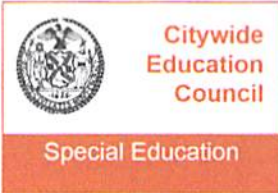


# Citywide Council on Special Education



January 21, 2016

SHERYL DAVIS  
Co-President

Hon. Bill de Blasio  
Office of the Mayor - City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

PAMELA STEWART  
Co-President

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

LESLIE CARABALLO  
Vice President

As members of the Citywide Council on Special Education and as representatives of thousands of families who have students with I.E.Ps throughout New York City, we are calling on you to keep your promise to bring universal free lunch to New York City public school students. In your campaign policy book, *One New York, Rising Together*, you promised to:

AMALIA ALVAREZ  
Recording Secretary

### Support Universal Free Meals in Schools

*"Bill de Blasio will make free school lunch available to all public school children at most city schools by taking advantage of the new Community Eligibility Option (CEO) for low-income school districts. This program would take advantage of the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which the DOE has failed to do. This allows schools to replace the current inefficient, application-based system for school lunches with a paperless data-driven system that allows students to eat free of charge and free of stigma."*

LISA BENNETT-  
WELLS  
Treasurer

### MEMBERS

Denise Garcia

We ask that you make good on the promises and expand universal free school lunch to all New York City public school students in your Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget. We urge you to address hunger in our schools by ensuring that children have equal and universal access to healthy school meals, regardless of family income or immigration status.

Ellen McHugh

Sandy Noel

Michelle Noris

Gina Panico-Devito

Marilyn Vasquez

Students must be well nourished to learn. Hundreds of thousands of income-eligible students in New York City public schools do not participate in the school lunch program due to the poverty stigma associated with traditional, fee-based school lunch. Many of these students—as well as others whose parents are not income eligible for free lunch yet cannot afford to pay school lunch fees—struggle through lessons on an empty stomach. In addition, despite urgent need, many immigrant parents are reluctant to fill out the school lunch forms for fear of government reprisal and the pursuit of lunch fees from parents who cannot afford it both put principals in the uncomfortable role of bill collector and indirectly undermines your efforts to increase parent engagement. Offering universal free and healthy school meals without identifying students by

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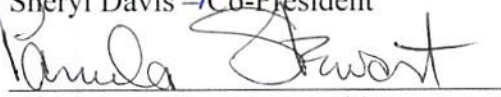
income is fundamental to eliminating stigma, increasing participation and addressing inequities in New York City public schools.

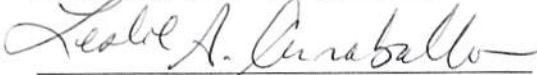
We applaud you, Chancellor Fariña, the City Council, and the Public Advocate for instituting universal free lunch in stand-alone middle schools. However, the majority of our City's children are still unnecessarily subjected to the inequities and stigma encountered in the income-based school lunch system. The City can't afford to ignore the direct health and educational benefits to our children and the financial relief to families of free, accessible school lunch.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. The Lunch 4 Learning campaign's Parent Caucus has our full support regarding this matter. The Citywide Council on Special Education would greatly appreciate if you would meet with them regarding our mutual concern.

Sincerely,

  
Sheryl Davis – Co-President

  
Pamela Stewart – Co-President

  
Leslie Caraballo – Vice President

  
Amalia Alvarez – Recording Secretary

  
Lisa Bennett-Wells – Treasurer

  
Denise Garcia

  
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# *Citywide Council on Special Education*

*Gina M. Panico-Devito*

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*Marilyn Vasquez*

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