**Nutrition & Trauma**

**Reflections from our students**

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**Students were asked what has been challenging about food in school and offered the following reflections:**

* “It is noticeable that I receive free lunch.”
* “Adults speak to us about things we have no control over.” (i.e. filling out forms for free & reduced lunch or payment for food)
* The cafeteria is overwhelming. “I am already nervous about the high school cafeteria. Too many people crammed in one place. I will probably just not eat.”
* Every school I have gone to has a completely different system in the cafeteria.
* Long lines are overwhelming.
* There is limited time for lunch. “I am never sure I will have time or how much time is left.” (Children who grow up with chronic exposure to toxic stress often have a less developed internal sense of time or can easily become too overwhelmed to track time.)
* The process is confusing. (Children may have minimal lived experience eating out & ordering food).
* The breakfast and lunch meals are all or nothing. “You have to take the whole lunch or pay more.  There is no way to take just what food I will eat. It is really hard for me to waste food.”
* “People comment on my portion sizes in front of other students. That is so embarrassing.”
* It is hard to make choices & decisions in a line.
* The social aspect of where to sit is overwhelming. “If you have a friend group, you have a spot. No friend group means no spot.”
* Snacks at school are usually from home. “No snacks at home = no snacks at school. I just pretended I didn’t want one.”
* Sensory overload- smell, noise, temperature, crowd (some schools have kids in winter clothing while eating to make transitions faster).

**“How did you solve these problems?”**

* “The only way I can solve the problems is to not eat. That is all I can control.”
* “I would rather avoid the whole situation, including eating.”