Paid Lunch Equity (PLE)

The purpose of the Paid Lunch Equity is to ensure that schools are charging an equitable price for the paying student lunch price, coupled with Federal reimbursement to be balanced with the reimbursement given for Federal free meals and reduced meals served. The USDA expects SFAs to not subsidize paid meals with Federal free reimbursement.

When the PLE Tool is not required
Each year the question comes up: Do I have to complete the PLE Tool? There are two situations in which you will not have to fill out the PLE Tool:

- Charging above the USDA Target Rate: $3.31 (2022-23), $3.18 (2021-22) $3.09 (2020-21)

- Part of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program and all of your meals are served free of charge to students **(NOT REQUIRED, BUT BEST TO KEEP UP WITH TOOL FOR DOCUMENTATION PURPOSES AND IN THE EVENT SFA LEAVES CEP PROGRAM, WILL HELP TO SET LUNCH PRICES).**

Requirements to complete Paid Lunch Equity tool
- 2010-11 lunch prices (If SFA has never completed the PLE Tool or does not have one on record) or accurately completed tool from previous school year

- Current lunch prices
- Participation numbers from previous October (October 2019 – pandemic)

If required to raise, what are your options?
- Raise lunch prices

- Contribute Non-Federal funds to the National School Lunch Program Account

- Apply for a waiver/exemption, if available

Clarifications

$0.10 Cap - $0.10 is the maximum ISBE can enforce raising lunch prices to comply. School Food Authority (SFA) has the right to raise lunch prices as much as they desire and approved by administration. ISBE is only responsible for requiring $0.10, what the SFA raises above $0.10 is at their discretion.

$0.10 requirement to raise lunch prices only applies to PAID LUNCHES. Reduced lunches are required to be no more than $0.40. Recently we have noticed several SFAs raising Reduced Price lunches $0.10 with paid lunches.

Possible Citations

- Did not complete PLE tool
- Did not use acceptable option when required to increase