



Tisch Report

Principals' Perception of Universal Free Lunch A Survey Analysis



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**Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy
Program in Nutrition
at Teachers College, Columbia University**

The Center cultivates research about connections between a just, sustainable food system and healthy eating and translates it into recommendations and resources for educators, policy makers, and community advocates. The Center focuses on schools as critical levers for learning and social change.

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Renata Peralta, Teachers College
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Executive Summary

Mayor Bill de Blasio, working closely with the New York City Council, passed a budget on June 19, 2014 that included \$6.25 million to provide free school lunch to middle school students during the 2014-15 school year. The specific policy took advantage of the federal Community Eligibility Provision, which states that states that any school (or group of schools) that has a certain proportion of high-needs students can use federal reimbursements to serve all students a free lunch.

Because of initial concerns around implementation, and to determine early impacts of universal free lunch on schools, researchers at the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education, & Policy in the Program in Nutrition, Teachers College, Columbia University distributed an online survey to all principals in standalone middle schools to determine any challenges or successes occurring in the first year.

Key findings that emerged from the data are summarized below, and are described in greater detail in the following pages.

Implementation Findings:

- Almost half of the schools had previously offered universal free lunch.
- Most principals did not change daily operations of their school to accommodate universal free lunch.
- Principals felt that effective communication about the policy happened at multiple levels.

Impact Findings:

- Principals perceive an increase in lunch participation.
- Principals saw improvements on access to nutrition and positive social interactions among students.
- Principals were uncertain about improvements on student academic outcomes.
- Principals hold contradictory views of impacts on Title I funding.

Future of the Program Findings:

- Principals saw many *potential* benefits to universal free lunch programs.
- 100% of the principals believed that the program should continue.
- 100% of the principals believed that the program should be expanded.

Results from the survey provide compelling reasons to continue and expand universal free lunch in New York City; however, further research is necessary to corroborate the findings from the principal survey. While principals are the experts in their schools, it is unlikely that principals can identify the exact impact on lunch participation and other student outcomes.

Introduction

Universal free lunch policies, where every student, no matter what income their parents make, can have access to a free lunch, are becoming more widespread due to the Community Eligibility Provision established in the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The provision states that any school (or group of schools) that has a certain proportion of high-needs students can use federal reimbursements to serve all students a free meal (Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010). Universal free lunch policies have been promoted by advocates because of the policy's ability to reduce paperwork for schools and improve participation in national school food programs (Lunch4Learning, 2013).

Mayor Bill de Blasio, working closely with the New York City Council, passed a budget on June 19, 2014 that included \$6.25 million to provide free school lunch to middle school students during the 2014-15 school year (Mayor's Press Office, 2014). The specific policy took advantage of Community Eligibility Provision. However, concerns about implementation, particularly around the potential loss of Title I funds, resulted in a pilot program that included only middle school students in standalone middle schools (i.e. schools that contain only 6th through 8th grade)¹. Connected to that concern, food advocates worried that the New York City Department of Education was not doing enough outreach to inform parents about the new policy.

Because of initial concerns around implementation, and to determine early impacts of universal free lunch on schools, researchers at the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education, & Policy in the Program in Nutrition, Teachers College, Columbia University distributed a survey to all principals in standalone middle schools to determine any challenges or successes occurring in the first year. This report presents these findings.

Methodology

Survey Construction

The initial survey included questions on school characteristics and the school's approach to child nutrition programs along with implementation questions examining the impact of the universal free lunch program on Title I, the outreach schools were doing, and support from the Department of Education. The survey also included questions about preliminary impacts such as reduced burden on school staff, improved student outcomes, and a better school environment.

After the first draft of the survey was completed, an assistant principal at a standalone middle school was asked to review the survey for clarity, ability to answer the questions, and political sensitivity, and provide any additional thoughts. The feedback was incorporated into the final survey. See Appendix A for the complete list of survey questions.

Survey Distribution

Surveys were initially distributed by email at the beginning of July 2015 after the first full year of implementation. Follow-up reminder emails were distributed at the end of July that same year. At the beginning of the school year in September 2015, phone calls were made to schools that had not completed the survey. A total of 289 schools were contacted in the original survey mailing, which included all schools in New York City that had 6th grade, 7th grade, and/or 8th grade only. This list included charter schools. Of 289, 65 surveys were

¹ New York City began using Community Eligibility Provision in 2012 with District 75 schools before the middle school pilot, but administrators in the Mayor's Office and Department of Education did not express concerns about implementation at that time.

complete for a response rate of 22.5%. According to some research, a response rate of 20% or higher is considered acceptable for online survey data if using ‘liberal conditions’ (Nulty, 2008). Additionally, the difficulty of reaching principals who are responsible for all operations in a school led us to consider our response rate acceptable.

Analysis

Survey data was merged with New York City Department of Education demographics data² to determine whether survey respondents were representative of the larger middle school population. Surveys were then analyzed using SPSS. The majority of analyses are descriptive statistics. Logistic regression and OLS regression were also conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in survey responses between schools serving different populations of students (Black students, Hispanic students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and low-income students); however, few differences were significant, and when they were, the differences were not practically meaningful; therefore, regression results are not reported³.

Respondents

Given the 22.5% response rate, we first examined school demographics to ensure that the survey sample was representative of the population of standalone middle schools. We found no statistically significant differences between the survey sample and the full sample of standalone middle schools regarding student gender, race, disability status, language status, and poverty; however, the survey sample overrepresented the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island schools slightly. Table 1 shows the minimum and maximum values, mean, and standard deviation for our sample of schools and the entire population of all standalone middle schools. Table 2 shows where the survey sample and the full sample of standalone middle schools are located.

Table 1: School Demographics (n=67)

	Survey Sample (n=65)				All Standalone Middle Schools (n=289)			
	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Total Enrollment	47	2064	566.2	451.6	30	2278	498.5	426.8
% Male	0.0%	60.0%	50.1%	7.7%	0.0%	100.0%	52.0%	7.3%
Race/Ethnicity								
% White	0.0%	83.5%	10.7%	18.3%	0.0%	86.8%	9.5%	16.5%
% Black	0.5%	90.4%	32.6%	28.4%	0.0%	98.7%	35.5%	28.5%
% Hispanic	7.8%	99.5%	44.2%	26.0%	1.3%	100.0%	43.5%	26.7%
% Asian	0.0%	80.0%	11.1%	16.3%	0.0%	80.0%	10.2%	15.9%
% Other	0.0%	18.2%	1.4%	2.6%	0.0%	18.2%	1.3%	1.8%
% Students with Disabilities	0.0%	39.6%	21.7%	7.0%	0.0%	53.5%	22.8%	7.3%
% English Language Learners	0.0%	100.0%	14.0%	14.9%	0.0%	100.0%	13.6%	13.0%
% Students in Poverty	20.5%	100.0%	84.1%	18.2%	10.7%	100.0%	81.8%	18.8%

² This data can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>

³ If you are interested in the results from the regression analyses, please contact the author at rp2481@tc.columbia.edu.

Table 2: Borough Representation

	Survey Sample (n=65)	All Standalone Middle Schools (n=289)
%Manhattan	16.9%	17.3%
%Brooklyn	23.1%	33.2%
%Bronx	33.8%	28.7%
%Queens	20.0%	16.3%
%Staten Island	6.2%	4.5%

Findings

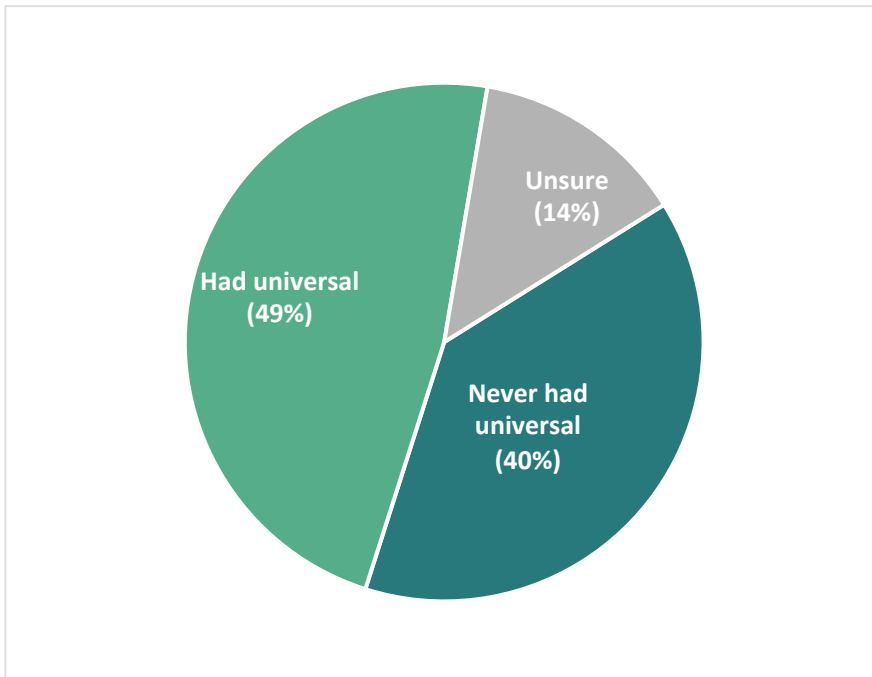
Implementation

Experience with Universal Free Lunch

It may be that a school with experience providing universal free lunch before 2014-15 is likely to have fewer implementation concerns. Some New York City schools have used Provision 2. Provision 2 in the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act allows schools to offer a free lunch to all their students under certain conditions: schools are required to distribute free and reduced price meal applications and make eligibility determinations for participating children in a base-line year. During years 2, 3, and 4, the school offers all children a free meal at no charge; however, federal reimbursements are based on the counts from the base-line year (USDA, 2002). This option has been available for New York City schools since 1991. District 75 schools have had access to Community Eligibility Provision since 2012. Also, if schools had 100% of their students qualify for free lunch prior to 2014-15, they were offering universal free lunch by default.

To gauge experience with universal free lunch programs, respondents were asked whether their school had ever provided free lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision, Provision 2, or by simply having all of their student qualify for free lunch. Figure 1 shows that around 45% of schools had offered free lunch to all their students – most offered free lunch because all of their students had qualified. Another 40% of schools had never offered universal free lunch.

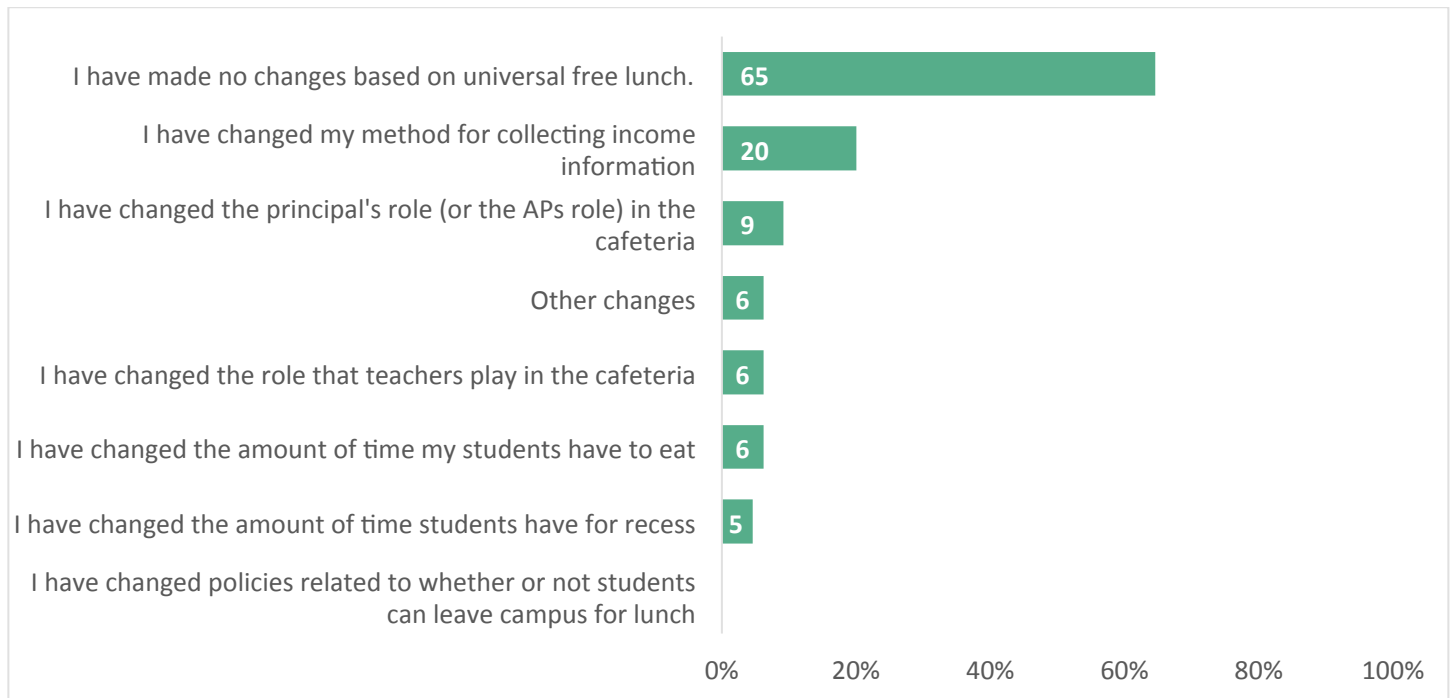
Figure 1: Almost half of the schools had **previously offered universal free lunch** (n=65).



Changes to Daily Operations

To determine the impact of universal free lunch on the daily operations of the school, respondents were asked if they made any substantial changes to accommodate the program. Some possible changes included increasing lunch time, increasing recess time, and changing the role of teachers in the cafeteria; however, the majority of principals (42 out of 65) said they made no changes at all. This suggests that the program was not burdensome to school leaders. As can be seen in Figure 2, the most common change in operations was a different method for collecting income information, but that was required by the Department of Education to determine Title I eligibility for schools.

Figure 2: Most principals **did not change daily operations** of their school to accommodate universal free lunch (n=65).



When principals were given the option to specify any other changes they have made as a result of universal free lunch, and one principal said “I have created a nutrition committee.”

Future Changes to Daily Operations

Even when principals were asked if they would make any future changes to accommodate the implementation of Community Eligibility Provision in their schools, 86% of principals said that they would not. Of the 14% that said they would, several specified the changes they would make: two respondents suggested a need to provide more information to parents, and one suggested a need to have a more structured approach to collecting income information. Two respondents also noted changes to recess to accommodate or enhance lunch participation. The full list of responses is included in Appendix B.

“I am going to make every student take a lunch. I am having recess before lunch as research shows that this increases the number of students who eat lunch.” - Principal

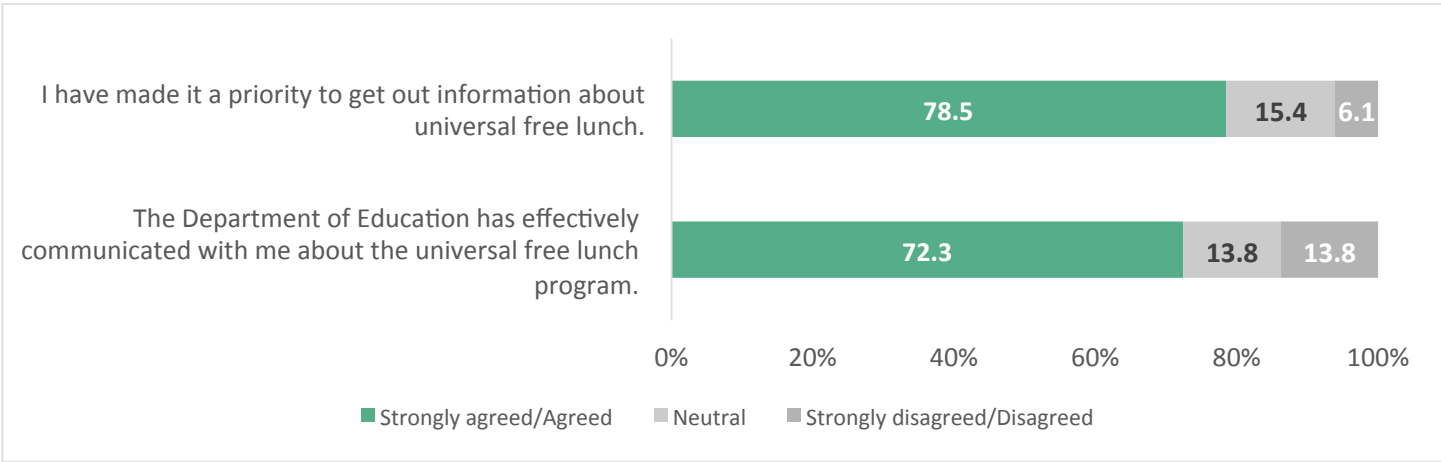
Outreach about Universal Free Lunch

Studies on Community Eligibility Provision have examined the communication between Local Educational Agencies and schools, and between schools and families, regarding the adoption of the policy. For example, Logan et al. (2014) conducted an implementation study that asked “how did LEAs communicate with schools and community members?” (p. 43). The authors found that 94% of Local Educational Agencies participating in Community Eligibility Provision reported that they informed the community in some way about the new policy, and they did so through notices or letters sent home to parents (59%) and postal mail (52%) (p. 48-49).

Like previous studies, and because school food advocates were concerned that the school district and school-level staff were not adequately advertising the new policy to parents and families, five questions on the survey asked specifically about communication.

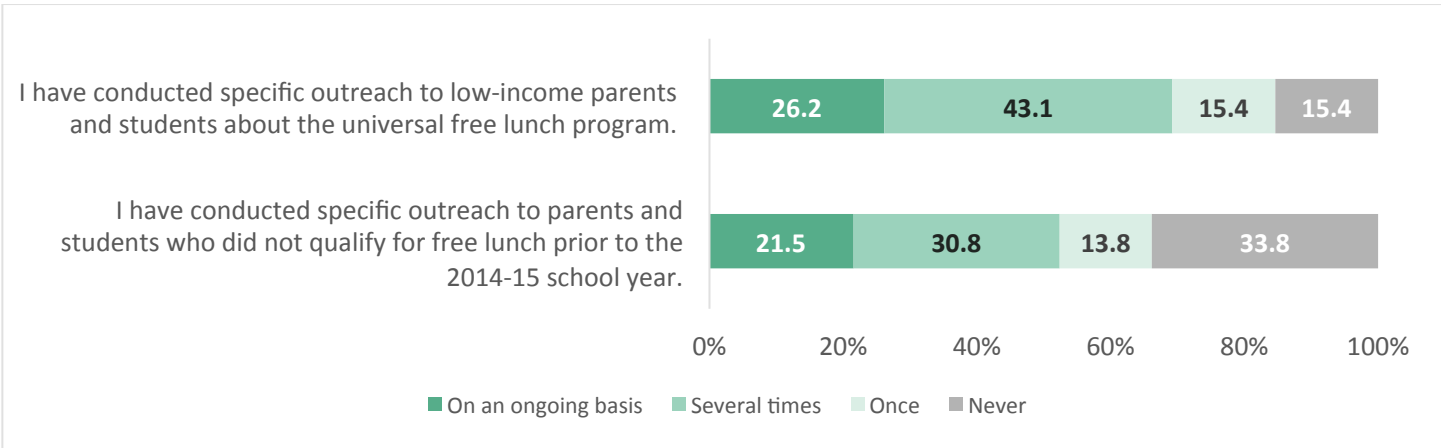
As shown in Figure 3, principals generally believed that the Department of Education had effectively communicated to schools about the universal free lunch program. The majority of principals also stated that they had made it a priority to get out information about the program to students and parents.

Figure 3: Principals felt that **effective communication** happened at multiple levels (n=65).



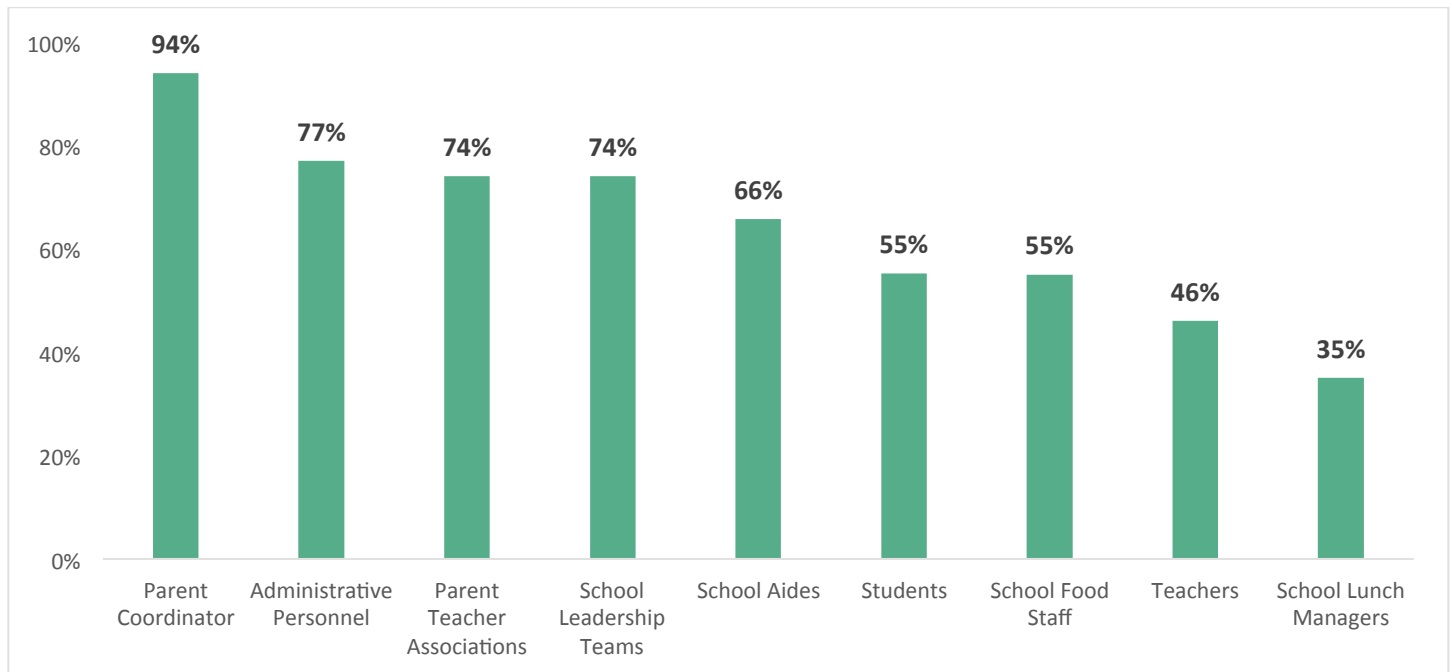
When asked more specifically about outreach, principals said that they had conducted greater outreach to low-income families compared to families that had not previously qualified for a free lunch. For example, about 26.2% of principals said they communicate on an ongoing basis with low-income families about universal free lunch, and an additional 43.1% have contacted low-income families several times over the year. On the other hand, almost 34% of principals said they had never reached out to families that had not previously qualified for free lunch regarding universal free lunch as can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Principals conducted **greater outreach to low-income families** (n=65).



In order to spread the message about the program, almost all the principals (61 out of 65) used their parent coordinators and 50 principals used their administrative personnel. Surprisingly, school lunch managers were the group least used to spread the word about universal free lunch with only 23 out of 65 principals selecting that group. See Figure 5 for the principal’s use of various staff members.

Figure 5: Principals use **parent coordinators, administrative personnel, and others** to do outreach. (n=65)



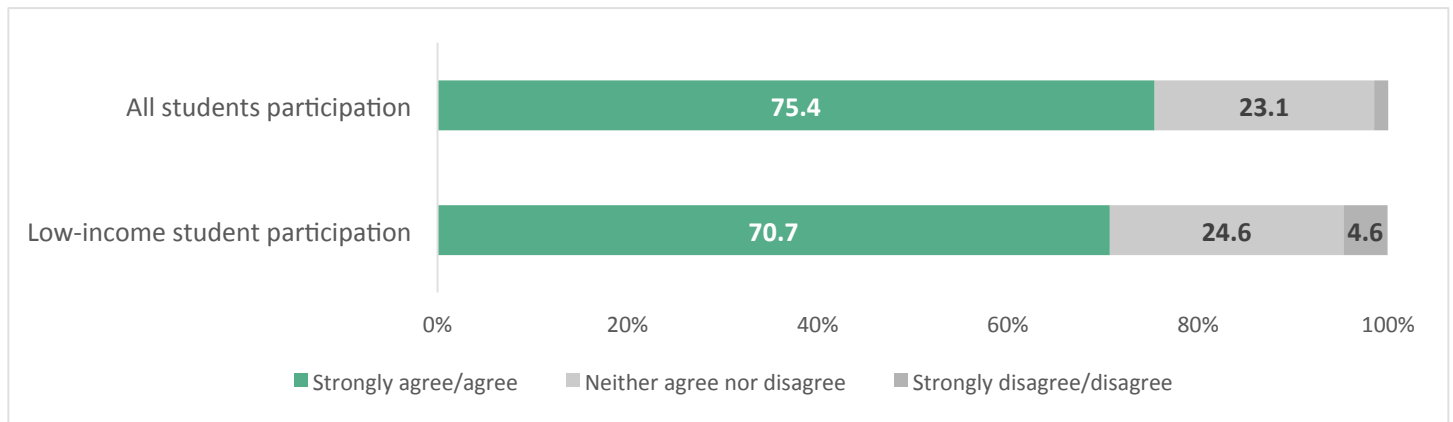
Impacts

Aside from our interest in implementation, we were curious about principal perceptions of early impacts of universal free lunch. Principals were asked whether they witnessed changes in: lunch participation, student outcomes, burden on school staff, Title I funding, and other outcomes.

Lunch Participation

The most immediate impact of an effective universal free lunch program would likely be increased participation rates, and several studies conducted on Community Eligibility Provision, or similar programs, found that the establishment of universal lunch policies have indeed raised lunch participation rates (Kwon, Mason, & Welch, 2015; Logan et al, 2014; Leos-Urbel et al, 2013; Meharie et al, 2013). Although testing this hypothesis using participation data from School Food would be preferable, our survey asked principals about their perception of participation change for all students and for low-income students. Principals overwhelmingly saw an increase in participation for all students, with 75.4% of principals “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” that universal free lunch has increased participation. A similarly large percentage of principals also saw an increase in participation for low-income students (70.7%). Figure 6 presents this information. These findings resemble similar findings from advocates in New York City. The Lunch 4 Learning campaign saw increases in lunch participation within the first few months of the program compared to the year before (Community Food Advocates, 2014).

Figure 6: Principals perceive an increase in lunch participation. (n=65)



Although principals witnessed increased participation, in the additional comments section of the survey, some principals expressed concern about the food as a possible deterrent for participation. A few selected comments are listed below:

“I am all for free lunch for students, but it would be great if the food smelled/tasted better because more students would partake in it...How do we expect students to eat something that we don't even want to smell? Healthier, tastier options would be a great addition to this already amazing program.” – Principal

“Since implementation more students are trying the new food menu options (cheeseburgers, burritos, salads, etc.), but there's been less fresh fruit and more frozen fruit (strawberries, peaches, etc.). Frozen fruit is not as popular as fresh fruit (which students can take with them and eat later (i.e. after school)).” - Principal

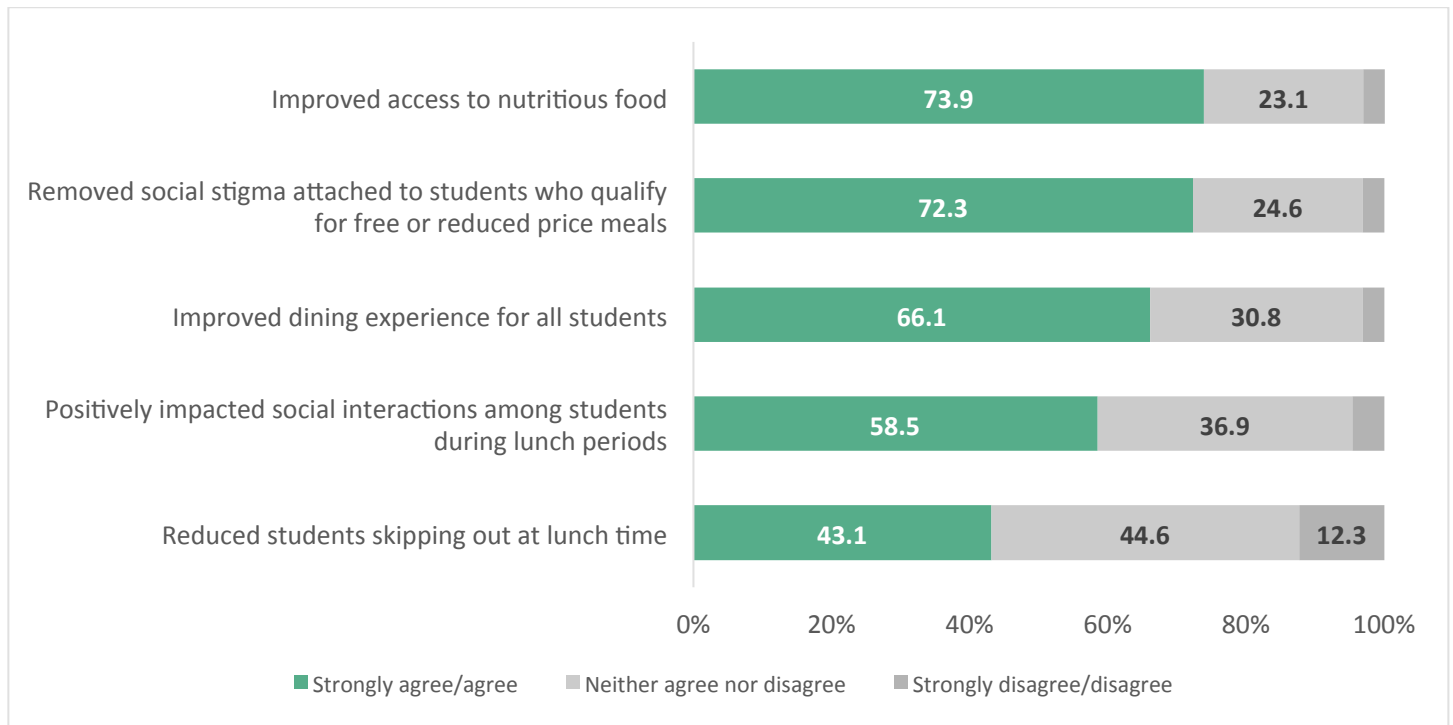
Student Outcomes

Non-Academic Outcomes

Universal free lunch programs can also have the effect of improving non-academic student outcomes. For example, Meharie et al (2013) examined the impact of Community Eligibility Provision implementation on fighting between students, bullying, skipping school, student health, respect for teachers, and motivation to learn (p. 17-18). The authors found that school staff felt that things had either stayed the same or gotten better compared to the year before implementation (p. 18).

To explore whether non-academic student outcomes improved during the Year 1 rollout, principals were presented with a set of non-academic outcomes that were selected from previous research studies (Meharie et al, 2013; Mirtcheva and Powell, 2009; Bhattacharya, Currie, & Haider, 2006). Principals were then asked if they had seen changes in these outcomes. Almost 74% of all principals surveyed “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the new policy improved access to nutritious food for their students. A similar percentage “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the new policy reduced social stigma attached to students who qualify for free or reduced price meals, and more than half the principals also saw improved dining experiences for students and improved social interactions among students in the cafeteria. Slightly over 40% of principals also saw a reduction in students skipping lunch (See Figure 7).

Figure 7: Principals **saw improvements** on access to nutrition and positive social interactions among students. (n=65)

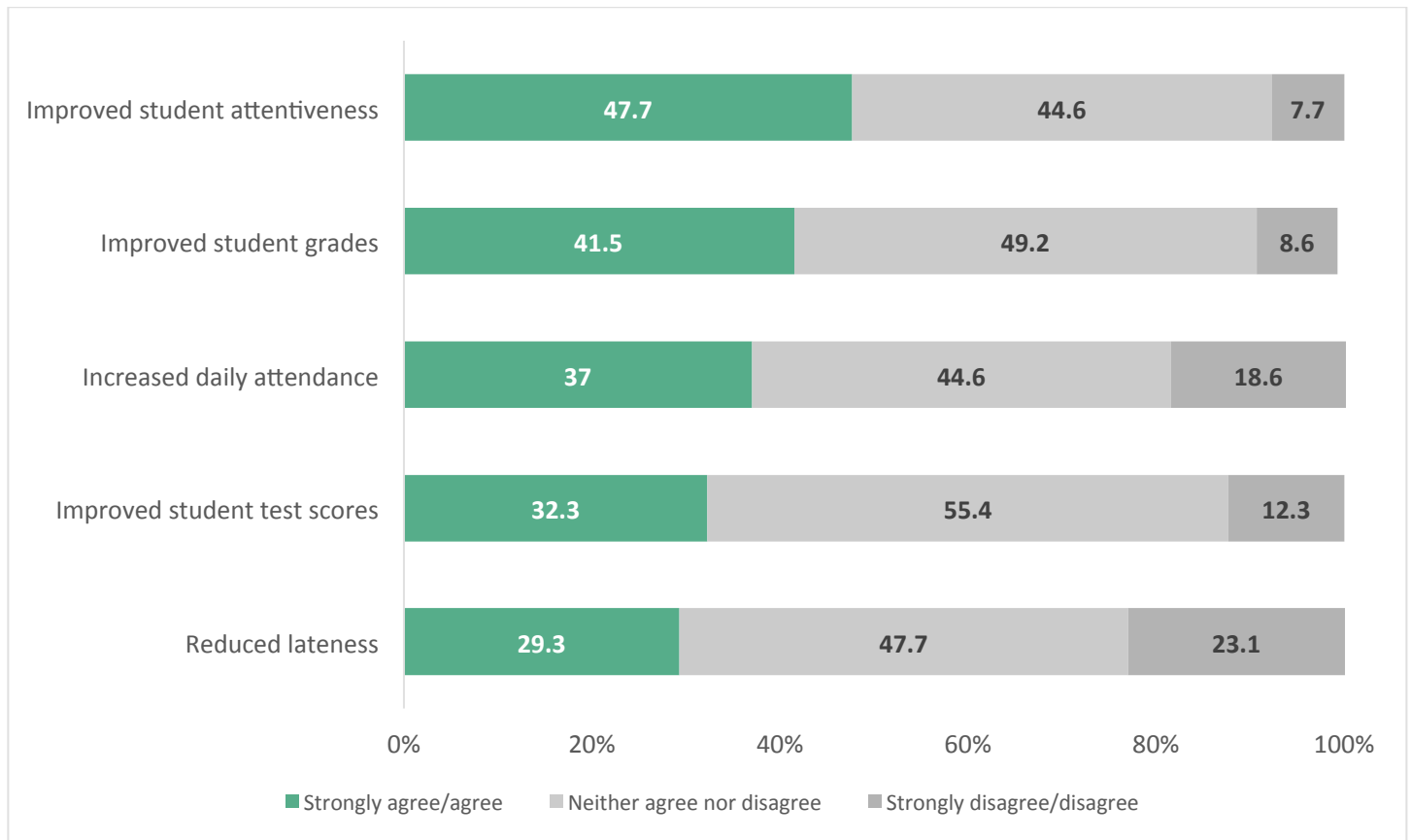


Academic Outcomes

When students have access to a nutritious meal, studies have shown that attendance, grades, and test scores improve (Figlio & Winicki, 2005; Murphy, 1998); however, improving academic outcomes within a year of implementing a new program and tying improvement to that specific program can be difficult when the program is aimed at nutrition, and not directly aimed at improving academic outcomes. One study examining the impact of universal free school breakfast did not find significant impacts on attendance, reading scores, or math scores (Leo-Urbel et al, 2013).

When principals were asked if they saw change in academic outcomes, slightly under half responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed. For example, when asked if they agree with the statement, “The universal free lunch program has improved student test scores,” 49.2% of principals selected “neither agree nor disagree” (See Figure 8). However, there is evidence that the universal free lunch program may be supporting particular skills needed for academic success. Almost half of the principals “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that universal free lunch was improving student attentiveness, and 37% of principals “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that universal free lunch was improving student attendance.

Figure 8: Principals were **uncertain** about student academic outcome improvements linked to school lunch. (n=65)



One reason principals may not have seen improvements is if the school was already successful. In the additional comments section, one principal explained why s/he disagreed that the program positively impacted students:

“We are a well-run, orderly school. We work very closely with the students and families. Our attendance is already excellent. We have no social issues [regarding] students having or not having free lunch. Students are not aware of who has it or does not.” - Principal

Burden

The Community Eligibility Provision, like Provision 2, is described in USDA documents as a paperwork burden reducing policy (USDA, 2015). As stated above, because the schools did not make significant changes as a result of this policy, most respondents did not report additional burden on school staff. Figure 9 examines principal perception of burden by staff type. A number of principals saw no change in any staff burden, especially teachers. According to respondents, principals and school aides had the greatest reduction in burden, with 40% of principals saying burden “decreased significantly” or “decreased some” as a result of universal free lunch for these two groups. Interestingly, almost 25% of principals perceived increased burden for school food workers, which seems reasonable given the potential for increased meals served in the cafeteria.

In the additional comments section, one principal mentioned that *“because of the new POS [point of sale] system in the cafeteria, school staff still must enter student info into a computer system. Therefore the burden to school staff has not been reduced or eliminated.”*

Figure 9: Many principals saw **no significant change** regarding burden on school staff. (n=65)

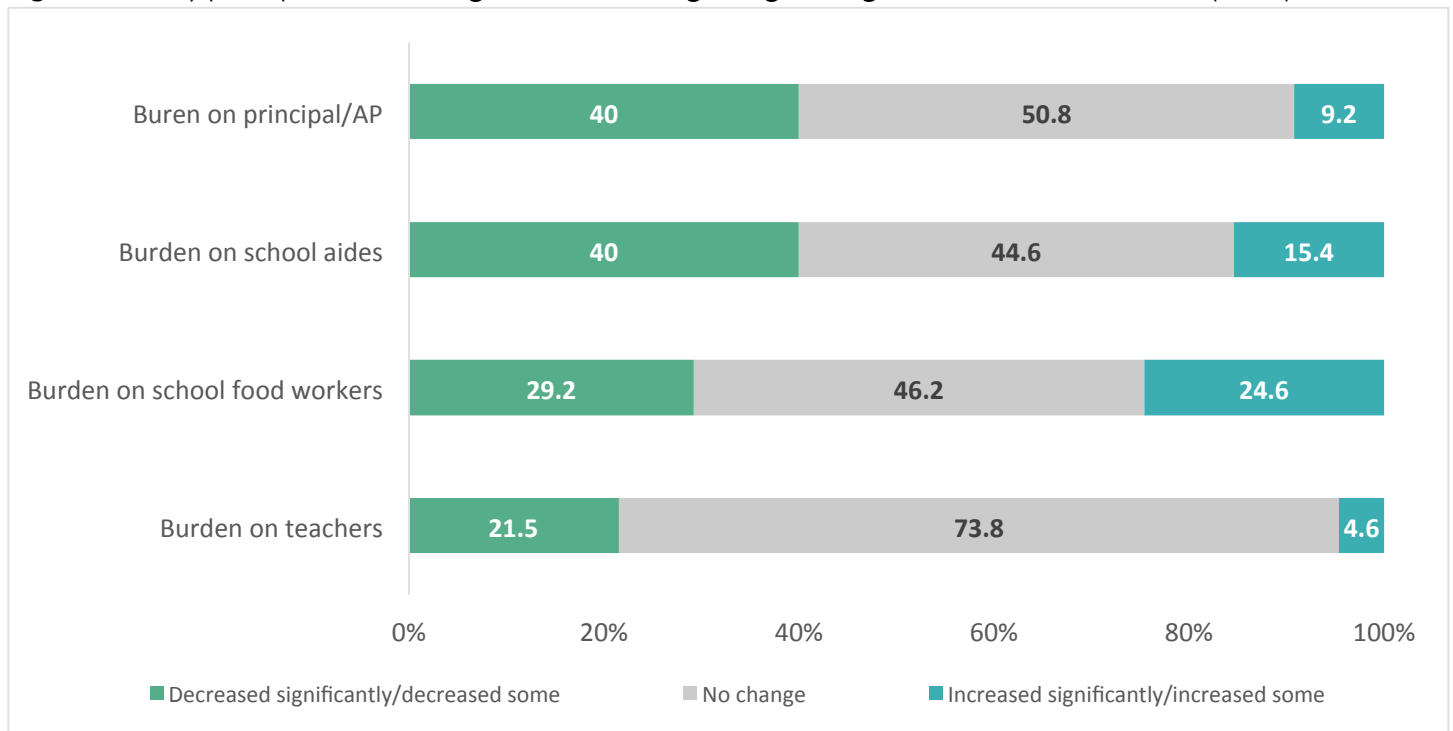
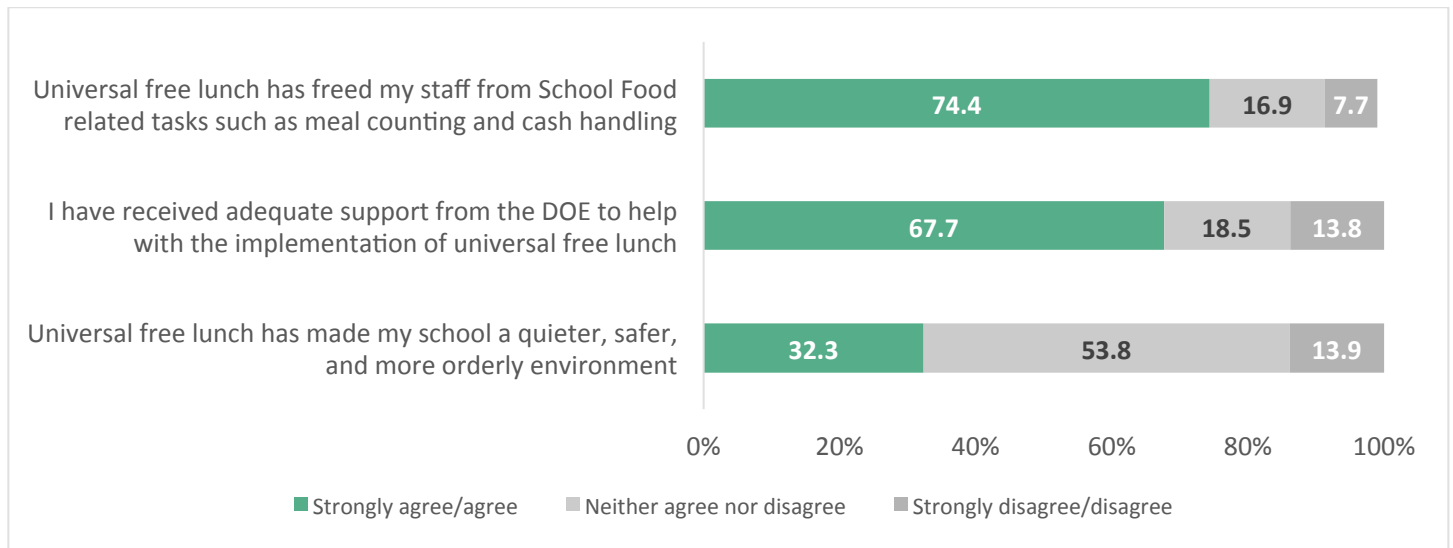


Figure 10 examines burden in more detail. When asked explicitly about reduced burden regarding tasks such as meal counting and cash handling, out of 67 respondents, 49 (74.4%) said they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “the universal free lunch program has freed my staff from School Food related tasks.”

There are other ways burden can be reduced with the universal free lunch program. For example, the survey asked if the school environment was quieter, safer, and more orderly, which could reduce burden on school staff to handle discipline. The survey also asked whether principals agreed or disagreed with the statement “I have received adequate support from the Department of Education to help with the implementation of universal free lunch.” Only 13.8% of principals “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” with the statement, and almost 70% felt that they had received adequate support.

Figure 10: Burden on school staff was reduced through fewer tasks and adequate support (n=65)

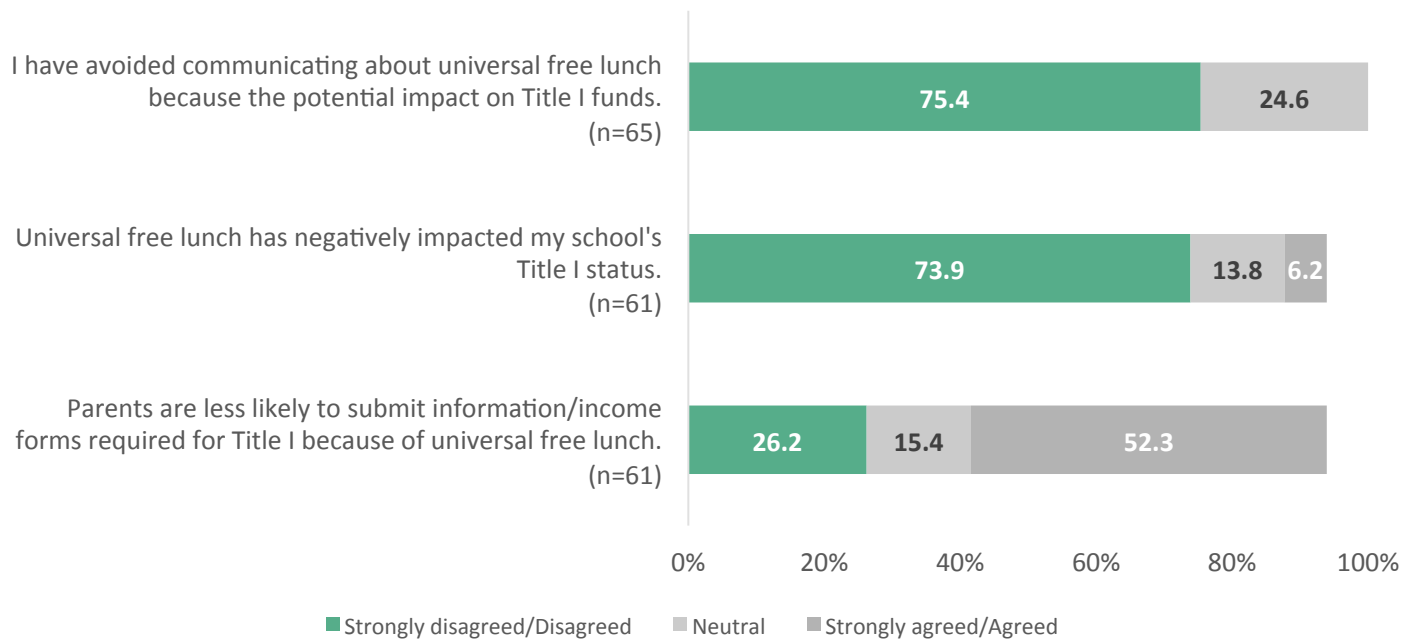


Title I Funding

Title I federal funding for New York City is determined by census data, but individual school Title I allocations are determined by school lunch forms, which specify the income status of families within the school. The New York City Department of Education expressed concern that universal free lunch, which eliminates the need to collect school lunch forms, would limit the school-level data necessary to make Title I allocations (Fertig, 2014). To address this issue, all standalone middle schools implementing universal free lunch in the 2014-15 school year were still required to distribute and collect income verification forms, which asked similar information as school lunch forms.

Three questions on the survey asked respondents about the impact universal free lunch had on their Title I funding with results provided in Figure 11. When asked if they thought parents were less likely to submit the necessary forms for Title I funding, more than half of the principals agreed or strongly agreed. Although excluded from the chart, four principals were not sure of the impact universal free lunch had on submitted income forms. Despite their concern about not receiving the forms from parents, almost 74% of principals did not believe that universal free lunch had negatively impacted their school’s Title I allocations. Again, four principals were not sure. Finally, concerns about Title I funding did not prevent principals from communicating with parents about universal free lunch, with more than 75% of principals disagreeing with the statement “I have avoided communication about universal free lunch because of the potential impact on Title I funds.”

Figure 11: Principals hold contradictory views of impacts on Title I funding.



In the additional comments section, one principal expressed concern about collecting income verification forms: *“The school needs more support in collecting Title I forms now that the direct financial incentive to submit them is gone. Perhaps parent-directed literature in multiple languages about why those forms are still needed would be helpful. Also, the forms need to be made available earlier in the summer so that they can be completed sooner, during student summer orientation programs when we have direct access to parents.”*

Interestingly, although principals were required to change the school lunch form to the income verification forms, when asked what changes the principal had made because of universal free lunch, only 13 principals checked off, “I have changed my method for collecting income information.”

Other Outcomes

Principals were asked about two additional outcomes: food waste and family expenses. One prominent concern with expanding school meals is the potential for increased food waste. Meharie et al (2013) found that nearly half of respondents saw food waste as a moderate or major concern associated with universal free meals (p. vii). In our study, almost 60% of principals said they did not see an increase in food waste. Slightly less than 20% of principals did see an increase in food waste. On the other hand, when asked if the universal free lunch program has benefited families, more than 80% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “the universal free lunch program has benefited families...by not charging for lunch.”

Future of the Program

Potential Benefits

In addition to inquiring about changes that already occurred as a result of one year of implementation, principals were asked if they saw the potential for improvements regarding the outcomes discussed above. Figure 12 shows that more than 90% of principals thought a universal free lunch program could benefit families and almost 88% thought it could improve access to nutritious food. A considerable number of principals also saw the potential to increase participation, reduce stigma, improve dining experiences, and reduce burden. On the other hand, only 33.9% of principals thought this program could reduce lateness.

Figure 12: Principals saw **many potential benefits** to universal free lunch programs. (n=65)



Future of Universal Free Lunch

Principals were asked whether universal free lunch should be continued for middle schools in the 2015-16 school year, and all 65 principals (100%) believed that the program should continue. Principals also provided reasons why the program should be continued including: increased access to nutritious food for students (11 responses), a reduction in financial burdens for students and families (7 responses), administrative benefits (6 responses), less stigma for low-income students (3 responses), and greater participation in federal food programs (3 responses). The full list of responses can be found in Appendix B.

Expanding the Program

Principals were also asked whether universal free lunch should be expanded to include elementary schools and high schools, and again all 65 principals (100%) believed that the program should be expanded. Principals provided similar reasons for why the program should be expanded including: increased access to nutritious food for students (12 responses), a reduction in financial burdens for students and families (8 responses), and less stigma for low-income students (4 responses). However, principals also cited the importance of a meal for student achievement (4 responses) and for eliminating an achievement gap (2 responses). Despite overwhelming support to expand the program, two principals expressed concern about the cost of the program and three principals suggested that high school students should pay for their own meals, or should not be prioritized over the other grades. The full list of responses, excluding responses that said “same as above”, can be found in Appendix B.

Discussion and Next Steps

This study clearly shows that principals in New York City standalone middle schools are happy with the implementation of universal free lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision. Every survey respondent recommended continuing the program into the 2015-16 school year, and recommended expanding the program to elementary and high schools. Part of the satisfaction with universal free lunch may come from the limited effort required to implement the program. Many schools had prior experience with universal free lunch and a majority of schools did not change the daily operations within their schools to accommodate the program. Another reason for satisfaction with the program was the perceived improvement in non-academic and academic student outcomes including improved access to nutritious food, increased attentiveness, and improved student grades. Additionally, concerns about changes in Title I funds proved to be unfounded.

Despite overwhelmingly positive feedback about universal free lunch, there are limitations to this study that need to be considered when interpreting the results. First, although we tested to ensure that the sample size was representative of the larger standalone middle school population, there may be differences between the sample and the population that are not detectable with the data we have. Second, while principals are experts in their school, testing out principal perceptions using quasi-experimental methods would provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of universal free lunch. For example, while principals thought that the universal lunch program was improving student grades, comparing student grades before and after the program for different groups of students will allow for a more conclusive finding. Aside from these limitations, this survey analysis provides compelling reasons to continue and expand universal free lunch in New York City.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Name:

Title:

School DBN:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey on universal free lunch! As a reminder, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this survey, discontinue filling out this survey at any time, or skip any questions. If you decide to help us with the survey, all of your answers will remain confidential. Please click below to consent to your answers being used in the Universal Free Lunch Middle School Study before beginning.

- ☐ I CONSENT for my answers to be used in the Universal Free Lunch Study.
- ☐ I DO NOT CONSENT for my answers to be used in the Universal Free Lunch Study.

Outside of academics, there are many other programs your school may have (anti-bullying, drug prevention, celebrating diversity, etc.) Where do healthy-eating programs rank in importance at your school?

- ☐ Amongst the highest ranked programs
- ☐ Moderately ranked
- ☐ Amongst the lowest ranked programs

Given the limited discretionary resources available to principals, how much do you currently devote to healthy-eating programs?

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ Up to 15%
- ☐ Between 15% and 30%
- ☐ Between 30% and 45%
- ☐ More than 45%

Please identify which students have been allowed to leave the school for lunch because your school offered open campus/open lunch:

	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Did not have open campus	School was not open	I don't know
2014-15 school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2013-14 school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2012-13 school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2011-12 school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2010-11 school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2009-10 school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2008-09 school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Provide relevant details about your open campus policy that will help us understand student participation in school lunch (e.g. when the open campus policy goes into effect for particular grades, if certain students within each grade are eligible, etc.)

Please list the earliest and latest lunch times at your school this year:

	Earliest lunch time starts at:	Latest lunch time starts at:
2014-15 school year		

Were the earliest and latest lunch times the same as above for the following school years?

	Yes	No	School was not open	Don't know
2013-14 school year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2012-13 school year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2011-12 school year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2010-11 school year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2009-10 school year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2008-09 school year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If there have been changes in school lunch times, please explain them below:

Is your school co-located?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Has your school ever provided a free lunch to all students prior to the 2014-15 school year? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Yes, through the Community Eligibility Provision.
☐ Yes, through Provision 2.
☐ Yes, because all of our students previously qualified for free lunch.
☐ No, never before.
☐ I am unsure.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your experience with the universal free lunch program?
(choose one in each row)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know
The Department of Education has effectively communicated with me about the universal free lunch program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have received adequate support from the Department of Education to help with the implementation of universal free lunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have made it a priority to get out information about universal free lunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents are less likely to submit information/income forms required for Title I because of universal free lunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Universal free lunch has negatively impacted my school's Title I status.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have avoided communicating about universal free lunch because the potential impact on Title I funds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The universal free lunch program has increased food waste.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often have you done the following: (choose one in each row)

	Never	Once	Several times	On an ongoing basis
I have conducted specific outreach to low-income parents and students about the universal free lunch program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have conducted specific outreach to parents and students who did not qualify for free lunch prior to the 2014-15 school year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Has the universal free lunch program changed the burden on school staff? (choose one in each row)

	Decreased burden significantly	Decreased burden some	No change on burden	Increased burden some	Increased burden significantly
Burden on teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Burden on principal/AP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Burden on school food workers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Burden on school aides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What groups in your school have you utilized to spread the word about universal free lunch? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Parent coordinator
- ☐ School Leadership Team
- ☐ Parent Teacher Association
- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ School food staff
- ☐ School aides
- ☐ School lunch manager
- ☐ Administrative personnel
- ☐ Students

Which changes have you made because of universal free lunch?

- ☐ I have made no changes based on universal free lunch
- ☐ I have changed the amount of time my students have to eat
- ☐ I have changed policies related to whether or not students can leave campus for lunch
- ☐ I have changed the amount of time students have for recess
- ☐ I have changed the role that teachers play in the cafeteria
- ☐ I have changed the principal's role (or the APs role) in the cafeteria
- ☐ I have changed my method for collecting income information
- ☐ Other: _____

I plan to make changes to the way my school is implementing universal free lunch next year.

- ☐ Yes _____
- ☐ No _____

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the POTENTIAL of the universal free lunch program?
(choose one in each row).The universal free lunch program has the potential to...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
remove the social stigma attached to students who qualify for free or reduced priced meals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improve the dining experience for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
positively impact social interactions amongst students during lunch periods.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
increase participation in the school lunch program for low-income students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
increase participation in the school lunch program for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reduce students skipping out at lunch time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
increase daily attendance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reduce lateness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improve student grades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improve student attentiveness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improve student test scores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improve access to nutritious food.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
make my school a quieter, safer, and more orderly environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
free my staff from SchoolFood related tasks such as meal counting and cash handling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
benefit families of our students by not charging lunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent have you ALREADY SEEN the following impacts since implementing the universal free lunch program?
(choose one in each row)The universal free lunch program has...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
removed the social stigma attached to students who qualify for free or reduced priced meals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improved the dining experience for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
positively impacted social interactions amongst students during lunch periods.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
increased participation in the school lunch program for low-income students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
increased participation in the school lunch program for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reduced students skipping out at lunch time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
increased daily attendance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reduced lateness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improved student grades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improved student attentiveness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improved student test scores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improved access to nutritious food.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
made my school a quieter, safer, and more orderly environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
freed my staff from SchoolFood related tasks such as meal counting and cash handling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
benefited families of our students by not charging lunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you think the universal free lunch program should be continued for middle schools for the 2015-16 school year?
Describe why.

- ☐ Yes _____
- ☐ No _____

Do you think the universal free lunch program should be expanded to elementary and high schools? Describe why.

- ☐ Yes _____
- ☐ No _____

Please provide any additional comments or thoughts about the universal free lunch program.

If you are willing to participate in a 30-40 minute interview about universal free lunch, please check the box below.

☐ You may contact me for an interview.

Appendix B: Open Ended Responses

I plan to make changes to the way my school is implementing universal free lunch next year. Yes? No?

- *[I will] Inform parents of the benefits of free lunch and the importance of filling-in the income form.*
- *[I will establish a] more structured method for collecting all information.*
- *I am going to make every student take a lunch. I am having recess before lunch as research shows that this increases the number of students who eat lunch.*
- *I will slightly increase the amount of time that students have to eat and have recess.*
- *I plan to send home the daily menus so students can make their selections before entering the serving area.*
- *It works well*

Do you think the universal free lunch program should be continued for middle schools for the 2015-16 school year? Describe Why.

- *Every child has should be provided with a free nutritious meal at school. This keeps students from eating a lot of sweets and junk food that they buy at the corner stores for lunch.*
- *The universal free lunch will provide all students an equal opportunity to access healthy food. It will develop harmonious interactions among students over lunch.*
- *Students are often hungry and there are times when parents' measly wages are considered [adequate] and students are excluded from eating free lunch.*
- *It gives students an opportunity to eat healthy daily*
- *It assures and entitles that all students receive free and healthy meals*
- *Because all students and families deserve equal access to quality, nutritious food options*
- *It is great to offer nutritious food to all scholars.*
- *It has streamlined the process and allowed more students access to nutritious food*
- *All students have equal access to food*
- *All students have equal access to the school food (lately the menu choices have improved significantly - more students are willing to try the food without having to pay for it).*
- *Yes, because it provides all children with a meal.*
- *Families should not have to be concerned with paying for food in school.*
- *[It] would help all students who have parents that unable to pay for lunch.*
- *I think it is a great help to all families. Even those with high income may not be there to provide meals for their children, a free meal is a great idea for all families.*
- *For all of the reasons described above. All of my students can eat lunch even if they do not have money. My students do not have to worry.*
- *For a school like ours it offers students access to meals that they may not be able to get at home.*
- *The strong financial benefit to families who are struggling economically but don't quite qualify for free lunch is worth it.*
- *Yes, there are students who do have hardships, and need a meal; however students should be made aware not to waste food.*
- *Every child must have lunch each day, avoid wasting staff time*
- *It makes it easier for us to tell the students that they do not have to pay!*
- *It puts all students on equal footing and reduces paperwork on the schools' part.*
- *It helps lunchtime to run smoothly and more effectively.*

- *The lunch line moves much quicker so we have time for recess. ALL students are eating lunch because they don't have to worry that their parents can't pay. Student focus has increased because they are not hungry in the afternoon since they can all eat.*
- *It is hard to get a middle schooler to eat lunch, making eating less complicated increases the number of students who eat. Collecting money from students is an administrative nightmare!*
- *Free lunch should be provided to all students no matter what socioeconomic background. We do not want to segregate children for issues beyond their control.*
- *All students should be provided with free lunch, removing the stigma of having low income for those that do.*
- *MS students are faced with financial and emotional stress. They tend to have better eating habits and conversations during lunch time. They feel equal and accepted if we all eat free. They like "schooly"*
- *An increase in the number of students participating in lunch is a positive outcome of this program.*
- *Increased lunch participation across the population*
- *Absolutely, more of my students eat lunch because of the program.*
- *We are the USA. We should provide health care, quality education and free school food for ALL students.*
- *Good for the students.*
- *It is so important that we can offer a free lunch to all of our students every day.*
- *Because the vast majority of my student population qualify for it.*
- *It benefits all students*
- *Students should be entitled to free lunch*
- *It is a positive impact for all students.*
- *[We saw a] positive impact last year...win-win situation*
- *All children should have access to universal free lunch*
- *It is a such a valuable resource for families and schools*
- *[It is a] good program*
- *A lot of students need free lunch*
- *It has benefited our students.*
- *All students should be able to eat for free.*

Do you think the universal free lunch program should be expanded to elementary and high schools? Describe why.

- *Everyone should have access.*
- *It ensures and entitles that all students receive free and healthy meals.*
- *This will help students have a nutritional meal on daily basis*
- *Because all students and families deserve equal access to quality, nutritious food options*
- *All students deserve access to free lunch.*
- *All students should have access to healthy breakfast and lunch*
- *All students deserve to eat a healthy lunch at school daily that is free of charge to the family.*
- *All children in public school should have access to free lunch.*
- *Access for all!!*
- *Elementary because students come to MS with poor eating habits.*
- *For some students, this is the only or best meal they will eat!*
- *Families should not have to be concerned with paying for food in school.*
- *Because families have needs for it.*
- *There is no reason why the economic benefit to families should be limited to those with children in middle school.*
- *All families should benefit from the program despite the grade level of the students*

- *All children deserve to come to school to learn and not be burdened about whether they can afford school lunch.*
- *We are always talking about teaching our students things at a young age, wouldn't it be nice if they had a meal in their bellies, even if their parents could not afford it. As for High School, the age of a student should not dictate whether or not they are fed and taken care of.*
- *All students should be provided nutritious meals with stigma or burden.*
- *For the same reason. It provides nutritious food for all scholars without the stigma of being "poor". It could be a bit better tasting.*
- *Decreases the stigma of free lunch for poverty students. All are equal.*
- *Every child must have lunch each day, without stigma*
- *All students should be provided free meals in school to ensure attentiveness and focus on learning*
- *It is our social responsibility to make sure everyone has food. For schools, students function better when they are have proper nutrition. This is well documented through research and based on my own observations.*
- *Elementary school students need to eat to improve focus and performance.*
- *Students need nutrition to focus in the classroom*
- *Give all students free lunch. This will help in a small way to level the playing field for minority and disadvantaged students.*
- *To reduce paperwork and have all students on equal footing.*
- *If the City can afford it!*
- *But not at the risk of hurting Title I status.*
- *YES for Elementary - students are too young to leave campus on their own. NO for high school - students are old enough to leave campus to buy their own food.*
- *I think it should be expanded for elementary school, but high school students should then be required to pay for their lunches*
- *They should have the same opportunities - at the very least, the elementary students.*
- *For all of the reasons that UFL is good for middle school, it would be good for elementary and HS. If this needs to be prioritized, I would put elementary first.*
- *An increase in the number of students participating in lunch is a positive outcome of this program.*
- *Students would benefit*
- *I think all students should have the right to eat free.*
- *It is a positive impact for all students.*
- *Good program*
- *Absolutely. All children should be allowed to eat*
- *I think that all children should get free lunch.*
- *Because it's universal. And what about siblings in different grade levels? Should be fair all around.*

Please provide any additional comments or thoughts about the universal free lunch program

- *Since implementation more students are trying the new food menu options (cheeseburgers, burritos, salads, etc.), but there's been less fresh fruit and more frozen fruit (strawberries, peaches, etc.). Frozen fruit is not as popular as fresh fruit (which students can take with them and eat later (i.e. after school)). Also, students are being asked to take a milk carton with every meal, but many students do not drink milk (lactose intolerant or habit); aside from water there are no alternatives to milk. Since students have to take the milk, it ends up in the garbage. At times, some students may share it with peers.*
- *It would be great if the meals were healthier, and smelled/tasted better. I am all for free lunch for students, but it would be great if the food smelled/tasted better because more students would partake in it. Some days the cafeteria smells awful. How do we expect students to eat something that we don't even want to smell? Healthier, tastier options would be a great addition to this already amazing program.*

- *I wish that the scholars had an opportunity to have smoothies. There are some young ladies who refuse to eat because they don't want to be "fat". It's very sad to see this.*
- *To improve the program, could the students have a second lunch or additional food.*
- *We are a well-run, orderly school. We work very closely with the students and families. Our attendance is already excellent. We have no social issues re: students having or not having free lunch. Students are not aware of who has it or does not.*
- *Because of the new POS system in the cafeteria, school staff still must enter student info into a computer system. Therefore the burden to school staff has not been reduced or eliminated.*
- *A program like this is especially important in neighborhoods that have been described or are self-proclaimed as "food deserts," because they help expose students to variety of food that is both nutritious and culturally appropriate (i.e. our students, which are predominantly Hispanic, have falafel and lentils for lunch and this has increased dialogue about food)*
- *We have a great cafeteria staff who work with our Wellness Committee and get regular input from students about the food they like. They added a water jet and also a salad bar because of our Wellness Committee/students.*
- *I think it is a wonderful program.*
- *I think that it's an excellent idea especially for students in low income areas. It also allows all students to eat lunch without distinction.*
- *The school needs more support in collecting Title I forms now that the direct financial incentive to submit them is gone. Perhaps parent-directed literature in multiple languages about *why* those forms are still needed would be helpful. Also, the forms need to be made available earlier in the summer so that they can be completed sooner, during student summer orientation programs when we have direct access to parents.*
- *Thank you for allowing all of my children access to a free meal. In the past, I watched students go hungry because the parents didn't send money for lunch. I had a stress free cafeteria simply because "school was free for everyone" The students ate more vegetables using the salad bar.*
- *It is absolutely critical that all children have access to food whether their parents can afford it or not.*
- *I am so grateful that we have the Universal Free Lunch Program. Prior to having the program, many parents confided that they did not have money to give their children for free lunch. In addition, many of my students would often worry about eating the food and how they or their family would pay for their lunch fee. Many students went without eating. The Universal Lunch Program enables all students to grow healthy, and eat without additional financial worries. For some of my students, breakfast and lunch are the only meals they have.*
- *It is fabulous! I am very pleased by being able to participate in UFL!*
- *It's great!*
- *It has been a great move for our schools.*
- *I think that was very nice that we have the Universal Free lunch Program.*
- *It is a blessing.*
- *Please keep universal free lunch program.*