

OSPI School Meal Programs Reference Sheet

Paid Lunch Equity

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must ensure sufficient funds are provided to the non-profit school food service account for meals served to students not eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This requirement may be met through the prices charged for 'paid' meals or through other non-Federal dollars provided to the non-profit school food service account.

Requirements

- LEAs must annually review paid lunch prices by completing the USDA Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Tool.
 - Exceptions:
 - LEAs operating the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 district-wide are **not** required to complete the PLE Tool.
 - LEAs with a positive balance in the non-profit school food service account as of June 30 of the second preceding school year.
- When the average paid lunch price is less than the difference between the free and paid Federal reimbursement rate, the LEA must act by:
 - Increasing the prices charged for paid lunch meals, or;
 - Providing non-Federal funding sources to the non-profit school food service account.
 - Non-Federal sources may include:
 - Per-meal non-federal reimbursement for *any paid* meal.
 - Any funds provided by organizations for *any paid* meal.
 - Any proportion attributable to *paid meals* from direct payments made from school district funds to support lunch service.

Steps to Completing the PLE Tool:

1. Gather the required data:
 - a. The weighted average price requirement from the previous year. Find this in last year's completed PLE Tool, in the SYXXXX-XX Report Tab.
 - b. To complete the PLE Tool you will need:
 - i. All paid lunch prices for October of the previous year.
 - ii. Number of paid lunches served at each paid lunch price in October of the previous school year.
 - c. If you plan to contribute non-Federal funds you will need:



- i. Total number of paid lunches served in the previous year.
 - ii. Total dollar amount of non-Federal contributions from all previous school years.
2. Access the USDA PLE Tool for the current school year.
 - a. The first tab of the tool includes detailed instructions on how to use the tool. Print these instructions to reference as you complete the tool.
3. Complete the PLE Tool
 - a. Enter the information into orange cells only – all other cells are protected.
 - b. Retain a copy of your completed PLE Tool for use during subsequent years and review during Administrative Reviews.

Resources

- [7 CFR 210.14](#)
- [Current year PLE Tools and Instructions](#)

Acronym Reference

- CFR - Code of Federal Regulations
- LEA - Food Distribution Program
- OSPI - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- PLE - Paid Lunch Equity
- NSLP - National School Lunch Program
- USDA - United States Department of Agriculture