

# L.A. youth teacher's guide

*Publishing Schedule*

**L.A. Youth will begin arriving Wed., March 17**

## Key to using the March-April 2010 issue:

ARTICLE and PAGE NUMBER	KEY TEACHING POINTS
<p><b>Is my home safe from mudslides?</b> p. 5 Every time it rains, Elis worries that her family's home will get damaged.</p>	<p>Does your family have a plan in case there is a disaster, like an earthquake or mudslide? As a teen, what can you do to help your family get prepared?</p>
<p><b>I can just be me</b> pp. 6-7 When Brett stopped being so into hardcore music, it was easier to make friends.</p>	<p>Have you ever felt pressured to act a certain way to fit in? Why is it important to be yourself?</p>
<p><b>I rescued my dog from a shelter</b> p. 9 Stanton was shocked when he found out how many animals are killed because of overcrowding.</p>	<p>Do you think it's OK to euthanize animals in shelters? What can teens do to help stop animals from being killed?</p>
<p><b>The census and race</b> pp. 10-11 Teens say labeling themselves by race doesn't capture who they are.</p>	<p>Do you think the census should ask about race? What's more important to you, race or culture?</p>
<p><b>Why is eating healthy so hard?</b> pp. 16-17 Junk food is all around, but Ernesto is trying to make better choices.</p>	<p>See lesson plan on page 2.</p>
<p><b>Mom, I missed you</b> p. 19 Living in a group home helped Tanya with her problems, but it was tough being away from her family.</p>	<p>What do you like most about your family? How do you deal with being separated from someone you care about?</p>
<p><b>You can tell me</b> pp. 20-21 When a girl's friend told her he was gay, she wanted to support him.</p>	<p>How would you react if one of your friends told you that they were gay? How can you support a friend who's going through a hard time?</p>
<p><b>My boring town isn't so bad</b> p. 22 The protest over building a new stadium made Stephany appreciate where she lives.</p>	<p>What are things you like about your neighborhood? What are things that you wish were different?</p>
<p><b>Thinking about the consequences of sex</b> p. 23 Her sister's abortion made Gabrielle believe that if teens get pregnant they should have the baby.</p>	<p>What has shaped your opinions about abortion? What can be done to help teens be more informed about sexual health?</p>
<p><b>We defy the stereotypes</b> pp. 24-25 People assume that teens from South Central L.A. are gangbangers and dropouts, but these Locke High students take their futures seriously.</p>	<p>What stereotypes have people made about you? How are you different from those assumptions?</p>

# Food influences are all around us

A lesson plan to go with “Why is eating healthy so hard?” from the March–April 2010 issue of L.A. Youth. In this article, Ernesto writes about the challenges he faces trying to eat better.

By Amanda Riddle, co-managing editor

## Grades: 7-12

**Subjects:** language arts, health, social studies, life skills

**Suggested Time Allowance:** 45 minutes-1 hour

## Resources/Materials:

- copies of the L.A. Youth article “Why is eating healthy so hard?” (one per student)
- pens and paper
- white board or blackboard

## Overview:

Students will examine what factors influence what they eat.

## Introduction:

In Los Angeles County, there are more than four times as many fast food restaurants and convenience stores as supermarkets and produce vendors, according to the California Center for Public Health Advocacy. The Center also found that people who live near an abundance of fast food and convenience stores have significantly higher rates of obesity and diabetes. We all know we’re supposed to watch what we eat, but where we live influences how easy that is. It’s even harder for teens who don’t have control over the food their parents buy or what’s offered at school. In a Healthy Kids survey, only half of ninth and 11th graders said they had had five or more fruits and vegetables in the past 24 hours. But two-thirds of respondents said they’d eaten french fries, potato chips or other fried potatoes in the past day.

## Warm-up activity:

Ask each student what they ate yesterday and have them write down their answers. Next to each item, ask them to

explain why they selected that food. Was it the only thing to eat in the house? What the school was serving or their parents cooked for dinner? They were busy or short on cash and had to grab fast food? Or just that was what they wanted?

Next, ask your students how they feel about their food choices? Do they wish they ate healthier? What makes it hard? Their answers may be both factors they can’t control, such as the food available in their community, school and at home, and what they can control, like what snacks they choose to eat and how much they eat.

## Activities:

Have your students read Ernesto’s story “Why is eating healthy so hard?” on page 16. After reading the story, as a discussion measuring their reading comprehension, ask students to answer the following questions about the story:

What reasons does Ernesto give for not eating healthy?

- He’s always eaten junk food.
- His mom brings home fast food or cooks the fattening meals his dad wants.
- He doesn’t know how to cook.
- There are a lot of fast food restaurants and convenience stores where he lives.
- The produce where he lives isn’t fresh.

What changes did Ernesto make to try to lose weight?

- He started exercising.
- He switched to eating the school’s vegetarian lunch option.
- He is trying to eat more fruit.
- He distracts himself with work, reading or video games so he won’t eat when he’s bored and not hungry.

As Ernesto made these changes, what prevented him from being as healthy as he wants?

- He doesn’t have control over the food in his home or neighborhood.
- He doesn’t know how to cook.

- His mom can’t take him to the gym anymore.
- He sometimes gives in.

What did he learn are ways to overcome those obstacles?

- Pick a healthier snack when he’s at a convenience store.
- Read food labels and avoid foods that have trans fats and MSG.
- Don’t give up.

## Discussion:

After reading the story, ask your students what they think of Ernesto’s efforts to eat healthier. What did they think about the things he couldn’t control? Could they relate to his frustrations? Did his observations about what prevented him from eating healthier make them think about what was influencing what they ate? Do they think it’s important to think critically about the reasons why they eat what they do? Do they expect their parents, schools and neighborhood markets to make it easier to eat right? They may not be able to change everything about their environment but being aware of the factors that influence what they eat can help them make better choices.

## Assignment:

Have students write an essay about how the factors that they can’t control make it hard to eat right. Then have them write about one thing they’d like changed. They may want a store in their neighborhood to offer fresher produce. Or their school to provide healthier meals at lunch or more time to eat. Or at home they wish there were healthier snacks.

## Extension activity:

They may not be able to change factors beyond their control but they can still try to make better choices. Challenge your students to follow some of Ernesto’s advice about eating healthier. They can try for a few days or even a week. Have them report back what they thought of the changes they made. Do they think they can stick with it?



## Would you like a speaker from L.A. Youth?

Editors Laura Lee and Mike Fricano speak about journalism, current events, working as a reporter, how to be a better writer and how students can get involved in L.A. Youth.

Call Laura or Mike at (323) 938-9194 or e-mail [llee@layouth.com](mailto:llee@layouth.com) or [mfricano@layouth.com](mailto:mfricano@layouth.com). PLEASE NOTE: You'll be asked to **pay \$5** to help offset the cost of gas.

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**Next Newcomer's Orientation: Saturday, April 17, 11 a.m.-noon** at L.A. Youth 5967 W. Third Street Suite 301, L.A. 90036 (between Fairfax and La Brea)

Call Amanda, Laura or Mike at (323) 938-9194.