

Elmhurst Community Prep & Alliance Academy

Student Research Team Report 2010-2011



Student Researchers:

Desjon Howard, Juliana Rivera, Ezequiel Borquez, Rickey Jackson, Maxie-Million Dixon, Brandon Stewart, Miguel Martinez

Student Research Coordinator:

Saba Ghebreyesus

Juliana Rivera

My name is Juliana Rivera. I am in the 8th grade at Alliance middle school. I chose to be a part of the student research team because it seemed fun and thought I could learn more research skills. I have learned many things about drug abuse to unhealthy foods effects on the body. I have gained more confidence because of it. Something that makes me special is that I am a musician and play two instruments: the Violin & Clarinet. When I grow up I will be a Pediatrician and help a lot of children.



Brandon Stewart

My name is Brandon Stewart. I am in the 8th grade and attend Elmhurst middle school. I really love animals and want to be a Zoologist when I grow up. I joined the group because I knew I could learn about cancer and nutrition but still be interesting. I learned about different foods that are unhealthy, how to eat better and Data entry was really cool. What makes me special is that I am really intuitive and speak from my heart.



Ezequiel Borquez

My name Ezequiel Borquez. I am 13 years old and I am in the 8th grade at Elmhurst Community Prep. The career I want to have when I grow up is to either be a mechanical engineer or an Architect. I want to learn how to build things. I chose to be a part of the Health Research team so that I could build new skills. The most important thing I learned is that I have to search for the truth If I really want it. What makes me special is that I can handle the truth and accept it just as it is.



Maxie-Million Dixon

My name is Maxie- Million Dixon and I am 14 years old and in the 8th grade. I attend Alliance academy. I plan to be a Professional Football Player and Environmental Lawyer when I grow up. I joined this group because it seemed like the group would be interesting. I was able to learn a lot from this research study. Like how McDonalds makes their food and how to read nutrition facts and respecting other people’s opinions.



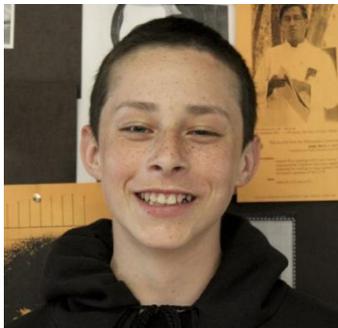
Rickey Jackson

My name is Rickey Jackson. I am 12 years old and I am in the 7th grade at Elmhurst Community Prep. I joined this group because I wanted to make a change in my school for the future students to come. I joined this research team because I had a lot of unanswered questions about health and cancer. I am really intelligent and love to learn about the Foods we eat.



Miguel Martinez

My name is Miguel Martinez and I am 14 years old. I go to Alliance Academy and I am in the 8th grade. I became a part of this Research team because I wanted to learn about stuff I wouldn't normally learn about in school or home. My hobby is Art, Graffiti and Astronomy. I love to draw and paint. I learned in the Research team how to look up important information regarding nutrition and art. I plan to go to the Army after college.



Desjon Howard

My name is Desjon Howard. I'm 13 years old and in the 8th grade at Elmhurst Community Prep. There's a lot of reasons why I joined this research team. I joined because I wanted to learn about fighting cancer, reduce stress levels and teach others about how McDonalds and other unhealthy foods affect our body. When I grow up I plan to work on being a Prominent Lawyer.



**Student Research Team Coordinator:
Saba Ghebreyesus**

I am convinced that producing a community of safety, truth, and connection with kids will produce that much needed concrete faith to guide them on their path of greatness. This requires my being able to embrace and breathe into the oppositional tensions that are a part of any learning situation. For example, if students are to learn, it is essential that they be invited to find their imaginative and authentic voices while at the same time be motivated to remain open to the examination of techniques and tools that I have to offer. If I could define my style in a straightforward way, I would characterize it as being centered in the essence of “being” while “doing.”

The Student Health Research Team goal was to assess Alliance Elmhurst middle school students. Use it as sample; to define the public health needs of adolescents in east Oakland. We conducted in person interviews, informative Field trips to explore the knowledge that students have towards health roundtable discussions on violence, sourced the available literature to explore the kids knowledge of health in the community.

The Research Team concluded by creating a video testimonial of each students experience and what they learned through the Process.



The Team

How the SRT members were recruited:

People from Youth Uprising came to our advisory classes and told us about a job offer. They told us about the pay (\$250). They took kids that were interested into the halls so that we could give them our names and contact information. We had to fill out surveys and whoever was most serious got the job.

How the final SRT members were selected:

All of us were interviewed to see what kids would be in the group. During the interview they asked what we could bring to the SRT and said the SRT would help the clinic. The students that gave the best answers and presented themselves nicely were chosen to be part of the team.

What the SRT members had to do in order to be a part of the team:

Each SRT member had to fill out an application. Each SRT member was interviewed. Student and parental consent forms had to be filled out. Each SRT member had to be serious about the project and had to show up to the weekly meetings.

Where/when/how often you met as a team:

We met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3-4:30pm. We met in a little office in the back of the cafeteria.

Methodology

People from Youth Uprising came to our advisory classes and told us about a job offer. Kids that were interested had to fill out an application and were interviewed by Saba Ghebreyesus. During the interview they asked what we could bring to the SRT. The students that gave the best answers and presented themselves nicely were chosen to be part of the team. Each SRT member had to be serious about the project and had to show up to the weekly meetings. Student and parental consent forms had to be filled out and we each took a survey at the first session. We met on Tuesday s and Thursday s from 3-4:30 pm and sometimes later.

We chose our topic by discussing what concerns we have about our school and community. As a group we decided on the following topic: mental health, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse in our community. We chose our topic by thinking about Oakland's biggest problems and how those problems affect us kids. Then we created a survey by each coming up with a question. Then we shared and edited our questions. Finally, we put them together into a survey. Frick Middle School pilot tested our survey and gave us feedback. We edited our questions incorporating their feedback.

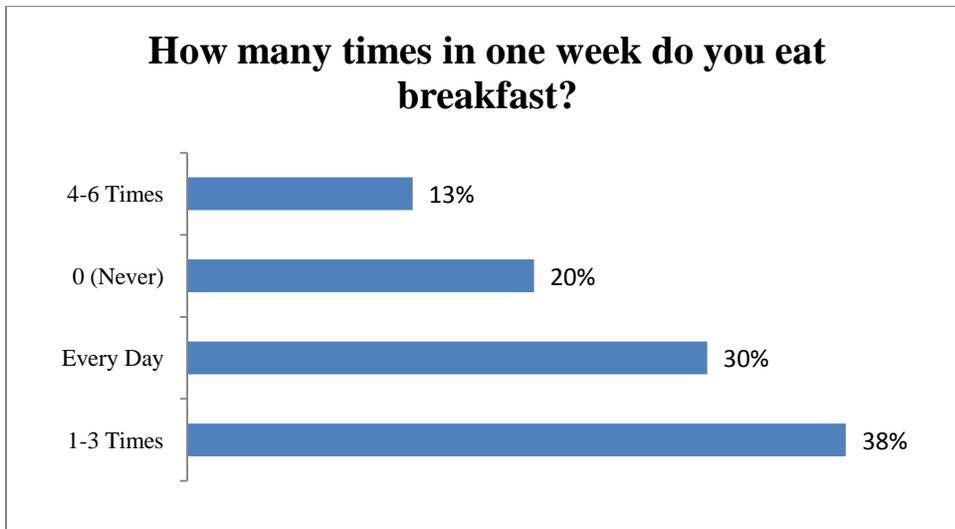
Two SRT members administered surveys at Elmhurst during advisory on one day. They each went to two advisory classes. Three SRT members administered the surveys by dividing them up and going to five classes. Saba brought copies of the surveys. We handed out the survey to advisory classes because the kids are free and didn't have to do class work. Saba came into advisory and gave us the surveys. We went into the classes and asked the teacher if we could hand out the surveys. We told the kids the survey was for the health center. We told them it wasn't mandatory and told them why it's important to take the survey. It is important for them to take it so we could give information to the clinic about what the kids need. The kids asked questions, like "Why should we take it if we're not going to be here next year?" We told them so that next years' kids can get help. They took the survey while we waited and then we collected the surveys and gave them back to Saba. We collected a total of 109 surveys.

We did some data entry during school, and met after school too and went to the computer lab. We entered the survey in a website called Survey Monkey. We numbered the surveys so we could keep track of them and after we entered the data we put our initials on the survey.

Findings

Forty nine percent of the people who took the survey were male, and 51% were female. Sixty-two percent were 8th graders, 17% were 7th, 21% were 6th grade. Fifty-six percent were from Elmhurst Community Prep and 43% were from Alliance Academy.

Forty-two percent of the people who took the survey said they sometimes get tired or have little energy. Most people eat breakfast 1-3 times a week (38%). What is not surprising is that almost half of the people often feel frustrated (47%) and what is surprising is that some people often feel like hurting themselves (15%). The team was surprised that 47% of people said that it's somewhat important that they have a counselor at the school.

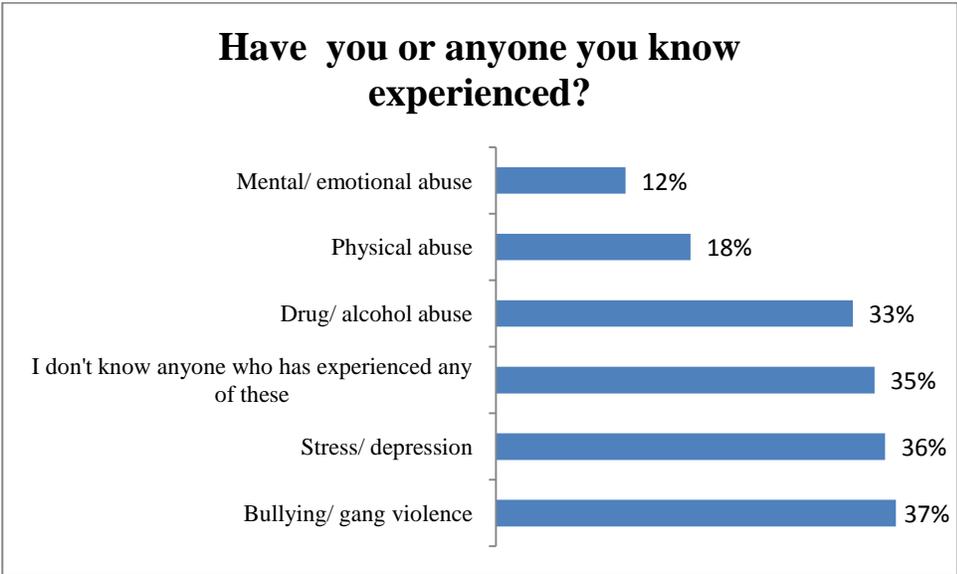


More than a third of people said they wouldn't be interested in seeing a counselor. Of the people who would see the counselor, they would see them for drug or alcohol counseling (13%), mental health (30%), violence (22%). Most of the people who answered this question said they weren't sure if they would share their business (59%).

How big of a problem are the following issues for students at your school?	
Issue	Average
Drug or alcohol abuse	3.3
Physical abuse	3.4
Mental or emotional abuse	3.4
Bullying	4.1
Gang violence	4.4
Stress or depression	4.7

*Based on a scale of 1-10. 1 = bigger problem, 10= less of a problem.

Unexpectedly, 17% of people said they never get stressed. Thirty percent of people said they sometimes get stressed. Fifty five percent said they often or sometimes get stressed. When asked why students get stressed out, the majority of students responded that personal problems stress them out. The following came up the most: being irritated or upset, not having anyone to talk to, not being loved or receiving enough attention, lack of sleep, getting scared, and other people stress them out. A slightly smaller amount of students responded that school work, mostly the amount of homework, is what stresses them. Several students reported that family members stress them out. Other students (n=5) responded that bullying and peer pressure are the cause of stress. The remaining respondents said that the violence in the community is a source of stress. Two respondents said that they do not get stressed.



We found it not surprising that people agree (61%) that they would feel safer walking down the street if there wasn't as much unnecessary violence. The majority of people said the violence in their

neighborhood made them feel scared (30%), upset (39%), paranoid/jumpy/nervous (25%), none of the above (22%), juiced and “other” were both 12%.

We thought most people would want to join gangs to fit in, but people who took the survey said people want to join gangs so they can feel like they are part of something (49%). Forty percent said to fit in. Almost a third said protection, 10% said because they distrust the police. More than two-thirds of the students answered that gang violence will affect students’ education, 38% will affect student’s families, 28% feel sad or depressed, 26% said it makes them feel nervous, 7% said none of the above, gang violence said it was not an issue.

Most people said that people do drugs because they want to deal with emotional or physical pain or stress (51%), 42% said they are addicted, 41% said they just try it, and 37% said because they feel pressure or to fit in. Unexpectedly, 59% of people said they haven’t been in a car with someone who is high or drunk.

When asked if they could change one thing in their community, what would it be? The majority of the respondents said that they would like to see less violence in their community. This included several forms of violence, such as harassment and gangs. The second largest, although significantly smaller, group of respondents said they would like to have a cleaner community. This included getting rid of all the tagged walls and trash. Some respondents would like to reduce the prevalence of drugs and drug dealers in their community. Other respondents said they would like to get rid of the gangs in their community. Some students expressed a desire to improve the school.

This included improving some of the teacher’s attitudes towards the students and changing or getting rid of the school uniform. The remaining students wanted to change community member’s frame of thought and attitude. They would like to have more responsible community members.

Limitations

One of the biggest limitations was time. We had to distribute surveys in a 30 minute window frame during advisory; a time where students like to unwind and be free from work.

Many students opted out of taking the survey because they were afraid that parents or teachers would discipline them; even after we said it was anonymous.

Many students didn't take the survey serious enough, so they skipped many of the open ended questions.

A lot of times, many of our group members were absent due to conflicting schedules and other extenuating after-school obligations.

Many students found it hard to commit.

Lessons Learned

One of the great lessons was learning how to input data which came out to be easier than we thought. However, we sometimes would forget to number the surveys so we had to repeat the process.

Speaking to teachers to get them to understand the importance of our survey was another lesson. It was a lesson because we were not used to speaking to adults in a professional tone and be taken seriously at the same time.

Listening to each other was another lesson. It was important for all of us to be heard but also have a voice that was valued. Luckily, we found that here in the Student Research team.

Recommendations & Next Steps

We recommend that the New Health Center focus on including students in any type of changes to our community in school. The students at Alliance/Elmhurst all believe we can come together by putting on Assemblies to create partnerships between students that encourage an overall pleasant atmosphere in the school and community.

We also believe the Health Center should focus on adding student health research teams as an after school program that teaches us about nutrition, assist us on our homework, Drug and alcohol education so that we can make better decisions.

We also believe the health center should meet with students once a week to help us be more proactive in student affairs so that all students feel important. Also, a weekly assembly to track our progress in school.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for supporting our team:

- Alameda County School Health Services Coalition
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- University of California, San Francisco
- Kaiser Permanente
- Our parents and family members
- Ms. Saba
- The teachers that let us administer the surveys in their class
- Frick for pilot testing our surveys
- The students who took the survey
- Ms. Ola, Ms. Payne , Ms. Robell and all of our cool Teachers