

TOPIC

Amount Of Time Had For Lunch

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

The issue with our community is there is not enough time for lunch. Lunch lines take up time had for lunch as long as no transition period between lunch periods, and having to use Minga to get into the cafeteria to have lunch.

RESULT

I want to extend the time for lunch to a minimum of 45 so that students can have enough time to get lunch and safely eat at a healthy rate

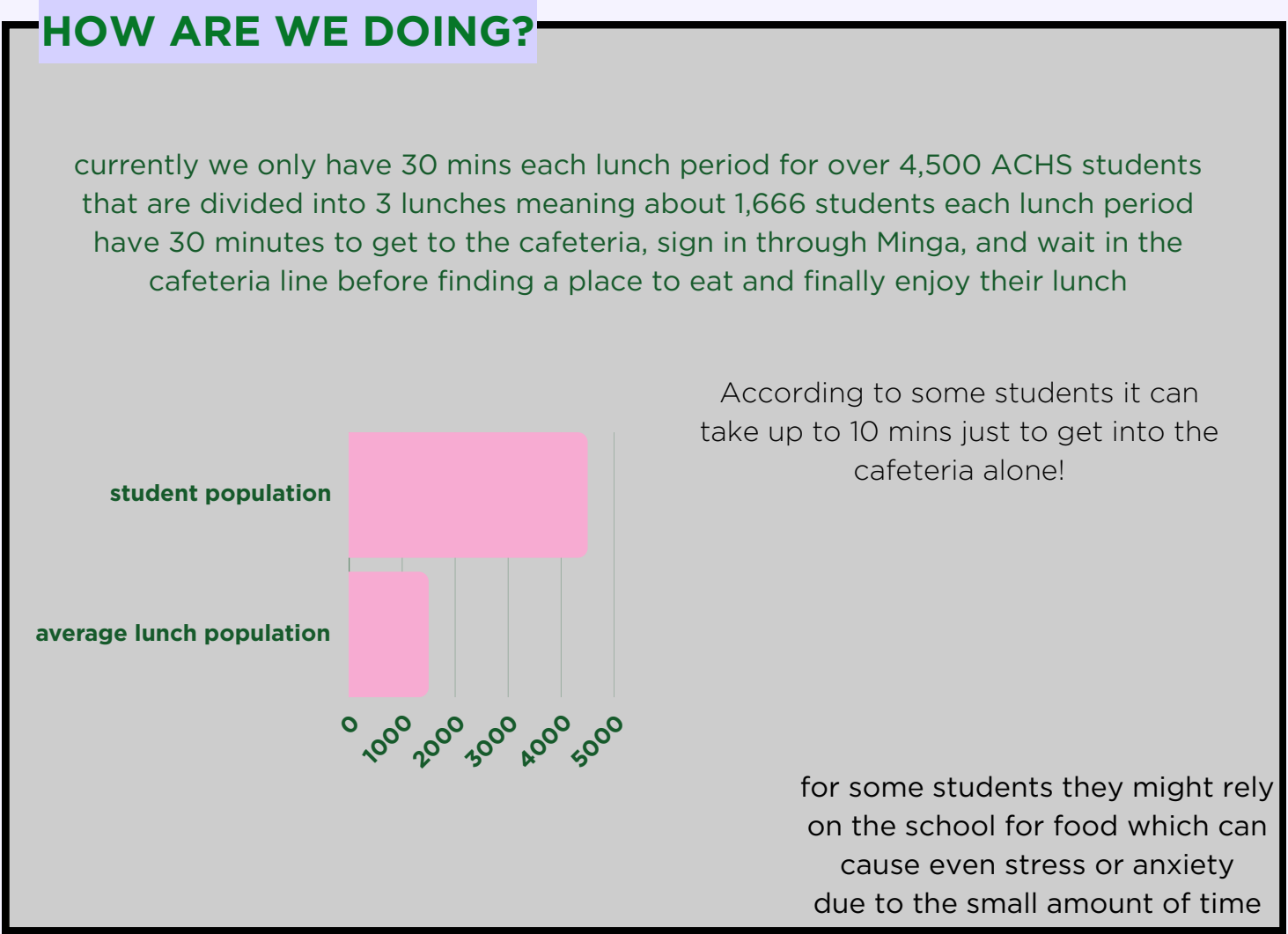


SIGNIFICANCE

With more time added to lunch students can have more time to get to the cafeteria, get their lunch, eat their food and get the help they might need as most students have a full school schedule and might not be able to have after school as they might not be able to for personal reasons or the teacher they need isn't available

CYCP GOAL AND STRATEGIC AREA

This lunch time project helps with the "Healthy Youth" goal in our Children and Youth Master Plan. It fits in the "Physical Health and Nutrition" strategic area because we're trying to make sure all students have enough time to eat healthy food during school. When kids don't have time to eat well, they can't focus on learning and might choose unhealthy snacks instead of good meals. Our project will help students be healthier and do better in school.



IMPLEMENTATION

As a senior at Alexandria City High School, I've experienced insufficient lunch periods for four years. The current 30-minute lunch allows only 15 minutes of actual eating time after navigating hallways and waiting in lines.

This particularly impacts seniors who:

Have complex schedules with AP courses in different building areas

Need time for college application work

Mentor underclassmen or meet with teachers

Lead clubs that often meet during lunch

Negative consequences observed:

Decreased academic performance in afternoon classes

Increased stress levels

Poor nutrition choices favoring quick, processed foods

Limited social development time

Inequitable impact on students buying school lunch

Proposed solution: Extend lunch from 30 to 45 minutes by:

Reducing each class period by 2 minutes

Starting school 15 minutes earlier

Creating a rotating extended lunch schedule

Additional recommendation:

Implement staggered lunch where seniors/juniors eat at slightly different times than freshmen/sophomores.

PARTNERSHIPS

ACPS Administration - Principal, School Board, Superintendent

ACHS Student Government Association - Student surveys and representation

ACHS Faculty Senate - Teachers who understand academic impacts

ACHS Wellness Committee - School nurse, health educators, counselors

Parent Teacher Student Association - Parent advocates and community support
Include their logos too!



PERFORMANCE EFFORT

Research findings:

- Time studies show students spend 8-12 minutes in lunch lines
- 72% of 150 surveyed students feel rushed during lunch
- 65% skip parts of meals at least weekly due to time constraints
- Food waste audit shows 35% of food thrown away
- 68% of teachers notice decreased afternoon focus in students
- National research indicates students need minimum 20 minutes of seated eating time

PERFORMANCE EFFECT

Positive effects of adequate lunch time:

Improved academic performance, especially for seniors in AP/IB courses

Decreased stress during college application season

Better nutrition and fewer absences

Enhanced club meeting opportunities

Increased school satisfaction

Negative effects of current short periods:

- Poor eating habits spread to underclassmen
- Limited mentorship time
- Academic work displaces eating time
- Contradicts school wellness

Facilitating factors:

- Administration's commitment to wellness
- District nutrition audit recommendations
- Strong student government advocacy
- Parent awareness of nutrition-academic connection
- Research-based recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Extend lunch period to 45 minutes
- Implement class-based staggered schedule for upperclassmen and underclassmen
- Create rotating priority access by grade level
- Implement digital pre-order system to reduce wait times
- Designate senior meeting spaces for college work and leadership activities
- Authorize off-campus lunch for seniors in good standing
- Create outdoor eating areas to reduce congestion
- Establish student-led evaluation committee to assess changes

Student Support for Lunch Time Recommendations



ONLINE

- **School Nutrition Association's "Time at the Table" Initiative** - [School Nutrition Association's "Time at the Table" Initiative](#) - [School Nutrition Association's "Time at the Table" Initiative](#) - [School Nutrition Association's Time to Eat Campaign](#) - [Scientific evidence on lunch time and academic performance](#) Scientific evidence showing how adequate lunch time improves academic performance and reduces food waste.
- **Centers for Disease Control - School Nutrition Environment** - [Scientific evidence showing how adequate lunch time improves academic performance and reduces food waste](#). [American College Health Association - Information on transitioning to college nutrition practices](#) Scientific evidence showing how adequate lunch time improves academic performance and reduces food waste.

Research and guidelines on how proper meal scheduling impacts student health and learning outcomes.

IN PERSON

- **ACHS Cafeteria Staff** - Our cafeteria workers can share firsthand observations about lunch rush challenges and student eating habits.
- **College Preparation Event** - Recent ACHS graduates could discuss how high school lunch schedules affected their college eating habits.

CITATIONS

Citations in APA format

- Cohen, J. F., Jahn, J. L., Richardson, S., Cluggish, S. A., Parker, E., & Rimm, E. B. (2016). Amount of time to eat lunch is associated with children's selection and consumption of school meal entrée, fruits, vegetables, and milk. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 116(1), 123-128.
- Gosliner, W. (2022). School-level factors associated with increased fruit and vegetable consumption among students in California middle and high schools. *Journal of School Health*, 84(9), 559-568.
- National Education Association. (2022). Teacher survey on school meal times. *NEA Research*, 14(2), 45-62.
- School Nutrition Association. (2023). Impact of lunch period length on high school student performance. *School Nutrition Research Review*, 12(3), 15-28.