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Got Health?: Student Health Through Distance Learning

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Abstract

Keeping kids healthy has always been a challenging task due to a plethora of reasons, but leaders in education have been doing their best to overcome this obstacle. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has made this challenge even greater. It has been more difficult to make an impact on student health because of distance learning. Healthy food programs and physical activity in school have been harder to reach, and because of this second Stay-At-Home order in California, it may now be a further reach. The focus of this capstone is on how students are taking care of their physical health through the challenges of distance learning. This is important because students and parents should be aware of their health during this pandemic. An evidence based argument is offered that distance learning offers little to no help on keeping students physically healthy. The three primary stakeholders perspectives analyzed were elementary school teachers, students, and parents. After interviewing the stakeholders, three action options emerged as ways to help make students understand the ways they can keep their bodies healthy. Based on this evidence, an action option is recommended that allows students to make healthy decisions during the pandemic with the help of parents and teachers.

Problem Description

Health and fitness have been trending in the late 2010s, providing careers for hundreds of social media influencers. Technology has been advancing to help adults live a healthy lifestyle. The Sleep Number Bed, fitness apps on smart watches, calorie counters and calculators, and smart scales, are just a few of the many technological advances that help adults live a healthy lifestyle. However, children are left out from this trend. Students are provided with books, laptops, tutoring, and even fitness evaluations, but none of these things help students learn about the best way to keep themselves healthy. Courses on health, PE (physical education), and SEL (social and emotional learning) were available before quarantine, but it has become a challenge to implement this kind of instruction through distance learning. Before the virtual learning forced on students by COVID-19, the CDC has conducted studies of how students lack in maintaining their health(Ahluwalia, et al.2020). Distance learning has only worsened this issue, and teachers are not prepared to face this challenge.

Contributing Factors

With distance learning and the sudden increase in unemployment, parents/guardians and administration in education have been more preoccupied by finances and academic instruction. However, students are facing a more serious battle, involving their physical bodies, which has been treated as low priority by educational establishments. If the students are not losing proper nutrition from school lunch, they are gaining an unhealthy diet from fast food. This issue is not exclusive to the 22 million students that receive free or reduced-price meals in the country, but the surprisingly increasing number of Americans consuming fast food during this pandemic (Dean, 2020). Fast food consumption has increased in the United States for multiple reasons. Some people eat fast food for comfort during these uncertain and stressful times, and other

families have lost their jobs and are now only able to afford to buy fast food. Furthermore, entering grocery stores has become a health hazard, so a drive-thru would be the safest and most convenient option for parents. Aside from nutrition and physical activity, sleep plays an important role in the health of young students. Although the educational system had little to no control over the amount of sleep students got before the pandemic happened, the amount of screen time from school work and online homework affect the students' health. According to Mangonon (2020), "Several studies have found a significant relationship between average hours of sleep and technology use before bedtime." The studies showed that children that used their computers during night time got up to one hour less sleep than those who did not use their computers. Mangonon (2020) continues, reminding parents that, "Sleep is essential for children's physical, cognitive and emotional development."

As much as we would like to blame COVID-19 for all of our concerns today, children were already wrestling with their ability to have a healthy relationship with food and their physical bodies before the pandemic caused global chaos. According to a study conducted by the CDC, 36.3% of children between the ages of 2-19 years consumed fast food on a given day in 2015-2018 (Figure 1). According to another CDC study from 2017, only about one quarter of all the students participated in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. In 2015, they also conducted a study on student sleep, which showed that more than half of students grades 6-8 and nearly three quarters of high school students did not get adequate sleep on school nights.

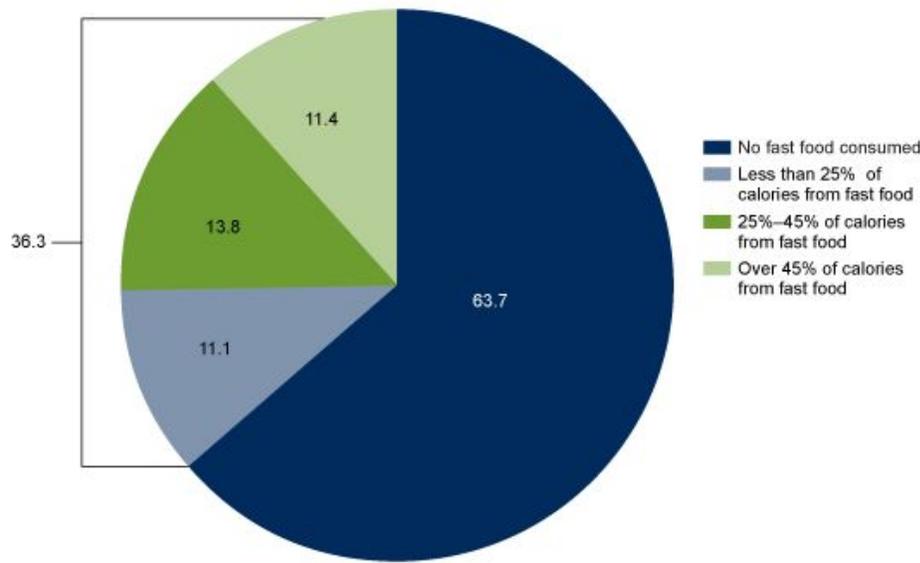


Figure 1 National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2015–2018.

Students can benefit from healthy nutrition and adequate physical activity in their academics. In a study conducted by the CDC, Ahluwalia ET AL.(2020) reports that physical activity has a better effect on grades, attendance, cognitive performance, and behavior in school, and it is associated with improvement in these areas for students. Getting a proper amount of sleep is important for students, and it helps them perform better academically. This helps students stay focused and concentrate better in class, and poor academic performance can be caused by the attention and behavior problems that result from inadequate sleep (CDC, 2019).

Living a healthy lifestyle through proper nutrition, physical activity, and adequate sleep can also benefit children as they grow into adulthood. All three components play a role in lowering risks of health problems in adults such as type 2 diabetes and obesity. Sleep, however, can help lower the risk of poor mental health in their adult life. According to the CDC, an increase in physical inactivity for children can cause energy imbalance and higher risks for cardiovascular disease, cancers, and other health factors that can lead to osteoporosis.

Needless to say, making sure that children live a healthy lifestyle have positive effects on both their academics and their adult lives. However, living an unhealthy lifestyle can also affect them physically in the near future. Keeping children healthy during this pandemic is just as important as keeping them clean and physically distant from other people. A healthy lifestyle can help boost a child's immune system. According to a study from 2006, there is a link between malnutrition and the immune system of a child. The poor nutrition resulted in immunological alterations. Keeping students healthy is especially important today, when bringing your child for medical attention can put them at greater risk for catching a deadly virus. Another way to keep immune systems strong in children, in addition to a proper diet, is by keeping them active. In the CDC's guidelines for children and COVID-19, living an active lifestyle for children is highly encouraged. The CDC suggests that parents, "Set a positive example by leading an active lifestyle yourself and making physical activity a part of your family's daily routine."

California law requires 200 minutes of physical education every 10 school days for grades 1-6, and 400 minutes every 10 school days for grades 7-12. Even with these policies, students are not being encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle. Children do not see how 20 minutes of stretching and exercising in a video chat room will help promote healthy living. They do not understand that they should get 8 hours of sleep a night and that they should order the side of apples when they get a happy meal from McDonald's. More time, effort, and funding should be provided for instruction on physical well-being for students. The present and future of the students depend on this, and the educational system should not repeat the failures from their past.

The school system is not the only ones who can be held responsible for the health of the children. Because students will be spending more time at home, the parents should also model the behavior of living a healthy lifestyle. If not too strict on health, then staying educated about

appropriate diet, sleep, and physical activity should be modeled. The school system should help educate, not just the students, but also the parents in the importance of physical health during this pandemic. If modeled by a parent, a child should be able to develop their own sense of maintaining physical health. According to psychologist Lev Vygotsky(1978), a child's ability to perform a skill independently first comes from learning from the "more knowledgeable other." In this case, the issue of unhealthy living should be solved, and having parents model this for the child will help the children understand how to approach this issue. When the children are able to follow and replicate the actions of their parents, they will be able to practice these healthy living skills on their own. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle will become a skill that they can take into adulthood, helping them live healthier and longer lives.

Consequences

Although there are many different factors to unhealthy lifestyles, research and policies are made in effort to change the habits that cause danger or harm to the physical body.

Unfortunately, the research and policies were put in place in a different kind of world. The world before the COVID-19 pandemic has caused students and parents to shift their focus. The loss of jobs, the inability to focus at home, and the limits to social interaction all hinder students from living a healthy lifestyle. If students continue to live this way, their future may not be so bright, no matter how well they do academically.

Schools have also lost their focus, and put more emphasis on other academic subjects that do not encourage students to take care of their health. However, the unhealthy lifestyle can also affect the way students perform academically. The studies show how physical activity and sleep correlate with academic performance. If students are deprived from their regular physical activity and sleep, this could jeopardize their success in school. Adding unhealthy food to the students' diet can also negatively impact their academic performance. According to a study conducted in Nova Scotia, Canada in 2003, there was an association observed between academic performance and diet quality. "Students with decreased overall diet quality were significantly more likely to perform poorly on the assessment"(Arsbridge, et al. 2008). Allowing teachers and parents to work together to educate their students, and themselves, about the dangers of unhealthy living can help the students create healthier habits that will benefit them in their studies and in the long run.

Method

The desired participants for the interview portion of the research are stakeholders who have either witnessed or experienced the health issues that arose as a result of distance learning. This can involve teachers, students, and parents. Teachers can witness student involvement in physical activity and their attention to instruction. Parents are considered witnesses for how their child has changed in regards to their everyday activities at home, including diet, sleep, and physical activity. The purpose of this research is to study those changes and determine a way for parents and teachers to collaborate to help students live a healthier lifestyle. The methods should not be time consuming, they should be able to reach as many parents as conveniently as possible, and the effectiveness of the methods will be measured.

Context

This study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, when the United States of America declared a state of emergency, and a national quarantine was put in place. Students attending learning institutions all over the nation were instructed to receive academic instruction from their homes indefinitely. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the academic year of 2020-2021 was to be held completely online, and instruction was held through Zoom meetings. With in-class instruction, students in California are given 54,000 minutes of classroom instruction, or 3,000 minutes of instruction every ten days. Of those 3,000 minutes, 200 minutes of physical education is required for students grade 1-6, and 400 minutes for students grades 7-8. Nearly 60% of students in California were considered socioeconomically disadvantaged and eligible for reduced or free meals in school in the 2019-2020 school year. For students in California, school was not only about academic achievement, but it also impacted their physical well-being.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of one mother of three students attending schools in LAUSD, a female elementary school teacher, and a male highschool math teacher. Both teachers have worked for LAUSD for over two years, and they will be able to compare the benefits of physical activity and proper nutrition from in-class instruction to online instruction. The mother has three children of different ages. She has one son in lower elementary, one son in higher elementary, and a daughter in middle school. All participants will be able to compare behavior and participation inside and outside of the home.

Researcher

The researcher noticed the difference in a young child who gained over 15 pounds during three months in quarantine. This observation has inspired the researcher to look into the effects of quarantine on student nutrition and physical activity. The participants of the study are family and friends, so the challenge would be to record responses and analyze data without taking into account past experiences.

Interview Questions/Survey/Data Collection Tools

1. Explain how this quarantine has affected the participation of students in class.
2. Provide a list of changes in the classroom behavior from face-to-face to online instruction.
3. How have your children/students been eating and exercising during quarantine?
4. How much has the screen time changed since quarantine or has it been the same?

5. How many students are actively participating during the physical education portion of online instruction?
6. What do you know about the appropriate amount of time children should spend sleeping?
7. Do you know anything about screen time and its correlation to sleep?
8. What are the proper portions for nutrition and diet for children?
9. How much daily physical activity should your child be getting?
10. How often do you go grocery shopping in comparison to the frequency of your fast food consumption?

Procedure

The researcher had a face-to-face interview with the mother of three, and all children were asked to provide a picture before and after the six months of quarantine. The conversations were recorded as voice memos on a smartphone. The students were also interviewed, and the interviews and pictures took nearly two hours altogether. The interviews with the teachers were conducted through recorded Zoom meetings. Both Zoom meetings took no longer than one hour. These recorded responses will be compared to the research material.

Data Analysis

The recorded responses from the interviews were compared to statistical data and state policies from further research. This comparison gave the researcher an idea of how common these issues are in the state of California, as compared to the issues presented in LAUSD from the interviews.

Results

For this Capstone Project, two parents and one teacher were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve the role of educational establishments in student health through distance learning. This is important because the pandemic has caused changes in the daily lives of families that can lead to poor choices regarding health, and schools should help their students make the best choices when it comes to their physical health. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: Time Required; Reach; and Effectiveness. With parents working and helping their children with distance learning, time is limited, and more participation will be expected if the activity is less time consuming. Having an activity that can include all families of the school will be more convenient, which can also yield more participation. Overall effectiveness is preferred, but it is realistically challenging. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Time Required	Reach	Effectiveness
Teach the Parents	High	Low	Medium
Health Log	Low	High	Medium
Health Help	High	Low	Medium

“Mother S”, a mother of four, has a son enrolled in the second grade, Son S, who currently attends a school that is part of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Since

quarantine started, Son S has coped with the stresses of school by increasing his food consumption. Mother S initially saw this as a positive thing because Son S spent more time at the dinner table and less time on his video games. Recently, Mother S began to notice that he did not only spend more time at the table at home, but anywhere the food was. Mother S works as a legal consultant and her husband works as a car salesman. When her husband's hours were reduced, their finances were more limited. Mother S did not lose any work during quarantine, but her husband had to stay with the children and take care of their one year old. They did not always have the time to cook meals at home, so their most practical choice was to purchase their meals from fast food restaurants. Son S started eating than he did before quarantine, most likely due to the stresses of distance learning. Son S gained 5 pounds during the last few months of the last academic year, when distance learning started, and he has gained another 5 pounds since this academic year has started. "They teach the kids science, ELA, and math, and they take brain breaks every hour. The kids even do some yoga and a little bit of exercise through the video classes, but he isn't learning the importance of why he has to do it. He's lazy and he isn't motivated to be active or eat healthily. The school gave us a jump rope to promote physical activity, but he's only 6. He doesn't know how to use a jump rope, and none of us are trained to teach him how to do things like this," says Mother S.

Giving students the time and instruction on how to be active is not enough. Although it is a good start, there needs to be a more interactive way for teachers to encourage students to live a healthy lifestyle. Teacher R, a third grade teacher for LAUSD, says that she tries to teach students the importance of health and how to maintain it. Teacher R is passionate about health herself, always encouraging others by sharing ways on how to live a healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, she cannot share this with her students as much as she should. "This is the best

time to teach kids how to take care of their bodies. I've had students brag about unhealthy meals they've had or how late they slept on a school night just playing video games with each other. Distance learning is safer for them, but not if they're destroying their bodies at home," she says. "The PE teacher comes to our Zoom class to teach a course once a week, and the students are barely participating."

Teach the Parents

For this part of the interview process, Mother S was interviewed alone. I formulated a short quiz to assess how well she knew the proper nutrition, sleep, and health activity her children should have. As suspected, she knew very little about healthy living for each of her children. As a working mother of four, finding time to do research about diet, exercise, and sleep can be a challenge for Mother S, just like it must be any parent during this pandemic. There are resources available on the school and district website regarding healthy living for children, but Mother S has not found the time to look through each of them. Of the twenty questions on the quiz, Mother S answered only eight of them correctly. We discussed the questions that she missed, and she learned about the kinds of changes she needed to make to help her children live a healthier lifestyle.

This option was helpful for Mother S, just as it will be for other parents. However, this method is very time consuming. A session to teach parents on healthy living will take an hour at the very least. Scheduling a session well ahead of time could help parents make arrangements in order to attend these sessions, but it is never guaranteed that all parents will be able to make that time. A solution to this problem would be to set multiple appointments or sessions and have the parents choose whichever best fits their schedule, but this would be extremely time consuming

for the teacher that will be leading the meeting. Having multiple appointments could also mean smaller groups for more intimate conversations and more time to answer questions for each group, but having teachers add an extra three to six hours during their first week of school is not ideal. Especially with the limited amount of time given with distance learning, six extra hours in the school year is extremely difficult to find.

Health Log

Any kind of learning that happens in the classroom is supplemented with independent practice away from the teacher, also known as homework. Not only does homework help students retain knowledge and practice skills that they have learned during instruction, but it also gives the students an opportunity to collaborate with their parents on concepts to help better their understanding. In the same way, students should also have this opportunity to independently practice what they learn about health in the classroom, presented by a log that records and compares a healthy lifestyle to that of their own.

When Mother S and her children were interviewed, they all claimed that they recall learning about proper nutrition, sleep hygiene, and physical activity. However, when asked to recite these facts, none of them were able to. They were given three sheets of paper. One was a dietary log, the second a sleep diary, and lastly, an activity log, all measuring how much food, sleep, and activity the children get throughout the week. I asked them to collaborate to fill out their meals, activity, and sleep from the day before the interview. When they were done, I handed each of them another packet of three pages. They were the same three pages, except the log had the recommended diet, sleep, and exercise as guidelines on the side. Mother S and her children were shocked to discover that their lifestyle was far from healthy. They have all learned

about these guidelines before, but comparing these guidelines to their daily routine helps them see how well or poorly they were applying what they learned.

Although this experience was eye opening for the family, this option still has its flaws. Following the guidelines for healthy living can be difficult for the entire family, which is why student health is at risk during this pandemic. Filling out the log honestly can be a constant reminder of how they were unable to successfully take care of their bodies. Students, and sadly parents, will always be tempted to follow the more convenient way to stay on track with their log, which is to log inaccurate information. The effectiveness of this option depends on the honesty and commitment of the family to filling it out.

Health Help

Technology today has made learning quicker and easier for students, teachers, and parents. Because of distance learning, having a meeting with a professional can easily be done in the comfort of your own home. These online sessions eliminate the time spent on getting ready, the time spent on traveling to and finding the location of the meeting, and the distractions from a new environment. Having health professionals hold online events to share about the importance of a child's health can be a convenient and effective way to inform one's community. Not only are the professionals well informed about diet, sleep, and exercise, but they are also aware of the best resources available within the community of the parents.

Teacher A has attempted to put together an event, outside of her classroom, to promote healthy living for students during the pandemic. She has reached out to registered dietitians, registered nurses, and personal trainers to help her discuss effective ways to live a healthy lifestyle. Although the participants are willing, time is hard to find. All of the medical

professionals have been extremely busy with work, especially with the hospital staff getting tested positive for COVID. Personal trainers have also been much busier with the gym closures. Their clientele have been asking for more online personal training, which limits their availability to be part of the event. With all of the uncertainty that this pandemic has brought, there is never enough planning to guarantee that this event will actually happen, no matter how informative and effective it may be.

Conclusion

Mother B has a 15 year old son who attends a private school in Rancho Palos Verdes in Los Angeles County. Her son, Son B, is part of the basketball team in the school. Although he was once motivated by the sport to stay active, the motivation has disappeared when the season was stopped. Son B is a competitive and driven student, understanding that he should sleep well and eat healthily even if he does not get the same exercise that he once had on the team. “It just became a habit I guess. I know what I shouldn’t eat and drink too often and stuff but only because our coaches kind of scared us. I mean it’s probably true but they made us believe that we’ll suck at basketball if we don’t eat and rest right,” says Son B. Even if he has only been on the high school team for two years, Son B expresses the change he noticed when he began to take care of his body regularly.

The coach’s instruction and encouragement for students is important. Even if a healthy lifestyle does not necessarily guarantee a change in performance in any specific sport, it is important for children to understand that there are consequences for not living a healthy lifestyle. Son B was not only motivated by the fear of the consequences, but he was encouraged by the sport because he enjoyed it. Finding ways to teach students about health in a fun way is

important for them to learn effectively. Teacher R and Mother S agree that spending more time on teaching and guiding fun activities about health is important for students to be encouraged to stay healthy. Teacher R suggested class games that promote fitness and educational activities that teach about healthy living. In addition to the jump ropes, maybe providing students with blue-light blocking lenses or screens to put over their glasses could help reduce the blue-light effect on their sleep. There are many ways that healthy living can be promoted at home. Having students keep a log of their sleep, diet, and physical exercise could help them reflect on how well they have been applying what they learn about health. Additionally, the logs could have recommended meals, fun physical activities, and techniques to help children regulate their sleep schedule.

Action Research Project Documentation and Critical Reflection

The focus issue of this research was student health during distance learning, and those who were interviewed were two teachers, two parents, and four students. According to all of the interviewees, student health has not been the same since the pandemic forced all students to learn remotely. Three action options that emerged were to have teachers hold meetings with parents, to create a health log for students to bring home and assign these for homework, and to have a community event where medical professionals discuss the importance of health for students. With the help of the two teachers and students interviewed, these action options were made possible. The preferred action was the health logs. Because this action consumes less time for the teachers and the students at home, it gives the families more time to read the information on the left hand side and fill the information in the tables. One student decided to use the health log as a reference and a schedule for her week, and she filled it in ahead of time. This way, she could give her parents a list of food she would like to eat and they could plan their grocery trips accordingly.

The main goal for this action was to educate the parents and students about the unhealthy habits that start as a result of distance learning. The health logs give the students and parents an idea of what healthy living looks like, including appropriate servings for nutrition, recommended hours of sleep, and recommended time for physical activity. The four interviewed students participated in the health log, along with eleven other LAUSD students that the interviewed teachers personally knew. I printed out the health logs and went with the teachers to drop off the logs and give them a short summary of the purpose of the activity. For this option a few adjustments were made in order to give the students more of an opportunity to fill their logs. One adjustment I had to make was to make the log as broad as possible. Giving students attainable

numbers was important because they can not control too much of their schedule, and even we needed to make the goals realistic, plus extra room for error on their part. For example, the log was previously set specifically for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. However, if the parents did not have time to pick up more fruit before the next meal, the students would have an empty box in their log and they might feel discouraged to continue with the activity.

Little participation was expected in this action, but the students were surprisingly excited to follow their health logs. The students were encouraged when they were given the opportunity to show their creativity through decorating their own logs. Having the parents hang the logs up on the fridge, wall, or the desk at the office was also encouraging to the students to know that their parents were supporting them in this activity. Lastly, it was surprising that the students were encouraged by the competition with their siblings. One family had three students, and they competed in the decorations, uniqueness of ideas, and amount of information they filled in on the health log. The parents were surprised that the childrens' determination to complete the chart honestly and to live healthier. Not only did they want to eat healthier, but they also were in competition to sleep earlier. They played together and biked together for the physical activities, and their father spent time with them that way. For the other students that did not have siblings participating in the study, they still had fun with the help of their parents. The parents tried to be as creative as possible, and the students enjoyed what the parents prepared. The parents getting involved showed that they were informed and educated about the proper diet, exercise, and sleeping habits that the students should try to maintain during distance learning, which was one goal for this research. Encouraging the students to participate in this educational activity could help them learn in a fun way.

After one week, we collected the paperwork from the students' houses to analyze the results. The first image shows the front page of the health log filled in by a second grade student. He had the freedom to design it however he wanted, but he had to keep the information visible for his reference. The second image is the second page, which includes sleep and exercise logging. As it turned out, all of the students filled in as much as they could in the table. Ten out of the eleven students were able to complete the table, and the student was not able to complete it because one parent got sick at the beginning of the week. The students responded well to the activity, providing all of the paperwork that was needed to be collected. The students wrote the kinds of fruits they ate, and some even wrote how much of each fruit. For the younger students, they wrote down the kind of fruit but they did write specifically how much. If there was one thing I could change for this activity, it would have been to do one Zoom meeting or video that could teach parents the best way to help their students achieve their goals. Most parents wanted the specific information that I chose not to provide, in order to give them more flexibility. They felt that this information was not enough for them, but they were able to tell me the different ways that they were able to prepare their portions for the students. This gave me the idea of providing the parents with different ways to prepare the food, different kinds of fun physical activity for the children, and different ways to help children could stay away from their screen to help them fall asleep at an appropriate time. One semester is not enough time to prepare for an activity like this, but this action project was a great start. Through this project, I was able to determine a convenient way to inform parents and students about health,

One thing that I have always known about myself is that I am determined to make a change in my community. I have recently been passionate about culture and social justice, and I thought that this is what my project would be about. However, when I saw how a second grade

student gained nearly 17 pounds during the first four months of quarantine, I saw that the student's body and health is a primary concern. I never knew how much I cared about physical health until I started this project. Although I would like to make changes in social justice, I have learned that I have more motivation to work towards changes that I have made in my own personal life first. Because I was able to change my lifestyle and live healthier, I believe I have enough experience to help others do the same. If I would like to start to make a change in public policies and social justice, I must immerse myself in that world and experience working in that field. Having that experience will give me the confidence to encourage others to collaborate with me in making the change.

Synthesis and Integration

Throughout my years in college, I have been taught academic material that helped me expand my knowledge about various subjects. However, I never studied about how education impacts the communities of the past, present, and future generations. I have witnessed changes in education policies and curriculum, but the Liberal Studies courses have taught me how to compare these changes and adjust to them in a way that all students could have the equity they deserve.

Coming from a community college in Northern Virginia, I had plenty to learn about California's policies in education. The Liberal Studies courses in CSUMB teach an extensive amount of history on how these policies evolved to become more inclusive and equitable for students of any background to succeed in. Even if these policies are still not perfect, the foundational knowledge from these courses allow us, as future teachers, to make these policies work for as many students as possible. California's multicultural and diverse population has created different starting points for all the students, but there was coursework designed so that

future educators are prepared to encourage students to embrace their culture and specific abilities. This instruction and coursework also exposes students to community problems and solutions, social responsibility and ethics, and sustainability. Understanding these different aspects of the environment of the diverse student body can help us be more effective educators. The diversity does not only affect the students, but also the workplace for school staff. Group projects and service learning experiences have exposed us as students to learn about the different ways to collaborate with colleagues, including the use of technology. The preparation and training from the library for research projects has also allowed us to learn about how to use our local resources effectively.

Because of the pandemic, the next steps in my professional life are unclear. As mentioned previously, my passion for social justice has grown stronger within this year. Now that the nation's ears are pointing towards those who suffer injustice, every worker in that field can make a huge impact. I would like to teach for private educational institutions temporarily to determine if my desire to make a difference in the community will be satisfied in my role as a teacher. If so, I will apply and enroll into a credential program to become a teacher for public schools. If I believe that I could do more, I would like to pursue a career in law to become a public defender or a public interest lawyer for children. As I have learned in the Liberal Studies coursework, schools are a microcosm of society, and if students are taught and treated in school as if they are criminals and just subjects to a system, they will identify as such when they grow into adulthood. Overall, I would like to choose a path that will make the biggest change in my community because I have been inspired by the professors and my peers in CSUMB.

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