Dear Chancellor Carranza,

I am a parent at PS [ ] and I am writing to you because our children’s health and future is at stake. [In New York City,](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/obesity.page) nearly half of all elementary school children and Head Start children are not a healthy weight; 1 in 5 kindergarten students, and 1 in 4 Head Start children, is obese. Kids are also fighting serious disease related to obesity. Children as young as 8 years old are on [cholesterol-lowering](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3018249/) and [blood pressure-lowering](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4062129/) medication. [Fifty percent of children under 15 have fatty streaks](https://www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJM199806043382302?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3Dwww.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) in their arteries, the beginning stages of heart disease. Annual health care costs relating to obesity are over $200 billion.

We cannot continue to serve out kids highly processed foods like fried fish and cheese and Tostitos taco bowls (both on the lunch menu) and chocolate milk sweetened with 20 grams of sugar per 8 ounce container. I am writing to implore you to prioritize our children’s health by pressuring the Office of Food and Nutrition Services to move away from highly-processed foods and sweetened flavored milk. New York City needs to lead the way with the best we can offer our kids—scratch-cooking, nutrition education and school gardens, and more time kids can eat school lunch.

That’s why I am a member of the [NYC Healthy School Food Alliance](https://www.nychealthyschoolfoodalliance.com/), a grass-roots parent-led organization advocacy group. Working with the office of Borough President Eric Adams, we are proposing a holistic plan for that includes:

* Changing the Food: Scratch-cooked healthy and culturally-appropriate menus;
* Changing the Mindset: Provide every grade with nutrition and culinary education so that kids can make the best choices and understand the power of healthy whole foods
* Growing the Food: Give kids a connection between the ground and the table by funding gardens at all schools; and
* Increasing the Time: None of this matters if kids don’t have the time to eat their lunches. Kids need 30 minutes for lunchtime, enough time to socialize and eat! (Short lunch times and rushed eating have been associated with [detrimental effects including excess food waste and obesity; kids snack later on because they haven’t had enough time to eat.](https://brightthemag.com/school-lunches-are-too-short-and-thats-a-problem-1fa7d933c67d))

With regard to changing school food, we urge your office to pressure OFNS to roll out scratch-cooking, and stop serving a menu of highly-processed carnival foods, and eliminate sweetened milk that is feeding the obesity crisis.

To achieve our nutrition education and garden goals we believe the DOE should create a Wellness Coordinator at every school; this position would erase inequity and ensure every school has a full suite of Wellness Programming that includes nutrition, PE, gardens, and mental health resources. In addition, this position should be funded with $20K per school to implement Wellness programming.

And with regard to lunchtimes, we propose mandating that every school have a one hour lunch and recess plan, with 30 minutes for each.

We are responsible for our children’s future — for nurturing their minds and fueling their bodies and giving them the ability to succeed and shape positive lifelong behaviors and attitudes. We have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of 850,000 children every day. Shouldn’t we start right now?

I look forward to hearing your thoughts!

Sincerely,

NAME and CONTACT INFO OF PARENT