

The School Lunch Tray: June 19, 2024

Dear School Sponsors of Child Nutrition Programs:

The School Lunch Tray contains the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) weekly email notifications for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs. This week's topics are listed below.

Action Items

- None

Need to Know

- Change to Distribution of Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (S-EBT) Benefits
- Local Food for Schools Incentive Program Payments for Third Quarter 2023
- Reminder for USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Participants: Receipting Invoices
- Summary of Meal Pattern Updates for School Year 2024-25: USDA's final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Clarification on Potable Water Requirement: USDA's final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Updated Comparison Charts: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 and Preschool in the School Nutrition Programs
- Resource Roundup: New USDA Program Participation Dashboard

Good to Know

- FRAC Webinar on June 27, 2024: Gearing Up for Back to School with Afterschool Suppers and Snacks

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. For previous versions of the School Lunch Tray, visit the CSDE's [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage.



Need to Know

Change to Distribution of Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (S-EBT) Benefits

Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (S-EBT) benefits will be sent to all students determined eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. This distribution will occur in early August instead of June. Please update households as needed. As a reminder, S-EBT information is available on the Department of Social Services [Summer EBT - SEBT](#) webpage. Individuals may also call the Summer EBT Customer Service line for help at 1-844-503-6871. The S-EBT Customer Service operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Local Food for Schools Incentive Program Payments for Third Quarter 2023

The payment for school food authorities (SFAs) submitting reports for reimbursement for the August through December 2023 local food purchases was made through the grants management system on or about June 11, 2024. The grant name is Local Food for School Incentive Program.

Reminder for USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Participants: Receipting Invoices

All invoices must be receipted within five business days in FFAVORS. This is especially important for SFAs that do not participate in summer meals to ensure that all invoices are receipted prior to leaving the office for summer break.

Summary of Meal Pattern Updates for School Year 2024-25: USDA's final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The USDA's final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (89 FR 31962, April 25, 2024), finalizes gradual updates to the school nutrition requirements in several key areas, including the meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). The updates that apply to the **meal patterns for school year 2024-25 (effective July 1, 2024)**, are summarized below, and will be reflected soon in all CSDE meal pattern, crediting, and menu planning resources for grades K-12 and preschool. The CSDE will notify SFAs as updated resources are available.

Note: This summary applies only to the meal pattern updates effective July 1, 2024. It does **not** include a) meal pattern updates effective after school year 2024-25; or b) other final rule changes not related to the meal patterns, e.g., professional standards, Buy American, and geographic preference. Guidance on those changes will be provided later. For a complete summary of all changes and implementation dates, refer to [USDA Memo SP 19-2024, CACFP 07-2024, and SFSP 12-2024: Initial Implementation Memorandum: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).

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These updates do **not** require changes to menus or operations for school year 2024-25. Changes to menus are not required until school year 2025-26, at the earliest.

- **Terminology update for meal components (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12 and preschool):** Changes all previous “food component” references in the regulations for Child Nutrition Programs to “meal component.”
- **Terminology update for the ASP:** Changes all previous regulatory references in 7 CFR Part 210 from “meal supplements” to “afterschool snacks.”
- **Meat/meat alternates (MMA) component quantities for preschool meal patterns (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for preschool):** Updates the MMA quantities the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns from ounces to ounce equivalents (oz eq), which also apply to the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meals patterns. The amount of MMA that credits as 1 oz eq or 1 ounce is the same.
- **Flavored milk (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12):** Continues to allow SFAs to offer fat-free and low-fat milk (flavored and unflavored) to grades K-12, and to sell fat-free and low-fat milk (flavored and unflavored) a la carte. Continues to require that unflavored milk must be offered at each school breakfast and lunch meal service.
- **Fluid milk substitutes - nutrient requirements (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12 and preschool):** Updates the units for vitamin A and vitamin D requirements for fluid milk substitutes to align with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling requirements. For vitamin A, instead of 500 IUs, the unit requirement is now 150 mcg retinol activity equivalents (RAE) per 8 fluid ounces. For vitamin D, instead of 100 IUs, the unit requirement is now 2.5 mcg per 8 fluid ounces. The amount of vitamin A and vitamin D required in fluid milk substitutes does not change; only the unit of measurement has changed to conform to FDA labeling requirements.
- **Whole grain-rich (WGR) (applies to NSLP and SBP for grades K-12):** Maintains the current NSLP and SBP meal pattern requirement for grades K-12 that at least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered at lunch and breakfast must be WGR, based on oz eq. Adds the following WGR definition in NSLP and SBP regulations: “Whole grain-rich is the term designated by FNS to indicate that the grain content of a product is between 50 and 100 percent whole grain with any remaining grains being enriched.” This definition does not change the meaning of WGR. SFAs can continue to identify WGR products as described in current guidance.
- **Sodium (applies to NSLP and SBP for grades K-12):** Maintains current sodium limits in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 through the end of school year 2026-27 and codifies a single sodium reduction for both programs. Refer to the CSDE’s [Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).

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- **Meats/meat alternates at breakfast (applies to SBP for grades K-12):** Establishes a combined grains and meats/meat alternates meal component in the SBP meal pattern for grades K-12 and removes the requirement for schools to offer 1 oz eq of grains each day at breakfast. SFAs may offer grains, meats/meat alternates, or a combination of both, to meet the minimum oz eq in this combined meal component requirement.
- **Substituting vegetables for fruits at breakfast (applies to SBP for grades K-12):** Continues to allow schools to substitute vegetables for fruits in the SBP and simplifies the vegetable variety requirement. Schools choosing to offer vegetables at breakfast one day per school week have the option to offer any vegetable, including a starchy vegetable. Schools choosing to substitute vegetables for fruits at breakfast on two or more days per school week are required to offer vegetables from at least two different subgroups.
- **Nuts and seeds at lunch (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12 and preschool):** Allows nuts and seeds to credit for the full MMA component in all meals and snacks, removing the previous 50 percent crediting limit for nuts and seeds at lunch.
- **Beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroup name (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12 and preschool):** Changes the name of the previous “legumes (beans and peas)” vegetable subgroup to the “beans, peas, and lentils” vegetable subgroup for consistency with the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).
- **Crediting beans, peas, and lentils at lunch (applies to NSLP grades K-12):** Allows beans, peas, and lentils offered as a meat alternate at lunch to also count toward the weekly beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroup requirement. As with the current requirement, menu planners determine whether beans, peas, and lentils count toward the vegetables meal component or the MMA meal component.
- **Dietary specification for synthetic trans fat (applies to NSLP and SBP for grades K-12):** Removes the dietary specification prohibiting synthetic trans fat in the NSLP and SBP, and in foods sold to children on campus during the school day. This change eliminates a requirement that the USDA determined is no longer necessary due to the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) actions that eliminated synthetic trans fat from the U.S. food supply.
- **Traditional Indigenous foods (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12 and preschool):** Explicitly includes in regulation that traditional Indigenous foods may be served in reimbursable school meals. This change is intended to support local efforts to incorporate traditional Indigenous foods into school meals.
- **Meal modifications (applies to NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12 and preschool):** Updates and reorganizes the regulatory text to distinguish between disability and non-disability requests more clearly. Encourages SFAs to meet children’s non-disability dietary preferences when planning and preparing school meals.

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For more information and resources on the final rule, visit the USDA's [Updates to the School Nutrition Standards](#).

Clarification on Potable Water Requirement: USDA's final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (89 FR 31962, April 25, 2024), maintains the requirement that schools must make potable water available and accessible without restriction to children at no charge in the places where lunches are served during the meal service and when breakfast is served in the cafeteria. The final rule also adds the word "plain" to the potable water regulations to clarify this requirement. For guidance on the potable water requirement, visit the "[Water Availability During Meal Service](#)" section of the CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Updated Comparison Charts: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 and Preschool in the School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE's meal pattern comparison charts are updated for SY 2024-25 to include the updates required by the final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These documents summarize and compare the meal pattern requirements for preschoolers and grades K-12 in the school nutrition programs. They also provide links to applicable crediting resources.

- **ASP:** [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP](#)
- **NSLP and SBP:** [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)
- **Grains:** [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Milk:** [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Milk Component in School Nutrition Programs](#)

These documents are available in the "[Comparison Charts](#)" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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Updated Crediting Summary Charts for the School Nutrition Programs for SY 2023-23

The CSDE's crediting summary charts for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) are updated for SY 2024-25 to include the updates required by the final rule, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

- **ASP for grades K-12:** [Crediting Summary Charts for the ASP Meal Pattern for Grades K-12](#)
- **NSLP and SBP for grades K-12:** [Crediting Summary Charts for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **NSLP, SBP, and ASP for preschoolers:** [Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#)

These documents include an overview chart of the crediting and documentation requirements and individual charts that summarize the crediting requirements and methods for each meal component.

Resource Roundup: New USDA Program Participation Dashboard

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) recently announced the new [FNS Program Participation Dashboard](#), an interactive dashboard that features state, territory, and national level data for FNS nutrition programs. This tool provides new, in-depth insight into publicly available data, specifically, program participation and meals served across ten FNS nutrition programs. It allows users to explore and display data in several ways and across different geographic locations, and makes key programmatic data available to download in an easy-to-use format. For more information, and to view all the data dashboards, visit the USDA [Data Visualization](#) webpage.

Good to Know

FRAC Webinar on June 27, 2024: Gearing Up for Back to School with Afterschool Suppers and Snacks

The Afterschool Nutrition Programs are important resources for helping to fill the nutrition gap that may exist for millions of children when the school day ends. As schools and community partners start to plan for back to school, afterschool suppers and snacks should be part of the conversation. Join FRAC on June 27, 2024, for a refresher on the available program options, tips for getting started, partnership ideas, and strategies for increasing participation at existing afterschool meal sites.

- **Date and Time:** June 27, 2024. From 3:00-4:00 p.m.
- **Registration:** [registration link](#)

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SLT/2024/SLT_06_19_2024.pdf.

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