

Ideas....Policies....Programs....Solutions

David Rubel Associates

We are pleased to post a newsletter covering project highlights from 2020 and 2021.

- 1. *Revolving Loan Fund: a new program to help low to moderate income families cover the cost of special education private school tuition.***
- 2. *“Universal school meals” means including a halal and kosher option for NYC school children***
- 3. *COVID-19 Policy Alert: research and advocacy showed how the NYC-DOE free school meals program could reach hundreds of thousands more hunger insecure New Yorkers during schools shut down***
- 4. *New community centers offer free professional help to parents to better understand and manage their child’s learning and behavioral issues.***
- 5. *NYC Haredi Workforce Project update: more than 250 people have found full time employment***
- 6. *City Limits Op-ed: NYC affluent parents have opportunity to donate \$150 million in P-EBT dollars to local charities***

Sincerely,

David Rubel

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1. Revolving Loan Fund: a new program to help low to moderate income families cover the cost of special education private school tuition.

<p>Problem</p>	<p>Every year, NYC-Department of Education (NYC-DOE) Office Legal Services decides that around 5,000 children with serious special education needs will benefit from enrollment in a private nonprofit special education school. While everyone agrees that a chronic backlog of around 15,000 cases is unacceptable, City and State remedies are not making much of a dent. The tuition reimbursement backlog hurts poor and middle income families the most, while wealthy families are barely affected. For families that cannot afford the cost of tuition for a private special education school, they can request a what is known as a Connors court decision based tuition payment (Connors vs. Mills 1998). With a what is commonly referred to as a Connors payment (which is similar to a Carter decision based tuition payment), a private school will advance the tuition cost while the school waits to be directly reimbursed by the school district. The average time it now takes for NYC-DOE to issue a written agreement and release a check for tuition payment is now averaging close to two years. These lengthy delays for issuing tuition payment are causing havoc for parents and private special education schools. The lag in payments is especially for schools that serve autistic children. Imagine if a DOE public school had to operate with only 50% of its budget while it waited for remainder.</p> <p>Current City and State efforts to reduce the backlog are not enough: While the NYSED and NYC-DOE recognize the crisis in the backlog problem, and have a Corrective Action Plan (CAP), there is little in the CAP that directly tackles the backlog in processing settlement decisions and reducing the lags in issuing payments. It is highly likely parents and special education schools will be stuck in the same place a year from now. The lack of faith in NYSED and NYC-DOE efforts to fix the backlog has caused two class action law suits to be filed within the past five months (Advocates for Children and New York Legal Assistance Group).</p>
<p>Solution</p>	<p>Create a Revolving Loan Fund for nonprofit private special education schools for short term borrow. However, due to the lengthy waiting for the City to issue court approved tuition reimbursement, the special education private schools are struggling with cash flow to cover all operational costs while maintaining high standards. DRA conceived and prepared a concept paper explaining how Revolving Loan Fund could be a practical solution. A revolving loan fund of \$200 million can solve the crisis of special education schools operating cash flow instantly. Since the funds will be repaid, it will cost the State nothing. Also, the schools only need a line of credit which will be repaid within a two year period, thereby replenishing the loan fund. The \$200 million is a <i>one time</i> allocation. New York State has years of experience with creating and administering a wide range of housing, capital education loan programs. Another option is for a government-commercial bank partnership in which a commercial bank administers the program and offers an interest rate at 1%. This solution can be implemented today and will provide immediate relief to families and schools.</p>
<p>Status and Results</p>	<p>The Sephardic Community Federation (SCF) and TeachNYS have been working closely school leaders, State Senators and Assemblymembers on drafting language for a bill. The Revolving Loan Fund Senate bill 7665 “An act to amend the education law, in relation to creating the New York state private not-for-profit special education schools revolving loan fund; and making an appropriation therefor” introduced in January 2022 by State Senator Andrew Gounardes and cosponsored in the Assembly bill AO9143 by Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz.</p>



2. “Universal school meals” means including a halal and kosher option for NYC school children

<p>Problem</p>	<p>“We know that students cannot learn or thrive in school if they are hungry all day,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. Free school lunch will not only ensure that every kid in New York City has the fuel they need to succeed but also further our goal of providing an excellent and equitable education for all students Free School Lunch for All will apply to all schools and students who participate in SchoolFood, including charter and non-public schools.” Source: NYC-DOE Press Release 09/06/2017.</p> <p>New York City is in its fifth year of operating a universal Free School Lunch program. This remarkable achievement is due to the New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE) SchoolFood program reaching 62.5% identified student percentage for the United States Department of Agriculture-Food and Nutrition Services-Community Eligibility Provision (USDA-FNS-CEP).</p>  <p>However, students in public and nonpublic schools with Islamic and Jewish religious dietary requirements cannot eat the lunches. When Mayor de Blasio first announced the program in 2017, an informal coalition of elected officials, religious leaders, education and nutrition advocates asked him to consider the religious dietary requirements of Islamic and Jewish students. By offering a Halal and Kosher option for both public and nonpublic school children, the City would be able to achieve a universal meals program not only in words but action. The stumbling block for offering a halal and kosher meals option for private school students. If more students are added to the City count, it may jeopardize the numbers in the Federal formula that allow. was that the City did not want to lose its 100% by adding more students to its CEP count.</p>
<p>Solution</p>	<p>To show the feasibility of a Halal and kosher meals option, DRA prepared a concept paper for the Sephardic Community Federation (SCF) “<i>WIN-WIN: At No Cost to the City, the Promise of a Nutritious and Free School Lunch Can Now be Extended to ALL New York City Children - Public and Non-Public School Students</i>”. Based on a FOIL request to the NYC-DOE, SCF received data showing the actual numbers of students enrolled and covered by the CEP 1.6 multiplier. Adding 20,000 nonpublic school students to the total NYC CEP count would not change the status of the NYC-DOE SchoolFood universal free lunch program. NYC-DOE could accommodate more students and still safely maintain its 100% free lunch status for all students. The concept paper offered a policy analysis documenting how NYC could offer a Halal and Kosher school meals option to more than 20,000 private school children without costing any new local tax levy dollars.</p>
<p>Status and Results</p>	<p>In early 2020, the SCF pitched the proposal to the Mayor’s Office and received a welcome response. After some delays due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Mayor’s Office and the New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE) responded with a proposal showing how the NYC-DOE could implement the program. SCF has been working closely on NYC-DOE on creating a nonpublic school kosher and halal pilot program. Plans are underway to launch the halal and kosher meals program in school year 2022-23.</p>

3. COVID-19 Policy Alert: research and advocacy showed how the NYC-DOE free school meals program could reach hundreds of thousands more hunger insecure New Yorkers during schools shut down

<p>Problem</p>	<p>When the COVID-19 Pandemic hit the country in March of 2020, thousands of school districts across the country launched “grab and go” meals so children could continue to get breakfast and lunch. Any child regardless of income was entitled to the free grab and go meals. Within the same week of the schools shutdown, the New York City Department of Education-Office of School Food set up a the largest grab and go meals program in the country with over 400 pick up sites. Grab and Go meant parents could pick up nutritious cold breakfast (yogurt, cereal) and sandwiches, fruit and a vegetable for lunch. While the meals were available, many families looked elsewhere for meals. A similar pattern occurred in the first three months of the Pandemic in most large and small school districts. For April, May and June, the NYC-DOE School Breakfast and Lunch program spent around \$66.7 million. During the same three month period in school year 2018-19, the NYC-DOE spent \$136.8 million. A drop of \$70 million. The spending patter continued for much of school year 2020-21 with several hundred million more dollars going unspent. The NYC-DOE is entitled to these Federal dollars through its participation in the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program. The drop in reimbursement income is based solely on the fact that fewer meals were being served. Fewer meals picked up meant that hundreds of thousands of parents were going elsewhere for their child’s meals. Food pantries struggled to stay afloat as demand surged.</p> 
<p>Solution</p>	<p>By the start of the 2021-21 school year, alarmed by the sharp drop in meals taken, some school districts (including Minneapolis, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Oakland, St. Paul, Prince William County) decided to switch over to the bulk food packages. The United States Department of Agriculture was encouraging school districts to consider offering parents this option. With bulk food packages, a family can pick a box of food that will last between four and seven days. The boxes are filled with shelf staples including rice, pasta, sauce, beans along with fresh vegetables and fruit. Families can save money and prepare the meals the way they like it (and with dignity). DRA issued a policy report “Practical Strategies for Helping Hungry New Yorkers Without any Additional Costs to New York City. September 2020. alerting the NYC-DOE, elected officials and anti-hunger organizations about the potential to reduce hunger in NYC by offering bulk food packages. The cost would be the same and covered by the Federal Government: Kids will no longer have the same old menu of cold sandwiches to choose from week after week. If the NYC-DOE, another \$300 million will be left on the table. DRA recommended that the DOE launch a pilot program for bulk food option in the most food scarce neighborhoods where the pantries cannot keep up with demand. The City can launch the bulk food packages option tomorrow; it doesn’t need to ask for permission or for more money from Albany/Washington or change any regulations. If NYC doesn’t want to try the bulk food option, at the very least, i, and offer a menu of both hot and cold lunches for both grab and go and in person. DRA issued an email alert in November showing that of the 25 largest school districts, NYC was the only one not providing hot meals for in person school or grab and go pick up. It was no wonder the number of meals taken had dropped by around 65%.</p>
<p>Status and Results</p>	<p>DRA worked closely with NYC Council Member Mark Treyger (Education Committee Chairperson) on pushing the NYC-DOE to offer a hot meals option for both in person and remote learners. A policy report update was issued in February 2021. In January, the DOE began serving hot meals in school and later in its grab and go program. Once it became clear that the DOE was meeting its potential to serve hot and tasty meals for the 700,000 remote learning students, DRA launched its own publicity campaign to get the word out. Three April E-mail Alerts: Citywide advocacy effort to publicize how recent changes to the NYC-DOE School Meals program offer struggling New Yorkers plentiful and tasty prepared food. Email alerts were sent out to over 100 stakeholders including elected officials, anti-hunger and CBO’s and media outlets. DRA also worked closely with local media including the NY Post and ChalkbeatNY to cover the school meals program.</p> 

4. Four new Title I funded Parent Engagement community center projects are helping non-public school parents better understand and manage their child’s learning and behavioral challenges

<p>Problem</p>	<p>One issue all education experts can agree on is the importance of parent involvement in a child’s education. What happens when a parent needs help with parenting? Where do parents, especially low to moderate income, get help with the following questions: my child does barely any homework; my child hates reading; my child just started acting out and I don’t know why? I know my child can do better but refuses to try. Should I seek professional help for my child? My parenting approach worked well for his brothers and sisters, but nothing I do works well with him. Why? How can you help me? What are Title I services and how can they help my child? This is just a handful of examples of questions parents find themselves asking themselves at some point. For families with limited resources, seeking professional help can be a budget breaker. Parents need access to professional help to improve their children’s achievement; provide professional advice/help on issues such as how to minimize homework battles, becoming a stronger/confident (happier) reader/learner, self-esteem challenges, and executive functioning/time management/organizational skills. Two DRA client organizations, the Sephardic Community Federation and the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg began looking for ways to help parents as far back as 2010.</p>
<p>Solution</p>	<p>Help is here! In beginning in the spring of 2019, DRA proposed a new Title I funded Parent Engagement Center (PECC) program design for a wider range of parent support services. The Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESSA) Title I program parent engagement component recognizes how important parents are to helping a child reach their academic potential. The NYC-Department of Education-Office of Non-Public Services embraced the new model recommendations for Title I eligible students. With the new Title I PECC model, parents can better understand how why children in the same family can have different behavioral and learning styles. Parents can learn about strategies for a wide range of child development issues including setting boundaries, building self-esteem, improving executive functioning skills and sibling rivalry. For parents considering seeking the help of a professional therapist, the PECC social worker can offer advice and practical suggestions and a referral so that the parent gets on the right path. The PECC staff offer these services on a one to one basis; the PECC also organizes and sponsor workshops on all of these topics. The workshops can be held at both the PECC or at individual schools.</p> 
<p>Status and Results</p>	<p>Beginning in the spring of 2019, DRA put together the first Title I PECC partnership between Catapult Learning and SBH Community Service network to primarily serve the Sephardic network of yeshiva schools in Brooklyn. The SBH-Catapult PECC was officially launched in March of 2020. After 12 months of operation only remote (zoom, phone, email, text) due to COVID-19 Pandemic, the interest in the PECC services has grown and now keeps two social-workers working nearly full time with short and longer term help. DRA then helped put together and launch three more PECC partnerships for yeshiva school parents: Queens-Hidden Sparks, Crown Heights-Yeled V Yalda-My Extended Family clinic and in Boro Park- the Boro Park Jewish Community Council. Community partners were paired up with Title I Vendors. The results have been very encouraging- a need is being met. Demand for services has been very strong. Hundreds of parents are seeking help in significant numbers by attending workshops or asking for one to one counseling sessions. DRA identified another funding stream so that all parents can use the PECC services not just Title I eligible parents. Much thanks goes to the NYC-DOE-Office of Non-Public Schools and following organizations for supporting the PECC creation and launch: Jewish Education Project, TeachNYS, Agudath Israel, UJO of Williamsburg and Yeshiva Education Services.</p>

5. Workforce Program Targeted to Helping the NYC Haredi Communities has benefited 2,400 with Career Advancement

March 8, 2021 –

One of the most positively impactful initiatives of Mayor Bill de Blasio benefitting the Haredi communities of New York City has been the Mayor's signature career services program, the Workforce Development Program, which has benefitted over 2,400 Orthodox Jewish individuals. It was recently rebranded as JobMap (with a website at <https://jobmap.org>).

WDP/JobMap was created pursuant to a study authored by renowned community planning and development consultant, Mr. David Rubel. This report documented that approximately 7% of the population targeted by NYC's Career Pathways initiatives are Orthodox Jews yet less than 1% of the resources generated by Career Pathways was reaching the Orthodox Jewish communities, due to cultural barriers.



Mayor Bill de Blasio and JCCGCI Executive Director Rabbi Moshe Wiener

Pursuant to extensive discussions with and thanks to the profound sensitivity and caring of Mayor de Blasio and his visionary Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven R. Banks, this pilot demonstration project was created to provide "Job Placement and Employment Services for the Low Income Hard to Engage Communities of NYC through the utilization of culturally sensitive service delivery modules. WDP/JobMap benefits from ongoing dynamic guidance and support of the Administrator of DSS/Human Resources Administration, Mr. Gary Jenkins.

Operated by Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island (JCCGCI), WDP/JobMap established sites in Williamsburg (partnering with UJO of Williamsburg), Borough Park (partnering with Boro Park JCC), Far Rockaway (partnering with JCC of Rockaway Peninsula), Crown Heights (partnering with Crown Heights JCC) and Gravesend (partnering with Sephardic Bikur Holim). WDP/JobMap's passionate director is Rabbi Yehoshua Werde, who has extensive successful experience in advancing entrepreneurial endeavors in the Orthodox community.

Since the initiation of this program two years ago, over 2,400 individuals residing throughout NYC have benefited from a variety of vital vocational assistance services such as career counseling, resume building and interview coaching, occupational skills courses (featuring in-demand topics as QuickBooks certification, Microsoft certification, and Amazon e-commerce skills) and job placement.

JobMap continues to benefit from the ongoing professional guidance of David Rubel and from Virginia Cruickshank, retired Senior Vice President for Workforce Development at FECS and one of the most respected experts and pioneers in workforce development in NYC.

Article reprint from: <https://collive.com/frum-workforce-program-benefited-2400-with-career-advancement/>

Since the workforce program was launched in 2019, more than 250 people have been placed in jobs at 20 or more hours per week.

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CITYLIMITS

Opinion: How NYC Families Can Donate Their Pandemic Food Benefits

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'If our most affluent public school families choose to donate the value of their P-EBT card, New York City charities could reap as much as \$150 million.'

Last month, the parents of one million New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE) students received a form letter in the mail from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (NYS-OTDA). Unless a parent already knew to be on the lookout for this letter, they might have just tossed it out. The form letter looks like one of the hundreds of junk mail letters everyone gets all year long.

If you are a DOE parent that did open the letter, you would have found out that your Pandemic-Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) card has been replenished with \$1,300 to cover the months of September 2020 to June 2021 (along with another \$260 to cover July and August). The P-EBT card can be used just like a credit or debit card in most grocery stores to buy food.

If our most affluent public school families choose to donate the value of their P-EBT card, New York City charities could reap as much as \$150 million.

Due to a federal school free lunch program regulation known as the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), all NYC-DOE families will benefit equally from P-EBT, regardless of income. For example, a family with an annual income of \$1 million or higher will receive the same amount on the P-EBT card as a family struggling on \$40,000 a year.

While this may seem counterintuitive, it is also an opportunity for wealthy public school parents to give an unrestricted cash shot in the arm, around \$150 million, to our local anti-hunger organizations and other nonprofits. This is because affluent parents can spend down the full value of the card to buy milk, vegetables, fruit and meat at their local grocery store, using their P-EBT card, and then have the option to donate the dollar value on their P-EBT card to nonprofits that served our neediest residents.

What is the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

When I checked with a few parents to see if they know about the P-EBT card, they asked me to explain what law would allow them to get such a nice gift in the mail. To end lunch shaming, where kids were charged for school lunch even though their families were just above the eligibility cutoff (130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level), the Federal Government came up with Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Under CEP, if a school district has at least 62.5 percent of families receiving SNAP/Medicaid or TANF, the entire school district student body would now be entitled to a free lunch.

In New York City, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, all kids grades Pre-K to 12 were now entitled to a free lunch daily. Despite the meals now being free, the pre-COVID average daily participation still hovers around 65 percent of DOE students. [Click here to continue reading the rest of the article:](#)