

Food for Thought

Dear Friends of McHenry High School District 156:

In an effort to help our students reach their full learning potential, McHenry High School District 156 realized that we had to come face to face with the struggles our students encounter each day before they even step inside our schools. One of the most prevalent issues some experience is the lack of enough quality food in their diets to help sustain their ability to learn. In 2014, according to Feeding America.org, “Although related, food insecurity and poverty are not the same. Poverty in the United States is only one of many factors associated with food insecurity. In fact, higher unemployment, lower household assets, and certain demographic characteristics also lead to a lack of access to adequate, nutritious food.” Some important statistics that will help clarify the problems: **Poverty Statistics in the United States (In 2014):**

- 46.7 million people (14.8 percent) were in poverty.
- 15.5 million (21.1 percent) children under the age of 18 were in poverty.

Very Low Food Insecurity and Food Insecurity in the US (In 2014):

- 48.1 million Americans lived in food insecure households, including 32.8 million adults and 15.3 million children.
- 14 percent of households (17.4 million households) were food insecure.
- 6 percent of households (6.9 million households) experienced very low food security.
- Households with children reported food insecurity at a significantly higher rate than those without children, 19 percent compared to 12 percent.
- Households that had higher rates of food insecurity than the national average included households with children (19%), especially households with children headed by single women (35%) or single men (22%).

In McHenry High School District 156, 1 in 3.6 students qualify for a free lunch which requires the family to be at or below the poverty line (a family of four: approximately \$24,000). McHenry High School District 156 is instituting a program (Food for Thought) to help with those students that are in need. We believe that by offering a food pantry at the school, we will help our students make the most of their education.

Our Food for Thought Program will provide a weekend supply of nutritious food for children when school lunch and breakfast is unavailable on a weekend or school holiday. We hope to provide a food bag that contains 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners, 2 snacks. All food is nonperishable and provided to children free of charge. It is our hope these resources will support the health, behavior, and achievement of every student that participates.

We are going to begin our program by reaching out to students whose families have been identified as those in need. Information to sign up for the program will be sent home with kids in the fall, and parents and guardians will have the opportunity to opt in or opt out. And the program is run completely by wonderful volunteers who help pack the food bags.

We are reaching out to you in hopes that you will see the benefit of supporting those most in need in your community. McHenry has always been a unified town; one that “takes care of their own.” It does take a village to raise a child and we are hoping that you will help by donating to this program. The donations are really more like a sponsorship (attached is an explanation and pledge sheet). This will help us to stock our shelves to reach as many students as possible. Please take the time to read through the attached information and help us help our students. If you have any questions, please contact Ashley Diedrich at diedrichashley@dist156.org or Aubrey Francis at francisaubrey@dist156.org.

With thanks for your consideration,
Food for Thought Committee

Mission Statement: The mission of Food for Thought is to provide hope and dignity to children by discreetly supplying additional food to students in need. There are scientific studies that show children who eat regularly have higher academic achievement. This aids in the scholastic development of our students, as well as aiding our teachers in accomplishing their goals. We seek to provide help to students in need by coming together as a community.

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