

June 8, 2015

Dear Board of Education,

The Center School is a non-profit special education school that provides services to children in your district. We are writing this letter to request, on behalf of the students at Center School, that all local Boards of Education pass a Resolution that will allow us to provide your students with a free, nutritious lunch program. We ask that all local Boards of Education pass this Resolution so that we can be in compliance with the regulations promulgated by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Due to the language in the administrative code, Center School would be prohibited from providing free lunches unless the local Boards of Education approve our exemption from the program separately. The following is pertinent language from the administrative code:

6A:23-4.5 Non-allowable costs

- (a) Costs that are not allowable in the calculation of the certified actual cost per student include the following:

20. The cost of meals:

- iii. Effective July 1, 2007, for students when the approved private school for students with disabilities has not charged students for paid and reduced meals in accordance with the income eligibility criteria established by the Child Nutrition Program as administered by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture except when the private school has received, on an annual basis prior to the start of the fiscal year, school board resolutions from a majority of the school districts that have contracted to send students to the private school in that fiscal year, which resolves the district board of education does not require the private school to charge students for reduced and/or paid meal.

Because of the stringent requirements of the free and reduced lunch program, and the lack of participation we have received from our parents in the past when we've attempted to obtain income eligibility information from them, we know that our participation will not result in all of our children getting lunch every day. Unfortunately, in our school, it is not as simple as "the students can bring their own lunch." Viable concerns include whether children who are given money by parents for their "reduced lunch" will have that money when they get off the bus. Are we to not give a lunch to children who can't afford it and whose parents have not filled out the forms? Regardless of the determination by the free and reduced lunch program criteria, many of our children will go without lunch if we cannot be exempted from the above-stated regulation.

We all agree that each student should eat a healthy breakfast and lunch every day. We also know that when a child does not eat well-balanced and nutritious meals, their academics and behaviors are negatively affected. The Center School believes the best way to ensure that every student's nutritional requirements are met is to provide free lunch to all students. We hope you agree that the possibility of the district saving minimal dollars is not worth the sacrifices of guaranteeing that every student receives a free and nutritious meal at school.

In accordance with the administrative code, these resolutions must be redone every year.

Enclosed is an approval form and self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. We thank you in advance for your support. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 908.253.3870.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marcie Fiorentino" followed by a stylized "lam" as a surname or initials.

Marcie Fiorentino  
Executive Director

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