

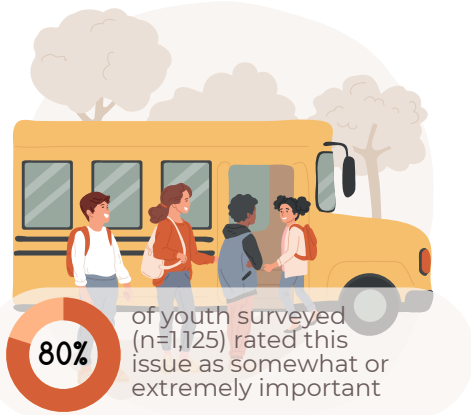
Youth Perspectives on:

School Conditions that Support Student Wellbeing



Overview

This subtheme, which emerged more than 455 times, reflects how students experience the physical conditions of their schools and the operational systems that structure the school day, including transportation, lunch services, scheduling, maintenance, and campus logistics. While some students appreciate improvements like newer buildings, many describe environments that feel overstimulating, inconvenient, or in need of attention.



WHY IT MATTERS

Facilities and operations play a significant role in shaping how students feel and function at school. Clean spaces, accessible bathrooms, and nutritious meals with enough time to eat them create the foundation for learning. When students are uncomfortable, rushed, or navigating logistical barriers, their ability to focus, connect, and succeed is compromised.

WHAT THE DATA SAY

Although students are allotted **30 minutes** for lunch, a 2024 *Theogony* article reported that cafeteria procedures, including scanning into the cafeteria with a Minga student ID, waiting in line for food, and the time it takes to walk to and from class, leave students with only **19 minutes** to actually eat.

WHAT YOUTH WANT

20+ mentions

Maintenance & Custodial Services

"Bathrooms are always open and clean."

"Recycling at school."

A school environment that is consistently clean, safe, and well-maintained, where bathrooms are sanitary, stocked, and accessible and classrooms and common areas are free of trash and pests.

50+ mentions

Physical Conditions & Infrastructure

"Less crowded hallways."

"Free and accessible student parking."

"Having a separate room for prayer (Muslims)."

A school environment that is spacious, clean, and welcoming, featuring inclusive spaces for all students, and enough affordable parking for students who drive.

20+ mentions

School Bus Transit & Intercampus Transportation

"One connected campus - transportation issues solved."

Reliable transportation where drivers are valued, campuses are connected safely and efficiently, and students don't lose learning time to long, late, or unnecessary commutes.

130+ mentions

School Lunch Services

"Longer lunches"

High-quality, nutritious, and culturally inclusive meals with adequate time to eat.

WHAT YOUTH EXPERIENCE

45+ mentions

Maintenance & Custodial Services

"Bathrooms are disgusting."

Concerns about cleanliness and upkeep, especially in restrooms. Missing supplies, closed bathrooms, and general maintenance issues were cited as everyday frustrations.

40+ mentions

Physical Conditions & Infrastructure

"It's super overwhelming and overstimulating. The hallways are so packed in."

Crowded hallways, limited space, uncomfortable furnishings, and inconsistent temperature control. While some praise newer buildings, many say current conditions can feel overwhelming and overstimulating.

45+ mentions

School Bus Transit & Intercampus Transportation

"The campus switching is awful and takes so long."

"I am always late because of school buses"

The two-campus high school model creates logistical challenges for students. The back-and-forth between campuses can be disruptive, especially for students with disabilities. Late, limited, or crowded buses contribute to missed instructional time and reduced opportunities for field trips.

95+ mentions

School Lunch Services

"Lack of lunch and learn = lack of equity"

Food quality, variety, and timing could be improved. Short lunch periods leave little time to eat, connect with teachers, or recharge.



Barriers to Improvement

Students identified several obstacles that might prevent progress on improving school facilities and operations

Administrative and Communication Issues

- A recurring theme was that school administrators are perceived as unresponsive or dismissive of student concerns.

Funding and Resource Constraints

- Low funding, high costs for maintaining large facilities, and regulatory issues (for example, food regulations that complicate menu changes) were seen as major barriers.

Infrastructure Limitations

- The current building layouts, insufficient staffing, and the design and access to facilities (e.g., a single universal staircase and locked bathrooms) were cited as impediments.

Behavioral Factors

- Some responses pointed to students' own behaviors (e.g., contributing to messy bathrooms) as a complicating factor.





Recommended Strategies from ACHS Students to Improve School Conditions

Better Transportation and Scheduling

- Keep students' classes on one campus whenever possible to cut down on stress and time traveling.
- Add more buses and routes to make intercampus travel faster and safer.
- If walking between campuses ever becomes an option again, use crossing guards and clear routes to keep students safe.
- Adjust the school schedule, for example, move Titan Time to the lunch block to make lunch periods longer, less crowded, and more relaxed.
- Use staggered lunch waves and shorter passing periods to give everyone enough time to eat and recharge.

Healthier, More Inclusive Meals

- Provide certified halal and gluten-free meals every day as regular options.
- Add clear allergy and ingredient labels for all foods.
- Make meal requests easy; no doctor's note needed for religious or dietary accommodations.
- Train cafeteria staff on food safety, allergies, and cultural sensitivity.
- Create a Student Menu Advisory Group so students can share feedback, test new meals, and help improve options.

Safer, Cleaner, and Well-Maintained Schools

- Keep bathrooms open and unlocked throughout the school day.
- Make sure restrooms are cleaned regularly and stocked with soap, paper, and feminine hygiene products.
- Improve plumbing, lighting, and ventilation, especially in older buildings.
- Add safety upgrades where needed, like better lighting, new staircases, or secure glass to make schools feel protected without feeling restrictive.
- Address overcrowding by improving building layouts and traffic flow.

Clear Communication and Student Voice

- Create open lines of communication between students, teachers, and administrators to quickly address concerns about schedules, lunch, or facilities.
- Regularly gather student input through surveys or meetings and follow up with visible changes.
- Give students real ways to participate in decisions, for example, through advisory groups or school improvement committees.

Funding and Policy Improvements

- Advocate for more funding to maintain and improve school buildings, facilities, and transportation systems.
- Review policies that make school life harder, like unnecessary restrictions on movement or scheduling that limits time for meals or transitions.
- Make decisions based on student experiences and input.