

*Stepping Forward for  
Community Health*



*Young People  
Speak Out on  
Eating Better,  
Moving More,  
and Creating Change*

Written by members of the  
Generation With Promise Writers Project

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For more information:  
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## FORWARD

Young people are not only leaders of tomorrow but leaders of today. Therefore, they should be given the opportunity to participate in the school and community health decisions that affect their lives and the lives of the people in their community. This is important because they are experts on their own experiences and their ideas can contribute to better programs, services, and policies. It is not too early to equip them, as leaders, with the knowledge, skills, and experience to serve as community change agents.

Generation With Promise (GWP) is a program originating from the Office of the Michigan Surgeon General, which is designed to transform schools and communities in some of the most disadvantaged cities of Michigan that former Governor Jennifer M. Granholm designated as Cities of Promise. GWP involves young people in public policy, as well as environmental and behavior change efforts focused on moving more, eating healthier, and avoiding tobacco use and exposure.

GWP places emphasis on youth leadership through a partnership with the Michigan Youth and Community Program of the University of Michigan. University collaborators and GWP staff work with young people assigned to student action teams, adult allies during school and community meetings, youth-led research teams, policy workshop participants, and youth summit participants. In addition, they assist with presentations to elected officials and school health officials.

As part of the program, youth leaders have written *Stepping Forward for Community Health*, a book about the impact of growing up in underserved areas, as well as experiences in their schools and communities related to nutrition, healthy eating, physical activity, education, tobacco, and safety.

In the book, the young authors write about their everyday lives, such as the food they eat in school cafeterias and see in grocery stores, their lack of physical activity and fitness-related activities in their schools and communities, and their concerns about crime and safety in walking between home and school.

This book was produced by GWP through a partnership with the Michigan Youth and Community Program of the University of Michigan. University partners work with program participants in a wide range of specific activities that help give voice to issues identified by the youth themselves. As you will see in the present publication, the youth leaders write from their own experiences and expertise, and as part of their involvement they sent a letter (reprinted here) to First Lady Michelle Obama during the public comment period of the Let's Move Campaign.

It is a pleasure to offer every encouragement to this work by our young people of whom we are proud. And to invite you to participate in our common vision and strategy to improve the health of our community.

*Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom, MD, MS*  
Nation's First State-Level Surgeon General  
Sr. Vice President of Community Health & Equity  
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## *Introduction*

When young people speak out on the unhealthy conditions they face in their schools and communities, it can transform them and other youth and adults around them. If only a fraction of young people in the world were to do so, the effects would be extraordinary.

This book is written by eleven young people who reside in and around Detroit. They write about growing up in the neighborhoods of a large metropolitan area. They write about the food they see in grocery stores and eat in school cafeterias, the lack of physical activity in their daily lives, and the problems and issues they face in the areas in which they reside.

But they also are aware of their situation and, in these pages, write about the changes they want. They want to eat healthy, get active, and take action. Unlike too many others, they are willing to step forward and speak out on what they want and how to make it happen.

Each of these young people participates in Generation With Promise (GWP). This program is an initiative that engages young people in transforming school health outcomes in low-income middle schools in Michigan's most economically depressed cities. GWP involves sixteen schools in developing strategies to "eat better," "move more," and "don't smoke."

More than 200 students have been involved in a variety of leadership development activities enabling them to identify issues, develop strategies, and take actions to improve health in their schools. We summarize some of their action steps in the margins of the book.

Student writers were selected because of their leadership and because their teachers and parents were willing to support them.

For example, adults provided them with transportation to the meetings. This might sound small to some readers of this book, but rides are a big problem in highly segregated areas that lack public transportation. They would not have been able to meet and write had it not been for the parents and adult allies who supported them.

These young people view themselves as change agents but know that they cannot create change on their own. They realize that they are fortunate to have adults who care about them and their health, but they know, and worry, that not everyone is so fortunate. As you read their stories, we hope that you will consider: What could you do to support young people who want to live healthier lives and who want to produce a real generation with promise?

Bridget Christian  
Barry Checkoway  
Katie Richards-Schuster

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*If I could change anything in my community, it would be to get rid of all the abandoned buildings—*

OUR FOOD: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

What we eat at school looks like jail food. It comes on foam trays that you throw away. The food is just slopped on. Sometimes fried chicken fingers, sometimes 3 little ravioli. When I visit people in jail you can see through the little window to the cafeteria and see that they get the exact same food on the exact same trays. I wonder why.  
-Darnell

I love to eat as much as I love to cook.  
-Makia

*and to choose the food I would like to eat at school. Healthy food, that is.*

-Tiera

My mom has a garden in the backyard. She grows vegetables like corn, cucumbers, cabbage, bell peppers, jalapenos, and so forth. I help sometimes. I have a windowsill strawberry garden and I can't wait until I get to the first one.  
-Semia

## *Sometimes We Come to School Hungry*

*A Collaborative Poem by members of the Generation With Promise Writers Project*

Sometimes we  
**come to school hungry,**  
and sometimes we  
**leave school hungry.**

**We want healthy food  
to eat at school!**

Generation With Promise students wanted better food in their school, so they took up a petition, collected signatures from students, and presented it to the superintendent and food service workers. Students in a math class counted how often the food served matched the menu for the day. As a result of their organizing, school officials now serve hot breakfast every morning and more fruits and vegetables for lunch.

We don't want the cold,  
dry pizza  
We don't want soggy,  
wet chicken nuggets  
We don't want the  
dried up french fries

We don't want the  
canned lima beans  
We don't want the  
canned ravioli,  
or canned anything!  
We don't want the spoiled milk

We don't want the plastic bags  
of brown apple slices  
We don't want PopTarts or  
cinnamon sticks for breakfast,  
or dry frozen waffles  
or stale cereal.

We don't want green  
spotted hot dogs  
and greasy fried chicken.  
We want more good protein,  
like tuna and turkey.  
We want wheat bread  
and fruit  
and vegetables.

We want fresh food,  
not old tired food because

**We want to eat healthily  
so we can try to learn.**

Sometimes we  
**come to school hungry,**  
and sometimes we  
**leave school hungry,**  
that's why **we want healthy food  
to eat at school!**



I have experienced getting a lunch or breakfast and my milk or juice was expired or hot dog was different colors. I've had to go without lunch because the food I was given was not fully cooked and I had no other choices of food.

Eating uncooked food can affect students' learning abilities, classwork, and participation in gym. We should have all proper cooked foods.

Here are some ideas that I've come up with to solve this problem of serving uncooked expired food. All school lunch ladies or people that work in the kitchen should have an update on the foods so that they will know when the foods expire and they won't continue to serve it. For example, all beverages should be ordered by date of expiration and at least a couple days before the expiration, they should get rid of them.

A way to stop uncooked meals from being served is the food should be steamed and boiled and baked instead of fried with lots of grease.

- Tiera

**SOLUTION : FRESH HEALTHY FOOD, NOT FRIED**

I think that instead of cooked wet greens from a can we should have a fresh salad bar with a variety of vegetables to choose from. I think we should have fresh wheat bagels with low fat cream cheese. This would make us much more healthy.

- Tiera

Sometimes the school food is so cold it doesn't seem cooked so I don't eat it— I go home to eat. They have food sitting out for days. They serve the milk warm. So I just don't eat. I just want to stop having old food in our school. And people be getting sick in the bathroom— throwing up and stuff.

I think maybe cafeteria people do it on purpose just to make their job easy. The students are in the bathroom more then they are in their classes. People are eating unhealthy food like hot chips, cookies and other things, because it's all they have.

- Darnell

In the school cafeteria, they give us a lot of cookies, but they only give us fruit sometimes.

- Jasmine

How do they expect us to do well academically and be healthy if we don't have good food at school? People keep talking about the obesity epidemic among children. Half of the time, the school cafeteria is serving fried food!

- Syed

*I think that instead of cooked wet greens from a can we should have a fresh salad bar with a variety of vegetables to choose from. I think we should have fresh wheat bagels with low fat cream cheese. This would make us much more healthy.*

Generation With Promise students convened a meeting with their school principal and food service director and asked them to install a salad bar and a smoothie machine. They collected surveys from the students on what kinds of ingredients or toppings they wanted. Adults installed the salad bar and the smoothie machine but continue to check with the food service to make sure they are supplying the salad bar and turning on the smoothie machine. Without student vigilance, adults might forget their promise of healthy food.

## *Solution: Train School Chefs Better*

I think we should have a chef at our school who knows about healthy cooking. All students should have healthy and nutritious choices at breakfast and lunch. Eating at school is two of our three meals a day, so it really matters in the obesity epidemic.  
- Jasmine

## *Solution: More Food Variety*

We have cereal for breakfast every day. Schools should have hot breakfast every day, or every other day of the week. There are some good things about the food at my school: we have a salad bar, which is great. But the cafeteria gives us leftovers to eat whenever they have some left. They don't give us all the choices at once. You can't choose what you eat out of all the options they have that day. We've been eating five chicken nuggets for lunch since the first grade. We've been growing, now we're in eighth grade and our bodies are bigger. Why are we eating the same sized meals?

A variety of foods is also important. Everyone can't always eat the same foods as others;

that's why we need choices. Some people are allergic to foods, or lactose intolerant, or just aren't able to eat certain foods. A lot of religions and cultures have restrictions on what people can eat. If pork is served in the school cafeteria, then they must give other choices. The cafeteria workers do not divide up the foods that should not be together. They serve Muslim students pork when they are not supposed to. And if meat is served, they must give a vegetarian option. All the foods should be separated properly so the kids don't get it coming to their plate all mixed up.  
- Syed



If our teachers expect good grades, then we expect good food.  
- Syed

We need to get fresh fruit every day at the store and they need to throw the old fruit away and then get new fruit in the store and people will start to come in a lot more when the fruit is fresh. And we need more support about fresh fruit. And we need to eat better food and fruit.  
- Darnell

We need more varieties and more options of foods in our schools. We also need hot breakfasts, since a balanced breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day. They say they give us hot breakfasts like pancakes and omelets, but really we only get cereal and pop tarts.  
-Semia

# Be healthier

We should have a salad bar and a fruit bar in all of our schools. There should also be only 100% fruit juice served in our schools. Also, if there were more regular health inspections of our school kitchens and cafeterias, and bad food would be eliminated and we would be healthier.

- Zakiya

The lunch ladies just put out the different choices when they feel like it, and that's what you get coming through the line. They also favor some kids and give them more food, which is really unfair. Sometimes they run out of food, and then people coming at the end of the line get less.

- Jasmine

We should have more choice of drinks at school and more fruit. Schools should not serve leftovers. The leftovers that are served taste bad and are often old and unhealthy. Also, there is too much greasy food in our schools.

- Jasmine

My school food is mostly unhealthy. We should have fresh juice and milk, and not juice and milk that taste nasty, like they've spoiled.

- Jasmine

*We should have fresh juice and milk, and not juice and milk that taste nasty, like they've spoiled.*

The schools expect us to do well academically. If they don't serve us healthy meals they shouldn't expect that. If we do eat healthy then our bodies will be strong and full. Which will help us do well in all subjects. We don't know if the schools know this or not because they obviously don't serve us good healthy food. Then they wonder why most kids are not doing well.

- Syed

Eating healthy increases learning abilities and helps us get good results on tests that are really important for us to pass.

- Tiera

Generation With Promise students organize a "taste fest" during school that enables other students to taste fruits and vegetables with which they are unfamiliar, which is many! They then ask the students to complete a "taste survey" of what they like best.

# 100% fruit juice

### *Solution: More Choices*

We want better food  
like strawberries and kiwis  
And orange carrots

Keep bad things away  
No more unhealthy changes,  
bad for the heart and soul!  
- Makia



### *Solution: Better Breakfast*

I strongly believe that students should have better choices at breakfast and lunch because that is all they have to get them through the day. For breakfast at school, we have graham crackers and juice. But other times we have Poptarts, which is not healthy. I think we should have hot breakfast that is good for us, as well as it tastes good too. If breakfast is the most important meal of the day, then why don't we get better choices? At breakfast we should have fruit instead of cereal. That would give us the boost we need.

-Tiera

### *Solution: Salad Bars and Healthy Vending Machine Snacks*

At lunch our food is baked, which is fine, but I think we can go a step further. Our hot dogs are sometimes like, green and pink and brown at the same time. Even if the lunch line gets better some students still won't eat it because it has a bad reputation. The solution to that problem would be to have a salad bar, a fruit bar, and maybe even a vending machine with healthy snacks. That way, even if they don't eat lunch they can make the school more money too. Those are just some of the things we can do to have better school choices.

-Tiera

## *Munch on This*

*A Collaborative Poem by the  
Generation With Promise  
Writers Project*

For lunch we want delicious  
fresh healthy food, like...

celery  
cantaloupe  
broccoli  
bananas  
pineapple  
watermelon  
grapes  
spinach  
kiwi  
avocado  
mandarin oranges  
grapefruit  
cherries  
carrots  
corn  
sunflower seeds  
cauliflower  
brussels sprouts  
star fruit  
salad greens  
collard greens  
glory beans  
spaghetti  
squash  
cucumber and pickles

mushrooms  
potatoes  
yams  
tomatoes  
beets  
olives  
peanuts  
black eyed peas  
refried beans  
pencil beans  
spanish rice  
peas  
chickpeas and hummus  
hard-boiled eggs  
baked or smoked meat  
grilled fish  
smoked turkey sandwiches  
honeysmoked turkey  
turkey bacon  
perch  
shrimp  
baked catfish  
gumbo  
jambalaya  
tilapia  
jello  
and  
fruit salad!



## *Problem: Fresh Food is Hard to Find*

In Detroit, Michigan, there are very few fresh food markets that provide healthy and nutritious fresh produce. We don't usually have that at our local grocery stores. The lack of these foods is steadily making us crave and depend upon junk food that we can get at liquor and grocery stores in our neighborhoods, as well as at fast food restaurants.

Our goal at Generation With Promise is to get everyone to "Move More, Eat Better, and Don't Smoke." But many people can't find or simply don't have a way to get to the stores where they can start/try to fulfill our mantra.

Even when we can find healthy markets, transportation is an issue. Transportation is always hard to find because the healthy markets are almost always far away in suburban areas. My mom goes to local stores all the time where healthy food is always limited. So we never get the healthy variety we require!

Finally, in my opinion, price is the most important issue we need to address. Fresh food is more expensive to keep fresh, whereas frozen and canned foods are easily maintained. From these markets I would like to receive healthy items such as fish, hummus, a variety of vegetables, and tofu. All of these problems can easily be fixed.

- Damien

## *A Conversation about Food Access*

When I go shopping with my mom she buys me everything I pick up, like SunChips, fruit and a little bit of candy. She told me I have to eat so I love to go shopping with her. She buys other things for the house. I like to eat healthy food. I'm happy about it when I go shopping with my mom.

- Darnell

I have transportation to buy the healthy foods, so I'm lucky. I shop at Krogers, Walmart, and sometimes Save-A-Lot. There is a lot of healthy choices at those stores. Sometimes when I am the store the junk food looks good, but I still walk past it because it is unhealthy but every now and then I have some junk food.

- Tiera

## *Solution: Personal Choices to Eat Well*

When I'm at home I eat healthy foods and some slow foods. The healthy foods that I eat at home are apples, oranges, vegetables, and baked meat. The slow foods I eat are pancakes, cupcakes, or candy bars. I thought one day I should change my eating habits. I said I was going to layoff the pancakes, cupcakes and candybars. I choose to do that because all its doing is making me weak and tired, or I can't think right. I am willing to make a big change.

- Jasmine

*I said I was going to layoff the pancakes, cupcakes and candybars. I choose to do that because all its doing is making me weak and tired, or I can't think right. I am willing to make a big change.*



## *Chocolate*

a poem by Dominique

There are those who come and  
try to tell me to eat that  
chocolate and this,  
like taste-testing,  
testing my taste buds.

I do not fall into their trap  
They are evil and conniving,  
like false advertisements,  
telling me that their product is  
good when it is really awful for  
me.

I have only eaten a few  
chocolates from the box of Life.  
Some tasted good,  
some tasted bad,  
but I ate them just the same.

Taking life one chocolatey,  
tasteful bite at a time.

Savoring all the many flavors  
stored inside

I wonder,  
and am anxious to see how  
the next chocolate will taste  
when I try it.  
My box of chocolates is not like  
ones in the store, not at all.

My taste is not controlled by  
manufacturers trying to make a  
profit.

I profit off of myself.  
I am my own manufacturer:

Some try and steer me to the  
good chocolates,  
for they have eaten them before  
and know the score.  
They punish me for eating the  
bad chocolates  
they have warned me against,  
but will forgive me afterwards.

So as I open my box,  
day by day,  
the smells of love chocolates,  
friendship chocolates,  
leading chocolates,  
and tempting chocolates  
lift my nose with good and  
stinky scents.  
I find one to eat,  
hoping it will lead me to the next  
good chocolate in the box.

*My box of chocolates  
is not like ones in the store,  
not at all.*

## *The Way We Move: Problems and Solutions*

*I'm on the baseball team. We practice for three hours every day. It is hilarious at practice, I love going to it! When it's game time, we become absolutely serious. I play left field, and I like that position because it's important and not important at the same time. So I always have to be prepared.*

*- Syed*

*In the yard I have a garden. On top is my flowers, on the right is my grapes and strawberries, on the left is tomatoes and carrots. It took a lot of teaching from my Grandma to get this garden. When I messed up, she told me to keep trying, practice makes perfect. She said, you have to be consistent or the garden will die, I will not remind you, you have to want it like you want those videogames. Like your video games, if you leave it alone too long, it's going to die.*

*- Jayla*

*I like to ride my bike, because it helps me exercise. I also like to play basketball, get active, do sketching after school, draw, read, and try different activities.*

*- Tiera*



I love to play sports, my favorite is basketball. I hope to one day get an athletic scholarship, and attend one of the Big Ten School, the Division 1 schools around us, or if I'm good –UCONN, the best girl's basketball college.

*- Dominique*

## *Problem: Childhood Obesity is an Epidemic!*

*A main cause of child obesity is the lack of exercise among our generation. With all of the technology available to us, we have less and less reason to go outside and play. We don't even have to leave our seats to shop. We can do it over the Internet! Coming to school is the only reason some kids leave the house.*

*- Dominique*

*When we don't exercise we get lazy so it's hard for our bodies to get used to exercising, since our body was enjoying being lazy.*

*- Jayla*

*I want a health class that will teach students about all the unhealthy things inside the junk food that they've been eating.*

*Also, parents should have info on why eating healthy is important so that they can buy better foods for their children.*

*My recommendation is that all schools should require health class for students and offer information for parents to provide healthier choices for kids. This should be a requirement. Since we are trying to influence people to eat healthy, they should have some knowledge about it.*

Generation With Promise students advocated for a workout room with treadmills and weights that could be used during their homeroom hour or study hall. Now the room is open after school for use by students, teachers and community members.

*I want a health class that will teach students about all the unhealthy things inside the junk food that they've been eating. Also, parents should have info on why eating healthy is important so that they can buy better foods for their children.*

*If this recommendation becomes a policy, (according to O'Neill, J.M. and Clark, J.K.), these could be the results: "Fourth grade students who received Michigan Model for Health lessons had enhanced physical activity and nutrition skills, better social-emotional and self-management skills, improved safety attitudes, stronger drug and tobacco refusal skills and less alcohol and tobacco use than those who didn't."*

*- Tiera*

Solution: We Want Required Health Classes - Tiera

## *Solution: An Hour of Gym Class Every Day*

by Dominique

A main cause of child obesity is the lack of exercise among our generation. With all of the technology available to us, we have less and less reason to go outside and play. We don't even have to leave our seats to shop. We can do it over the Internet! Coming to school is the only reason some kids leave the house. But while we are out, we might as well make the most of it.

Since many kids won't take the initiative to get out and move more ourselves, our schools can—and should—require us to. The Michigan Surgeon General Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom says that students should get out and play at least an hour a day. What more perfect way to do that than in gym class, allowing us an hour full of non-stop play and hands-on learning about exercise? That can help us tremendously.

An hour of required exercise might sound boring to kids my age, but if teachers make it fun, we won't even notice. For those wanting to excel past just an hour, allow them to join an enjoyable competitive sport of their choice. And if that takes place, we should have more choices of sports among us!

Exercise not only helps us physically, but academically. It helps your brain excel in math and reading. Sports not only help us physically, but they also help educationally to further develop motor skills, attitude, and behavioral skills. The more sports we can play, the better chance we have of gaining a sports scholarship to a good college, and being healthy life-long.

Seeing all of these benefits arising from just one hour of gym a day, don't you agree that it should be required by all the schools in the nation?

In my school, one hour of gym for half a school year is only available for seventh graders. This just benefits a certain group of kids for a small time span. We do, however, have a weight room for all ages that is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3 to 5.

Generation With Promise students created a before school workout program. Each morning, a different student leads the group. Teachers report that seemed better-behaved and more awake in class.

## *Solution: Health Classes for Parents and Kids*

by Zakiya

Parents and kids these days do not have a lot of information on healthy life choices. That might be because there is no way for them to find the information in the first place. See, if schools around the world were to offer health classes, classes where you can learn a variety of ways to be healthy, there would be a lot of change around the world. More people would be active, eat healthy foods, and not start smoking.

My school had a health class last year, and a little at the beginning of this year. and that did help students to have a better perspective on how to live and choose a healthy lifestyle. Until they got rid of that class, I learned a lot, like how smoking can limit your life span and how healthy foods can make you more you more energetic.

I suggest that schools have a period per day of health class--it can be combined with gym class if it has to. For parents, there should be programs after school and on weekends. They can come to the school or community center.

There are lots of positive benefits from having health classes. They should be a place where people can feel comfortable and feel that they are in a positive learning environment. By just having these hour-long classes, there could be a total change in our communities.

I want to learn more about how even small portions of unhealthy food is kind of bad still. How smoking can affect not only you but also your family/friends. My parents would come to a health class because they would like having a place were they can go and learn how to live a better life. We eat healthy food at home, but some people just do not know how smoking and not eating right can affect you.

During school Open House, students and parents are encouraged to participate in a "health scavenger hunt" that provides health information while enabling them to have fun together.

## *Health Means the Surroundings, Too*

*The most important thing someone should know about my school is that it is exceedingly dirty.*

*- Damien*

*At school, people throw glass on our playground and gamble, too. People call the cops. I would too. If I could, I would get all the glass off the school's playground and stop the gambling. Little kids (10 and under) need a safe environment to play on those playgrounds.*

*Sometimes at my school we have mice. I'm scared to walk into my classroom sometimes because I hate to have to see some rodent on the floor crawling around. Mice are ugly little things.*

*The teachers keep telling us that the schools are getting a million dollars for this and that. I hope they put some of that to clean up the school because the environment and surroundings need to be healthy too.*

*- Makia*

*Afterschool gym. Teachers could be paid to stay afterschool for anyone who wants to stay and work out.*

*Permission slips for parents to sign for the kids to stay afterschool to exercise.*

*I'd like a walking club to be started every other day during lunch after eating.*

Generation With Promise students got school officials to install walking tracks that are used before school, at lunch, and in gym class. They got people walking and training for a mini-marathon. They recorded their miles at lunch, and it became a fun competition.

*We should have a teacher four days a week to teach us about health, obesity, lung cancer, heart beats, and other body knowledge.*

*We should have a track meet, for people to run miles and win different prizes.*

*We should have a health class for parents to teach them how to eat better, why not to smoke, and how to move more. We can encourage parents and kids to go to health class with games and healthy snacks. I'd like schools to put back healthy vending machines.*

*We could have fun contests to see how long a family can withstand not eating any junk food, or how much weight each grade can lose.*

*One day a week—maybe Fridays—should be health day. On Fridays we could have a taste fest with healthy snacks and representatives to tell us about them.*

Here are some things I would like to see happen at my middle school:

## *Solution: More Gym Class*

By Samantha

*Like most Americans, I want kids to be healthy and strong. But out of five days a week of school, I only have exercise on two days, and that is afterschool, in a basketball program on Monday and Tuesday. Even for that little bit, it's not fair that my school has it and others don't.*

*I want childhood obesity to end. I want school to be more active and to help us have more energy. Most eighth-graders that I know want to exercise, do sports, and run around. I would suggest that we let all students have gym or exercise one hour every day. We will be active and fit. We won't be overweight or have childhood obesity.*

*I want childhood obesity to end.  
I want school to be more active  
and to help us have more  
energy.*

*If you don't know how to spend your weekends, we are going to give you a number where you can spend your weekends. It's called City of Detroit Parks and Recreation Department (313) 224-1100. If you don't have anything like equipment, then you should call the Salvation Army so you could get the stuff you need.*

- Samantha

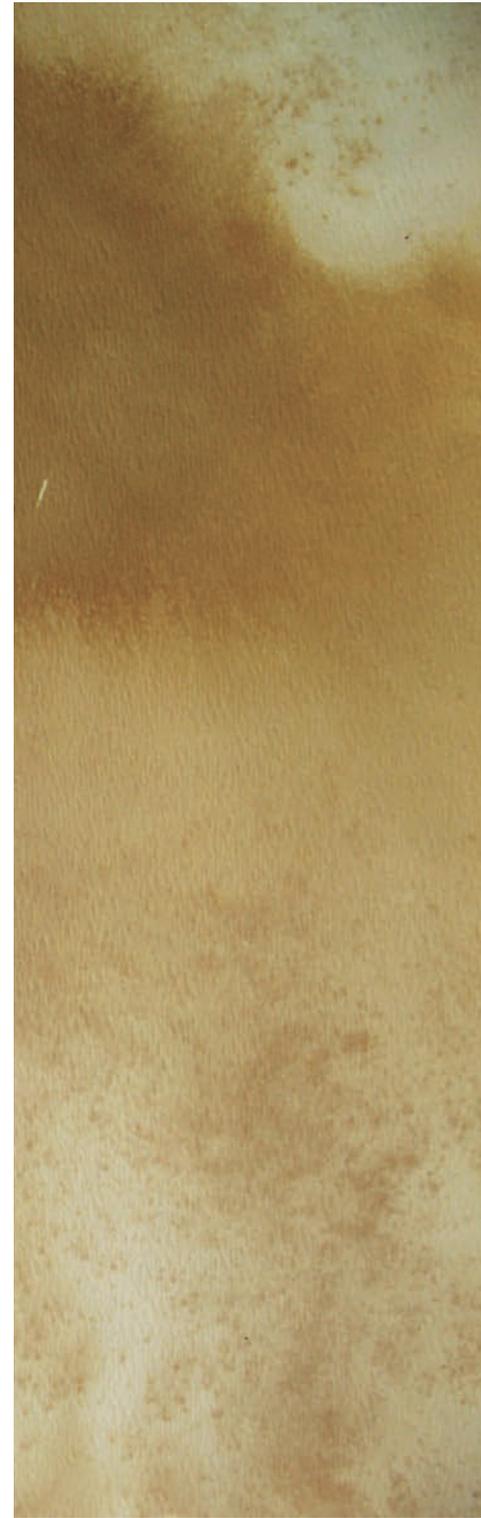
Generation With Promise students led community members on a health hike where they walked through the neighborhood, gave out health information along the way, and ended at the high school stadium where they learned a health recipe.

Solution: Go to the park!

## ***Solution: Keep Smoking Out of Schools***

*Lots of parents—9/10ths—are smoking. Smoking drains their energy, just like it does for kids. There is so much pollution in our air because of factories and smoking. One of my teachers even smokes. She doesn't know how smoking affects her. Her lungs will turn black and she'll lose energy. Teachers should not be able to smoke where kids can see them!*

*— Jayla*



*We should have a No Smoking club at school. -Jayla*

*I see adults smoking around my school and walking down the street to go a short distance from the school. I have to smell it! I have never been tempted to try, but I've been offered several times. If you do play sports, you should never smoke. Smoking hurts your lungs in a tremendous way. Your lungs are one of the main muscles you have to keep in shape for sports. Smoking will not help you. Smoking will only hinder you.*

*- Dominique*

## *On Being A Leader*

*What it means to be a leader...*

To be a leader means to know what you feel, and to know what you mean to everyone. And now you lead young children into a better direction of the road to success. I think I am a leader.

- Makia

Leadership to me is knowing when to be assertive but kind at the same time. A leader is someone who people listen to and go to when they need to.

- Jayla

Leadership is when you make a change, make a difference, and believe in yourself.

- Semia

Leadership: I do what I do, but I do not do what a lot of people do.

- Darnell

Leadership to me means that you do the right thing and set a good example for others.

- Syed

Leadership to me is knowing when to be assertive but kind at the same time.

- Jasmine

A leader is someone who people listen to and go to when they need to.

- Jasmine



I realized that I don't like being anonymous in my writing anymore. If I write it, I want my name on it.

- Syed

I learned that it's important as a group to work together and we all have similar problems in our schools. We learned by talking.

- Semia

At a summit, Generation With Promise members developed a Student Health Bill of Rights, which includes the following: Michigan's youth have a right to:

- Healthy food
- Physical exercise
- Safe environment
- Clean air
- Learn from others
- A voice in schools.

Over 200 students ratified the Student Health Bill of Rights by signing their names to a large banner.

# *> Leadership.*

## *Have High Expectations of Us, Please!*

*A Collaborative Poem by Members of the Generation With Promise Writers Project*

*People don't expect for me to be smart and get good grades in school. They don't expect for me to be really academically educated in school, or to want to go to college.*

*Everyone expects me to get into fights at school, or curse out a teacher. But I don't anyways. So there, right?*

*People don't expect me to catch an attitude.*

*People don't expect me to get mad and lash out. But if you're doing something I don't like to me or anyone close to me then I will get mad.*

*People don't expect that I'm a great ballroom dancer (but I've been doing it since I was in the fourth grade!)*

*People don't expect that I can get a bad grade, because I always do well in school.*

*People don't expect me to be perfect. They know everyone has flaws.*

*People don't expect me to have an attitude problem. The only way they will find out is if they make me really mad.*

First Lady Michelle Obama recently called for young people to play vital roles in developing policy solutions for addressing the challenge of childhood obesity. In her "Let's Move Campaign" she stresses the importance of engaging students in helping schools and communities "eat better" and "move more." On the opposite page is a letter that the students wrote to her.

Letter to First Lady

Dear First Lady Obama,

On behalf of Generation With Promise, we support your "Let's Move" campaign and share recommendations for your consideration.

We are working in our schools and communities to "end childhood obesity within a generation" by moving more, eating better and not smoking.

We see our schools and communities becoming more and more unhealthy. We have noticed that throughout our years of going to school, our lunches and breakfasts are not healthy and nutritious. We do not always get gym or recess despite the importance of daily physical fitness. Many of us don't have opportunities for physical activity outside of school. Finally, we need opportunities for health classes in schools to learn about making the right food and fitness choices.

As students, we want to do something to change this.

We have come up with the following recommendations for your "Let's Move" campaign:

1. All schools should require students to have opportunities for physical fitness at least one hour a day. This would include having gym every day, more sports, and recess.
2. All students should have healthy and nutritious choices at breakfast and lunch. This includes a variety of foods each week.
3. All food should be cooked properly and no spoiled food should be served.
4. All schools should require a health class for students and offer information for parents to provide healthier choices for kids.
5. All communities should have access to affordable healthy fruits and vegetables. We want better food choices at stores and local supermarkets that we can afford.

We would like to see changes soon and are willing to help. We would like you to learn more about Generation With Promise and the work we are doing to create change in our schools and communities. Please consider allowing us to send representatives from our group to come speak to you about Generation With Promise and our ideas.

Thank you.  
Detroit Youth Writers Workshop

## *Members of the Generation With Promise Writers Project*

### *Makia.*

My name is *Makia.* I am 12 years old in the 6th grade. I go to Nichols School. I grew up in Detroit. I have a goal to accomplish what I put my mind to. I like to write songs and sing for a hobby and sometimes just be silly.

### *Semia.*

My name is *Semia.* I am 11 years old and I go to Nichols Elementary/Middle School. I live in Detroit, MI. My goal is to graduate high school as valedictorian and to be in a beauty pageant. I like to sing, dance and act. I also like to talk to my friends.

### *Jasmine*

My name is *Jasmine* aka Hollywood. I'm 13 and I live in Detroit, MI. My goals are to go to college and be a lawyer. My hobbies are dancing and singing and going to school.

### *Tiera.*

My name is *Tiera.* I am 13 years old. I go to Mark Twain School. I live in Detroit, Michigan. My goals are to leave middle school with a 4.0 and go to college and become a successful person. My hobbies are drawing, reading and writing.

### *Damien*

My name is *Damien* and I am 13 years old in the 8th grade. I attend Alexander Hamilton Elementary/Middle School and I am from Detroit, Michigan. One goal I have for myself is to get my doctorate from Harvard in business and also become a lawyer. My hobby is ballroom dancing.

### *Samantha.*

My name is *Samantha.* I am 15 years old. My city I live in is Detroit, Michigan. My school I go to is Robert Burns Elementary/Middle School. My goals are to be a singer and my hobbies are to write songs.

### *Darnell.*

My name is *Darnell.* I am a 14 years old. I go to Burns Elementary and Middle School. I am in the 8th grade and live in Detroit, Michigan. When I am not at school I like to be funny and hang out with my family.

### *Jayla.*

My name is *Jayla.* I am 12 years old and I live in Southwest Detroit. My goals are to go to Cass Tech, go to Harvard, and become a professional chef.

### *Syed*

My name is *Syed* and I'm 13 years old. I attend Kosciuszko Middle School currently. I live in Hamtramck, MI and one of my goals is to make this world a better place. I enjoy playing baseball.

### *Dominique.*

My name is *Dominique.* I am a 13-year old girl from Hamtramck, Michigan and I attend school at Kosciuszko Middle School. When I grow up, I would like to do something with music or play a sport professionally. Some of my hobbies are making music, playing sports, hanging with friends, and eating food.

### *Zakiya.*

My name is *Zakiya.* I am 13 years old and go to Kosciuszko Middle School. I live in Hamtramck, which is in Detroit. One of my goals is to become a writer when I grow up. Some of my hobbies are listening to music, hanging out with friends, and having fun.

## *Resources*

### *For Youth*

#### *Generation With Promise*

[www.henryfordhealth.org/body.cfm?id=53279](http://www.henryfordhealth.org/body.cfm?id=53279)

#### *Body and Mind (BAM)*

This colorful, interactive website was designed for young people to promote a variety of preventive and health-enhancing behaviors.

Topics addressed include physical activity, nutrition, asthma, stress, safety, injury prevention, and infectious diseases.

[www.bam.gov](http://www.bam.gov)

#### *Kids' Health*

Created by The Nemours Foundation's Center for Children's

Health Media, this website is aimed at families and has a specific parents' link.

Parents can utilize the site or links for nutrition, physical activity, and health information related to youth.

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

#### *Michigan Steps Up*

Michigan Surgeon General Dr. Kimberly Dawn Wisdom and the

Michigan Department of Community Health know there are five key things people can focus on to step up to a healthier lifestyle. With this

website, they show Michigan residents how.

[www.mistepsup.org](http://www.mistepsup.org)

#### *Fruits and Veggies: More Matters*

For information on the importance of eating fruits and vegetables every day, visit

[www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/)

#### *Michigan Team Nutrition*

Team Nutrition is a national initiative designed to motivate, encourage, and empower schools, families, and the community to work together to continually improve school meals and to make food and physical activity choices for a healthy lifestyle.

[www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu](http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu)

### *For Teachers and Parents*

#### *Nutrition Education Activity List*

This list has numerous suggestions for nutrition education activities for the classroom, cafeteria, school, school staff and home. The list was developed by the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan Department of Community Health for use by the 2004-05 Fruit and Vegetable grantee schools. [www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/Nutrition\\_Activities.pdf](http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/Nutrition_Activities.pdf) Michigan

#### *Action For Healthy Kids*

This website provides an update on Michigan's coalition and contains lots of helpful information and resources related to healthy school environments.

[www.actionforhealthykids.org/state\\_profile.php?state=MI](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/state_profile.php?state=MI)

#### *Healthy School Toolkit - Your Guide To Action!*

Use this toolkit to help your school district adopt its Local Wellness Policy. The kit was developed by Michigan Action For Healthy Kids and provides the information, resources, and tools needed to assist schools in providing an environment that supports healthy eating and physical activity habits of students, their families, school staff members, and the community.

[www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/HealthySchoolToolkit.html](http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/HealthySchoolToolkit.html)



Michigan Youth and Community Program



GENERATION WITH PROMISE



Move More. Eat Better. Change Lives!