

Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Summary Report 2018-2019

Introduction & Background

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a group of 8-10 high school students in Alberta, who, under the leadership of the Nutrition Services (NS) School Nutrition Working Group (SNWG), advise, support and promote nutrition related activities led by SNWG, to provide a youth perspective for the planning, development and implementation of health promotion products developed by SNWG.

The 2018-2019 YAC consisted of 10 members, ranging from ages 15-17 and in Grades 10-12. Members resided in different urban and rural parts of Alberta and represented four zones within Alberta Health Services: North, Edmonton, Calgary, and South.

In 2017-18, members led consultations with their peers in their schools or in one case, a youth leadership group, to learn about the priority nutrition related health issues of their peers. Findings from this consultation are summarized in the [Youth Advisory Council Peer Consultation Report](#). One of the key findings was that youth felt they lacked knowledge of nutrition basics, and they preferred to hear information from health professionals. The findings from this report guided the main project for the 2018-19 YAC, which was to develop, implement, and evaluate healthy messages by and for their peers and determine effective methods in their school setting to share this information.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to summarize the process, results, and feedback from the Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project completed by YAC members. Additionally, the report provides recommendations for next steps.

Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project

Consultation with YAC Members

Ten YAC members participated in guided discussions on nutrition wellness messaging in their schools. Council members shared effectiveness of messaging in their schools and suggestions for better methods. Main findings from the discussion were as follows:

- Announcements are ineffective in providing wellness and nutrition information as most Jr. High and High School students do not listen to announcements.
- Social media is an effective communication method. Currently social media is used in many schools to promote positive mental health.
- It is important to layer messaging within the school. For example, having nutrition messaging through social media, posters in bathroom stalls and videos in classrooms.
- Unique needs of each school need to be acknowledged. What works for one may not work for another school.
- Students prefer actionable messaging rather than only being told what the problem is.
- Do not make messages “cheesy” (over-the-top or inauthentic).
- Health and nutrition education should be mandatory.

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In addition, YAC members provided feedback on the AHS resource [School Nutrition Announcements](#). YAC members were asked to review the resource and answer questions. This feedback is summarized in the [School Nutrition Announcements – YAC Feedback Report](#).

Pilot Project Methods

Each 2018-19 YAC member was tasked to design at least one nutrition message from the AHS nutrition resource *School Nutrition Announcements* in the format of their choice. Nutrition messages were to be unique and best suited to each member's school environment. Variety of formats, delivery method, and topics the YAC members covered in their projects are summarized in Table 1. Upon completion, YAC members planned to pilot the nutrition messages with their peers in their school and collect feedback using five questions provided by YAC Facilitators (Appendix I). YAC members submitted the nutrition messages that they developed and any feedback that they collected from their peers. The results were compiled and summarized.

Table 1. Message formats used by YAC members

YAC Member	Format	Delivery	Topic
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos Instagram campaign using hashtag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School council's social media (Instagram) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drink water Healthy snack
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posters Social media post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posted around school - 1 poster/week School's social media (Instagram) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sugar in foods/drinks Effect of sugar on the body Drink water Label reading/Food guide
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posted around school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vitamins & Minerals Sugar Breakfast Drink water Fruits Sedentary behaviour
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media post with memes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School's social media (Facebook) - over 3 consecutive days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy snacks Label reading
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posted around school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical activity Breakfast Vegetables Vitamin A Drink water
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement on school television 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydration
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displayed on TV in school cafeteria for a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy alternatives
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infographic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could not be shared in the school due to administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced diet

9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media post • Emails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could not be implemented in the school due to timing and administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown
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Pilot Project Results

Seven out of ten YAC members were able to successfully complete their Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project. Two members were unable to implement their project due to timing and unanticipated issues with school policies. One member did not participate in the project.

Examples of healthy messages that YAC members developed can be found in Appendix II.

Evaluation of YAC member developed messages including the reach, evaluation method, and number of participants are summarized in Appendix III. In summary, youth reported that:

- The messages were informative and attention grabbing. In particular, they liked the following characteristics from the messages:
 - Relatable (e.g. familiar face of a friend/student)
 - Entertaining
 - Organized
 - Colourful
 - Used graphics (e.g. visuals, memes, etc.)
 - Included interesting statistics and facts
 - Easy to read and understand
 - Short and to the point
- The messages were thought provoking and motivating. Messages that motivated change addressed:
 - Risk of disease (e.g. Type 2 diabetes) related to certain lifestyle/behaviours
 - Familiar foods/drinks that youth commonly consume (e.g. Tim Horton's Iced Coffee)
 - Facts about nutrient content of foods/drinks (e.g. sugar content of a granola bar)
 - Links to nutrition and school performance (e.g. healthy eating and increase in concentration and productivity)
- They wanted to receive more healthy messages like these through variety of channels including:
 - Social media (e.g. YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook)
 - Schools (e.g. posters, bulletin boards, cafeteria, and gym/fitness room)
 - Within the community (e.g. rec centres, restaurant menu, drive thru, etc.)

Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project Process

Benefits of Pilot Project

- YAC members became advocates for nutrition and wellness within their own schools.
- Members were able to gain experience in planning, implementing and evaluating a project targeted at their age group.
- Having youth create their own nutrition messaging caught peers attention.
- YAC Project Group gained insight into methods of design for nutrition messaging for High School students.

Limitations of Pilot Project

- Due to the YAC being an online council and all YAC members and YAC facilitators being spread through 5 AHS zones in Alberta, there was no in-person supervision or assistance for members.
- Only seven out of ten members completed the Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project and members provided varying degrees of project detail.
- YAC members expressed challenges with time constraints of creating messaging in a short period of time. These time-constraints affected their ability to create and implement their desired nutrition messages in their schools.
- Comparing the health messages from student to student is difficult because messages were not in the same format or on the same nutrition topics.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project is an innovative way at testing and targeting key nutrition issues identified in the YAC peer consultation. YAC members were able to be advocates for nutrition and wellness in their schools and were successful in reaching youth with healthy messages in a variety of formats. Their projects gave the YAC Project Group unique insight into effective nutrition messaging for High School Students and the findings of this project can help guide future planning within *SNWG*.

Recommended next steps

- Continue to encourage YAC to be advocates for nutrition and wellness in their schools.
- Continue to include YAC in the creation of effective nutrition messages targeting youth.
- Consider the findings from this project in future development of messaging towards youth to help grab attention and motivate change.
- Communicate healthy messages to youth using a variety of channels including social media, schools, and within the community.
- Explore opportunities to use school's social media to deliver nutrition messages. Refrain from using nutrition announcements as a sole method of delivery in schools. Effective delivery methods may differ among schools (e.g. rural vs. urban).

Appendix I

Healthy Messages for Youth

Consultation Questions

Use these questions to get feedback from your friends or other students in your school on what they thought of your healthy messages for youth:

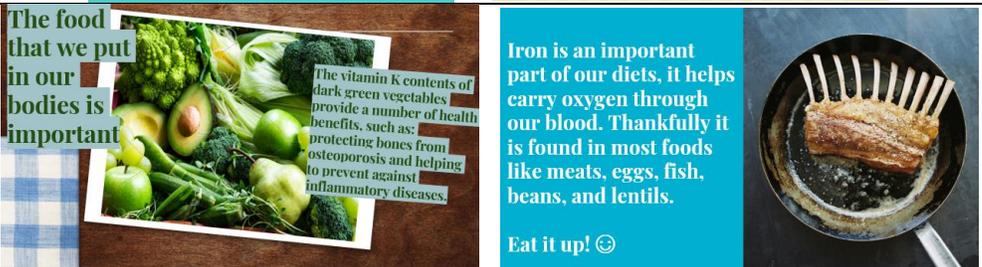
1. Does the message catch your attention?
2. What is this message about? Are the words/format easy to understand?
3. Did the message make you care or motivate you to change?
4. How and where would you like to hear these messages?
5. Any comments? Are there any changes that you would suggest?

As we've discussed at our YAC meeting, you can use any methods that work for you to collect the feedback such as an online survey, paper survey, casual conversation, interview, etc.

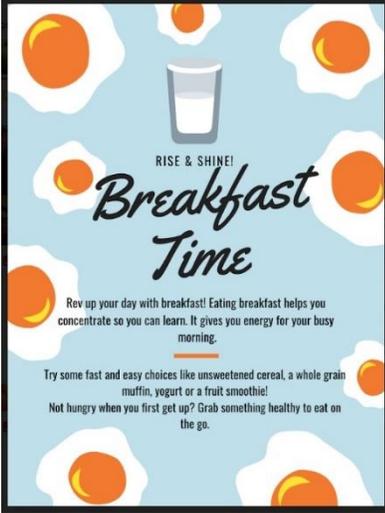
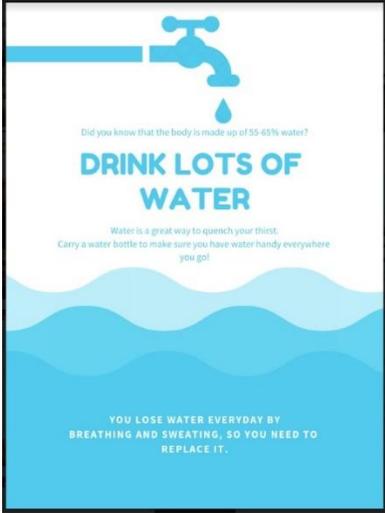
Remember to keep track of some quantitative data as well such as the number of students who saw or received the message, number of students who provided feedback, etc.

Appendix II

Examples of YAC member developed messages

YAC Member	Format & Topic	Highlights
1	Instagram campaign on drinking water	<p>cch.studentcouncil Did you know that the body is made up of 55-65% water? Water is a great way to quench your thirst. Carry water bottle to make sure you have water handy every where you go! CCH is still staying healthy in Poland! #healthycch</p> 
2	Posters and social media posts on sugar	  
3	Posters on vitamins and minerals	

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<p>4</p> <p>Social media post with memes on healthy snacks</p>		
<p>5</p> <p>Poster on breakfast and drinking water</p>		
<p>7</p> <p>Poster on healthy alternatives</p>	<p>CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF BAD EATING HABITS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: OBESITY, ADDICTION, WASTEFUL PACKAGING, EXPENSIVE</p>  <p>IT IS OFTEN MORE COST EFFECTIVE TO PURCHASE HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES FROM THE GROCERY STORE AND TO PREPARE FOOD IN ADVANCE</p> <p>PREPARE A NEW HEALTHY MENTALITY</p>	

Appendix III

Evaluation of YAC member developed messages

YAC Member	Evaluation Question	Evaluation Results
1	Reach: Evaluation method: Participants:	Unknown Unknown, open-ended questions 6 students
	Does the message catch your attention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's very relatable • Familiar face of a friend/student was very attention grabbing • It was extremely entertaining
	What is this message about? Are the words/format easy to understand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's about doing little things that lead to a healthier lifestyle • The message is very straightforward and can be understood by anyone
	Did the message make you care or motivate you to change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The message is so simple but makes you think about your priorities. • I wouldn't say it made me jump out of my seat, but it gave me something to think about for sure • The message motivated me a lot, and made me realize how important it is to move my body
	How and where would you like to hear these messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through ads on websites like YouTube or Instagram • Schools should make an effort to promote this during assemblies or have brochures available in school offices • I would love to hear these messages in schools; not only in wellness clubs where kids care about a healthy lifestyle, but to students who don't necessarily think about these healthy life tips • I would like to hear these messages anywhere possible!! It is smart and informative
	Any comments? Are there any changes that you would suggest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would love to see expansion on some of the videos! • Just get more involved around the school, make it obvious and hard for students to ignore. Start up a trend again using hashtags.
2	Reach: Evaluation method: Participants:	Approximately 300 students Online survey, open-ended questions. Survey was administered a week after posting final round of posters Unknown
	Does the message catch your attention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I liked the colours and graphics, it helped draw my attention to the posters • The statistics were interesting • Yes, I liked how easy the messages were to interpret
	What is this message about? Are the words/format easy to understand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The messages were about how youth should be aware of what they are eating to be healthier • By informing people about how much sugar is in certain foods, the posters make you think about how to be healthier • The words and formatting was easy to understand

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	Did the message make you care or motivate you to change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The messages did make me more cautious in eating, mostly to live a healthier lifestyle • Learning about what can happen to you when you don't work to eat healthy, like Type 2 Diabetes, really helped open my eyes about how much sugar I'm consuming • I thought mentioning how much sugar we think we're consuming versus how much really works. A granola bar may seem like a relatively healthy option, but when you look at how much sugar you're consuming, you can see there are better options. • Using a Tim Horton's Iced Coffee as a way to catch my attention was really smart
	How and where would you like to hear these messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to be more educated on the matter, even outside of school, like within the community for the message to be known • It needs to be everywhere. Like in rec centers, actually posted in the drive thru, on the menu in restaurants. It shouldn't really be a chore to find out what you're eating. • Social media is a super good platform in my opinion. Everyone is always on their phone so might as well post useful stuff • Sponsored pages on Instagram
	Any comments? What changes would you suggest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More on Instagram. Posters aren't super beneficial. • I'm pleased with the posters in the school, I think they help educate everyone to make healthier life choices • I would even add more health disorders that can result from too much sugar or sodium. They're scary but they help the message sink in.
3	Reach: Evaluation method: Participants:	Unknown Unknown, open-ended questions 5 Sr. High students, 7 Jr. High students
	What do you think about these messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative • Good visuals • Short and to the point • Eye opening
	Is there just enough, too little or too much information on the message to lead you action/put the information into practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There could be more, but for the most part they were good • Motivational and got people thinking about how they spend their money (especially in grade 12), and some alternative options
	Is the information easy to understand (is the message clear, is the information clear)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes

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	Overall comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters could have been bigger, with larger font and more eye-catching features • Information got people thinking and planning their lunches accordingly
4	Reach: Evaluation method: Participants:	Number of views <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First post: 324 • Second post: 348 • Third post: 366 (Total number of students in school = 621) Online survey, open and close-ended questions 15 students
	Did the messages catch your attention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53.3% - Yes I read through all of the posts • 33.3% - I read through some parts of the posts • 13.3% - I didn't read it...sorry • 0% - I only looked at the memes
	What part(s) of the info did you find most useful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% - 3 reasons to eat healthy • 40% - Misleading labels • 40% - Memes • 40% - List of common healthy foods
	Was info easy to understand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% - Yes clear info, right length • 33.3% - Yes but post lengths too long • 6.7% - No nothing made sense • 0% - Meh sometimes seemed to go off-topic
	What format(s) do you want to see the message?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 66.7% - Facebook posts + memes • 40% - Posters at school • 40% - On Daily Bulletin • 13.3% - Schoolzone • 6.7% - Just facebook posts, no memes pls
	Did the message make you care or motivate you to change? If yes, what was effective? If no, why not?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I enjoyed the snack suggestions • I liked the addition of memes! Great way to get to youth. Important messages and touched on many issues that teens often struggle with. • Yes, the reasons that specifically related to school. I don't want my grades to drop for a few minutes of yummy junk food! • Message was clear because short and straightforward, sort of motivated to change • Not really because I'm lazy • Not really, there wasn't a lot of new info. But it was well presented, it's hard to come up with new information on such a well explored topic.
	How frequently do you want to see the messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 – Once a week, span for over one month • 6 – 2-3 times per week, span for over a week • 3 – Daily messages, span over a week • 3 – Daily messages, span over few days • 2 – Once a week, span for over a week • 1 – Once a week, span over a few days • 1 – 2-3 times per week, span over one month • 1 – Daily messages, span over one month
	Any additional changes you'll suggest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe 1 meme per post? Make it look more interesting and concise? Video!

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The memes were not spicy enough
	Do you want to see this again?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 86.7% - Yes 13.3% - No 13.3% - I don't know
	Is there any nutrition topic that you wanted to see but was not included?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busting myths about nutrition
5	Reach:	Unknown
	Evaluation method:	Unknown, open-ended questions. Feedback specific to poster on water.
	Participants:	4 students
	Does the message catch your attention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The message catches my attention and convinces me to view/read it This message is nicely organized I like the way the poster looks! It's very attractive and definitely makes me want to read it
	What is this message about? Are the words/format easy to understand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The message is about the importance of water The message is about drinking water, and why one should drink it. It also includes a nice 'did you know' fact. The words are easy to read and understand It is easy to understand, but difficult to read the small text
	Did the message make you care or motivate you to change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes
6	How and where would you like to hear these messages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like to see this poster in the cafeteria I think putting this poster by every water fountain in our school would be a good idea I think it should be placed in the bulletin boards by the gym, or the fitness room, to make sure people realize that people NEED to drink water if they are physically active I think the poster is great, but to truly make someone change, you should include a 'did you know' fact in the announcements
	Any comments? Are there any changes that you would suggest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger text so it is easier to read
	Reach:	Unknown
6	Evaluation method:	Unknown
	Participants:	Unknown
	General feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The feedback received was very positive and students did consider the initiative The school recently installed two automatic water bottle stations which gave students more opportunities to stay hydrated
7	Reach:	Unknown
	Evaluation method:	Unknown
	Participants:	Unknown
	General feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback from few friends Needed to tell people to look at the posters on the screen