

Mr. Luis E. Diaz, Chief Operating Officer
Office of District Operations

**SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD AUTHORIZE
SCHOOL MEAL PRICES FOR FULL-PRICED STUDENT
MEALS, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 2026**

COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
PLAN: EFFECTIVE & SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONAL PRACTICES**

The district is requesting approval to establish paid meal prices as we transition from the current district-wide Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) at select schools, to a hybrid model based on specific school site direct certification status. This transition is required based on the current district wide direct certification percentage not meeting the required sixty-two and a half percent threshold that has allowed free breakfast and lunch for all students the past four years. The hybrid CEP model will allow all students in specific schools meeting the sixty-two and a half percent direct certification required threshold to continue to have free breakfast and lunch daily. For all other schools not meeting this requirement, all direct certified students will continue to receive free breakfast and lunch automatically. For the other students enrolled within these schools, they must complete a lunch application that will determine their pricing status of either free, reduced or full pricing.

As it relates to the proposed pricing chart referenced within this board item, please take into consideration that food prices have increased due to inflation, supply chain disruptions, and higher vendor pricing. Core items such as milk, produce, proteins, grains, and packaging now cost substantially more than in prior years. In addition, the district continues to focus on offering healthier, minimally processed food options, which often carry higher purchasing and preparation costs than highly processed alternatives. Maintaining fresh ingredients and improving meal quality supports student wellness and aligns with evolving nutritional expectations. School nutrition programs are experiencing increased operational costs across multiple areas, including higher wages, rising employee benefit expenses, increased utility and transportation costs, and growing expenses associated with equipment maintenance and replacement. These combined financial pressures have increased the overall cost of operating the food service program and require adjustments to maintain long-term program sustainability while continuing to provide quality meals to students.

Programs participating in the United States Department of Agriculture school meal programs must comply with strict nutritional standards that include offering fresh fruits

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and vegetables, whole grains, reduced sodium items, and higher-quality protein options. While these requirements support improved student health and wellness outcomes, they also increase the overall cost of meal planning, purchasing, and preparation.

Proposed Action on School Lunch Prices

As per School Board Policy 8500 – Food Services, student meal prices must be approved by the School Board. Authorization is requested to establish a price for student meals effective August 13, 2026.

The Department of Food and Nutrition will continue to operate under the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) providing free meals for students where feasible.

For those schools that do not meet the qualifications for free meals under the CEP program, the following will be the meal prices for the 2026-2027 school year:

Lunch	Proposed Charge to Student	Federal Reimbursement
Free Lunch	\$0.00	\$4.71
Reduced Price Lunch	\$0.40	\$4.31
Full Price Lunch Elementary	\$4.20	\$0.55
Full Price Lunch Secondary	\$4.20	\$0.55

Breakfast	Proposed Charge to Student	Federal Reimbursement
Free Breakfast All Elementary and K-8 Schools	\$0.00	\$2.94
Reduced Price Breakfast Middle and Senior High	\$0.30	\$2.64
Full Price Breakfast Middle and Senior High	\$2.50	\$0.40

RECOMMENDED:

That The School Board of Miami Dade County, Florida authorizes the following breakfast and lunch pricing for the 2026-2027 school year for students, except for the following:

- 1) Students enrolled in an identified Community Eligibility Program (CEP) school;
- 2) Students identified as direct certified; and
- 3) Students identified as eligible for free or reduced pricing through the lunch application process.

- Breakfast: \$2.50
 - Middle School
 - Senior High
- Lunch (Elementary): \$4.20
- Lunch (Secondary): \$4.20