

## **Action Plan Final Report**

During my time at BELL last summer, I learned about a worldwide initiative called Meatless Mondays, in which people are vegetarian one day a week. The Action Plan that I developed at BELL set a goal of instituting Meatless Mondays once a week in all Boulder Valley School District cafeterias in Boulder, Colorado, my hometown. Implementing Meatless Mondays at BVSD would reduce health risks for students, raise awareness in the community by targeting kids and sharing information with families, reduce the environmental impact of the school district, and reduce costs.

When I first returned home from BELL, I was very excited about this project and started doing Meatless Mondays myself. However, during the school year I felt that I had too many other commitments to prioritize my Action Plan, and felt nervous and slightly discouraged about my prospects in actually making the change happen. However, I didn't stop talking about my project. Over the past year, I have taught my family all about Meatless Mondays, and have been able to share my personal experience in going meatless one day a week with friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Most people that I shared my story and my idea with feel very positively about the change and encouraged me to continue to pursue my Action Plan.

In June of this year, once I had graduated from high school and had much more time, I took a leap of faith and sent a direct email to the Director of Nutrition Services for BVSD, Ann Cooper, outlining my idea and explaining why this is an important step for BVSD to take. Although I regret not pursuing this project more fully during the school year, my timing was right, and Ann responded that same day to my email. She completely agreed with my proposal and we met face-to-face in late June, at which we decided to involve my high school's environmental club, Net Zero, which I had been a part of for four years.

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This summer, I gathered a committee of 15 high-school students out of our 50-person club, and met with five of the members on August 25<sup>th</sup>, at which I made sure that everyone was informed about the overall Meatless Mondays project goal and the issues that we see today with our meat industry. Some ideas discussed at the meeting include writing letters to the editor of the local newspaper, implementing a pilot project to test out Meatless Mondays in one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school in the district, addressing protein concerns especially with student athletes, including information about the benefits of Meatless Mondays in the district-wide parent newsletter, releasing recipes of alternative meals and sources of protein on the BVSD food services website, inviting guest speakers to give presentations at school assemblies, inviting parents to eat lunch with their kids at school one day once Meatless Mondays are implemented, including food issues and discussions in the classroom and science curriculums, holding food awareness days at schools, hosting movie showings of films like Food, Inc., hanging posters with food facts in school cafeterias, holding tasting days of proposed alternative meals before the change is implemented, implementing the change in elementary schools first, and encouraging families to have Meatless Mondays at home as well as at school. We will discuss these ideas and more at a kick-off meeting with Ann Cooper on September 5<sup>th</sup>, at which we will create a Communication Plan, set goals to keep the project moving forward, and make a plan to implement some Community Involvement Strategies. By starting a conversation between parents, students, and educators, this change will be more widely accepted and welcomed as a step that we can easily take as a school district for the health of our children and for the health of our planet.

My Action Plan is not yet complete, and has really just started. I created my Action Plan last summer knowing that it would be a multiple-year commitment and wouldn't be implemented immediately. As I have graduated from high school and am going to college out of state at Stanford University, my sister, Laura Hutchinson, who is a junior in the Net Zero Club, will become the local

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student liaison for the Meatless Mondays Committee, and will serve as the person of contact for Ann Cooper and the person that organizes the logistics of the committee while I continue to assist from afar.

Over the course of working on my Action Plan thus far, I have learned a lot about myself, and about my strengths in perseverance, ingenuity, and passion for this issue. Because I was able to pick the project back up again this summer so quickly after almost a year of little forward progress, I realized that I really am extremely passionate about this issue, and I hope to bring Meatless Mondays to Stanford someday. I have applied the leadership skills of listening and taking that leap of faith in this project – if I hadn't taken a chance and emailed Ann Cooper with my idea, my Action Plan would not be where it is now, and I continually practice good listening skills by being open to new ideas and being receptive to the needs of Net Zero members, Ann Cooper, my fellow students, and the community in shaping the direction of this project. I would advise this year's Leadership Institute students to get other people and groups involved in your Action Plan back home – it is much more fun and rewarding to work together as a group to make a big impact in your community – and to never give up.