

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
04-01-2026	SLT Newsletter 04-01-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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02-04-2026	SLT Newsletter 02-04-2026 Table Talk 02-05--2026 Mandatory CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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