



FEDERAL FUNDS TO NEW YORK CITY: NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH, BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

Overview

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) (Assistance Listing Number 10.555) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) (Assistance Living Number 10.553) provide low-cost or free breakfast and lunch to students in public and non-profit private schools across the United States. Both are federally funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and aim to combat child hunger and promote healthy eating habits among children. NSLP, first established in 1946, served 7.1 million lunches in its first year. SBP started out as a pilot program in 1966 serving 80 thousand children in that school year. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024, 7.6 billion breakfasts and lunches were served in the United States.

Nationally, children qualify for free breakfast and lunch if a family's income is at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level or if they participate in other income-based programs, such as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program. In 2017, New York City made all school-age children eligible for free breakfast and lunch regardless of income through the Free School Lunch for All program.

City Funding

Combined, the City's latest projections include \$538 million for NSLP and SBP in each of FY 2025 and FY 2026 (see Figure 1), with the City's Department of Education (DOE) receiving more than 99 percent of funds.

IMPACT

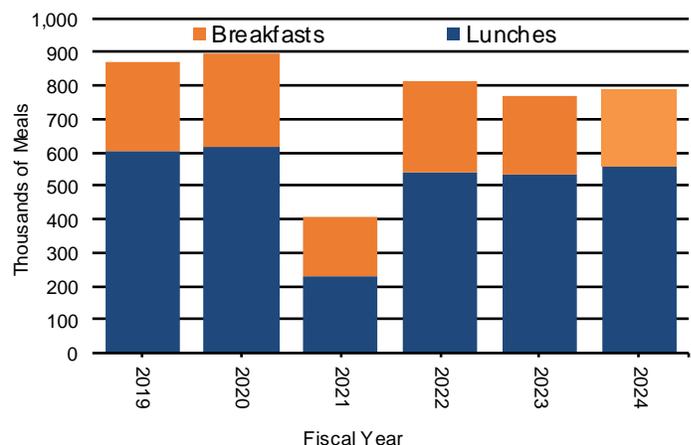
- In FY 2025, the DOE's school food budget is about \$620 million of which 92 percent is federally funded. In FY 2025 and FY 2026, both NSLP and SBP make up 94 percent of federal funds. The balance is funded by another USDA program which the DOE uses to support snacks and meals for students who attend programs or activities outside of the regular school day.
- FY 2024, City schools served 788,000 meals daily, up 3 percent compared to FY 2023 (see Figure 2). In total there were 1,058,100 eligible students in FY 2024 compared to 1,047,900 in FY 2023.

FIGURE 1
Department of Education School Food Services
FY 2026 Preliminary Budget
(in millions)

	FY 2025	FY 2026
Total Expenses		
City Funds	\$ 24.0	\$ 23.9
State Funds	26.7	33.2
Federal Funds	569.8	569.8
Total	\$ 620.5	\$ 626.9
Federal Funds:		
School Lunch Program	\$ 423.0	\$ 423.0
School Breakfast Program	115.0	115.0
All Other	31.7	31.7
Total	\$ 569.7	\$ 569.7

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding
Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; OSC analysis

FIGURE 2
NYC Department of Education
Average Breakfasts and Lunches Served Daily



Sources: NYC Mayor's Management Report; OSC analysis