

The School Lunch Tray: May 22, 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

- CT Fresh Ed: Compass Due June 1, 2026
- Requests to Extend the NSLP and/or SBP into the Summer Months (July and August) due June 12, 2026

Need to Know

- CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program School Year 2025-26 Allocations for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) 
- School Year (SY) 2026-27 NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 and Menu Planning Resources
- CSDE Menu Planning Guidance Series for SY 2026-27
- SY 2026-27 Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern, Handbook, and Forms
- SY 2026-27 NSLP, SBP, and ASP Preschool Meal Patterns, Menu Planning Guides, and Forms

Good to Know

- Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar: Growing Connections: Safe Sourcing and Handling of Fresh Produce, May 27, 2026 

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Action Items

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 resources, including the CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training from February 5, 2026. School food authorities (SFAs) can reach out to their [Regional Farm to School Coordinator](#) for support with the CT Fresh Ed: Compass.

Requests to Extend the NSLP and/or SBP into the Summer Months (July and August) due June 12, 2026

Local educational agencies (LEAs) may serve reimbursable lunches and/or breakfasts through an extension of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP) during the summer months (beyond June 30, 2026) if one of the following two criteria apply: 1) the school year is extended; or 2) an official required academic summer school program is in place.

LEAs requesting an extension of the NSLP and/or SBP during summer 2026 must consider the following:

- only students enrolled in the extended school year or academic summer school program can receive meals;
- for sites not operating under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a student's school year 2026-27 free and reduced-price eligibility by direct certification or free or reduced-price meal application will be used for the counting and claiming of meals;
- meals will be claimed as free, reduced price, or paid based on student eligibility;
- meals must be charged at the correct price (reduced price \$.30 breakfast or \$.40 lunch, and district established paid lunch price);
- multiple meal distribution and non-congregate meals are not allowed;
- proper point-of-service meal counts are required (based on student eligibility); and
- sites approved to operate the CEP must utilize their approved claiming percentages to claim meals.

To be eligible to serve and claim reimbursable meals during summer due to an extension of the school year or a required academic summer school, interested LEAs must submit an email requesting an extension of their NSLP and/or SBP to Jen Bove at jennifer.bove@ct.gov by **June 12, 2026**. The email must include:

- the schools requesting the extension;
- the reason for the extension, e.g., academic summer school;

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- the meal or meals the site will be serving (breakfast only, lunch only, breakfast and lunch); and
- the start and end date of the program.

Note: To submit July and/or August claims for reimbursement for the approved sites and dates, the LEA must first have an **approved** school year (SY) 2026-27 Sponsor Agreement. The CSDE will be providing a future email with instructions on updating the SY 2026-27 Sponsor Agreement. The LEA must submit the online agreement for CSDE approval by **July 30, 2026**, to submit the July claim for reimbursement.

Questions may be directed to jennifer.bove@ct.gov.

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Need to Know

CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program School Year 2025-26 Allocations for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)



In school year 2025-26, SFAs participating in the CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program (BLP) received an upward adjustment to their NSLP allocation if they also sponsor Summer Meal Programs and/or CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals Programs.

These additional funds were determined using a proportional formula based on each sponsor's share of prior year reimbursement claims across the Community Nutrition Programs, including the SFSP, Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and CACFP. Funding was fully scaled according to overall

reimbursements, with no base allocation provided. Specific allocation amounts are available in the CSDE's document, [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program School Year 2025-26 Allocations for the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\) and Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#).

SFAs may use CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program funds to support all eligible Child Nutrition Programs. For those SFAs that have not signed up and received approval for the BLP, please complete the [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program SY 2025-2026 Application](#). Any questions, please contact fionnuala.brown@ct.gov.

School Year (SY) 2026-27 NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 and Menu Planning Resources

The SY 2026-27 NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 (dated May 2026) are now available. Updates include the requirements of the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), effective June 8, 2026. These meal patterns are available for five-day weeks and seven-day weeks in the "[Breakfast Meal Patterns](#)" section and "[Lunch Meal Patterns](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

The menu planning resources for grades K-12 below are also updated for SY 2026-27.

- [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the NSLP](#)
- [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the SBP](#)
- [Menu Planning Checklists for Lunch for Grades K-12](#): Include forms for five-day and seven-day weeks for the three required grade groups (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and the optional grade group for K-8.

Please discard all previously downloaded versions and replace them with the current versions..

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CSDE Menu Planning Guidance Series for SY 2026-27

The CSDE's menu planning guides for school year 2026-27 (dated May 2026) are now available. Updates include the requirements of the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), effective June 8, 2026.

- [Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#)
- [Guide to the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)

These guides are available on the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) webpage.

SY 2026-27 Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern, Handbook, and Forms

The CSDE has updated the ASP resources below for SY 2026-27. All documents are dated May 2026. Updates include the requirements of the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), effective June 8, 2026.

- [Afterschool Snack Program \(ASP\) Meal Pattern for Grades K-12](#)
 - [Afterschool Snack Program Handbook](#)
 - [Sample snack menus for grades K-12 and preschool](#) (“Menu Planning” section of the CSDE's ASP webpage)
 - [ASP forms for school year 2026-27](#) (“Forms” section of the CSDE's ASP webpage): These forms include the ASP menu forms, the ASP On-site Monitoring Form, production records, snack count forms for site/area eligible schools, and snack count forms for schools that are not site/area eligible.
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SY 2026-27 NSLP, SBP, and ASP Preschool Meal Patterns, Menu Planning Guides, and Forms

The school year 2026-27 NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns, guides, and forms (dated May 2026) are now available. Updates include the requirements of the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), effective June 8, 2026.

- **Preschool meal patterns:** The NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns are available in the “[Meal Patterns](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers School Nutrition Programs webpage.
 - **Preschool menu planning guides:** The CSDE’s [Guide to the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs](#) are available in the “[Menu Planning Guidance Series](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
 - **Preschool menu forms:** The breakfast and lunch menu forms for five-day and seven-day weeks for ages 1-2 and ages 3-5, and the ASP preschool menu form for ages 1-5, are available in the “[Menu Forms and Production Records](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
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Good to Know

Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar: Growing Connections: Safe Sourcing and Handling of Fresh Produce, May 27, 2026



Building relationships with local farms starts with the buyer. Sourcing locally can be a win-win for your school and community, but finding the right farm partners to safely grow, purchase and deliver fresher ingredients takes some know-how. This webinar walks down the garden path from identifying and vetting potential growers to food safety requirements and recommendations for specifying, receiving, storing, preparing, and serving fresh produce. Chef Andy Montero will also share culinary tricks of the trade with live demonstrations on handling and preparing fresh-from-the-farm ingredients like a pro.

Learning Objectives

- Identify best practices for sourcing fresh produce from local farms.
- Review Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) requirements for growers and producers, including on-farm practices that reduce the risk of foodborne illness.
- Explain the difference between food product liability insurance and general farm liability insurance.
- Demonstrate kitchen techniques and handling tips for working with fresh, locally sourced produce.

Date and time: Wednesday, May 27, 2026, 3:00 -4:00 p.m.

Registration: [Growing Connections: Safe sourcing and handling of fresh produce](#)

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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_05_22_2026.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

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