

Summary of School Lunch Tray Topics for 2026

This document summarizes the School Lunch Tray topics for 2026. The School Lunch Tray is the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) weekly e-newsletter for Connecticut sponsors of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs, including the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), [Afterschool Snack Program \(ASP\)](#) of the NSLP, [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP, and [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program \(FFVP\)](#).

Click the link in the "Link" column to access a PDF of the School Lunch Tray and, if applicable, the corresponding Table Talk webinar. For previous versions of the School Lunch Tray, visit the CSDE's [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage.

Date	Link	Topics
08-05-2026	SLT Newsletter 08-05-2026	- Share Plans for Celebrating CT Grown for CT Kids Week and Receive a Free CTG4CTKW Kit - Need to Know - CSDE Virtual Procurement 101 Training 4 Part Series (October 15, 22, and November 5, 12 2026): Register by Friday, October 9, 2026 - New USDA Resource: Farm to School State Formula Grant Dashboard
07-29-2026	SLT Newsletter 07-29-2026	- USDA Foods Update: Change to Hartford Provision Company (HPC) Ordering Platform for USDA Foods - Order USDA Team Nutrition Materials
07-22-2026	SLT Newsletter 07-22-2026	Buy Local Program Payment Request Form is Open
07-15-2026	SLT Newsletter 07-15-2026	- Updated Civil Rights Complaint Procedures for School Nutrition Programs for School Year 2026-27 - Updated CSDE Civil Rights PowerPoint Presentation for School Year 2026-27 - Updated CSDE Training Program for School Year 2026-27: Complying with Healthy Food Certification
07-08-2026	SLT Newsletter 07-08-2026	- Updated County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs - Updated CSDE Staff Contact Information 2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants Include Three Connecticut Awardees

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07-01-2026	SLT Newsletter 07-01-2026	• Registration Deadline Extended to July 7, 2026: Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership Virtual Training, August 4, 11, and 18, 2026 • What's in a Meal Training Modules for School Year 2026-27 • New Summer EBT (S-EBT) Eligibility Checker on Department of Social Services (DSS) Website
06-24-2026	SLT Newsletter 06-24-2026	• Final Reminder for CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 08-26: Paid Lunch Equity Guidance for School Year 2026-27: PLE Request Due June 30, 2026 • Final Reminder for Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 • Final Reminder for Interschool Agreements in HFC Schools for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 • Summer EBT (S-EBT) Benefit Issuances for 2026 • Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar: Procuring with Efficiency: Local Food Purchasing in Schools, June 25, 2026 • Gratitude and Transitions • School Nutrition Association's (SNA) Advocacy in Action Webinar, June 29, 2026

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06-17-2026	SLT Newsletter 06-17-2026	• Reminder for CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 08-26: Paid Lunch Equity Guidance for School Year 2026-27: PLE Request Due June 30, 2026 • Reminder for Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 • Reminder for Interschool Agreements in HFC Schools for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 • Reminder for Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership Virtual Training, August 4, 11, and 18, 2026: Registration Deadline is June 26, 2026 • CT Fresh Ed Back-to-School Professional Development Trainings for available for August and September 2026 • Operational Memorandum No. 11-26: Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Payment for School Year 2025-26 • New CSDE Resource: How to Check the Payment Status for Healthy Food Certification • Vegetable Substitutions in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) for School Year 2026-27 • Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs for School Year 2026-27 • Offer versus Serve (OVS) Requirements for Grades K-12 for School Year 2026-27

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06-10-2026	SLT Newsletter 06-10-2026	• Reminder: CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 08-26: Paid Lunch Equity Guidance for School Year 2026-27: PLE Request Due June 30, 2026 • Procedure to Request Alternate Lunch Time Outside the Timeframe of 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. • Reminder for Interschool Agreements in HFC Schools for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 • CT Fresh Ed Buy Local Program Payment Request Form: Deadline June 15, 2026 • CT Fresh Ed Compass Next Steps • USDA Memo SP 08-2026 and CACFP 04-2026: Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs • Name Change for USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) • New USDA Webpage: Child Nutrition Programs Food Industry Toolkit • New England Dairy Smart Swaps Survey: Due June 30, 2026 • Build Dairy Farm to School Cafeteria-Classroom Connections • Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar: Dig Safely into School Gardens
06-03-2026	SLT Newsletter 06-03-2026	• Reminder for Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 • Reminder for Interschool Agreements in HFC Schools for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 • USDA Foods Reminder: All Foods Must Be Out of State Warehouse by End of June • USDA Foods Reminder: Receipting Orders in FFAVORS Before End of School Year • Revised CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program Questions and Answers • USDA Foods Cancellation: Applesauce Cans, Sales Order Number 5000972034-100 • Requirements for Field Trip Meals in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

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05-27-2026	SLT Newsletter 05-27-2026 Table Talk 05-28-2026	• CSDE Bureau of Special Education and CSDE Office of Student Support Services issued Operational Memorandum No. 26-01: Providing Meals to Students Outplaced Pursuant to Individualized Education Program • Operational Memorandum No. 10-26: Payment of Fiscal Year 2025-26 State Funds for the National School Lunch Program • Final Reminder: CT Fresh Ed: Compass Due June 1, 2026 • Last Table Talk for School Year 2025-26 on Thursday, May 28, 2026 • CSDE Virtual Training: School Year (SY) 2026-27 Online Application Process for the School Nutrition Programs, Monday, June 1, 2026 • Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership Virtual Training, August 4, 11, and 18, 2026: Registration Deadline is June 26, 2026 • CSDE Crediting Resources for School Year 2026-27 • Updated Resources for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs • UConn Extension Virtual Training: Maintaining the Garden and Developing a Work Plan, June 1, 2026
05-20-2026	SLT Newsletter 05-20-2026	• Requests to Extend the NSLP and/or SBP into the Summer Months (July and August) due June 12, 2026 • 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 • Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar: Growing Connections: Safe Sourcing and Handling of Fresh Produce, May 27, 2026

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05-13-2026	SLT Newsletter 05-13-2026 Table Talk 05-14-2026	- Operational Memorandum No 09-26: Annual Application Process for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP): Deadline May 15, 2026 - USDA Final Rule: Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs: Effective June 8, 2026 - USDA Foods Update on Broccoli for School Year 2026-27 - Theme for Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, October 5-9, 2026: Breakfast and Beyond — CT Fresh All Day Long! - Resource from The Foundation for Fresh Produce: The Fruit & Veggie Handbook - Food Research & Action Center Webinar: Summer Meals: Outreach That Works, May 21, 2026 - GENYOUth Report: School Meals Are a Core Driver of Student Success
05-06-2026	SLT Newsletter 05-06-2026	- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 08-26: Paid Lunch Equity Guidance for School Year 2026-27: PLE Request Due June 30, 2026 - Reminder: Steps to Take Now for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27, Due July 1, 2026 - Reminder: Interschool Agreements for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 (Full Service) or August 30, 2026 (Vended) - Final Reminder: Register by May 8, 2026, for the 2026 WSCC Academy on May 20, 2026
04-29-2026	SLT Newsletter 04-29-2026	- Register by May 1, 2026, for the CT Farm to School Conference on May 13, 2026 - Reminder: School Lunch Hero Day is May 1, 2026 - No Table Talk on Thursday, April 30, 2026 - CSDE Recorded Training Modules Updated to Resolve Technical Difficulties with Sound Quality 2025-26 Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) Worksheets Updated

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04-22-2026	SLT Newsletter 04-22-2026	• Registration for the 2026 CT Farm to School Conference on May 13, 2026 • Registration for the 2026 WSCC Academy on May 20, 2026 • Updated Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) On-site Monitoring Form • USDA Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Farm to School Grants Awarded • National Dairy Council Webinar: Practical Strategies to Lower Sugar in School Breakfasts, May 6, 2026 • New England Dairy's Bulk Milk Interest Survey: Due April 30, 2026 • Webinars for Summer EBT and Rural, Non-Congregate Programs • Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Unlocking the Power of CEP: How Strategic Grouping Can Transform Your School Meal Program • Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Report: Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: The Reach of Summer Meals • Recorded FRAC Webinar: The Summer Nutrition Landscape: Setting the Scene for Summer 2026
04-15-2026	SLT Newsletter 04-15-2026	• Reminder: Steps to Take Now for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27, Due July 1, 2026 • Reminder: Interschool Agreements for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 (Full Service) or August 30, 2026 (Vended) • USDA Foods Orders for School Year 2026-27 • USDA Foods Direct Delivery Inventory at HPC • Payment Requests for Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Funds Due May 8, 2026 • CSDE Summer Meal Program Interest Survey Due April 29, 2026 • CT Fresh Ed Compass Office Hours, April 20, 2026 • Save the Date: 2026 CT Farm to School Conference, May 13, 2026 • The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (S-EBT) Program • No Table Talk on April 16, 2026 • Reminder: Serving Up Local Foods In School Meals webinar is Today, April 15, 2026, at 3:30 pm

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04-08-2026	SLT Newsletter 04-08-2026	• 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 • School Lunch Hero Day – May 1, 2026 • 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
04-01-2026	SLT Newsletter 04-01-2026 Table Talk 04-02-2026: CT Fresh Ed: COMPASS Assessment Tool Training	• Join the CSDE for Table Talk Tomorrow, Thursday, April 2, 2026 • 2026-27 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Grant Announcement: Applications due May 1, 2026. • Spring 2026 CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest Starts April 1, 2026 • CT Fresh Ed: COMPASS Reminder and New Snapshot Available • New CSDE Resource: CT Fresh Ed: Local and Regional Food Tracker • Recording Available for Triennial Assessment Webinar March 30, 2026 • Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Takes Steps to Improve Gluten Ingredient Disclosure in Foods
03-25-2026	SLT Newsletter 03-25-2026	• Direct Certification and the Annual Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Notification Requirement for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) • Save the Date: Second Annual Connecticut Farm to School Conference, May 13, 2026 • UCONN Rudd Center Webinar: Connecticut's 2025 Triennial Assessments: Where We Are and Where to Go Next, March 30, 2026 • Spring 2026 CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest – April 1 through April 30 • Upcoming 2025-26 USDA SFA Survey Participation

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03-18-2026	SLT Newsletter 03-18-2026	• Join the CSDE for Table Talk Tomorrow Thursday, March 19, 2026 • Register for Mandatory Summer Meal Program Annual Training by Monday March 23, 2026 • 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 • Important Information about the Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System): Applications and Claims • CNP System Now Open to Submit 2026-27 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2026 • CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program • Operational Memorandum No. 06-26: State Severe Need School Breakfast Program Grant for School Year 2025-26 • School Nutrition Association Webinar: Sugar & Sodium Standards: What You Need to Know

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03-11-2026	SLT Newsletter 03-11-2026	• Final Reminder: Deadline to Place USDA Foods Order for School Year 2026-27 is Today, March 11, 2026 • Reminder: Apply for CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program (New List of Approved Sponsors) • Reminder: Steps to Take Now for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27, Due July 1, 2026 • Reminder: Interschool Agreements for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 (Full Service) or August 30, 2026 (Vended) • Mark the Calendar for Next Week: CT Farm to School Collaborative Monthly Meeting: Hydroponics as an Educational Tool, March 18, 2026 • Now Available: CSDE's List of Area Eligible Schools and List of Site Eligible Schools for School Year 2025-26 • Updated List of Acceptable Food and Beverages Dated March 10, 2026 • Updated CSDE Training Program: Complying with Healthy Food Certification • Data on HFC Participation for School Year 2025-26 • New Resource: CT Fresh Ed: Social Media Toolkit • Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals Deadline Extension to March 31, 2026
03-04-2026	SLT Newsletter 03-04-2026	• Join the CSDE for Table Talk Tomorrow Thursday, March 5, 2026 • Limited Amount of Additional USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Funding Available for School Year 2025-26: Respond by March 6, 2026 • Reminder: Deadline to Place USDA Foods Order for School Year 2026-27 is March 11, 2026 • Save-the-Date: Summer Meals Annual Training March 31, 2026
02-25-2026	SLT Newsletter 02-25-2026	• Reminder: Deadline to Place USDA Foods Order for School Year 2026-27 is March 11, 2026 • USDA Foods Office Hours Rescheduled to Monday March 2, 2026 • Reminder Farm to School – Live! and Compass Office Hours • CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program and Federal LFSIP Redistribution

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02-18-2026	SLT Newsletter 02-18-2026	• Updated Menu Planning Checklists for Lunch for Grades K-12 for SY 2025-26 • New Food Yields Added to the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs • USDA Memo SP 02-2026, CACFP 01-2026, SFSP 01-2026: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030 – Eat Real Food • Reminder: State and Federal Requirements for Competitive Foods in Schools • Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Recorded Webinar: Practical Menu Solutions for Reducing Added Sugars in School Meals • ICN Webinar: Practical Menu Solutions for Reducing Sodium in School Meals, February 26, 2026 • Subscribe to ICN for Updates and Webinar Information • Free Team Nutrition Resources for Schools
02-11-2026	SLT Newsletter 02-11-2026	• CT Fresh Ed: Compass due June 1, 2026 • Spring 2026 CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest – Start Taking Pictures Today • Reminder for Cafeterias in Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Districts: Non-entree Items in Second Student Meals and Sold A La Carte Must Meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards • Good to Know • March is National Nutrition Month • Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals Due March 6, 2026

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Date	Link	Topics
02-04-2026	SLT Newsletter 02-04-2026 Table Talk 02-05--2026 Mandatory CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training	- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 03-26: Requirements for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27 - CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 04-26: Interschool Agreements for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026 (Full Service) or August 30, 2026 (Vended) - Final Reminder: Mandatory CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training on Thursday, February 5, 2026 - Need to Know - CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 05-26: CT Fresh Ed: Compass - Updated Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern for Grades K-12 - Updated Preschool Meal Patterns - USDA Foods Entitlement and Meal Counts Update for School Year (SY) 2026-27 - Good to Know - National School Breakfast Week March 2-6, 2026: The Quest for School Breakfast
01-28-2026	SLT Newsletter 01-28-2026	- Final Reminder: Redistribution Application for Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Funds: Due February 2, 2026 - Reminder: Mandatory CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training on Thursday, February 5, 2026 - Reminder CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program application is open - USDA Memo SP 01-2026: Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025 – Implementation Requirements for the National School Lunch Program - Updated School Year 2025-26 NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 - Revised USDA Product Formulation Statement (PFS) Templates and Samples - Updated CSDE Resources for Meal Pattern Crediting Documentation - Updated CSDE Menu Planning Guidance Series for School Year 2025-26 - Updated CSDE Crediting Resources for School Year 2025-26 - Chill Out with Cold Milk Cooler Giveaway Deadline: February 28, 2026

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01-21-2026	SLT Newsletter 01-21-2026 Table Talk 01-22-2026	• 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
01-14-2026	SLT Newsletter 01-14-2026	• CSDE Launches CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program • Reminder: Save the Date: Table Talk Will Resume on Thursday, January 22, 2026 • Onsite Monitoring for School Year 2025-26 Must be Completed by February 1, 2026
01-07-2026	SLT Newsletter 01-07-2026	• Save the Date: Table Talk Will Resume on Thursday, January 22, 2026 • 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 • 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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For more information, visit the CSDE'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/summary_slt_topics_2026.pdf.



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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
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