed to make a decision among lots of good choices - for instance, banning Burger King from the school, revamping school breakfast, or advocating for more parks in the area. But ultimately, they selected to fight for amplifying the opportunities for students to be more intimately involved with the kitchen and garden here at SLz - resources that do not exist at every school and from which these students gained so much in knowledge, experience, and inspiration to live healthier.

Something special about this group has been their supportiveness for one another, consistency, and steady pace throughout the year. I have a ton of admiration for how closely they've worked together, managed their strengths and challenges, and really cared for each other. I have most enjoyed watching them laugh together as they struggle through.

I want to thank each of you Profreshionals for being so stellar, so gracious, so fun!

Miss Kate

BIOGRAPHIES

Berenice Heredia - My name is Berenice Heredia and I am 17 years old. I go to San Lorenzo High School and currently a junior. I am looking forward to go to community college and pursue my dream of becoming a physical therapist or a medical assistant. I have been involved with the Profreshionals for 2 years. What I like from Profreshionals is that you get to learn new things. You get to help the environment stay clean. I am proud that I joined the Profreshionals because it changed my eating style and taught me to eat right. Also that I got the chance to communicate with other schools and discuss our projects with each other. The changes that I think that I made were help my family get healthy and live in a better community.

Jacky Xu-Hello my name is Jack Xu and I am a 16 year old boy who is a junior at San Lorenzo High School. A little bit about myself is that I love building and fixing things like models and bikes, but I mostly like working on bikes; because I think that bikes are fun to ride and they are good for the environment. My favorite foods are enchiladas and other Asian foods because I love trying something new. My future goals are to go to a four year college and to study to become a mechanical engineer. I had joined the “Profreshionals” because last year I had been in another “Profreshional” group that did a different project and I enjoyed it because I really liked what I was doing, I felt like I was making a change to the school and the community. I want people to see our work and know that the “Profreshionals” did it. What excites me about the work that we are doing is that it is going to make a huge impact to our school and our fellow

students. My favorite memory of this program is doing “Professionals” last year with a fun and loving group and doing it again this and working with a new group of people and making new friends, which has gotten me to start to talk to many new people that I meet.

Luz Avalos- My name is Luz Avalos, I am 16 years old. I go to San Lorenzo High School and currently a junior. I look forward to go to college and pursue my dream of becoming a pediatrician or an elementary teacher. I am involved in the Druids club, Link Crew and the Professionals here at San Lorenzo. I like to help out the community and make it into a better environment. That is why I joined Professionals. We all know that in the U.S. there is a huge problem with obesity and people not having the equal access to fresh food, but nobody does anything about it. On the other hand I wanted to get involved with this issue because this affects everyone around. I believe that if you are truly passionate about something you could make that difference in the world.

Jennifer Nunez- Hello my name is Jennifer Nunez and I am 18 years old. I currently attend San Lorenzo High School and I am a junior there. I do look forward to going to college later on in life. I plan on trying to major in Culinary Arts or Forensic Science. I am involved in Link Crew, a manager for Volley Ball and a member of Professionals at SLZ. Being involved is important to really know what is going on in and around my community. I think that is why I joined this group because I knew that we would find to make a difference, even if it's a small dent. I think what I like about the Professionals is that we all get to know each other and become a small little family. It

becomes very interesting to see everyone develop in their own ways and get together to make a change happen. That is why I joined this awesome group.

Yesenia Gonzalez- My name is Yesenia Gonzalez and I am 18 years old. I am getting an education here at San Lorenzo High School. One thing I can't live without is running. I am a part of the track team and have been for the past 3 years. My three career goals are to become a flight attendant, a cosmetologist, and major in public health. I'm really enthusiastic about making my community healthier. That is why I am excited about finishing our project and see some kind of change. I am really grateful that I have had the opportunity to be a part of this project/group.

Adriana Aviles- Hello, my name is Adrianna Aviles, but I go by Marie. I am a sophomore here at San Lorenzo High. My hobbies are playing softball and I enjoy being involved in the school. I have been a part of the Profreshionals for 2 years. I love this program because it shows teamwork and it helps me improve on that aspect. I hope to one day use this internship for my education.

Elijah Mekwunye- Hello my name is Elijah Mekwunye Jr. I am 17 years old and I am a senior at San Lorenzo High. My interests are video games, comic books and drawing. I feel that drawing helps me express myself and it makes me feel like I'm doing something good. My favorite experience from the Profreshionals was working with new people and making a difference in my school. As I am leaving I will miss this program and what it has to offer.

Patrick Banta-My name is Patrick Banta and I am 18 years old. I attend San Lorenzo High School, but I will be attending CSU East Bay in the fall. While there I will be studying psychology so I can better understand the human mind. I take pride in my slightly above average vocabulary and I love playing video games. I joined the “Profesionals” because I felt like my school needed a healthy reform; and to inspire my peers to pursue healthier habits and lifestyles. I am truly excited about making a change and being able to say, “That was me who did all of that”. I used to be very unconcerned with my habits, but ever since I joined I am much more caring about how I treat my body. I work hard to engage myself in a healthier lifestyle.

Yoselin Martinez- My name is Yoselin Martinez; I’m 15 years old and currently go to San Lorenzo High School as a sophomore. I play tennis as a varsity doubles player and enjoy drawing during my free time. My all-time favorite food is ravioli. For my future career goal, I’d like to work in the medical field, but I’m still pondering on which one I want to do. I joined the Profreshionals because I caught my interest and I wanted to be a part of this group. Specifically in our project I enjoy and find interesting how we find our information and methods. One of my favorite memories from this experience is working along with everyone and cooperating with each other to get the work done. Something that has changed about me is my way of thinking towards my lifestyle and how to help myself be better.

Yadira Diaz-I am Yadira Diaz and I am a senior in San Lorenzo High School. I enjoy helping people, love reading, writing and drawing. I also love the outdoors very much and nature. I also

enjoy music; I play the violin and guitar. I am a vegetarian and protect animal rights. I joined Profreshionals because I wanted to work on a project to help my community. I love helping those around me and want to be able to make a change. I love being involved in ways that can help environmentally and socially because it is an important part of our community and our futures. I have really enjoyed meeting other students that are doing the same thing as our group. It will always be a memory that I have met many great people. My future plans are to go to college and become an engineer in computer science. Profreshionals has made me see that there are people always out there trying to make a change and that we just need to look out there to see what we can do to help the community.

INTRODUCTION

Our goal with this project was to make an impact in our school and to find a way to make it healthier. We decided on this topic because as students we see firsthand and know that students can be healthier, but don't have the tools to do so. After a lot of discussion we all agreed on a focus.

Specifically we are trying to get all students in the kitchen and garden at least once a year and for students to feel like they know how to cook a healthy meal at home with the produce and food that they already have, to grow healthy food, and to be advocates for healthy food.

Our research question was:

How could we involve the garden and the school kitchen more into the school curriculum?

Some of the major questions we asked were:

- how can we get other student involved in the garden and kitchen?
- how can we work with teachers to get ideas or help on the project?
- who can we get talk about how to make this possible?
- is it possible to get an A-G course that would teach students this stuff and take place in the kitchen and garden?
- what can the course teach the students?

METHODOLOGY

During the summer we did a lot of team building and deciding on a focus for our research. We went to several trainings with people who have had the knowledge in our topic. We learned about Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). As a group we did a lot of team bonding and cooking.

In order for us to get more insight into why teachers really did not use the kitchen and garden more, we conducted 2 focus groups with a total of 12 teachers. To begin with, we had to find teachers that would be willing to give up some of their time to come talk to us about this issue. We had to develop questions that we wanted to ask them that surrounded our project (*see Appendix 1 for Focus Group Questions and Protocol*). Once that was done, we got together with the teachers and had a whole discussion about it. That was not one of the easiest things to do because teachers just say it how it is. After we met with all of the teachers, as a group we got together and discussed what feedback they gave us.

To get more feedback we created a survey that would go out to teachers to handout to the students. In each teacher box we put 30 surveys for them to hand out and told the teachers what it was about. Then we told them if they could please can them out during their 4th period class. Once the surveys were done we had them returned to the main office or D-3. Overall we surveyed about 230 students ranging in grade level. After receiving them we imputed all of the information into Survey Monkey to see all of the results that came from that. That is how we got input from the students.

We got the opportunity to visit MLK Middle School in Berkeley. We went there because we wanted to learn from a successful program how to make our goal possible. We got to tour their garden and listened to the experience that the school went through to make their garden program possible. We had a lot of questions for them to help us figure out how to make it possible to create something similar at SLZ.

From this visit we learned that there are a lot challenges that will come across when trying to improve our garden and bring more teachers out to use it and the kitchen. We also learned that support is the key to making things happen – now we have that support from Project EAT but that may change. We need to have that support there for us when we need it. Overall we were inspired by our visit and how they made it happen. They also encouraged us to pursue the goal that we wanted for our school.

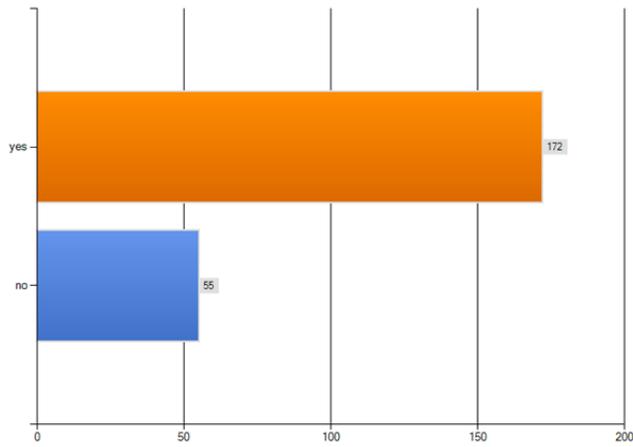
RESULTS

From the teacher focus groups what we learned was that teachers needed more time and planning when they want to go into the kitchen or garden. That was the key issue because there isn't always a lot of flexibility in the schedule that the teachers have. Also another thing was that they felt like they didn't have all the resources and support that they needed to be in the kitchen. On the other hand, teachers said that they would be willing to create a new unit surrounding our project – English could do essays related to food; history could do lessons on the Industrial Revolution or cultural food related to World History; biology and environmental science could use the garden for a variety of units. The best part was that they were all willing to work together to do something great for the students and the community.

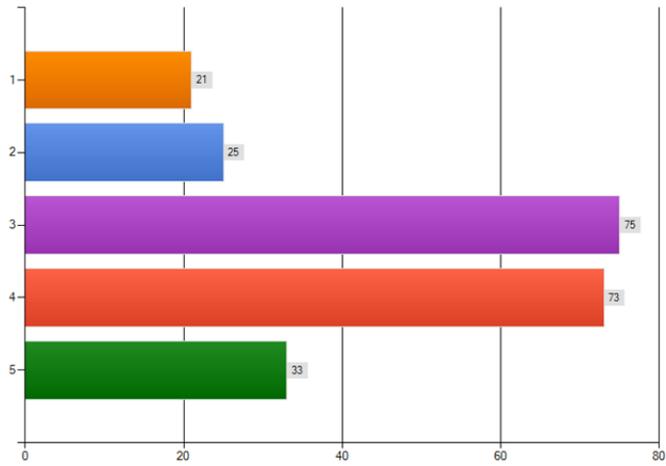
From the student surveys we learned that most students (83%) do like hands on learning opportunities, that many (69%) were interested in a class that took place outdoors, and that most (76%) would take a class on nutrition and agriculture. When asked why they wanted to take a class in the kitchen or garden students said:

- 72 said because it was hands on/outside
- 30 said because they wanted to be healthy
- 60 said they wanted to learn to cook different foods
- 34 said it would be fun and a different experience.

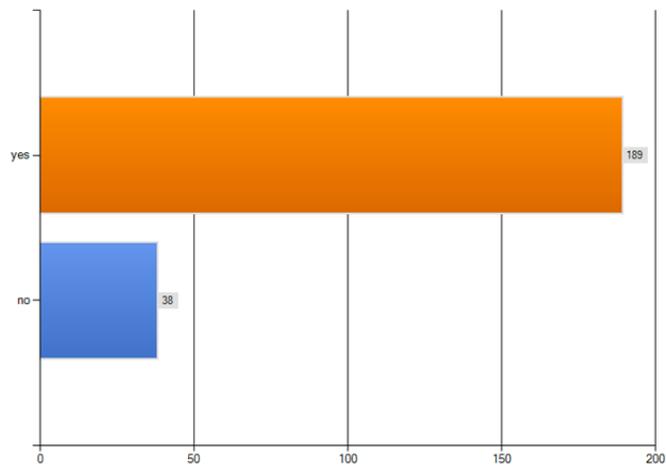
Would you take a class on nutrition and agriculture that also gave a-g credits?



How interested would you be in taking a class about the garden and kitchen?



Would you be interested in a class that took place outdoors?



ACTION STEPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The actions steps that we are taking to further our project is:

- we wrote 1 grant for funding an outdoor classroom
- we are currently making a teacher toolkit to encourage use of the kitchen and garden (*See Appendix 3*)
- submitted a course proposal (*See Appendix 4*)
- made a short video about our project
- Sponsored monthly lunch time events about nutrition and health.

Our recommendations for those who may continue our project are:

- we want an outdoor structure/classroom to create a more academic atmosphere and environment for learning.
- Continue to implement our proposed course.
- Have more educational/informational signs in garden – these are things that students could create in class
- Have teachers be more involved with the development of the course and other curriculum
- Support teachers with some professional development around using the kitchen and garden in their classes.
- Have students continue with this project
- All SLZ students have a required number of visits to the kitchen and garden – we recommend 2 a year.

LIMITATIONS

Throughout this entire project we had a lot of stepping stones. Sometimes it was tough passing through it because we didn't know where to go from there. Some of those limitations were:

- Getting money for the outdoor classroom
- Limitations on staff
- Not enough time
- More time on planning
- Not always communicating
- Not so much flexibility in teachers schedule

We hope that our work doesn't go unrecognized and unfulfilled. We wish for teachers to take our findings into consideration and hopefully apply themselves to help achieve our goal. Carrying onwards without the full satisfaction of knowing we achieved what we set out to do will also make it hard for us moving forward.

THANKS

Project EAT/ACOE for giving us the opportunity to help promote a healthier lifestyle to our school and community.

Of course to Kate Casale our fearless leader! Without you this wouldn't have been possible – thank you for all your advice and helping us be the best group we could be.

Also to Alex Zenoff, Ms. Hddie, and Shamia Sandals

SLZ – students, teachers, counselors, principal

Edible Schoolyard/MLK Jr. Middle School

The sun for giving us warmth every day

Finally, we are thankful for each other, for helping one another and pushing each other to help achieve our goals and coming together to do what we all wanted to do.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Focus Group Questions and Protocol

WELCOME ALL, WE ARE GOING TO GET STARTED

First we want to thank you for taking the time to come today to participate in our focus group. As part of the ProFreshional internship, we have developed a project to figure out how best to use the awesome resources of our garden and kitchen here at SLZ. We've asked you here today because we want your ideas on how better to integrate them into our curriculum and school culture.

INTRODUCTIONS

I'm _____ and I will be the facilitator today. I'm _____ and I will be the assistant moderator today. Also introduce the notetaker, kitchen support, etc.

GROUND RULES

- We have about 8 questions today and really appreciate your open and honest thoughts.
- There are no right or wrong answers, all of your experiences and opinions are important. Also feel free to disagree in a respectful way.
- As moderator, I may ask clarifying questions and/or call on one of you directly if you haven't spoken in a while
- Respect the person who is speaking and do your best not to interrupt each other.

QUESTIONS

1. **Thinking back to high school, what were the classes that interested you?**
2. **If you have used the kitchen or garden before, how have you used it? What was your experience like?**
3. **What is your perspective on adding the garden and/or kitchen into your curriculum?**
4. **What are the challenges that prevent you from using the kitchen and or garden?**
5. **What resources or support would make you use the kitchen or garden more?**
6. **If we had specific resources that you needed, would be willing to use the kitchen or garden more?**
7. **One idea we have it to create an actual course that focuses on our food system (including health, farming, cooking) and occurs in our kitchen and garden. What are your thoughts on this?**
 - a. **How should we go about making this a reality?**
8. **Can you can each write down 2 or 3 units/topics you teach that could incorporate the kitchen or garden.**
9. **Do you have any ideas that we didn't ask you about that you'd like to add?**

NEXT STEPS

Moving forward from here we are hoping to: - Take all our information from you, students, and field trips to create an action plan for how this school can better use our kitchen and garden. We also would really like to move forward on creating an A-G course. **Would anyone be interested in being involved more on this project?**

CONDUCTING A FOCUS GROUP

- Ideally, the focus group is conducted by a team consisting of a moderator and assistant moderator. The moderator facilitates the discussion; the assistant takes notes and runs the tape recorder.
- Both moderator and assistant moderator are expected to welcome participants, offer them food, help them make their name tents, and direct them in completing pre-group paperwork.
- Name tents should identify participants with a number written largely for anonymous identification of individuals as they make comments.
- The moderator uses a prepared script to welcome participants, remind them of the purpose of the group and also sets ground rules.
 - WELCOME --- *Thanks for agreeing to be part of the focus group. We appreciate your willingness to participate.*
 - INTRODUCTIONS --- *Moderator; assistant moderator*
 - PURPOSE OF FOCUS GROUPS ---- *The reason we are having these focus groups is to find out _____ . We need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us.*
 - GROUND RULES
 1. WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING.
*We would like everyone to participate.
I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.*
 2. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS
*Every person's experiences and opinions are important.
Speak up whether you agree or disagree.
We want to hear a wide range of opinions.*
 3. WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE
We want folks to feel comfortable sharing when sensitive issues come up.
 4. WE WILL BE TAPE RECORDING THE GROUP
*We want to capture everything you have to say.
We don't identify anyone by name in our report. You will remain anonymous.*
- Before asking the first question, an icebreaker can be inserted to increase comfort and level the playing field.
- The moderator has a responsibility to cover all prepared questions within the time allotted. S/he also has a responsibility to get all participants to talk and fully explain their answers. Some helpful probes include:
 - "Can you talk about that more?"*
 - "Help me understand what you mean"*
 - "Can you give an example?"*
- It is good moderator practice to paraphrase and summarize long, complex or ambiguous comments. It demonstrates active listening and clarifies the comment for everyone in the group.
- The moderator must remain neutral, refraining from nodding/raising eyebrows, agreeing/disagreeing, or praising/denigrating any comment made.
- How to deal with challenging participants:
 - Self-appointed experts: *"Thank you. What do other people think?"*
 - The dominator: *"Let's have some other comments."*
 - The rambler: *Stop eye contact; look at your watch; jump in at their inhale.*
 - The shy participant: *Make eye contact; call on them; smile at them.*
 - The quiet participant: *Ask them to repeat their response more loudly.*

APPENDIX 2 Student Survey Questions

Hi! This survey is to help out a student research project so that we can make a change at our school. Please be honest and complete in your answers. Thanks!

The ProFreshionals ☺

1. What grade are you in?

- Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

2. Have you ever taken a nutrition class before?

- yes no

3. Do you like hands on learning? (gardening, cooking, video project)

- yes no

4. Would you take a class on nutrition and agriculture that also gave a-g credits?

- yes no

5. How interested would you be in taking a class about the garden and kitchen? Please rate 1-5, 5 being the highest.

- 1 2 3 4 5

6. Would you be interested in a class that took place outdoors and/or in the kitchen?

- yes no

7. Why?

8. Would you be willing to take this class after school?

- yes no

9. Why?

**10. Do you think it is important to learn about where your food comes?
Why?**

APPENDIX 3 Teacher Toolkit

See attached

APPENDIX 4 Course Proposal

See attached