

LA County Probation  
Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council

August 15, 2022

I say this with utmost sincerity: a granola bar can save lives.

I have been involved as a teaching artist with InsideOut Writers since 2016, and I currently teach two units at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall. Our program is a catalyst for positive change in the community, and our creative writing classes are the lifeblood of the IOW organization that boasts a thriving alumni program and decades of success stories in decreasing recidivism.

I understand that the juvenile justice system is in the midst of changes and, by its nature, is a dynamic, challenging enterprise. I write today with a simple request that increases the impact we're able to make with the youths. Please let us bring snacks to our classes.

Snacks are a simple, inexpensive incentive that doubles, triples or quadruples participation. If a bag of chips is what it takes to get a youth seated in front of a piece of paper, that's a win. I have no problem with a student overtly attending class simply to collect a snack at the end of the session because, countless times over the past six years, I've seen a youth sit down for a snack and, three classes later, develop into an insightful leader in the group who sees the world differently.

Especially as our program has been frequently affected by recent quarantines, snacks would be an excellent way to increase participation and build a rhythm with the youths.

For simplicity and security, I'd suggest a supply of factory-sealed snacks in the facility - provided by teachers and/or IOW - that teachers can access when we arrive for classes, similar to the set up we used at Central Juvenile Hall for many years. We could start with snacks in clear packaging if that helps appease additional concerns.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and prompt action.

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