



Freshmen Ace Edwards, Carter Uttley, Paul Worsley and sophomore James Richey eat during first lunch. First lunch has 337 students assigned. "It's kind of hard to fit everyone in a nice, compact short lunch when we have so many people in school," Richey said. "There's not really a way to solve it." PHOTO BY MADDY EMERSON

A TALE OF THREE LUNCHES

Overcrowding causes concerns, admin enacts solutions

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Entering the cafeteria, sophomore Cassie Hurt-McLarty easily finds a seat next to her friends.
Hurt-McLarty is one of 128 students assigned to the second lunch period.
"Second lunch is really empty," Hurt-McLarty said. "There are less people, so I am able to eat in peace and comfortably communicate with my friends."
Joining his classmates in the lunch line, freshman Tayte Kelsey hopes to pick up his food as soon as possible so he can find a seat next to his friends.
Kelsey is one of 356 students assigned to third lunch period, while 337 students are assigned to first lunch period.
"I have to wait in line for around 10 to 15 minutes," Kelsey said. "That's too long. A lot of kids aren't getting the food they need in the time they have available. If I'm lucky and my class is nearby, I have 20 minutes to eat, but some kids have less than 10 because of how long they have to wait in line."
With a large majority of students assigned to first and third lunch and a minimal number of students assigned

to second lunch, overcrowding has been a concern.
"Seating is certainly an issue," assistant principal Rhonda White said. "There are long lunch lines, which are a nuisance and inconvenience to students."
An increasing population is one factor contributing to overcrowding. "Enrollment has grown," White said. "We've significantly increased [in population over] just the last three or four years."
According to White, preserving core academic time is a priority.
"Uninterrupted class time is crucial to making sure that teachers are able to have their best instruction and students are able to have their best learning," White said. "That's what has caused us to move to a heavy attendance in first and third lunch."
According to food service manager Terri Feagan, there is inconsistency when it comes to the number of

students waiting in line to obtain their food.
"I wish we could equal out the lines so there wouldn't be such a big difference like there is now," Feagan said. "If some of those kids from first or third lunch get into second, we would be pretty good for a while, unless we keep getting more students."
In some cases, students in first and third lunch do not get to sit in their preferred seating location.
"Overcrowding in the cafeteria requires our students to be able to move from where they might have been used to sitting," White said. "We have enough seats, it's just crowded."
For junior Skylur VonWinklepleck, sitting is replaced with standing.
"It's really difficult for me to sit at a seat next to my friends," VonWinklepleck said. "Because it's so crowded, I usually don't even sit at a table. Instead, I stand [next to] the edge of the table where my friends sit."
Although the cafeteria is able to

serve a large number of students, there are still issues concerning the current available space.
"Making sure we have enough seating so kids can sit together and spread out is an issue," White said. "[Currently], this cafeteria and kitchen layout wasn't designed to accommodate the number of students that we have right now with the scheduling we are trying to follow."
Oftentimes, school outings contribute to more overcrowding in first and third lunch.
"A lot of times, teachers will send their kids down to eat on a certain line due to a field trip," Feagan said. "I would like for them to tell me, 'We're going to send a certain amount of kids down to eat.' If they have a few, that's fine, but if they have 50 or 60 kids that they're going to send down on a certain line, I would like for them to tell me because we try to cook everything in the morning."
Additionally, student activities can cause different lunch populations to fluctuate due to early release times or schedule changes.
As a result of this, students specifically in third lunch often miss

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WHITE ACCEPTS NEW POSITION

Assistant principal will take on new role at elementary school

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After working at the high school for 20 years, assistant principal Rhonda White is moving to Lakeside Elementary.
"It is a bittersweet change because having been at the high school for so long," White said. "It has felt like home."
For four years, White was a special education teacher at the high school. She then became a counselor for 12 years, and she has been an assistant principal for the past four years.
Now, she plans on fulfilling her dreams of becoming a principal.
"I enjoy having a leadership role to help facilitate change, further improve our schools and make sure we are constantly [getting] better at what we are doing," White said. "I enjoy the challenge to make sure we are always improving. Realizing I enjoyed leadership responsibility has caused me to look at those responsibilities as a principal."
She will be able to transfer several skills from the other jobs to her new position.
"Having good communication skills, and being able to build trust and positive relationships are some things I have been strong at, especially through school counseling and as an assistant principal," White said. "Those characteristics will help me be a good principal at Lakeside."
Along with these skills, her modesty is also admired.

"What amazes me most about Mrs. White is how little attention she wants for everything she does," freshman advocate Kristin Thomas said. "When interviews need to be given or photos need to be taken, if possible she will find faculty, staff or students to represent PHS, that's just how unselfish she is."
Principal Jon Bishop believes White is leaving quite a legacy behind.
"You cannot replace Rhonda White," Bishop said. "She is leaving an awful lot of knowledge here. It will be difficult to fill her shoes."
White has written several grants and created programs to improve the school. Some of these programs include the advocates program, Army S.T.A.R. and Link Crew. Besides these clubs, White has also impacted the school through her attitude.
"Mrs. White leads by example through her morals and ethics," Thomas said. "I don't know how many times I've seen her pushing a mop or picking up trash. Mrs. White has a way of making every person at Pittsburg High School feel valued."
Although White will be missed at the high school, Bishop agrees with her decision.
"She absolutely deserves to be a leader in this district," Bishop said. "She and I have talked about this possibility for the last two years. I knew she was ready. There is no way in the world she could not [apply] for this job."
Bishop looks forward to seeing White grow as an administrator.



Assistant principal Rhonda White will be the new principal at Lakeside Elementary. White has been in her current position at PHS for four years. PHOTO BY MADDY EMERSON

"I wish her the best of luck," Bishop said. "We are colleagues, we are still going to be able to talk to each other. Mrs. White will come out here and talk with me, I will go out there and talk with her. We have a very special professional relationship. She has been very good for me growing as an administrator and as a leader. She will make Pittsburg schools better."