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Bloomington High School South

The lowest scoring grade from my report card was an F, for the Zero Waste, or Waste in general, category. We have a contract with Rumpke Trash and Recycling, (<https://www.rumpke.com/>) who accepts a variety of recyclable items, but our school only allows students to recycle paper and plastic bottles. While there might be additions to this, students are not aware of them. One student I talked to, Natalie Hogan, said “The signs up around school don’t accurately tell you what is recyclable, and a lot of times I just don’t know, so I throw it away.”. Our AP Environmental Science teacher told me of her experience in trying to promote recycling around the school. She said a few years ago, her students had collaborated with the administration to add bins that separated recyclable materials, made laminated signs that hung above the recycling bins in the cafeteria, and made announcements on the intercom about the recycling initiative for South High School. She mentioned that “Some time in the last school year, the bins disappeared, the signs went missing, and the scheduled readings on the announcements weren’t added”. She said when she contacted MCCSC’s head of Waste Management, he responded with ignorance, saying he “had no clue” where those items went, even though all bins are supplied and disposed of through his department. There is not a tab visible on the MCCSC website (<https://www.mccsc.edu/bloomingtonhss>) or our school website (<https://www.mccsc.edu/bloomingtonhss>) where his position is labeled, his name mentioned, or the systems described for our waste management. For how the administration has responded to our simple questions-saying we are moving in the right direction or that we are already doing the best that we can with what is available- I would expect that this information would be on the internet. I emailed a school board member, Ms. Fuentes-Rohwer, who I know is connected to this issue in our city and our schools to ask if there was a reason this was happening, and if there could be a discussion with South students on this topic.

**Other sources used for challenge:**

<https://www.in.gov/icsb/files/the-green-schoolapp-full.pdf>

## Questions on our Waste Services at Bloomington High School South and our School System



**Jose Sparky** <jgymnastsparky@gmail.com>

8:11 PM (0 minutes ago)



to cfr ▾

Hi Ms. Fuentes-Rohwer,

My name is Josie Sparks (daughter of Randy Sparks at the Law School) and I am a student at Bloomington High School South. I know you are an advocate for green energy and sustainability in our community, and I would appreciate if you would take the time to consider this message. In our Environmental Science class, we are learning about the impact of our actions on the environment, and after seeing the way we manage our waste inside the school building, I was wondering about our waste management services.

In 2014, there was a proposition for a Green School, a charter school based on ideas around sustainability and eco-consciousness, that never got pursued or put into action. We live in Bloomington, Indiana, a hub of environmental focus and awareness (<https://www.in.gov/icsb/files/the-green-schoolapp-full.pdf>). But when it comes to our waste at South, I don't see the correlation. Starting in the cafeteria, where the problem is most obvious, we have an immense amount of food waste. Although requiring elementary students to eat their required vegetables may have worked, it does not seem to in the high school setting. Requiring healthy lunches, while a good initiative, adds to our food waste. Students simply throw the food away. Instead of changing our entire lunch system, which does not seem feasible or have a probable solution, is it possible that we could invest in composting? There are local services like Green Camino Curbside Composting that offer curbside pickup of food waste and composting (<https://greencaminocompost.com/about-us/>), so the school would not be responsible after collection. If this could be a feasible option, our food waste would rapidly decrease.

From what I understand, we have a contract with Rumpke--a company that accepts a variety of recyclable materials such as glass, cardboard, aluminium, and cans such as aerosol cans--but we are only allowed to recycle paper and plastic bottles (<https://www.rumpke.com/for-your-home/recycling/acceptable-items>).

In speaking to Mrs. Figolah, our teacher, she said she had asked about providing recycling containers at games where we sell plastic bottles. The response from the South administration was that the environmental club, Sage, could take on that responsibility, with students carrying the bins out and back in before and after games. Although students are willing to do this--even if they do not attend games normally--in my opinion this is something that should be the school's responsibility to provide to students.

I understand there could be some blockers to providing such services, and I am interested in what those might be and other alternatives we could put into place to reduce the waste we produce. Whether it is about budgeting money, time, or staff, I realize that there may be reasons that the school cannot deliver what we are asking of them. Although the school board has a lot on their plate, the students that care about our footprint on the environment would greatly appreciate a response and consideration of further action on this topic.

Thank you for your time,  
Josie Sparks