

The following was an article published on Aug. 15, 2023 in *The Oklahoman*:

**What a couple of life changes can do for future health; schools can make changes, too.**

My Nguyen - Guest columnist

The importance of physical activity and nutrition in my life is to balance out unhealthy choices that I made because of careless habits.

I'm overweight and I want to lose extra weight so I can steer clear of certain health issues related to possible future obesity that can be avoided. This comes from the fact that in my school, nutrition and physical activity are optional. For example, during lunch, the choice of fruits and veggies on my plate is up to me if I want to include them or not. Physical Education is a one-year required course: Some of the requirements include a 20-minute walk (equivalent to 1 mile) and sometimes exercise after the walk.

Having a strong policy with Elevate Student Health would get people to start moving more in and out of school. Elevate Student Health is a program where schools across Oklahoma can work to improve the health of youth through increased physical activity and improved nutrition. With better nutrition it will help not only me, but also many of my peers to not feel sluggish after eating. I don't enjoy the overwhelming amount of carbohydrates I eat from my school foods.

After I joined Youth Action for Health Leadership (YAHL), one of the events I did was a principal meeting with my great friend and YAHL leader, Carina Chen. Our former principal, Mr. Thomas, told us that one of his goals for our school is to replace all the old water fountains with new ones that have automatic water fillers for the faculty and students.

In my freshman year, the presentation of fruits and veggies wasn't very appetizing, which pushed me away from adding them to my plate, but in my sophomore year, I saw change. I could see the bright and fresh fruits and veggies that were arranged in a more eye-catching way, which encouraged me to take one or two to eat or save for later as snacks.

In support of Elevate Student Health, the changes to policies will be a long-term success that future generations (or children and grandchildren) will truly appreciate.



*My Nguyen is a Youth Action for Health Leadership (YAHL) leader from Classen School of Advanced Studies. As Nguyen continued participating in YAHL, it brought about the realization that the school lacked some healthy elements that could be changed.*