



## Campaign Key Points

### ***What is the goal of the campaign?***

Universal free and healthy school lunch for all NYC public school students. It is the most effective way to encourage greater participation by eliminating the poverty stigma associated with the program.

### ***Who makes up the coalition?***

A broad range of over 170 organizations and elected leaders have joined the campaign.

### ***Why do we want universal free school meals for all NYC public school students?***

Participation in the school lunch program is low—but not for a lack of need.

- 68% NYC public school students are eligible for free school lunch, which means that their annual family income is less than \$25,000 for family of three.
- 75% are eligible for free or reduced school lunch, which means that their annual family income is less than \$36,000 for family of three.
- Many students whose family incomes are above the \$36,000 per year cut off for free or reduced priced lunch are struggling to meet basic needs.

Changing the current system – which links school food with family income – gets rid of the income stigma that greatly impacts participation, especially as children get older:

- Students eating school lunch: 81% in elementary, 61% in middle school, and 38% in high school.
- **250,000 of the 780,000 students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals do not participate.**

### **Universal School Meals Works**

- NYC schools that provide free school lunch to all students through a federal incentive program called “Provision 2” had significant increases in the number of students eating, especially in middle and high schools. This proves true in other places that have universal free school lunch.
- **Over time, an additional 120,000 children will eat school lunch each day.**

### ***How can this be done?***

**First step:** The Department of Education is implementing universal free school lunch in middle schools in the 2014-15 school year as part of the city’s focus on improving the middle school educational environment.

**Next steps:** Using lessons learned from the middle school experience, the city can expand universal lunch to the rest of the schools by implementing federal incentive programs that reduce paperwork and maximize federal reimbursements (Provision 2 & the Community Eligibility Provision).

**Food Appeal:** Menu flexibility should be reinstated with student input in each school to encourage greater participation.

### **Cost & Revenue Generation**

School lunch costs are primarily paid for by the federal and state governments. A 20% increase in participation (or 120,000 extra meals per day) would bring an additional \$59 million in federal and state funds into NYC. The city covers the difference between the federal and state reimbursement and the cost of providing the meal. A 20% increase in participation would require an additional investment of \$20 million in NYC funds, or \$20/student per year.

This \$20 million represents .0001% of the \$26 billion NYC Department of Education budget. This is a small investment with a big return.

### **Universal free school lunch is WIN-WIN-WIN! It benefits students and families, schools, and the local economy.**

- Students will be better nourished and ready to learn.
- Families are better able to make ends meet.
- A 20% increase in participation will equal the creation of 1,000 SchoolFood jobs and increased local economic activity.
- Schools can direct time and resources toward educational activities that are now used for the collection of school food application forms and the daily identification of students.

