



Paid Lunch Equity Tool (PLE) Q&A

1. Does our School Food Authority (SFA) need to submit a PLE tool for the 2025-2026 school year?

SFAs with a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2024, are exempt from PLE pricing requirements found at [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)](#).

To apply for the PLE exemption, complete the attestation statement that can be found at: [Paid Lunch Equity \(PLE\)](#). Once you complete the form, you should receive an email showing that you applied. Keep this for your records.

SFAs with a negative balance are required to submit a PLE tool for the 2025-2026 school year to ensure their prices are compliant with the PLE pricing requirements.

2. Is the school district able to determine the price of paid lunches solely based on what they want to charge?

For SFAs with a negative balance, they must charge at least the minimum price determined by their PLE tool.

SFAs with a zero or a positive balance can choose to complete the PLE Tool to calculate their student paid lunch price for SY 2025-26. While it is not required, it is recommended, to ensure that the paid prices can continue to cover expenses.

Some considerations when thinking about pricing include:

- Expected reimbursement. Remember, reimbursement is based on individual eligibility. No matter what the student paid lunch price is, the school will receive the same reimbursement amount regardless of the paid lunch price charged.
- Labor shortages and potential wage increases.
- Increased food costs.
- Fluctuation in participation.
- Meal quality. Remember, quality should not decrease if a school decides to lower their paid lunch prices.

3. Will reduced prices remain the same, \$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.40 for lunch?

Yes, SFAs cannot charge reduced eligible students more than .30 cents for breakfast and .40 cents for lunch.

4. Do schools need to fill out a form or apply for the Paid Lunch Equity Waiver if the school chooses not to complete the PLE Tool?

Yes, you will need to complete the attestation form that can be found under the [Paid Lunch Equity \(PLE\)](#) dropdown.

5. If a school decided not to apply for the waiver, am I correct in thinking that there is a 10 cent cap on lunch pricing?

Consistent with [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)\(4\)\(i\)](#), SFAs are not required to raise their paid lunch price by more than 10 cents for SY 2025-2026 from the last year they charged for paid lunches. SFAs may still choose to raise the price by more than 10 cents.

Schools can determine how much they need to charge based on analyzing their projected income and expenses for the upcoming year.

In years when the PLE tool is required, it calculates the required price increase needed but will not require an increase greater than 10 cents in any year. This means that schools always have the option to raise prices higher if needed to cover expenses but the regulations would not require more than a 10 cent increase in a year.

For additional questions, please email: scnfinance@doe.in.gov with “PLE Tool” in the subject line.