

SY2026-27 Paid Lunch Equity Exemption
Illinois State Board of Education
Nutrition Department

Under the Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) requirement, School Food Authorities are required to ensure that there are sufficient funds provided to the nonprofit school food service account for lunches served to students not eligible for free or reduced priced meals. There are two ways to meet this requirement: annually raise the prices charged for paid lunches or providing equivalent amount of funds from nonfederal sources to the nonprofit school food service account.

Under the 2026 Appropriations Act, for SY 2020-2027, only SFAs that had a negative balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2025, shall be required to establish a price for paid lunches served through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in accordance with section 12(p) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) (42 U.S.C. 1760(p)). Consistent with the terms of the Appropriations Act, this memorandum provides notice that any SFA with a positive or zero balance in its nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2025, is exempt from paid lunch equity pricing requirements found at 7 CFR 210.14(e) for SY 2026-2027. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will be providing additional guidance for SFAs that are required to comply with the paid lunch equity provision during SY 2026-2027.

Using the form below, the School Food Authority must provide the balance in their nonprofit food service account as of June 30, 2025 to be considered for the exemption. Documentation should be maintained with this exemption in order to validate this balance for the School Food Authority. This documentation may be reviewed by the State Agency during a Resource Management Review. Please be aware that the USDA may seek additional information on the financial standing of the School Food Authority approved for exemptions in order to inform future policy considerations.

*****This Paid Lunch Equity Exemption may NOT be used as a corrective action plan to previous citations under the Paid Lunch Equity requirements. *****

When completed, please email completed and signed information to PLExemption@isbe.net

**Paid Lunch Equity Exemption Request for SY2026-27
Illinois State Board of Education, Nutrition Department**

School Food Authority (District/School Name):	Agreement/RCDT# (00-000-000-00):
Contact Person:	Contact Phone:
City:	Contact Email:

1. Provide the balance in the nonprofit food service account as of June 30, 2025

Balance as of June 30, 2025

Name of Authorized Representative Signature of Authorized Representative Date

*****This Paid Lunch Equity Exemption may NOT be used as a corrective action plan to previous citations under the Paid Lunch Equity requirements. *****