

The School Lunch Tray: April 8, 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

- 2026-27 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Application Information Session: Friday, April 10, 2026
- Reminder: CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program – Updated List of Approved Sponsors (as of March 30, 2026) and Payment Request Form due April 15, 2026 
- Reminder: Federal Local Foods for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Redistributed Funds Must be Spent by April 30, 2026 
- CT Fresh Ed: Compass Due June 1, 2026 
- Final Reminder: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Reporting Due April 10, 2026

Need to Know

- School Lunch Hero Day: May 1, 2026

Good to Know

- Serving Up Local Foods In School Meals: How Scratch Cooking is Being Implemented and Supported in Districts Across the Country
- Made with School Lunch Celebration Calendar

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Action Items

2026-27 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Application Information Session: Friday, April 10, 2026

The application for the 2026-27 FFVP Grant is due May 1, 2026. The CSDE will hold a one-hour information session on the FFVP application process via TEAMS on Friday, April 10, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. All interested applicants are strongly encouraged to attend.

Microsoft Teams FFVP Application Information Session

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/21203707519100?p=dRMEUMsf0PI9iY1o4I>

Meeting ID: 212 037 075 191 00

Passcode: 8hZ3uG9A

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Dial in by phone

[+1 860-840-2075..724286988#](tel:+18608402075724286988) United States, Hartford

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Reminder: CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program – Updated List of Approved Sponsors (as of March 30, 2026) and Payment Request Form due April 15, 2026



The CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program provides funding to eligible USDA Child Nutrition Program sponsors to support the purchase of locally and regionally sourced unprocessed and minimally processed foods, strengthening local agriculture while supporting nutritious meals statewide.

Updates and Reminders

- Updated List of Approved Sponsors (as of March 30, 2026)
- Payment Request Form Due April 15, 2026 – Approved sponsors with payments to submit must do so by this deadline.

Approved Sponsors

The CSDE's List of CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program Sponsors identifies all currently approved sponsors. Districts not included on the list must complete an application to participate.

- **Application:** [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program SY 2025-2026 Application](#)

Payment Requests

All payment requests must be submitted using the [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program Payment Request Form](#). For more information, refer to [Operational Memorandum No. 2-26: CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program](#) and the resources below.

- [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program Questions and Answers](#)
- [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program School Year 2025-26 Allocations for Eligible School Food Authorities](#)

These resources are available in the [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program](#) section of the CSDE's CT Fresh Ed website.

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Reminder: Federal Local Foods for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Redistributed Funds Must be Spent by April 30, 2026



This is a reminder that any school food authority (SFA) that received Federal LFSIP Redistributed Funds is required to fully expend (100 percent) its allocated funds by April 30, 2026. Any funds not spent by April 30, 2026, will be forfeited and reallocated at the CSDE's discretion.

[Regional Farm to School Coordinators](#) are available to help SFAs spend all funds by helping to identify farms and products, developing a purchasing strategy, and advising on the use of a forward contract with a farm or food hub.

Congratulations to sponsors that spent 100 percent of Federal LFSIP Redistributed Funds. As a reminder, the [CT Buy Local Program](#) is now available to support continued local food purchasing.

CT Fresh Ed: Compass Due June 1, 2026



The CT Fresh Ed: Compass is due June 1, 2026. Visit the [Compass](#) section of the CSDE's CT Fresh Ed Compass webpage for guidance and resourced, including the CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training from February 5, 2026.

Contact the SFA's Regional Farm to School Coordinator for support with the CT Fresh Ed: Compass. The CSDE and Regional Farm to School Coordinators will be hosting monthly office hours for opportunities to ask questions and get real-time answers.

Save the Dates for Compass Office Hours

- April 20 – 2:00-3:00 p.m.
- May 4 – 2:00-3:00 p.m.
- May 18 – 2:00-3:00 p.m.

The link for the April 20 Office Hour is below. The additional links will be provided closer to each date.

Microsoft Teams meeting for April 20 Office Hour

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/26554009515031?p=33ktSreBNomZzYLCBb>

Meeting ID: 265 540 095 150 31

Passcode: yH6tQ2zn

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Final Reminder: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Reporting Due April 10, 2026

All National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) sponsors (excluding residential child care institutions (RCCIs) and Special Milk Program (SMP) sponsors) must submit school-level CEP eligibility data to the CSDE no later than **April 10, 2026** (regardless of participation or intent to participate in the CEP). For information on how to access the CNP Application and Claiming System to enter notification data, refer to the CSDE's document, [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Data Collection Guidance for School-level Eligibility Information](#).

The steps for collecting data to update the annual Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) notification lists are outlined in [Operational Memorandum No. 07-26, Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies \(LEAs\) Participating in the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) and/or the School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Due April 10, 2026](#).

As a reminder:

1. When obtaining the April 1 data for CEP reporting, use the "View All Certified Records" link on the Review Matched page to retrieve the most up-to-date information.
2. When preparing your data for CEP reporting, do not count students with the codes of FE or RE since these students are eligible via S-EBT benefits which involves an application. They are not considered directly certified. Also, do not count students with the code of RM (Reduced Medicaid) since these students are not directly certified for free meals.

Questions may be directed to the SFA's [CSDE school nutrition team member](#).

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Need to Know

School Lunch Hero Day: May 1, 2026

School Lunch Hero Day is on May 1, 2026. Join schools across the country in recognizing the vital role these team members play every day — nourishing students, supporting learning, and making a difference for every child who walks through the cafeteria doors. For more information, visit the School Nutrition Association's [School Lunch Hero Day](#) webpage.

Good to Know

Serving Up Local Foods In School Meals: How Scratch Cooking is Being Implemented and Supported in Districts Across the Country

Please join the CT Farm to School Collaborative's meeting on April 15, 2026, to hear how districts all over the nation are serving more locally grown foods by implementing scratch cooking in schools. This presentation will feature an expert panel of representatives from innovative organizations driving the scratch cook movement. Attendees will hear how Brigaid, Chef Ann Foundation, ScratchWorks, and Wellness in the Schools are supporting the creation of delicious, healthy home-made meals in our nation's schools. The panelists will provide insight and resources on how to bring more scratch cooking to school districts.

Chef Maraiah Popeleski-Tilley, RDN will be the moderator. Maraiah is the food services director for Mansfield Public Schools and Region 19, where she has been transforming the district from a heat and serve model to scratch based program for the past 3½ years.

Register in advance at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/KqnjJb0JSIq0FN4DdaBprg>. Registrants will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Made with School Lunch Celebration Calendar

Celebrations do not stop because the end of the school year is approaching. For creative ideas on how to celebrate, refer to the School Nutrition Association's [Made with School Lunch Calendar](#). This calendar is packed with food celebrations, national observances, and fun monthly moments SFAs can use to spark excitement around school meals all year long.

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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/2026/slt_04_08_2026.pdf.



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1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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