

The School Lunch Tray: January 21, 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.

Action Items

- Join the CSDE for Table Talk Tomorrow Thursday, January 22, 2026
- Redistribution Application for Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Funds: Due February 2, 2026 
- Mandatory CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training on Thursday, February 5, 2026 

Need to Know

- Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) for School Year 2026-27
- Local is Year Round 

Good to Know

- None

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Action Items

Join the CSDE for Table Talk Tomorrow 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. Use the Teams link below to join.

Microsoft Teams meeting

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Redistribution Application for Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Funds: Due February 2, 2026



On January 15, 2026, all unspent Federal LFSIP funds were swept by the CSDE and are now available for redistribution to school food authorities (SFAs) that participated in the Federal LFSIP **and fully commit to spending 100 percent of their allocated funds by April 30, 2026**. (For a list of SFAs eligible for the redistribution of funds, refer to Attachment 1 in [CSDE Operational Memorandum 02-25: Local Food for Schools Incentive Program: Phase 2](#)).

After funds are redistributed, any money not spent by April 30, 2026, and not submitted for payment by May 15, 2026, will be forfeited and may be reallocated at the CSDE's discretion. SFAs whose applications are accepted will receive a minimum \$1,600 allocation.

Any SFA that spent less than 50 percent of its Federal LFSIP allocation by January 15, 2025, as identified in the CSDE's [School Food Authorities Expenditure Less Than 50 Percent of Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program \(LFSIP\) Allocation](#), must submit a detailed spending plan to be considered for redistributed funds. This spending plan must explain how the SFA will use 100 percent of the redistributed funds and must identify the specific products to be purchased and the farms from which those products will be sourced.

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The [Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program \(LFSIP\) Redistributed Funds application](#) must be completed by one of the SFA's two authorized signers, as indicated on the SFA's ED-099: Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs (not the food service director or representative from the food service management company). Prior to completing this form, review [CSDE Operational Memorandum 14-23: Local Food for Schools Incentive Program](#) and [CSDE Operational Memorandum 02-25: Local Food for Schools Incentive Program: Phase 2](#) to understand the Federal LFSIP requirements.

Mandatory CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training on Thursday, February 5, 2026



The CSDE will conduct a Mandatory CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training on Thursday, February 5, 2026. CT Fresh Ed: Compass is a statewide Farm to School readiness and growth tool for local educational agencies (LEAs). The CT Fresh Ed: Compass is designed to capture key elements of Farm to School operations across Connecticut and to support continuous improvement of Farm to School practices within LEAs and schools participating in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs (CNP). This training will provide an overview of the CT Fresh Ed: Compass, outline expectations for completion, and demonstrate how to use the online tool.

- **Date:** Thursday, February 5, 2026
- **Time:** 2:00–3:00 p.m.
- **Format:** Virtual through Table Talk
- **Attendance:** Mandatory

Microsoft Teams meeting

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Need to Know

Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) for School Year 2026-27

The CNS for school year 2026-27 (July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027) are now available on the [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) webpage. The state nutrition standards committee did not make any changes; the 2026-27 CNS are the same as the CNS for the current school year.

Local is Year Round



Regional Farm to School Coordinators (RCs) are wrapping up a busy few weeks after supporting 70 school food authorities (SFAs) in spending Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) funding. Congratulations to those districts who spent all their LFSIP funding and deepened relationships with local farms.

With the announcement of the [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program](#), RCs are reminding SFAs that local food is available year-round. The examples below show what can be found on a local farm this time of year. SFAs may reach out to their [Regional Farm to School Coordinator](#) for support finding these products.

- Apples (storage varieties)
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Carrots, beets, turnips, and parsnips
- Onions and winter squash
- Mushrooms
- Greenhouse greens (lettuce, kale, and spinach)
- Dairy (yogurt, cheese)
- Meats
- Honey
- Maple syrup

Regional Farm to School - Live virtual meetings are happening next week. Please refer to the emails sent by the local Regional Farm to School Coordinators for the date, time, and instructions for joining. Discussions will be focused on the [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local 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_01_14_2026.pdf.



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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil
Rights
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