

ProFRESHionals

Tennyson High School

Project EAT (Educate, Act, Thrive)

YPAR Project 2011-2012

The LANCER REPORT

In the school year 2011-2012, the ProFRESHionals began working on projects that inform students on choosing a healthy lifestyle. We looked at how students felt about the cafeteria food at our school. We surveyed our peers on: "What do Tennyson High School students think about the cafeteria? And where are the nutrition labels?" We discovered interesting facts from our survey. The most interesting fact we found was that *91.8% of the THS Students surveyed **do not** think the cafeteria food is healthy.* Based on our findings, we recommend that our cafeteria include nutrition labels and a variety of healthy food choices in their menu options. We are currently working with the cafeteria to try to include new menu options and to place nutrition labels on all of their food items. We hope you enjoy our report!



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What is Project E.A.T. (Educate, Act, Thrive)? Who are the ProFRESHionals?

Project EAT is a project of the Alameda County Office of Education. The mission of Project EAT is to end health inequities and close the achievement gap in schools. The ProFRESHionals at Tennyson High School are a group of student activist interns who work for Project EAT to develop Youth Participatory Action Research projects in order to develop a healthier community. We are a diverse group of young people who care about the health of our community. Almost all of us were Fresh Crew Farm Interns in the past, so we come to the ProFRESHionals internship with experience in the areas of growing food in a sustainable way, cooking food, and nutrition. As ProFRESHionals we are working in our own community for the benefit of our society. As a group, we are aware that Hayward has one of the highest obesity and diabetes rates in the state of California. We are using our power as peer to peer activists to create positive change for the future generations. We hope that our positivity and motivation will inspire a healthier future for our community.



Biographies

(A.K.A The people behind the project)



My name is **Ana Moraes**. I'm a senior and I've been involved with Project EAT ever since my Junior year. I met Melissa Morris when I got interested in maybe changing the cafeteria food that I don't find appealing. We talked about that and she told me about Project EAT and all of the things that we could do under their name. Then, months later, I applied to work in the farm and I got hired! 6 months was enough for me to fall in love with the idea of growing my own food and in that same summer I started a garden in my house. In my senior year I got hired to work as a ProFRESHional and the experience was also fantastic. My friends and I worked on surveying our peers about their opinion about the cafeteria food, the project that I had forever in mind. Project EAT has taught me a lot, from growing my own food to making a positive impact in my community.

My name is **Vanessa Anilao**. I am 15 years old and a sophomore at Tennyson High School. I love playing sports, and being active! I also love working as a ProFRESHional, because I get to learn new things about being healthy and help out the community.



Hi! My name is **Navpreet Khabra**. I am 16 years old as of 2012. I like to read manga and watch anime. I am a high school sophomore involved in many different student groups. I believe that the world could be a better place if we all respect each other. I love taking care of animals and nature. I love to spend time with friends and family. Project EAT has taught me to eat more protein and drink more water which helped me improve in my academics and athletics.

My name is **Gianna Uson** and I am a sophomore. I grew up in the Philippines and it wasn't until I got involved with project EAT that I realized the importance of having access to affordable and trustable healthy food. I've always sought to live a healthy lifestyle and Project EAT has aided me and even empowered me to influence others.



Hi my name is **Hugo Armenta** and I am a part of the ProFRESHionals, By now I have been a part of this youth group for two years now and they really change my life and way of eating. Project EAT has thought me that even if a small group gets together they could make not just a difference in peoples' life but that they can get together and make something positive.



Hi, I'm **Adriana Rojas**. I am a current senior at Tennyson High School. I work with ProFRESHionals because I am passionate about living a healthy lifestyle. I like to encourage my community to make healthy choices because being healthy serves us well in the long run. Project EAT has given me the opportunity to do research projects, such as surveying students from my school on ways to improve our cafeteria food. Working with Project EAT has been a huge support to my ideas of improving health.



Hi my name is **Erik Romero** and I am student at Tennyson high school. I am a ProFRESHional and I love the outdoors. I love the feeling of fresh air. Being a ProFRESHional, I worry about my community and I want to help decrease obesity and increase healthiness among our community. I am an athlete and health nut. I try to model a healthier lifestyle. Because of Project EAT, I have committed myself more into being healthy and giving more in to our community. Our research question has expanded my knowledge of my community's views of food and consumption, thus making me want to change this issue. With the help of Project EAT, I believe making a change in our community is closer in the future.

Hi my name is **Patricia Hollister** and I am a student at Tennyson high school. I am a ProFRESHional, that means I, along with Melissa Morris and number of students, try to promote a healthy life style. As youth, health is important to me because like many students, my mother is a single mom and healthy food is hard for her to afford. Trying to make her buy more fruits and veggies is a constant struggle but she soon came to realize that in the long run it was worth spending a little extra cash in order to live a long prosperous life. Project EAT has encouraged me to take a stand and argue with my mother in order to live a healthier life. Project EAT has supported me through everything and I am glad to work with people in Project EAT.





Hello my name is **Erica Reyes** and I work with Project EAT as a ProFRESHional here at Tennyson high school. We ProFRESHionals try to promote healthy lifestyles, to eat nutritious food, to help out our community, and to make a change of eating better. We also promote physical and mental health. As a teenager, I want to be healthy and would like to encourage other people to eat right. Being in Project EAT made me realize how to stand up for what I want. Healthy food may be expensive but it is worth it and our body needs these nutrients and vitamins in fruits and vegetables. I am glad to work with these friends in the ProFRESHionals which has supported me to help out more and to work with the community. It has inspired me to be a leader.



Hello! My name is **Gurwant Kahbra**.

What's Up?! My name is **Melissa Morris** and I am the adult ally that supported this amazing group of young people. I have been interested in growing food and food justice since growing up on my

family's Texas cattle ranch. Encouraging more people to grow and eat their own fresh fruits and veggies is one of my passions. This project has been as much of a learning process for me as it has been for the young people.



METHODOLOGY

(A.K.A. How did we develop our research?)

At the beginning of the year, we brainstormed ideas for possible YPAR research topics. We looked at challenges that our community faces versus the ideal community that we would like to live in and found that there were two topics that we wanted to explore further. Initially, we planned to have two research topics. One was: Why does McDonalds in Hayward target children and who allows this to happen? The other was: How does our community view the cafeteria food at our school and where are the nutrition labels? After developing both projects, we found that due to the amount of time we actually had for working, we chose to pick one to focus on as a whole group. We chose the cafeteria project because it is a topic that affects our student body.

Next, we looked at different methods on how to collect data, and we decided on using surveys as opposed to the other methods because it was the easiest, most straightforward, and most appropriate for the research we wanted to do. It took us a couple of weeks to finalize our survey because we only met as a group once a week. Once we finalized our survey, we had to come up with a plan on how to distribute the survey. We wanted it to get to the largest, most diverse group of students, but still be a sample that we could handle interpreting. Our ideal plan was to have the survey distributed to all English classes because all students take English classes. Melissa Morris proposed this idea to the head of the English department. The head of the English department agreed tentatively, but she did not want to ultimately require the English department teachers to distribute the survey. Melissa then offered the teachers an option of physical paper surveys or a link to Survey Monkey for the classes to fill out their survey. Since the survey was not mandatory and the teachers were not all able to get access to our computer lab, we were only able to get around 300 surveys returned instead of the possible 1300 if we had surveyed the whole group. Fortunately, the surveys that we got back were from a mix of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and seniors. Then we entered the physical paper surveys

into the Survey Monkey website. This was a tedious, but interesting process, seeing how much work goes into a survey project!

Once we had the surveys entered into Survey Monkey, we were able to use their charts and graphs to analyze the results. This was helpful for analyzing some of the data, but we also needed to look at the open-ended question to analyze some of the quotes from students. We took the time to read these quotes and understand some interesting topics that were brought up by THS students. Additionally, during a Health Alliance meeting with the San Lorenzo High School students who were working on a different YPAR project, Helen Hunt, a statistician, came to speak to our group about how to analyze their research using the Survey Monkey that we put together. We learned even more about how to analyze our data from her input.

Finally, after analyzing some interesting findings, we came up with a list of recommendation ideas and ways to inform our community about our YPAR project. We decided to showcase our survey and results at an all-school tasting event at lunch time, as a booth at a community event on campus, at a health festival (HEALTHstival) at the end of the year, at a Hayward Unified School District Board Meeting, and at a Site Based Decision Council meeting at Tennyson. We then made a Power Point presentation of our research and recommendations and met with the Site Based Decision Council meeting at Tennyson High School. We presented our research to this group of teachers and staff because the staff in the meeting was already beginning to discuss the health of the breakfast food at the THS cafeteria. Additionally, the head of Food Services at Hayward Unified School District was supposed to be at this meeting to discuss the health and nutrition at the cafeteria. However, she did not come to the meeting. Fortunately, the Tennyson staff was very impressed with our research and encouraged us to develop our recommendations. The staff suggested that we work with the cafeteria staff to test new menu options during summer school at Tennyson in order to have new options for lunch during the next school year.

Following this meeting, we were very enthused by the support. We decided to move forward with planning the summer menu testing and a

possible additional research project to review these new menu options. In order to move forward with developing this action, we needed to meet with the head of food and nutrition services at HUSD. Unfortunately, she did not reply to any forms of communication and we were not able to set up a meeting with her. Additionally, our group got very busy with another huge project: putting on a HEALTHstival for the Hayward community at Tennyson. The HEALTHstival was a festival celebrating the health in our community. It was organized and run almost entirely by the ProFRESHionasl from Tennyson and San Lorenzo High Schools. The HEALTHstival included over 40 booths run by students, parents, teachers, and community organizations with over 600 attendees. We ended up not planning our summer menu testing by the end of our school year, so we are not sure if we are going to be able to follow up with this action during this year's summer school.

We also thought it would be an excellent idea to visit schools that have healthier cafeterias. One of the Tennyson staff members suggested that we visit Berkeley High School to research their cafeteria layout and the food that they serve. Unfortunately, we set this field trip up very late into the end of the school year. Due to the finals and lack of availability for a tour, we were unable to go visit the other schools.

As a group, we were able to inform the student body about our research through several booths at large student community events, an article in the school newspaper, and a presentation at a Tennyson Staff Meeting. We felt that there was a large amount of support for further research and action on our project, but we were unable to jump into more action due to the constraints of a busy end of the school year.

The entire process from beginning to end was enjoyable for all of us. Each individual grew and developed in huge ways. We became more comfortable with public speaking. We were able to be more aware of how to make change in our community and how to build relationships with allies. We became a close 'family' that supported each other throughout the long school year. We were enthusiastic about our project from beginning to end and were happy with the success that we found throughout our process.

Data Analysis

(A.K.A. What did we find out?!)

***more graphs and quotes in the appendix**

Key Findings:

1. Students at Tennyson High School view the cafeteria food as unhealthy.

Supporting Data:

- 91.8% of the THS Students surveyed do not think the cafeteria food is healthy.
- The majority of students chose 'greasy' and 'not delicious' to describe the THS cafeteria food.

2. If students did not feel that it was their only nutrition option at school, students would not choose to eat the cafeteria food.

Supporting Data:

- 50% of Tennyson High School surveyed students eat cafeteria food because it's their only nutrition option during school hours.
- "I do eat it but only rarely! When it is my last option I would, this is [because] it doesn't look or taste healthy." - THS Student
- "I sometimes eat the cafeteria food but only [when] I'm really really hungry. Its not fresh nor healthy. It's also very greasy."-THS Student

3. Tennyson students want a healthy cafeteria.

Supporting Data:

- 62.7% of students surveyed consider 'freshness' the most important factor for cafeteria food.
- 55.9% of students surveyed want to see nutrition labels on their food.

Recommendations

(A.K.A. What we think should happen next)

1. **Put a salad bar in the cafeteria.** We suggest putting a salad bar in the cafeteria for students to build their own salads with ingredients from our school farm.
2. **Meatless Mondays.** We suggest the cafeteria offers Meatless Mondays where all of the food served is meatless so that new and interesting vegetarian options are offered to the community.
3. **Nutrition Labels.** We suggest putting nutrition labels on every item that is served at the cafeteria.
4. **Menu Signage.** We suggest more obvious menu signage. We would like to see the menu posted in obvious areas around the cafeteria and the school.
5. **More Menu Options.** We suggest offering different types of dishes to the community so that there is not always the option of pizza or nachos every day. We would also like the students to have a voice in what menu items are offered at our school. We would like to trial new menu items during summer school.
6. **Healthier Breakfast Items.** We suggest offering healthier breakfast items other than waffles and sugary cereals.
7. **More Culturally Diverse Food Options.** We suggest that the cafeteria offers more diverse menu items that reflect the multitude of ethnicities in our student body.

Limitations

(A.K.A. Lessons Learned)

Data Limits:

- Only a certain percentage of the school was surveyed. If we had more support from our school we could have had the entire school surveyed. For example, the administration could have allowed us to visit all English classes and have students take the surveys on the iPads for a quicker process.

Weakness of Process:

- Paper surveys were not efficient for data input. It would have been better to enter this data via the internet. Also, people might have said more in the open ended question if they could type their answer.
- Not all teachers had their students complete our survey.

Areas that we would have liked to examine more:

- We would have liked to work more with the Food Services from our district. We were unable to set up meetings with them, but think that they could have been a key part in helping our research.
- We would like to test menu items to research whether students like the healthier options or not.
- We would like to know what staff think about the cafeteria, not just students.
- We would like to know if they are still doing food testing for menu items and how we can get involved.
- We would like to research other cafeterias to see what their cafeteria set up looks like, what types of menu items they offer, and how their nutrition labels are displayed.
- We would like to know how our cafeteria could source local and organic produce.
- We would like to use more technology in our research next time.
- Perhaps next time we could have the principal support our survey more and enforce the survey to the entire school.

Lessons Learned:

- We learned that our school has to make improvements in the school cafeteria.
- We learned that a high percentage of our students depend on the cafeteria as their only nutrition option.
- We learned that a lot of students care about what they eat

Acknowledgements

(A.K.A. The People We Love)

We would like to personally thank and acknowledge Melissa Morris, Caily McElhinney, Shamia Sandles, and Shay Cosby for their help along the way. We also would like to thank every member of our group for participating and supporting each other's ideas with our project all year long. During this school year we became more than co-workers, we became a family that stood together through thick and thin. Even though we didn't always agree, we could always laugh at the end of the day.

We appreciate all the help and support we received. The knowledge that we gained will always be with us and we'll always remember the 2012 ProFRESHionals group.





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