

The School Lunch Tray: January 7, 2026

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. 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.

Happy New Year!

Action Items

- Save the Date: Table Talk Will Resume on Thursday, January 22, 2026

Need to Know

- Updated for School Year 2025-26: CSDE's Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals
- Reminder About Offer versus Serve Resources and Training Materials
- Reminder About Required Signage for School Meals in the NSLP and SBP
- New CSDE Resource: Guidance for Using Meal Clickers to Count Reimbursable Meals for the School Nutrition Programs

Good to Know

- The Health, Environmental, and Cost Implications of Providing Healthy and Sustainable School Meals for Every Child by 2030: A Global Modelling Study

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Action Items

Save the Date: Table Talk Will Resume on Thursday, January 22, 2026

The first Table Talk of 2026 will be held on Thursday, January 22, 2026, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. More information will be provided in the next School Lunch Tray.

Need to Know

Updated for School Year 2025-26: CSDE's Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals

The CSDE's [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) is updated for school year 2025-26 and includes the meal pattern updates required by the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). This guide contains information and resources for implementing the USDA's offer versus serve (OVS) provision for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. The requirements in this guide apply to all NLSP and SBP sponsors in public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that implement OVS for grades K-12.

Reminder About Offer versus Serve Resources and Training Materials

Guidance on the OVS requirements is available in the CSDE's resources below.

- [Overview of Offer versus Serve \(OVS in the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)\)](#)
- [Overview of Offer versus Serve \(OVS in the School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)\)](#)

Training on the OVS requirements is available in [Module 15: Offer versus Serve in the NSLP](#) and [Module 16: Offer versus Serve in the SBP](#) of the CSDE's training program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs. For more OVS information and resources, visit the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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Reminder About Required Signage for School Meals in the NSLP and SBP

The NSLP and SBP regulations require that school food authorities (SFA) must post cafeteria signage that provides clear information about the daily planned reimbursable meals and all allowable choices. The purpose of this signage is to prevent unintentional purchases of a la carte items and help students choose a reimbursable meal. SFAs must post two different types of cafeteria signage.

1. All SFAs must post cafeteria signage that identifies the foods and amounts offered for all planned reimbursable meals. This signage must be near or at the beginning of the serving line, prior to the point-of-service, and located at all applicable points in the serving line where the meal components are available.
2. In addition, SFAs that implement OVS must post cafeteria signage that identifies the required student selections for reimbursable meals with OVS.

For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), and visit the "[Required Signage for OVS](#)" section of the CSDE's OVS webpage.

New CSDE Resource: Guidance for Using Meal Clickers to Count Reimbursable Meals for the School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE's new resource, [Guidance for Using Meal Clickers to Count Reimbursable Meals for the School Nutrition Programs](#), provides guidance for schools considering using a meal clicker to count reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks at the point of service in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP.

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Good to Know

The Health, Environmental, and Cost Implications of Providing Healthy and Sustainable School Meals for Every Child by 2030: A Global Modelling Study

This study finds that well-designed school meal programs could greatly improve nutrition and long-term health, reduce hunger, and be a strategic investment in a healthier, more sustainable future.

- Marco Springmann et al, The health, environmental, and cost implications of providing healthy and sustainable school meals for every child by 2030: a global modelling study, [The Lancet Planetary Health \(2025\). DOI: 10.1016/j.lanplh.2025.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanplh.2025.06.002)
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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_01_07_2026.pdf.



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