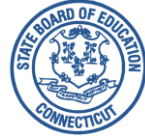





STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program

FROM: John D. Frassinelli, Division Director 
School Health, Nutrition and Family Services

DATE: July 08, 2022

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum No. 12-22
Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for School Year 2022-23

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently issued guidance addressing the Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) tool for school year (SY) 2022-23. Included in this guidance was [USDA Memo SP 08-2022](#), [CACFP 07-2022](#), and [SFSP 03-2022](#), *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022: Effect on Child Nutrition Programs*. This memo states that school food authorities (SFAs) with a positive or zero balance in its nonprofit school food service account as of December 31, 2021, are exempt from the PLE pricing requirements of [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)](#) for SY 2022-23.

Additionally, to assist SFAs to better transition to normal pricing based on their local needs, the USDA approved the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) request to waive the PLE requirements (set forth in 42 U.S.C. 1760(p)(2) and 7 CFR 210.14(e)), July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023) to raise the paid lunch price for SY 2022-23. The PLE requirement applies only to school *lunch paid* prices. **Therefore, regardless of the SFA's fund balance as of December 31, 2021, SFAs have the discretion to choose whether to raise the paid lunch price for SY 2022-23.**

The availability of the PLE waiver provides SFAs the flexibility to price paid lunches at a level that is best for their school or district based on local needs. This includes the option to decrease paid lunch prices from their previous levels. However, before adjusting paid lunch prices for SY 2022-23, SFAs should carefully review their budget to determine the most appropriate pricing. Some considerations for SFAs when setting paid lunch prices include:

- the federal reimbursement rate will be the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) rates starting July 1, 2022;
- reimbursements will be based on the free, reduced, or paid eligibility of a student;
- increased costs such as food, supplies, paper, transportation, and labor; and
- fluctuation in meal participation.

Note: Meal quality cannot decrease if a SFA decides to lower the paid lunch price.

SFAs that wish to take advantage of the exemption and waiver do not need to do anything.

SFAs that decide **not** to opt in to the PLE exemption or waiver must notify the CSDE and follow the instructions below.

1. To establish paid lunch prices for SY 2022-23, refer to the USDA's [SY 2022-23 PLE tool](#). SFAs should use the *last lunch price charged to students* as the basis for their SY 2022-23 PLE calculation. For many SFAs, this will be the lunch price for SY 2019-20.
2. SFAs participating in the NSLP for SY 2022-23 that choose not to opt in to the PLE waiver must assess if their paid lunch price meets the outlined requirements and adjust accordingly. SFAs participating in the NSLP that (on a weighted average) charged less than the target weighted average price of **\$3.31** for paid lunches in SY 2021-22 are required to adjust their weighted average lunch price or add *non-Federal funds to the non-profit school food service account*.

Questions may be directed to your [school nutrition consultant](#).

JDF:tdd

Attachment

Important: This is a numbered Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) operational memorandum that contains important program information. Please read carefully and retain in a binder for future reference. All CSDE operational memoranda are posted on the CSDE's [Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.