

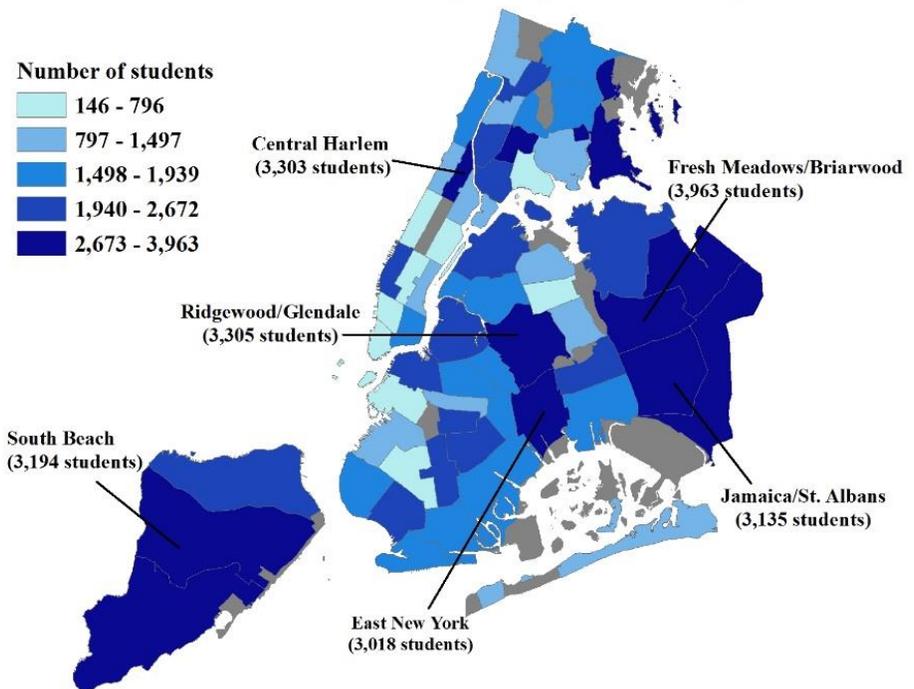
**Provide Financial Relief to Struggling New Yorkers by
Expanding Universal Free Lunch to All Public School Students
May 2017**

There are nearly 110,000 New York City public school students from moderately low-income families whose family income is low, but not low enough for them to qualify for free school meals, and who are not lucky enough to attend a school with universal free lunch. The City can easily help address the financial stability of these families, and also ensure children have access to healthy food, by expanding universal free lunch to **all NYC public schools**.

For the vast majority of New York City students, household income must be at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (\$34,911 for a family of three) to qualify for free school lunch.¹ Students from families with incomes above 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL) must pay full price-- \$1.75 per meal. This includes the nearly 110,000 NYC students whose families earn between 185%-275% of the FPL, or merely \$35,000-\$52,000² for a family of three, and do not attend a school with universal free lunch. Though these families' incomes disqualify them from free school lunch, it is likely that many are struggling to support themselves in a City with a cost of living as high as ours.

Since the 2014-2015 school year, NYC children attending stand-alone middle schools have had universal free school lunch. There are also some additional elementary and high schools that offer universal free lunch. Even with these programs in place, our analysis shows **over 110,000 students from moderately low-income families must pay full price for lunch.**

Students between 185-275% of poverty not receiving free lunch



¹ Traditionally, those families that fall at or below 130 percent of the FPL receive school lunch free and those falling between 130 percent and 185 percent receive reduced price lunch. NYC now provides all those below 185 percent of the FPL with free lunch and those above this level pay full price.

² 185% of the Federal Poverty Level for a family of three was \$34,911 and 275% of the FPL for a family of three was \$51,895 in 2015, the most recent year for which income data was available. Enrollment at universal free lunch schools is based on the 2015-2016 school year.

As seen in the preceding map, these moderately low-income families reside throughout all five boroughs. The neighborhoods with the highest numbers of students from low-income families who do not have access to free school lunch programs are Briarwood/Fresh Meadows (QN), Central Harlem (MN), East New York (BK), South Beach (SI), Ridgewood/Glendale (QN), and Jamaica/St. Albans (QN).

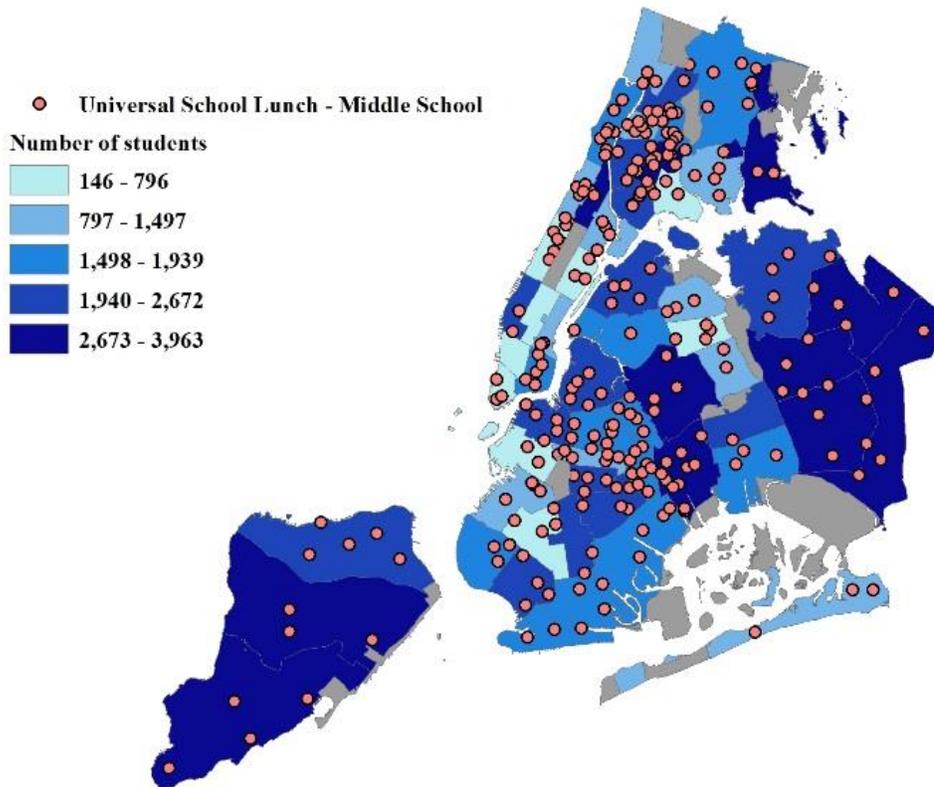
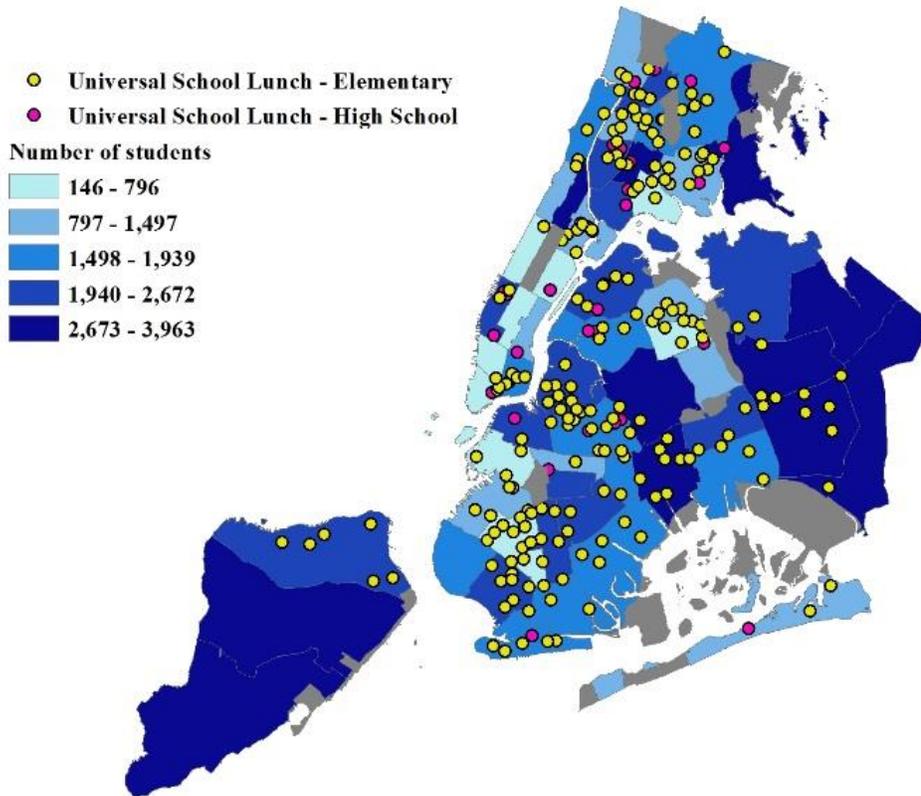
School meals are essential to ensuring that students have access to nutritious affordable food, which has been proven to help children succeed in school.³ In July of 2013 when now-Mayor de Blasio was running for Mayor, he called a universal free school lunch initiative crucial. To date, the de Blasio administration has only made universal lunch available in stand-alone middle schools and has continued to reiterate a reluctance to expand the program.

Implementing universal free school lunch in all New York City public schools is an important step to help alleviate some of the stress facing these moderately low-income families. Currently, all New York City public school students in standalone middle schools – those with only students in 5th through 8th grades, 6th through 8th grades or 7th through 8th grades – can eat school lunch for free. There are also some elementary and high schools that have universal free lunch. But the majority of elementary, high school and middle school students in schools that are not stand-alone, have to either qualify for free lunch and defy the associated stigma, or pay for their lunch.

The maps on the next page overlay the schools with universal free lunch programs with where the over 110,000 moderately low-income students reside. **These maps show that many of the neighborhoods with a large population of students from moderately low-income families do not have a significant presence of universal free lunch schools.**

³ Florence, M. D., Asbridge, M., & Veugelers, P. J. (2008). Diet quality and academic performance. *Journal of School Health*, 78(4), 209-215.

Students between 185 and 275% of poverty not receiving free lunch and universal free lunch schools



Many of the elementary and high schools that have universal free lunch are located in lower income districts in the Bronx, southern Williamsburg, and Borough Park. Stand-alone middle schools that offer universal free lunch are concentrated in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn.

The data show that whether moderately low-income students attend a universal free lunch school varies drastically by community district. In Queens Community District 4 (Elmhurst/Corona), where nearly 4,500 students live in moderately low-income households, 82 percent of all students attend universal free lunch schools. On the other hand, in Queens Community district 8 (Fresh Meadows/Briarwood), where there are over 5,100 students from moderately low-income households, only 23 percent of students attend universal free lunch schools. The share of students attending universal free lunch schools is as low as 3 percent in Manhattan Community District 10 (Central Harlem).

Universal free school lunch has been documented to be successful in other large cities such as Boston, Dallas and Chicago, as well as throughout New York State in Buffalo, Rochester, Utica and Syracuse. **Additionally, it has been successful in New York City stand-alone middle schools.** In school year 2015-16, in the middle schools with universal free school lunch, over 60% of students ate lunch versus only 40% in middle schools that did not offer free school lunch.⁴

Citizens’ Committee for Children and Community Food Advocates, along with our colleagues in the Lunch 4 Learning Campaign, are eager to finally see universal free lunch expanded to include all New York City public school students for the upcoming school year. NYC families are already under so much stress, but ensuring that children will have healthy food to eat when they are in school will help lessen the burdens of financial insecurity while also ensuring children are not hungry.

Appendix 1:

Poverty Thresholds (2015)

Household Size	Poverty Threshold	185 percent of poverty (cut-off for free school lunch)	275 percent of poverty (threshold used for moderately low-income in CCC analysis)
Two	\$15,391	\$28,473	\$42,325
Three	\$18,871	\$34,911	\$51,895
Four	\$24,257	\$44,875	\$66,707
Five	\$28,741	\$53,171	\$79,038

⁴ Community Food Advocates. *Universal Free School Lunch Has a Significant Positive Impact on Students of All Grade Levels.* https://media.wix.com/ugd/fce5d8_fd660b26a61b415bb7dda84cc0ba2a3d.pdf

Appendix 2: Number/Percent of Students Attending Schools with Universal Free Lunch

Community District	# Students enrolled in schools with universal free lunch	Total enrollment	% in schools with free lunch
Manhattan			
Battery Park/Tribeca (M01)	1,950	12,657	15.4%
Greenwich Village (M02)	0	5,003	0.0%
Lower East Side (M03)	5,855	19,230	30.4%
Chelsea/Clinton (M04)	3,774	16,390	23.0%
Midtown Business District (M05)	0	4,358	0.0%
Murray Hill/Stuyvesant (M06)	3,271	11,031	29.7%
Upper West Side (M07)	3,147	18,956	16.6%
Upper East Side (M08)	2,261	10,463	21.6%
Manhattanville (M09)	807	10,806	7.5%
Central Harlem (M10)	454	18,455	2.5%
East Harlem (M11)	5,177	21,436	24.2%
Washington Heights (M12)	5,919	21,320	27.8%
Bronx			
Mott Haven (B01)	2,860	23,451	12.2%
Hunts Point (B02)	3,810	10,940	34.8%
Morrisania (B03)	4,818	24,430	19.7%
Concourse/Highbridge (B04)	6,873	23,946	28.7%
University Heights (B05)	7,495	17,371	43.1%
East Tremont (B06)	8,610	20,156	42.7%
Bedford Park (B07)	6,046	21,336	28.3%
Riverdale (B08)	4,485	13,932	32.2%
Unionport/Soundview (B09)	13,860	23,980	57.8%
Throgs Neck (B10)	6,415	18,064	35.5%
Pelham Parkway (B11)	7,410	16,681	44.4%
Williamsbridge (B12)	5,239	14,922	35.1%
Brooklyn			
Williamsburg/Greenpoint (K01)	7,797	20,001	39.0%
Fort Greene/Brooklyn Hts (K02)	2,280	21,970	10.4%
Bedford Stuyvesant (K03)	3,815	17,991	21.2%
Bushwick (K04)	6,098	15,035	40.6%
East New York (K05)	9,576	27,017	35.4%
Park Slope (K06)	2,898	15,284	19.0%
Sunset Park (K07)	8,435	18,773	44.9%
Crown Heights North (K08)	1,806	9,149	19.7%

Crown Heights South (K09)	2,155	12,864	16.8%
Bay Ridge (K10)	4,090	19,224	21.3%
Bensonhurst (K11)	11,214	21,645	51.8%
Borough Park (K12)	12,859	19,575	65.7%
Coney Island (K13)	6,177	17,470	35.4%
Flatbush/Midwood (K14)	5,967	20,038	29.8%
Sheepshead Bay (K15)	7,549	19,708	38.3%
Brownsville (K16)	3,342	14,821	22.5%
East Flatbush (K17)	3,507	15,819	22.2%
Canarsie (K18)	5,564	17,355	32.1%
Queens			
Astoria (Q01)	6,369	22,949	27.8%
Sunnyside/Woodside (Q02)	8,993	17,306	52.0%
Jackson Heights (Q03)	9,576	15,696	61.0%
Elmhurst/Corona (Q04)	19,222	23,354	82.3%
Ridgewood/Glendale (Q05)	5,948	24,031	24.8%
Rego Park/Forest Hills (Q06)	2,665	14,999	17.8%
Flushing (Q07)	7,155	23,760	30.1%
Fresh Meadows/Briarwood (Q08)	6,512	28,533	22.8%
Woodhaven (Q09)	4,031	15,339	26.3%
Howard Beach (Q10)	6,868	17,265	39.8%
Bayside (Q11)	3,957	23,721	16.7%
Jamaica/St. Albans (Q12)	8,122	26,699	30.4%
Queens Village (Q13)	4,477	22,049	20.3%
The Rockaways (Q14)	4,207	13,862	30.3%
Staten Island			
St. George (S01)	8,217	22,844	36.0%
South Beach (S02)	2,571	20,429	12.6%
Tottenville (S03)	5,033	19,508	25.8%