

The School Lunch Tray: July 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

- None

Need to Know

- Updated County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs
- Updated CSDE Staff Contact Information

Good to Know

- 2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants Include Three Connecticut Awardees

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Need to Know

Updated County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs

Jen Bove will now provide technical assistance for Windham, New London, Middlesex, and Tolland Counties. This updated assignment allows the CSDE to continue providing consistent, responsive support to school food authorities across these regions.

For districts located in one of these counties, Jen will be the primary point of contact for school nutrition technical assistance.

Updated CSDE Staff Contact Information

The CSDE staff contact information documents below are updated as of July 2026.

- [Child Nutrition Staff and Responsibilities](#): This document includes a list of all CSDE Child Nutrition Program staff and their areas of responsibility.
- [County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs](#): Each Connecticut county has an assigned CSDE school nutrition team member who provides technical assistance for the USDA school nutrition programs. This document indicates each county's assigned CSDE school nutrition team member. This is the person SFAs should contact regarding any questions about operating the school nutrition programs.

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Good to Know

2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants Include Three Connecticut Awardees

On July 7, 2026, the USDA announced the second cohort of fiscal year (FY) 2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants. The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program increases the availability of local foods in child nutrition programs and connects children to the sources of their food through local procurement, education, taste tests, school gardens, and field trips. Congratulations to the three Connecticut awardees that received these grants.

- **EASTCONN Regional Educational Service Center Incorporated – \$116,858 Hampton, CT (Cohort 1)**

EASTCONN will establish a centralized production kitchen at its Columbia campus to increase access to fresh, locally sourced foods for 2,368 K-12 students across 9 partner schools. The project will renovate the kitchen, equip it for large-scale meal preparation, develop and pilot menus featuring regional produce, and train food service staff in safe handling and scratch-based cooking techniques. Key partners will support food sourcing, distribution, menu testing, and educational activities. Through these efforts, the project will improve student nutrition, expand farm to school access, and create a sustainable model connecting regional farmers to school meal programs.

- **Groton Board of Education – \$100,000 Mystic, CT (Cohort 2)**

Groton Public Schools (GPS), located in southeastern Connecticut, is expanding student access to local farm-fresh foods. Building on the success of existing farm to school programming, including previous funding from USDA, GPS partners with numerous local farms and supports agricultural education through school gardens, greenhouses, and hydroponic systems that help connect students to food production and increase access to local produce. Through this grant, GPS will implement an onsite processing facility to increase access to fresh produce year-round and advance GPS's goal to become a processing center for neighboring school districts. GPS will also work with community partners to train staff and teachers in farm to school concepts and integrate Next Generation Science Standards-aligned agricultural lessons into the preK-12 curriculum and high school career and technical education program. The opening of an early childhood center in September 2026, located at the same facility as the processing kitchen, offers an ideal opportunity to expand the program to early learners.

- **Yellow Farmhouse Education Center – \$428,055 Stonington, CT (Cohort 1)**

The Farm to Culinary Classroom Initiative: Advancing Curriculum, Career Pathways, and Local Procurement will expand the Yellow Farmhouse Education Center's established farm to school work across Connecticut, Rhode Island, and nationally by strengthening teacher training, deepening producer-school partnerships, and increasing student access to food education and career pathways. Over a 24-month period, the project will support high

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school Family & Consumer Sciences and Child Nutrition Program sites through integrated curriculum, professional development, and procurement strategies.

More information about the grant and a list of awardees with project descriptions are available on the USDA's [Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program](#) website.

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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_07_08_2026.pdf.



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