

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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Hey everybody, welcome to the Connecticut State Department of Education Child Nutrition School Lunch Tray Table Talk and just for the record here. We are recording and transcribing this today, so that is for your own knowledge.

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I I'm Shannon Yearwood and with the Child Nutrition Program Child Nutrition Programs unit and I did warn my team that I'd probably be tongue, twisted in the beginning and here I am correct on that, so we are very delighted to join you. We know we had to cancel the last time so we appreciate that hopefully you've come back from a great spring break and you're refreshed and reinvigorated and ready to jump back into the rest of this school year. So we have a couple of weeks to cover we did not.

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I'm in the school lunch trade this week. We did not have any items to update you on so you get a little bit of a spring break from the School Lunch Tray as well, and we will make sure through the stable talk that we go through the items that you are going to need to know that we have covered for the last few weeks. So thanks for joining us today. Don't forget to tell your friends about it and have them joined to we're always good for entertainment. If not for good good information as usual. We are keeping the microphones muted and the cameras off so you can certainly if you have questions go ahead and enter those into the chat as we go.

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We will either pop up randomly and and answer them. Where we will answer them at the end. We'll see how it goes. So certainly those questions don't have to do, don't have to be restricted to the items that are contained in the school lunch tray. Whatever is on your mind go ahead and submit that it's important for us to know so that we can be responsive to what you are working with out there in the field so with that. I am happy to pass it off to my colleague Caroline.

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Hi hello, everyone, Umm so this was from a couple of weeks ago. Many of you are familiar with the fact that the area eligible schools list and site eligible schools lists were released and that went hand in hand with a webinar webinar. We had on area eligibility and what that means in regard to summer meals participation as well as the interest survey that went out right on the heels of that webinar to find out if folks are planning to participate in summer meals this summer or not.

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So just a very, very quick reminder the area eligible schools list was delayed this year based on the fact that we normally use a National School Lunch Program data set which we have not had for some time during the public health emergency.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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It was released and it is usable now and the area eligible schools list provides you schools in your district that are area eligible because there are at 50% or higher. Population of a combination of free and reduced-price eligible students any of the schools listed on the area eligible school. List can be used to make a summer meal site eligible as an open site for this summer as well as any other addresses in town that are district.

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To that school so.

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The difference between that list and the site eligible list is that the site eligible list does not those schools. On that list. Do not define a geographic boundary. So those tend to be schools, like charter schools or magnet schools or school choice schools where the kids may be coming from a certain area. But they may also be coming from other areas and for that reason, the schools on the site eligible school list cannot be made.

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Open to the public, unless they have another source of area eligibility that supersedes that site eligible school list.

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And they also cannot make any other addresses in town eligible to host a summer meal site. So if you have any questions about that? Feel free to direct them to me.

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And keep an eye out for additional information on area eligibility coming. We know that this is a particularly different difficult year as we transition from the program flexibilities that we've had during the course of the public health emergency back to normal operations and that is certainly going to have an impact on area eligibility and Connecticut. So we have heard rumblings of some additional information coming from USDA. We do not have anything in writing yet.

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And we will share it with you as soon as we do so stay tuned.

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Monica you're on mute.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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Thank you. Caroline alright try it again folks Umm good afternoon. Monica Pacheco here with the UM food distribution program and my first topic? Is everyone's favorite because we've only brought this up 1,000,000 times, but it is the cheese. This was a reminder from earlier in the month because again we're going back a few weeks that there was some of the shredded white cheddar cheese with that material code. The 1000 02 that needed to come out because it's approaching it's best used by date and thankfully and and thanks to you all.

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Umm we are good with that now. Umm there is still some cheese. Some shredded cheese, but from a later delivery in the UM warehouse. So we are all set as far as the time sensitivity of this Umm of this product here that was mentioned in early April.

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But this will kind of segue me into the UM next piece, which is the fact that you really need to be closely monitoring your UM remaining orders or remaining allocation reports when you get those from HPC and really trying to figure out what you can do to bring in any of the remaining product that is at the warehouse. We well understand that things were never the the norm. This year and what was ordered and planned for changed product change menus changed, but definitely the.

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Trend we are still hearing, UM is that supply chain issues will be continuing for a while yet as most of you can imagine. This is gonna take a while to reconnect to whatever the new normal becomes and you really should try to take advantage of any food that is sitting around with your name on it. So to speak and make sure you're utilizing it to the best of your abilities, especially these USDA foods.

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Umm so uh while we do have the request to donate excess USDA foods form available. We just went through another order period.

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And you can put that in We are also strongly encouraging that you first really evaluate what you have left in the warehouse and if you can take it and store it and and normally we don't encourage carrying it over into the next year. But if this can help you start off the next school year with this product and you can you have a way of holding on to it, please try to take this product out remember we are end of April. So we have probably 2 delivery periods left to get this product out so we are just strongly encouraging you to keep close tabs on that evaluate.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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Carefully really think if there's a way you can utilize the product that you still have in the warehouse before you fill out the request to donate excess USDA form USDA foods form.

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Umm and UM.

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Donating form as reminders, the one with the red title. Uh we will certainly take that into consideration, but remember unless somebody else does take it. It remains your product until that point, so that's just a reminder on that.

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Umm and then if we can move ahead to the next the last piece, which again is Umm from a few weeks back is we do have our new vendor in place for the USDA. DoD fresh fruit and vegetable program. Gargiulo took over as of April 2. Gargiulo produce is a large wholesale produce company out of New Jersey, but just outside the New York City border area. So they are pretty close actually and they are also a vendor for some of the other DoD.

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Programs and other states and UM so they have taken on over so the first week was a limited selection in the catalog for those who started ordering immediately and as they had promised so far. We had gone from probably about 25 offerings that first week to 50 items on the catalog that I see this week, so they're really ramping it up, they had to do that to allow for the.

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You know adjustments and and to ease into the you know delivery schedule and figure out some of the logistics so Umm. We are hopeful that with this new vendor. The program will move on strong and Umm finish up the year with us so again if you do have any direct questions for them. They're email is the best way to reach them. It's there in the School Lunch Tray. I'm certainly reach out to Alison or myself if you do have any questions.

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And with that I believe I'm passing it back on over 2 Fionnuala.

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Thanks, Monica Hi everyone, UM Anula Brown here. I'm gonna be covering the next 2 items. So this USDA. Memo came out April 4th. The Consolidated Appropriations Act. This is a nice summary here. These 4 bullet points of how this consolidation of this act affects our child nutrition programs so the first item here, vegetables, and breakfast so for school year 2122.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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And for next school year 22-23 school food authorities participating in the breakfast program may credit any vegetable in place of fruit without including vegetables from other subgroups in the weekly menu. So this information is pertinent for the menu planner in the district or the school and some information there. The second item poultry from China. So program funds cannot be used to procure raw or processed poultry products from the People's Republic of China.

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Then we have some information about paid lunch equity provision. UM SFAs that have a negative balance in their nonprofit school food service account as of December 31, 2021, must establish a paid price. A price for paid lunches served through the National School Lunch Program so next year, obviously for districts that are not participating in community eligibility provision will be transitioning back to free reduced and paid prices and so the paid lunch equity provision will be.

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Back in effect and USDA will be releasing additional guidance. Hopefully soon on that and how you'll be able to comply with the requirements for school year 2022-23.

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And the last item here would be the low-fat flavored milk so for uh the next school year beginning July 1, 2022 the transitional meal patterns standards go into effect so this is.

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Uh reflective in all of our uh menu planning guidance and this would be allowing the low-fat flavored milk to be served in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Special Milk Program for children ages 6 and older so if you want. Some further information. On this memo. You could just click on those hyperlinks there. But as I said, This is a nice work for bullet points that summarize that memo.

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Next I'm going to just remind everyone of a webinar. We have coming up May 13th and this is for the requirement. USDA's requirement to assess your local school Wellness policies, the due date for this is December 30, 2022 and we've been providing a series of webinars this year and we are on Step 3 and 4 at the last 2 steps in the process so if you.

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Need some assistance I and have not availed of these webinars. Yet Step 3 and Step 4. We've done 2. So far, so this is our last one May 13th.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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I suggest that you jump on it's actually it's only about an hour and UM.

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Uh I'm very informative if you need a refresher on how to wrap up. This this process. We understand that this is challenging. We think that my experience is that many sponsors have kind of.

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Started the process and now really just need uh some assistance and we have all of those resources available for you to to bring it home. I'm going to have Teri click on the how to complete your local school wellness triennial assessment and if you just scroll down. I want to point out this chart, so for anyone who got sure what I'm talking about things they might have done Step 2, possibly 3.

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Is getting invited to these webinars is not really sure what? What we're even talking about? I would highly suggest you click on this link and check check this out on this is great. We put this together last year. It breaks off breaks apart. The assessment into 4 different steps and gives you worksheets and videos for each step of the way and as I mentioned this is our last webinar now trying to support our districts in finishing Step 3 and 4 so.

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Last thing I'll say is just that the requirement is that you complete the assessment and then you make it available to the the public so that is what you'll need to have done by June 30, 2022 and if you have any questions about about this you could certainly reach out to me.

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I think that was more than I was supposed to say so. Yeah, no for no don't go passing yet Umm. We do have a quick question on the paid lunch equity tool. Umm do you have any idea when it might be coming out?

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No.

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OK, short and sweet thank you.

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The guidance that I've been giving we, we, we do issue. This I think we have up on our website, the last. UM guidance from USTA regarding what the minimum price would would need to be so I

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

mean, I would take a look at what the last guidance. We gave but I'm not sure. Maybe Teri has some further insight. As far as when more information coming out, but you should you should look to kind of where you left off. With this and kind of where your paid lunch prices are and and what USA has issued.

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The last time they issued it.

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I really don't Fionnuala except to say that we did issue an operational memorandum last year that references 2021. So you can certainly go on their Umm operational memoranda and check it out if you wanna have further guidance as well.

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OK thanks for Nora thanks Teri.

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Umm I'm gonna talk about UM sign up for USDA alerts UM.

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From the Federal Register, and UM sometimes, UM, you might wanna get a direct notification from USDA. And so you can sign up yourself to get that information and we give you the link that you can click on and it will take you right to where you sign up, it's a very easy process.

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And I'm just going to connect there.

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And if you go up to to browse.

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And you click on browse you can select the topic that you would like to UM receive notifications on and so there are different topics on, but Food Nutrition or Food Nutrition Service would be one of the topics that you would pick and then if you go over and click in to sign up, then you would just be able to put your information in there and then you will start receiving emails from the Federal Register, directly to your email box and so it might be something that you're interested in doing.

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And certainly check that out.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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And then also I wanted to alert you to the Connecticut State Department of Education 's laws and regulations for child nutrition programs and we have a webpage that's just dedicated to that.

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And I'm going to take you there.

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And many times if you contact her office and you have a question on that pertains to guidance from USDA. We will often go to this source. This website and look up either. Federal regulations or state regulations under the Connecticut General State Statutes and we just wanted to make sure that you're aware of this because this is where sometimes your administration will say well. Where did you find that or can you show me in the regulations where it says that and this is where you would go.

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And so we cover everything from lunch and breakfast and other feeding programs for public schools and employees, which is 210 or 10 to 15. All the way down to the governor 's executive orders are listed all there and then we have the competitive food regulations, which are state regulations, which are listed out and then we have state and federal regulations as well. And here you'll see CFR stands for code of federal regulations.

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And these are the federal regulations that guide your programs whether it's the National School Lunch Program, which is under 210. Umm see it's 7 CFR part 210 or on the Special Milk Program, which is 215. You can find all of those regulations there.

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And we also have a CFP as well as uh final rules pertaining to different areas in the school nutrition programs and then the summer food service programs so there's a lot of information there. We encourage you to check it out and I think you'll find it very helpful.

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And now I'm going to turn it over to Susan Alston.

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Very so Umm, the last thing today is just in the Resource Roundup from last week. We just wanted to remind everyone about the recording of the info session that we did on the supply chain assistance fund so the info session was on April 8th. So if you did, miss that you can go back and you can watch it. You can watch it at any time. If somebody missed it, a business official if after you



## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

receive the funds. You kind of wanna. Refresh your of how you can use them. We encourage you to go back.

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And to watch the recording or read the transcript. Umm on our Operating Child Nutrition page. We have Umm a section.

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Umm supply chain assistance funds for school year 21-22 that has the OM on the Q&A. The list of the amounts that you're the school is going to get I'm along with the the attestation. The blank attestation form. So we did. We were very successful in getting all of the attestation statements in so I just want to thank Sean and Fionnuala and Teri because I know while I was out last week, they reached out to a lot of you to talk you through why you should you know get those funds.

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And we were able to get those uh attestations back so now we will start the process to get the funds out to you. And when we send them out. We will let you know that they are coming so that you know when to look for them.

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And with that that's it for me.

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Thanks so much Susan I do just want to add one thing on the supply chains as well as we've had a couple of questions around the period of performance and when you need to spend those funds by so we did cover. This a little bit in the A lot in the webinars. So definitely refresh your memories on that. But the the period of performance on the USDA so if you look at arc at the consolidated Q&A that we put together and released with this webinar training you'll see the ones that we really.

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No apply to you and apply to Connecticut. UM there are a few different items in those Q&AS that USDA released in the broader Q&A that really apply to the state agency more so than you so the reminder is the intent of these funds is to deal with any immediate supply chain issues. So we really want to see you be able to get these funds into you so as soon as possible. Once you receive them. So our team has been really, really great with the providing the technical assistance and helping you brainstorm.

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Has some really great ideas around it so if you're stuck if you're worried if you're trying to figure out what you're going to spend and how fast you're going to spend it reach out to your consultant and have those conversations. If you haven't already the other thing is that the period of performance

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

around when these funds have to be spent that you'll see in the broader USA Q&A. That is really that that deadline of September 30th 2023 pertains to the state agency and are having to have those funds out the door. Once you have them there is not.

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That same that same September 30, 2023 deadline does not apply to you, but again, I want to reiterate you want to get those out as fast as you can because that is the intent as to help you with any of these supply chain disruptions that you've been facing so but with that. You do not need to lose any sleep over not being able to get those funds out your door by that. September 30, 2023 date. We need to lose sleep at getting that anything that we may have to reallocate out the door to you so I just wanted to make sure to make this as clear as we could on that.

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Come as well so that we know you lose sleep over enough things you don't need to worry about that. One so much so. Hopefully these will help.

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OK, I think we have some question that came in Monica.

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Yes, we do, and actually it's for me, yeah, so Umm. There was a question about the requested donated commodities, Umm When would we know what was allocated to us that we can begin ordering them a notifications are sent out directly to you as soon as that transfer has made. I know several have gone out over the last couple days. We usually try to turn this around around within a week to 10 days after the deadline for the order forms knowing that these are time sensitive so if you do have specific questions certainly reach out to myself or Allison. But a lot of notifications have gone out in the last day or 2.

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And typically like I said a week to 10 days after the deadline for sending in the requests. We wanna get that turned around so you can get at it.

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And that's all the questions so far and I know Susan had noted that we hadn't gotten any questions through the UM.

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Through the survey that can be done at any time to have questions for it. For this session. So just a reminder that you can always do that, if you think of it at strange hour of the night when it's racking your brain. Feel free to still utilize that form. We check it. Every week to make sure that we're keeping up with any questions that might come in.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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Thank you. I completely forgot my 3:00 AM reminder to use that link at the beginning.

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And so the other thing in Caroline alluded to this in the beginning. Just I wanted to also make you guys aware so Umm, although all of the congressional authorities for USDA. Flexibilities don't expire this June 30th 2022. We are working very closely with the USDA. We know that USDA has been exploring every opportunity that they can to be able to make this transition as smooth as they can within the authority that they currently have so we are, we have not received anything formal from USDA.

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On what we are allowed to be able to communicate out what will be allowed to do, but please. Do stay tuned and definitely join us for these School Lunch Tray Table Talks because once we receive that guidance. We will be sending it out as soon as we possibly can and it may impact how you plan your operations for this coming summer and for the next school year. I can't really describe it much more than that, but please know that we are everyday fighting to make sure that we have as much flexibility and as much.

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Umm administrative ability to make sure we are not increasing your burden anymore than we absolutely have to have to participate in these programs, but please. Do stay tuned to School Lunch Tray and Table Talk. This is the number one way that we get that information out to you and the fastest way possible, as soon as we receive that that guidance in writing from USDA. We will share it with you. But we do what we are aware that USDA has been doing some national conversations around it and some of the information out there.

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Seems like we have more information than we do, and we we don't so I do wanna put that we are under the same umbrella of hearing this as you guys are that we are excited that there might be some additional flexibilities. We might be able to pursue but like I said as soon as we know we'll let you know as well.

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And speaking of reducing administrative burden. I'm guessing everybody on here is already bookmarked their Program Guidance. So I won't go into my long public service announcement about that. But make sure you do a select Program Guidance and that is bookmarks. On your favorite browser. But in the meantime, we are going to give you a lot of time back so we skipped to School Lunch Tray. We wanna make these as I mentioned several times as useful as possible to you. We know you're super busy and so we want to make these we covered 3 weeks in 25 minutes.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022

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How's that for a government? I think pretty good so thank you. All for what you do and for for all of your efforts and we will happily give you some more time back in your day and make this historically the shortest Table Talk that we have delivered so far, so way to go team very proud to work with you and we will see you guys at the next Table Talk.

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 28, 2022



For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's Training for School Nutrition Programs webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

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