



Closing the Lunch and Achievement Gaps in Minnesota Schools MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

HUNGRY KIDS CAN'T LEARN

MAZON, our partners and supporting organizations seek to reduce hunger among school students in Minnesota by eliminating the fee for reduced-price lunch.

We continue our efforts to address the problem facing many students who qualify for the reduced-price lunch program, but whose families cannot afford the co-pay. These students go without lunch and experience the stigma of being denied food because their families have limited resources. According to a recent Minnesota Legal Aid Survey, many school districts have a policy that prevents children from obtaining the regular school lunch - some provide a sandwich, but others turn children away.

For a relatively small cost (about \$3.5 million per year), the state can ensure these children have access to a healthy school lunch. This small investment will:

- ❖ **Provide** all reduced-lunch students with access to a healthy school lunch. Many of these students' families are now facing reduced SNAP benefits, making healthy school lunches even more crucial for these children.
- ❖ **Help** close the achievement gap. Students who participate in school meal programs enjoy better health and stronger academic performance and demonstrate better behavior than children who do not participate and are hungry;
- ❖ **Relieve** schools of the administrative burden of collecting the 40 cent fee for reduced-price lunches. The administrative costs often outweigh this co-pay.

Support the efforts of the MAZON Advocacy Project of Minnesota (MAP-MN) to close the lunch and achievement gaps for nearly 62,000 students. Eliminating the 40-cent co-payment ensures these children are less likely to go hungry during the school day and will be better able to learn.

HUNGRY KIDS CAN'T LEARN

Minnesota's school lunch program is funded by a combination of state and federal funds:

- Free Lunch Program: the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provides funding for students whose family income is under 130% of the federal poverty level (under \$29,055 for a family of four). The state contributes \$0.125 for each of these lunches and NSLP pays up to \$3.09 per lunch.
- Reduced-price Lunch Program - For students whose family income is between 131-185% of the poverty level (\$29,965-\$42,643 for a family of four), NSLP pays \$0.40 less per lunch. Minnesota pays \$0.125 for each of these meals, but requires reduced lunch families to make up the additional \$0.40 for each meal.

For more information about MAP-MN, contact:

Judy Cook at 612-850-7116 or jcook@cookgirard.com

Scott Grayson (MAP-MN Co-chair) at 612-226-6209 or sgraysonmn@gmail.com

Rabbi Harold Kravitz (MAZON national board chair) at 952-545-2424 or hjkrav@gmail.com

1/30/14