

## The School Lunch Tray: September 17, 2025

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

- Verification Starts October 1 and Must be Completed by November 15, 2025
- CT Grown for CT Kids Week: Mark your calendars for October 6–10, 2025 🗓️
- Enter the CT Fresh Great Plates Contest! 🍴

### Need to Know

- National School Lunch Week: October 13-17, 2025
- Height of the Harvest for Local Foods 🗓️
- Using Free/Reduced Price Meal (FRPM) Eligibility for State Education Programs
- Resource Roundup: Determining Foster Children's Eligibility for Free Meals or Milk in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program

### Good to Know

- None



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.

## Action Items

### Verification Starts October 1 and Must be Completed by November 15, 2025

This is a reminder that the verification process begins October 1 and must be completed by November 15. The CSDE verification webinar, *Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs*, is available on the CSDE's [Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The verification forms are available in the "[Forms](#)" section of the CSDE's Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Three important documents that assist in the verification process include the CSDE's [Calendar for Completing Verification](#), [Important Points for Completing Verification](#), and the **required** [Verification Selection Worksheet](#). For more information regarding verification, refer to the USDA's [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#).

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### CT Grown for CT Kids Week: Mark your calendars for October 6–10, 2025



Join schools across Connecticut in celebrating *Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week*! From taste tests and corn shucking contests to farmers markets and classroom visits from local farmers—there are countless ways to get involved.

Start small by adding a local item to school menus. Look at what is already being served and consider where locally grown foods can be “swapped in”. Now is the perfect time to connect with area farms and line up local products for the week—and for the rest of *National Farm to School Month*! The [Regional Coordinators](#)

are here to support you every step of the way.

The CSDE would love to hear what schools are planning. Share your events and activities by filling out this quick [FY 25 CTG4CTK Week](#) form.

For additional information, refer to the resources below:

- [CT Grown for CT Kids Week](#)
- [What is CTG4CTKW? | CT Farm to School](#)
- [CT Farm to School Directory](#)

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### Enter the CT Fresh Great Plates Contest!



This is prime harvesting season, and schools are serving up plenty of fresh, CT-grown food. Snap a photo of the local items on your menu and submit it to the **CT Fresh Great Plates Contest**. For more information and instructions go to [CT Great Plates Contest](#).

New to farm to school? No problem! There is a special category for schools that are just getting started—so everyone has a chance to enter.

For help getting that perfect picture, talk to your Farm to School [Regional Coordinator](#) for tips and assistance.

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### Need to Know

#### National School Lunch Week: October 13-17, 2025

National School Lunch Week is quickly approaching. The theme for this year is *Taste the World – Your School Lunch Passport*. For resources and more information, visit the [School Nutrition Association](#) website.

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### Height of the Harvest for Local Foods



As fall quickly approaches, the [Regional Coordinators](#) remind school food authorities that it is the height of the harvest for local foods in schools – produce is rolling off farms in abundance! Work with your Regional Coordinator to take advantage of the season and make connections with farms. Use the UConn Extension Farm to School Marketplace ListServ to seek products. For questions about the listserv, contact [Shannon.Raider@uconn.edu](mailto:Shannon.Raider@uconn.edu).

It is also a good time to check in with farmers about any forward contracts arranged this past year. Make sure they are going as planned and lean on your RCs for support.

For a great resource, refer to [What's Growing in CT: Seasonal Planning for K-12 School Menus](#).

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### Using Free/Reduced Price Meal (FRPM) Eligibility for State Education Programs

The following was issued in the CSDE Update on September 16, 2025, to all superintendents. Please review and share with staff.

The disclosure of FRPM eligibility is restricted. However, FRPM eligibility can be shared for the purposes of administration of a state education program. Dual credit courses that are offered in partnership with an institution of higher education, Advanced Placement (AP) exams, the PSAT and SAT tests, and the International Baccalaureate exams are all considered part of Connecticut's state education program. Therefore, coordinators for these projects (e.g., school counselors) may be granted access to students' FRPM eligibility status to ensure that students can receive fee waivers in these programs.

Coordinators/counselors requesting access to FRPM eligibility data must complete the [Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Program](#) to ensure they have an understanding of the USDA regulations and do not use this information for other purposes. The completed form must be reviewed and approved by the district or school's determining official (i.e., the person who processes FRPM applications). Once approved, the determining official can provide the coordinator/counselor with the FRPM eligibility status only, but not the source that determined the eligibility, for the applicable students.

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### Resource Roundup: Determining Foster Children's Eligibility for Free Meals or Milk in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program

Determining officials may use two methods to determine if a foster child is eligible to receive free meals or milk. These include the household application and direct certification. For guidance and resources on these two methods, refer to the CSDE's document, [Determining Foster Children's Eligibility for Free Meals or Milk in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program](#).

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's [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/2025/slt\\_09\\_17\\_2025.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/slt/2025/slt_09_17_2025.pdf).

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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