



## COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

154 West 93<sup>rd</sup> Street New York, New York 10025 - Room 204 Tel (212) 678-2782 Fax (212) 678-2804 Email: CEC3@schools.nyc.gov

---

Joseph A. Fiordaliso  
President

Nan Eileen Mead  
First Vice President

Zoe G. Foundotos  
Second Vice President

Kristen Berger  
Secretary

Kimberly Watkins  
Treasurer

---

**Council Members:** Noah Gotbaum Theresa L.C. Hammonds Pradnya Joshi Daniel Katz  
Lucas Liu Vincent Orgera, *ELL Member* Vacant, *Student Member*

**Ilene Altschul**  
*District 3 Community Superintendent*

Honorable Bill DeBlasio  
Mayor, the City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

May 25, 2016

RE: 6 -12 Free Lunch and free lunch for all students

Dear Mayor De Blasio:

You have rightly championed free breakfast and free lunch for all middle schoolers as a critical part of preparing all students to successfully learn. The evidence is overwhelming that a hungry child is not a child who can maximize his or her learning opportunities. Too many kids are heading to school hungry and staying that way throughout the day.

West End Secondary School for Urban Studies (WESS) is a brand new 6-12 school on the Upper West Side. Currently, the school only has sixth graders; WESS will add a grade each year until we have all grades 6-12 represented. WESS has students and families from a wide range of financial situations from all parts of the Upper West Side.

WESS parents have inquired about their child's eligibility for the program and we have learned that even though all *stand-alone* middle schools are eligible for free lunch, students at WESS are not eligible because they attend a 6-12 school.

Moreover, CSD3 has two additional 6-12 secondary schools; Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing and Visual Arts; and Frederick Douglass Academy II. Although a majority of students in those schools qualify for free and reduced price lunch, not all of them do and therefore face a similar problem of exclusion from the free lunch program.

CSD3 has *seven* (7) K-8 schools whose middle schoolers are similarly excluded from the free lunch program unless they qualify as individuals.

It seems that the pilot program that was agreed to and funded in the past two budgets only applies to middle schools that serve exclusively middle school children. We find this hard to believe that our city has adopted a policy that treats sixth graders differently simply based on what type of public middle school they choose to attend. A middle school child is a middle school child. We also understand that there is federal reimbursement for free lunch so this should not be a financial issue for the City.

Secondary schools can be attractive options for families looking for stability and continuity for their children throughout grades 6-12. However, not providing free lunch puts these students at a marked disadvantage compared with students who choose to attend a standalone middle school. This can make a new school such as WESS seem less attractive compared with other options in the district.

In the next two months your Administration will be negotiating a final FY 17 budget with the City Council, we respectfully request your leadership in extending this pilot program to *all* middle school children, regardless if they attend a 6-8, a 6-12 or a K-8.

Beyond middle school children, the free lunch policy should be for *all* children regardless of whether they are in elementary, middle school, high school or a school that serves a combination of grades. As you work towards that goal, all middle school children should be afforded the same benefits of the free lunch program that their peers at neighboring middle schools receive.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Community Education Council 3

cc: Jessica Jenkins, Principal West End Secondary School  
Council Member Inez Dickens  
Council Member Mark Levine  
Council Member Helen Rosenthal