



Building on Success of Universal Free Lunch in Middle Schools: Mayor de Blasio Should Fund Expansion to All New York City Public School Students

Context and Introduction: New York City is Lagging Behind Other Cities

Cities across the country already offer universal free school lunch to all of their public school students. Those cities include Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Akron, Dayton, and Nashville.

Universal free school lunch should be at the foundation any progressive education and health equity agenda.

On this issue, New York City is lagging behind other cities. Now is the time to catch up.

This report provides analysis of Department of Education school lunch participation data to support the expansion of universal free lunch to all New York City public schools.

Here is the key finding: universal free school lunch in middle schools is working. Substantially more middle school students are participating in the school lunch program since September 2014.

If the program is expanded to all grade levels and fully funded in the budget for 2016, an additional 120,000 students will eat school lunch every day.

For a Mayor committed to reducing inequality, this is an immediate and far reaching strategy to address this head on in public school settings.

The Success of Universal Free Lunch in Middle Schools So Far

In his executive budget address earlier this month, Mayor de Blasio referred incorrectly to the “mixed results” of universal free lunch in middle schools.

Our analysis refutes this claim and shows that in just the first six months of implementation the program has proven very successful, starting in September 2014.

Student participation in the program **increased by nearly 10%** in the first six months of this school year (2014-15) compared to the same period last year (2013-14).¹

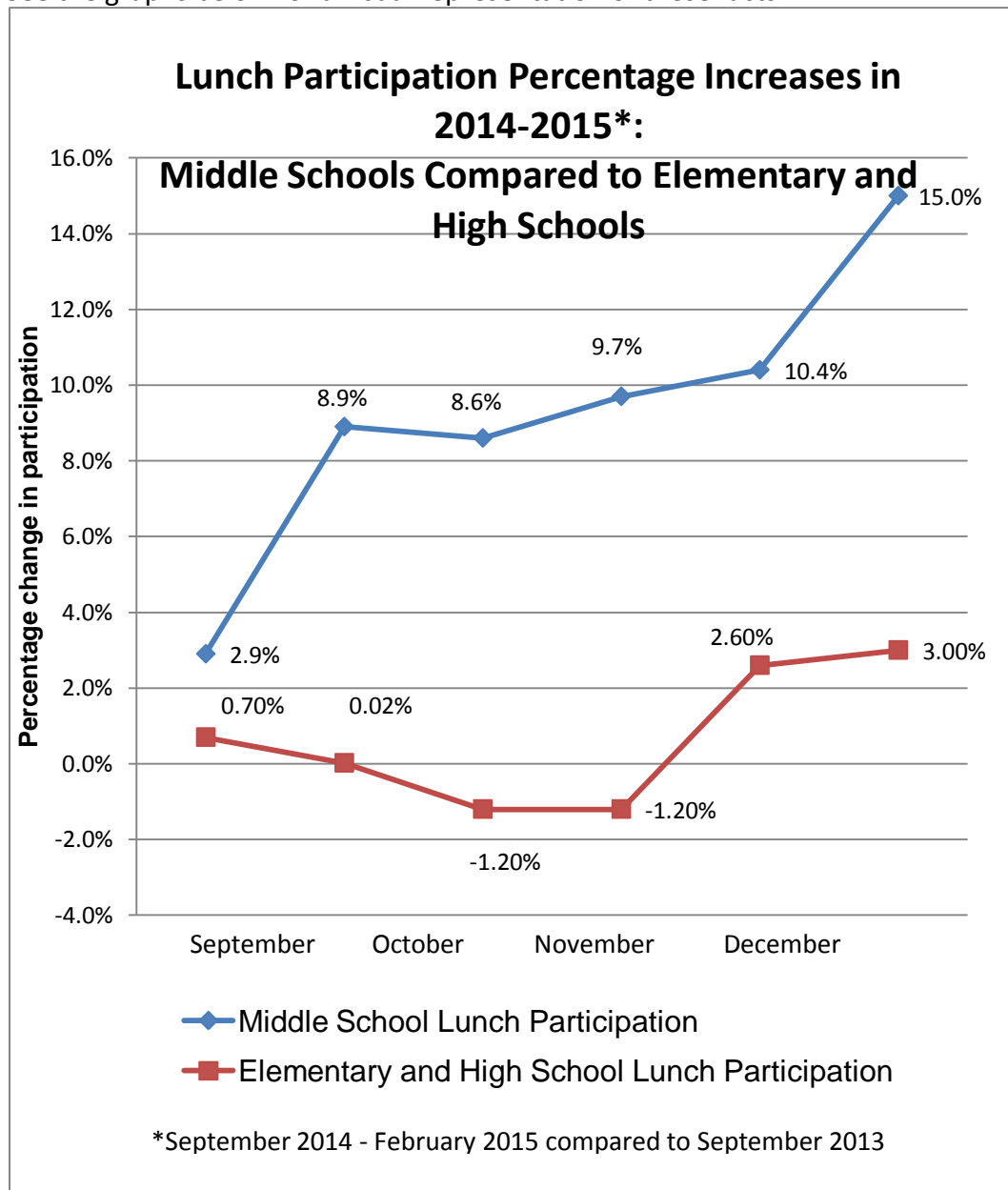
This substantial increase means an additional **10,000 – 15,000** middle school students eat lunch each day because of the program. That is what real success looks like.

¹ Analysis is based on SchoolFood division of the Department of Education school lunch participation data

By comparison, from September 2014 – February 2015, elementary and high school participation remained largely flat, and increased only slightly in January and February, strongly suggesting that the increased participation for middle school students is directly related to the implementation of universal free school lunch.

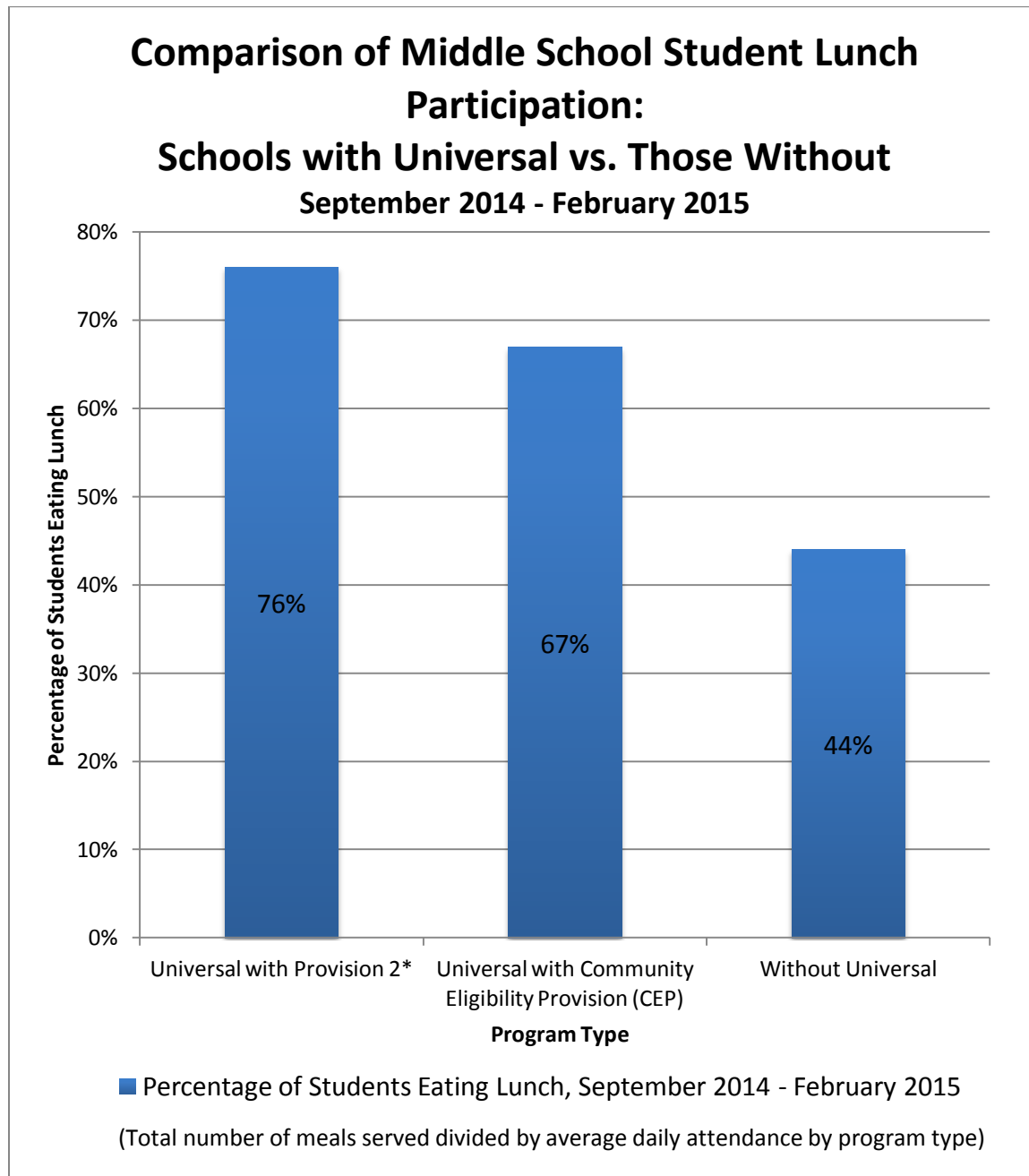
Increased federal and state revenue; New York City received an additional \$4.5 million in federal and state lunch reimbursements as a result of middle school implementation of the Community Eligibility Provision for the first 6 months of the school year².

See the graphs below for a visual representation of these facts.



² The new reimbursement structure under the federal Community Eligibility Provision (coupled with increased participation in middle schools) shifts more meals to the “Free” category, with highest reimbursement (\$3.1199 per lunch), and fewer meals to “Reduced Price” (\$2.8581) and “Paid” (\$.4199) categories.

(Supporting data on page 5 and 6)



(Supporting data on page 7)

The Positive Benefits of Increasing Participation in the Program:

Our analysis indicates that the poverty stigma is a primary barrier to participation.

In the absence of any other far-reaching changes in the cafeteria environment, over 10,000 more middle school children are choosing to participate in the program now that the poverty stigma is eliminated through universal and equal access to free lunch.

An additional 10,000 -15,000 students each day are now well-nourished and fueled for their studies: a reality that has big implications for academic performance and healthy development.

For many students, school lunch is their only substantial meal of the day.

Universal free school lunch clearly results in fewer students skipping meals due to fear of the poverty stigma or a family's inability to afford school lunch.

The Case for Expansion: The Impact of Feeding 120,000 More Students

75% of New York City public school students have family income low enough to qualify them for free or reduced priced lunch (below \$36,000 for a family of 3), yet 250,000 of 780,000 of low income students (close to one-third) do not participate in the program.

If universal school lunch is expanded citywide, we project that an additional 120,000 students will eat school lunch each day—a 20% increase in participation.

We end where we began: Mayor de Blasio should fund the full expansion of the program to students across grade levels.

See pages 5 -7 for data

Data for graph on page 2

**September – February 2015 Comparisons with September – February
2014 in Middle Schools (Division 2) and Elementary and High Schools
(Balance of Students)**

Middle/Jr.High Division 2	Free (% of total meals)	Red. Price (% of total meals)	Paid (% of total meals)	Total
ADP Sept. 2013	86,909 (79.3%)	6,431 (5.9%)	16,235 (14.8%)	109,575
ADP Sept. 2014	100,540 (89.1%)	2,363 (2.1%)	9,901 (8.8%)	112,804
Difference	+13,631	-4,068	-6,334	+3,229 (+2.9%)
ADP Oct. 2013	86,360 (79.5%)	7,157 (6.6%)	15,122 (13.9%)	108,639
ADP Oct. 2014	104,905 (88.7%)	2,652 (2.2%)	10,722 (9.1%)	118,279
Difference	+18,545	-4,505	-4,400	+ 9,640 (+8.9%)
ADP Nov. 2013	82,061 (77.5%)	7,610 (7.2%)	16,259 (15.3%)	105,930
ADP Nov. 2014	101,315 (88%)	3,060 (2.7%)	10,706 (9.3%)	115,081
Difference	+19,254	-4,550	-5,553	+9,151 (+8.6%)
ADP Dec. 2013	83,960 (81%)	8,056 (7.8%)	11,577 (11.2%)	103,593
ADP Dec. 2014	100,441 (88.4%)	3,120 (2.7%)	10,071 (8.9%)	113,632
Difference	+16,481	-4,936	-1,506	+10,039 (+9.7%)
ADP Jan. 2014	81,044 (79.5%)	7,964 (7.8%)	12,905 (12.7%)	101,913
ADP Jan. 2015	99,647 (88.5%)	3,138 (2.8%)	9,744 (8.7%)	112,529
Difference	+18,603	-4,826	-3,161	+10,616 (+10.4%)
ADP Feb. 2014	78,911 (79.9%)	7,729 (7.8%)	12,149 (12.3%)	98,789
ADP Feb. 2015	100,723 (88.7%)	3,181 (2.8%)	9,712 (8.5%)	113,616
Difference	+21,812	-4,548	-2,437	+14,827 (+15.0%)



Balance of Students	Free	Red. Price	Paid	Total
ADP Sept. 2013	413,451 (79.3%)	26,344 (5.1%)	81,508 (15.6%)	521,303
ADP Sept. 2014	420,200 (80%)	28,985 (5.5%)	75,907 (14.5%)	525,092
Difference	+6,749	+ 2,641	-5,601	+3,789 (+.7%)
ADP Oct. 2013	422,471 (79.8%)	30,943 (5.8%)	76,120 (14.4%)	529,534
ADP Oct. 2014	419,775 (79.3%)	33,121 (6.3%)	76,751 (14.5%)	529,647
Difference	- 2,696	+ 2,178	+ 631	+113 (+.02%)
ADP Nov. 2013	416,175 (78.9%)	34,409 (6.5%)	77,132 (14.6%)	527,716
ADP Nov. 2014	411,579 (79%)	35,788 (6.9%)	73,774 (14.2%)	521,141
Difference	-4,596	+ 1,379	-3,358	-6,575 (-1.2%)
ADP Dec. 2013	418,234 (79.5%)	35,775 (6.8%)	71,815 (13.7%)	525,824
ADP Dec. 2014	414,559 (79.8%)	37,657 (7.2%)	67,498 (13%)	519,714
Difference	-3,675	+ 1,882	-4,317	-6,110 (-1.2%)
ADP Jan. 2014	397,697 (80.5%)	34,567 (7.0%)	62,024 (12.5%)	494,288
ADP Jan. 2015	406,452 (80.2%)	36,590 (7.2%)	63,969 (12.6%)	507,011
Difference	+8,755	+2,023	+1,945	+12,723 (+2.6%)
ADP Feb. 2014	399,268 (80.8%)	34,999 (7.1%)	60,179 (12.2%)	494,446
ADP Feb. 2015	410,976 (80.6%)	36,765 (7.2%)	62,387 (12.2%)	510,128
Difference	+11,708	+1,766	+2,208	+15,682 (+3.2%)

***Analysis provided by Community Food Advocates 212-542-9083
communityfoodadvocatesnyc.org***

** Provision 2 and CEP are two different federal programs for instituting universal free school lunch. Provision 2 is a long-standing program in a small number of middle schools in NYC; CEP began in most middle schools in September 2014.*

***Analysis provided by Community Food Advocates 212-542-9083
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Data for graph on page 3

Middle School Lunch by Program Type
September 2014 - February 2015

(Year-to-date)

	Provision 2	CEP	Non-Universal	Total Division 2 Schools
Number of Schools	38	254		
ADA (Average Daily Attendance)	18,921	122,397	39,359	180,677
ADP Total Lunches Average Daily Participation	14,352	81,797	17,467	113,616
% Participation	76%	67%	44%	63%