

Woodbridge Lunch Program – Meal Price Adjustment Proposal

The Woodbridge Lunch Program has not increased its paid meal prices in over five years. Due to federal waivers provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, the district was exempt from making annual price adjustments as typically recommended by the USDA and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). While this provided short-term relief for families, the district must now realign its pricing with federal guidelines and financial sustainability goals.

According to the USDA's Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Tool, the recommended average weighted meal price for districts is **\$3.86**. However, since Woodbridge serves only grades K–6, the applicable target price is **\$3.56**. Our current paid lunch price remains at **\$3.00**, well below the target, and has not been adjusted since before the 2019–2020 school year.

Below is the PLE Tool's suggested pricing trajectory, had annual increases been implemented:

School Year Recommended Price

2019–2020	\$3.00
2020–2021	\$3.09
2021–2022	\$3.18
2022–2023	\$3.31
2023–2024	\$3.56

Additionally, the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) compiled county-level lunch pricing for comparative analysis. Current average elementary school lunch prices in surrounding counties are as follows:

County	Elementary Lunch Price
Fairfield	\$3.10
Hartford	\$3.23
Litchfield	\$3.25
Middlesex	\$3.81
New Haven	\$3.19
New London	\$3.19
Tolland/Windham	\$2.17

Locally, peer districts have already moved toward compliance with USDA targets:

- **Orange:** \$3.40
- **Bethany:** \$3.30
- **Cheshire:** \$3.50

Recommendation

To align with USDA guidelines and maintain financial viability of the meal program, I recommend one of the following approaches:

1. **Single-Year Adjustment:** Increase the paid meal price by **\$0.50** for the 2025–2026 school year, bringing the price to **\$3.50**. This would likely maintain compliance for the next two years, with a potential minor adjustment in year three.
2. **Phased Approach:** Increase the price by **\$0.30** for 2025–2026 and another **\$0.30** in the 2026–2027 school year. This would gradually bring the price to **\$3.60**, slightly exceeding the USDA’s current K–6 target, allowing for potential changes in future guidelines.

Either approach would move the district toward compliance with federal requirements while remaining competitive with neighboring districts.