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Jill Linnell,
Grants and Contracts Manager,
Bronx Health REACH/New York CEED
Institute for Family Health,
16 East 16th Street,
New York, NY 10003

Dear Madam:

As a veteran teacher in P.S. 221 the physical and mental changes in the elementary aged pupils over the years have been noticeable. The neighborhood stores have remained constant with various corner stores, fast food franchises and Chinese food restaurants nestled within every other block in Crown Heights. The only supermarket within several blocks serving the neighborhood is Met Foods on East New York Avenue. One variation is that there are fewer mothers at home preparing meals than when I began my teaching career. As a result, children have been making their own nutritional decisions for a number of years especially for their breakfast and the evening meals. It has an on-going battle fought by my colleagues and me with children who begin their day with a packet of chips and a blue sugary liquid. In the evening, there is the meal of french-fries and chicken wings doused with ketchup and other sweetened condiments. The result of which has been the noticeable rise in obesity rates as well a mental and physical sluggishness that I have observed among the student population. The long term health crisis as a result of obesity if not addressed such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer will place additional burdens on the health care system in the United States as well as impact young lives by decreasing their human potential.

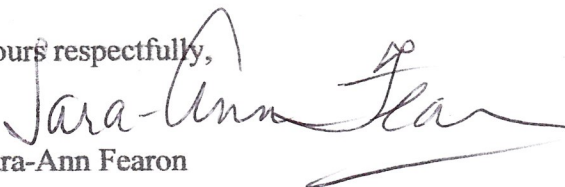
The differences in services available to an underserved neighborhood such as Crown Heights is staggering when compared with more affluent communities separated by just several city blocks. The lack of access to fresh foods and vegetables, cultural programs available to the children and their parents especially those from Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, and Latino families remains too high in the twenty-first

century. Especially as we are reminded of the ease with which we may exchange information electronically.

The Seeds in the Middle project founded by Nancy Katz was initially introduced in P.S. 221 during 2009 school year with the introduction of the Urban Voices project offered by the New York City Metropolitan Opera Company to tremendous praise from both teachers and parents, the Hip2Bhealthy program followed. The Hip2B healthy component was adopted by a few teachers at the beginning. However, when it became apparent that there were inter-curricular links, the school became abuzz with planting activities, cooking classes and demonstrations led by trained chefs. Student and parental participation increased with the introduction of soccer for children and Zumba classes for adults. Overheard conversations among the children of P.S. 221 have shifted to include critical and conscious choices about the foods that they and their parents select.

I am reminded of the saying, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." This project has created what we hope to be mental and physical adjustments that will continue through out the lives of these children. It is also my desire to see the continuation of this program in P.S. 221 with its students becoming the ambassadors of healthy eating within their families and their communities.

Yours respectfully,


Sara-Ann Fearon