

MEMO

DATE: May 12, 2026

TO: Doug Eccarius, Superintendent

FROM: Maureen Jones, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations

SUBJECT: Food Service Pricing for 2026-2027 School Year

The Board recently approved the school food service contract to be renewed with Quest for the 2026- 2027 school year. The District has received the approval letter from the Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department for our renewal process for the National School Lunch Program.

We have examined the food service program revenues and expenses for the 2025-26 school year so far (see attachment). The program experienced a large deficit (\$76,591) for the previous school year. By law, we are not allowed to run the lunch program as a profit center. The district has accumulated roughly \$200K in losses since 2017-18 and losses of over \$800K since joining the NSLP. Prior to joining the NSLP in 2011-12, the District experienced yearly losses of \$200K, on average. I am also attaching the unpaid student lunch data for the past several fiscal years so that the board is aware of the effects of the Hunger-Free Students' Bill of Rights Act, which was enacted in 2018.

Some market trends that effect next year's pricing are as follows. The January 2026 Consumer Price Index is up 4.10% from one year ago as well as continued labor cost pressures. Vendor price increases on average 5%. Minimum wage increased to \$15.00 on January 1, 2025, however it is difficult to hire staff at that rate.

Quest is the service provider for all lunch service districtwide. The cost to the District for next year will be \$4.5835 per meal. Last year, D89 paid \$4.4030 for lunches. The new cost represents a 4.1% increase in cost, which is the increase in the Consumer Price Index – All Foods Away From Home, as allowed in the bid documents. The District will pay \$1.1646 per after school snack for the GECRC. This cost is also an increase of 4.1% from the prior year of \$1.11.

Reimbursement rates from the federal government for the 2025-26 school year were \$4.60 for those students on free lunch, \$4.20 for students on reduced-price lunch and \$0.44 for paying students. Historically, these rates increase slightly each new school year and we expect ISBE to announce the 2026-27 final rates by the end of

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July. With this information, and the large deficit in the program for this year, I recommend that we increase the cost of the lunch price to students. Additionally, each year, the district must file the Paid Lunch Equity tool for the NSLP with the ISBE. This tool is used to ensure that school food service authorities charge an equitable, non-subsidized price for paid student lunches compared to the federal reimbursement received for free and reduced-price meals. Concerned with our large deficit from 2024-25, the auditor from the Nutrition Department at ISBE recommended that we increase our paid lunch price to \$4.15 for FY2026-27.

For reasons cited above, I am recommending that the Board raise the meal price to \$4.15 and the ala carte entrée price to \$4.00 for next school year at the middle school. Additionally, I am recommending the price for adult lunches also be raised to \$4.75 to cover the cost of the lunch. We are also recommending a few increases to the prices of the other “ala carte” items as outlined below.

The Board also needs to set the milk price at the elementary level for students who choose to purchase an individual carton of milk. Three years ago, the Board set the cost of milk at the elementary level at \$0.50 per carton. I recommend the cost of milk increase to \$0.55 per carton for next school year.

Item	2025-2026	2026-2027
Student Lunch w/Milk	\$4.00	\$4.15
Adult Lunch /Milk	\$4.50	\$4.75
Entrée A la Carte	\$3.85	\$4.00
Milk	\$0.50	\$0.55
Bottled Water	\$1.25	\$1.25
Izze	\$2.00	\$2.10
Switch	\$2.00	\$2.10
Cookie	\$0.75	\$0.80
Baked Chips	\$1.75	\$1.90
Ice Cream	\$1.75	\$1.90
Cereal w/milk	\$1.50	\$1.60
Whole wheat donut	\$1.75	\$1.90
Whole wheat pop-tart	\$1.75	\$1.90

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Student Unpaid Meal Balances	
As of Date	Total Amount
6.30.2022	\$ 6,430.49
6.30.2023	\$ 25,742.89
6.30.2024	\$ 33,290.91
6.30.2025	\$ 43,881.74
4.30.2026	\$ 60,467.04

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