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The problem of food insecurity is something I know about on our high school campus because I have received forty cent-reduced fair lunches, and, when I was younger, free lunches because my mother did not have a job. The child food insecurity rate in Monroe County IN is 18.9%. There are 25,390 people living in our town with some form of food insecurity, and being a college town, I don't doubt that our students are a large part of that population. 36% of students in our district get free or reduced lunch fairs, but that could be for a variety of reasons. Some schools have numbers as high as 59%, while others have 11%. My school had 23%.



If it is enough that there could be partial day's servings for another day, they will put it back in the back for that day, but if there are less than maybe 100, give or take, they throw it away. Some variety of our food goes to our Hoosier Hills Food Bank and teaching center where students learn about agriculture and food insecurity. Another portion goes to the community kitchen for homeless people to purchase cheap or free meals. The milk we drink that is not taken is sent back to Prairie Farms and gets sold again, a credit system to the school. In 2017 our school corporation donated 20,398 pounds of food to Hoosier Hills. That same year, we raised 11,619 pounds of food in our food drives. There is not a food pantry on campus because we are a high school. We have 3 vending machines and donate our food, but students cannot access the food they have given up.

There are student-led can drives and food drives that NHS- our National Honor Society run for volunteer hours, but as a high school, food is pretty off limits to questioning from students in general. The elementary through high school system is good about food. Making sure everyone has it, making sure they are no different from anyone else, and offering assistance to those who are borderline not able to access food on a regular basis. The real problem is probably sitting downtown on IU's campus. You cannot participate in an NHS event if you are not a member, so we could alternate the weeks that we run food drives and can drive around school. We could get a group together to put them on and help the NHS anyway we can.

Something not mentioned in the prompt today that is majorly important to this topic is required purchases. If anyone wants to buy lunch, they have to get a component of each food group, but while telling elementary students to eat all the veggies on their plate

might have worked, it does not with highschoolers. Requiring that a student purchases the full meal means that kids choose not to eat-which isn't healthy- or they buy the items and throw away what they don't want, piling up the food waste in our cafeteria that is not kept or composted at all. An elementary school in our district composts all cafeteria waste, and I got to take a look into the days scraps one day. It was mostly peppers. Three slices in little non-recyclable plastic sleeves. With the requirement of a health standard that is beginning to get out of date and not accounting for the free will to send food straight to the landfill, this does not seem like a viable option to continue the way we are without reducing our food waste. It will only pile hire.

I do not know if the school board decides those things or if they are state or even federal policy, but I would love to meet with the school board and discuss our waste patterns in every sector.

Sources:

<https://www.hhfoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Annual-Report-17.pdf>

<https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2016/child/indiana/county/monroe>

<https://projects.propublica.org/miseducation/school/180063000120>



DID YOU KNOW?

Currently MCCSC participates in meal share programs with **Hoosier Hills Food Bank, Community Kitchen, and Wheeler Mission**. Usable leftovers that we can't use are provided to these community organizations:



Hoosier Hills provides containers and picks up regularly from our schools. We have participated in the Hoosier Hills Meal Share Program since 2010.

Leftovers that don't freeze well but can reheat for use within 1 day are taken to **Community Kitchen** and **Wheeler Mission** by Food Service Staff.

Milk is picked up by Prairie Farms and redistributed to meal share with programs or farmers (if outdated).

This happens on the last day prior to our breaks (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break and Summer).

Our account is credited for all milk they take back.

Identified students in our elementary schools and at Tri-North Middle School, receive food for the weekend through the **Community Kitchen Backpack Buddies Program**.

