

Quality Food Education and Healthy School Meals: Keys to New York City's Recovery

- The current public health crisis has highlighted the important role that schools play in students' diets and made increasingly clear how dangerous diet-related diseases can be.
- The Food Ed Coalition, a diverse group of advocates, program leaders, and school community members convened by the Tisch Food Center, continues to support the most vulnerable communities in New York City. Coalition members are providing meals, delivering groceries, communicating about available food assistance, and offering virtual food education.
- **Restoring Food Ed Hub funding and supporting the Food Ed Coalition's priorities** are two ways the Council can ensure our communities are stronger, safer, and healthier moving forward.



With food insecurity at an all-time high in the City, Food Ed Coalition members have continued to donate food to families during the crisis.

The NYC Food Ed Hub has provided Children's Aid and other food organizations with vital support during the COVID crisis. The Food Ed Hub's response to the crisis was immediate and highly effective: they have consistently convened organizations in our Coalition, providing space for crucial resource-sharing, including much-needed COVID-related funding opportunities. The Food Ed Hub has helped us navigate a landscape of rapidly changing food policies, from clarifying school food changes, providing updates on Pandemic EBT, and helping to advocate for state-level waivers for CACFP and SNAP-Ed. Their support has enabled Children's Aid to more effectively and immediately address the needs of our communities during this difficult time.

—Director of Food and Nutrition Programs,
Children's Aid

The Food Ed Hub: A Critical Support for School Food Partners

The Food Ed Hub, based within the Tisch Food Center, coordinates food and nutrition education (food ed) programming across city schools; advocates for policies to support healthy school food and food ed; convenes stakeholders; and provides critical technical assistance.

The organizations that the Food Ed Hub supports work with the most vulnerable school communities, providing meals, delivering groceries, conducting outreach about available food assistance, and offering virtual food ed. Since last March, Coalition members have been using limited dollars to cover new, COVID-related expenses such as food, overtime pay for frontline workers, personal protective equipment, and digital learning technology.

In the face of increasing financial pressures, these organizations cannot afford to lose a critical resource designed to maximize impact, increase efficiency, and ensure that services are equitably distributed. Now, more than ever, the City cannot afford to lose the Food Ed Hub. With restored funding, the Food-Ed Hub can continue to provide technical assistance, tools, and training to community-based organizations and educators. **Cost: \$250,000**

Additional Food Ed Coalition Priorities for FY 22

The current public health crisis has highlighted the important role that schools play in students' diets and made increasingly clear how dangerous diet-related diseases can be. Healthy eating has only become harder, but continued support for the Food Ed Coalition priorities can help New York City recover. To ensure that our communities are stronger, safer, and healthier moving forward, the City Council must:

- Hire additional school food managers;
- Develop a plan to expand the Outdoor Learning Initiative; and
- Make existing funding for school wellness more flexible.

Additional School Food Managers: Enhancing Capacity to Increase Participation

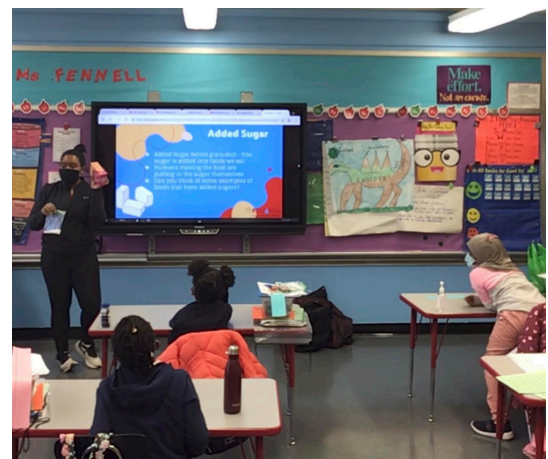
The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) has been working tirelessly to make sure that students have the food they so desperately need during COVID-19 school closures. OFNS needs more school food managers to plan and review appealing menus, educate students on the importance of eating healthfully, train new personnel, and increase participation in the school meals program. Funding for an additional 60 managers would enable OFNS to better achieve these goals, helping to ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn. **Cost:** \$57,291 per manager; \$3.5 million total

Plan to Extend the Outdoor Learning Initiative: Informing Equitable Access to Green Spaces

Many public schools lack adequate space for learning and play even without social distancing requirements in place. In response to COVID-19, the City has increased the outdoor space available to schools and their partners, including Food Ed Coalition members. To ensure that all public students have access to outdoor learning spaces, the City should develop a plan to inform the future of the Outdoor Learning Initiative. The plan should identify additional space available to public schools, determine how the cross-agency group coordinating this initiative can continue to streamline processes, and clarify additional support that principals need.

Flexible School Wellness Funding: Tailoring Programming to Local Needs

The Department of Education (DOE) currently provides school wellness council grants to schools. Adjusting the existing grants program to allow for more flexible funding could help to ensure schools have impactful programming. For example, DOE could allow schools in a high-needs district to use the funding to support a paid Wellness Coordinator. The Wellness Coordinator would align food ed programming across grades, facilitate professional development, and help integrate wellness with sustainability and other academic subjects. Increased capacity for food ed is critical: 44% of public schools currently do not partner with a food ed organization, and approximately two-thirds of middle school students do not receive the full state-mandated Health Education course.



Food Ed Coalition members have continued to provide in-person instruction during COVID-19.

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