

Appleseed This Week

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A nonprofit network of 16 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico, Appleseed is dedicated to building a society in which opportunities are genuine, access to justice is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest.

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October 8, 2009

Join us for

New Mexico Center Fights Hunger in Schools

New Report Shows How to Expand Free, Discounted Meal Programs

With both school and household budgets strained by the economic downturn, student hunger is threatening public education across the country, as countless children are underfed and unable to learn. In response, New Mexico Appleseed has outlined a strategy to take full advantage of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), helping local schools feed more children at a lower cost.

"Hunger is a huge problem in New Mexico. At least 20 percent of children here do not know where their next meal will come from," said Jennifer Ramo, executive director of New Mexico Appleseed. "The school lunch program provides a unique opportunity to give these kids two solid meals a day, when they might not get a third one at home. There is no excuse to overlook eligible children or leave any federal reimbursement money on the table."

The full report, "Full Stomachs ~ Full Minds," is [available here](#). The executive summary is can be [read here](#).

Prompted by a controversial alternative lunch program in which Albuquerque Public Schools attempted to collect unpaid lunch debts by giving a cold cheese sandwich and milk to children whose parents owed money, New Mexico Appleseed embarked on a mission to ensure that no child goes hungry or suffers such humiliation.

The report's recommendations revolve primarily around maximizing student enrollment in the NSLP and expanding the pool of eligible students in order to secure higher federal reimbursement rates for meals. Improving direct certification by, for example, marrying NSLP eligibility to enrollment in Medicaid or the food stamp program would help would help qualify children more easily and at a lower administrative cost.

**Appleseed's Annual
DC Gala at the
Harman Center for
the Arts!**

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support Appleseed
through the United
Way (#9639) and the
CFC (#10758)!**

New Mexico Appleseed seeks to eliminate all of the barriers that children face in accessing school meals, whether the bus comes too late for free breakfast programs or applications are impossible to fill out because parents cannot read or speak English. There are many ways to improve meal programs so that more children can eat and pay attention in class.

New Mexico Appleseed is grateful to the law firms of Skadden Arps, Brownstein Hyatt, and O'Melveny & Myers, as well as Huron Consulting Group, for their generous contributions to this project.

For more information, visit the [New Mexico Appleseed website](#) or contact Jennifer Ramo at jramo@appleseednetwork.org.