

Here at my high school, we don't generate a lot of food waste. But for what we do produce, it is raw and unadulterated food waste. You see, our school doesn't have a cafeteria, or even a kitchen. We have one lunch lady from our nearest middle school bring us cold lunches every day. She's done a very good tally over the years, but every day there's about 5 meals that go uneaten. Due to the nature of our setup, she has to throw them away.

Now, when I reached out to speak to food insecure students, this became an ethical issue very quickly. As high school students, sharing our food situation can out an entire family's financial problems, which is something that many students would want to avoid. In addition, our state free lunch program does a great job at masking poverty and food insecurity. Even after asking my teacher for advice, she and I concluded that outing students is not appropriate, and that I should find an anonymous or self-select way to do it. I literally knew no one who was food insecure. I reached out onto our facebook page and got one response from a friend who is food insecure (I never knew). They said:

*"I can't always afford food, or I don't have access to affordable good food. When I don't eat breakfast or lunch I can't stay focus and I get really tired, so I don't remember everything, or I can't pay attention in class. And all the food waste at sami is mostly due to students not eating it because it doesn't taste good or they don't like it. They need to make healthy and delicious affordable food, with easy access."*

I find this very interesting because the school is trying to get food trucks on campus, but this will do nothing for my friend who is food insecure because they may not have the money for a more palatable hot lunch.

In recognition of the challenge, I put out a post on reddit with my question. Unlike my friend, I got two very unhelpful responses.

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Sometimes I think my watermelons are judging me

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This is very perturbing to me because this gives me an idea that food insecurity is not commonly talked about. And that's not okay! As a society, we need to talk about what people don't have and how we can redistribute other's excess to them.

To help implement this and take advantage of our school's unique position, I reached out to our lunch lady and proposed setting up a "no thank you" bin where students can put less desirable portions of

their lunch in the bin and hungry students can grab it at no cost. She thought it was a good idea, and would like to speak with her supervisor about it.

I then talked to our zoo liaison – a staff member at our school who is also a zoo staff member (our school has classes in and near our local zoo). The zoo has an on-site composting facility, and I proposed letting our school add in food waste as well. She was emphatic about the idea at first, but funnily enough, remembered that another student is already re-initiating our school compost program!

This is very encouraging to hear that other students are taking steps towards sustainability. I hope that we can soon close the gap on hunger in our school.



Leftover lunches that will be tossed right after lunch. They can't be offered up to needy students as a part of district policy.



Two trash bins overflowing with food waste and recyclables, all destined for the landfill. There are near-complete lunches in those bins!

 **Sienna Lippert**  
Just now

Did you know that the unsold lunches at SAMI are thrown away?  
Before you throw away your leftover food, make sure you ask the people around you if they would like it. Odds are, one of them will eat it and we can start to move toward a more equitable community here at SAMI.

Turning Green #savethefood #PGC2018



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I posted this to our School facebook page.