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School Nutrition Programs Newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education



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Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

School Nutrition Programs

This weekly newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is dedicated to providing education, training, and technical assistance opportunities to school nutrition professionals, helping to ensure seamless operations for those participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Child Nutrition Programs. If you are the food service contact for your school or facility, please be certain that everyone on your team has access to this important information.

Tip of the Week

SUN Bucks Address Changes

Thanks to those who have already notified households about their SUN Bucks eligibility. IDOE has directed households to ensure that the address filed at their school is correct. Please continue updating student information in Data Exchange (DEX) through Tuesday, April 30. IDOE will pull an enrollment report in early May to issue the first round of SUN Bucks benefit cards. After Tuesday, April 30, schools can direct households to the [SUN Bucks help form](#). Review the [communication plan for schools](#) for address update notification language and graphics for social media or newsletter communications.

Important Updates

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Election Period Open Through Sunday, June 30

CEP applications are now being accepted. CEP schools agree to serve both breakfast and lunch to all students free of charge. The qualifying school's meal reimbursement reflects the percentage of identified students (students who are directly certified for free meals). A school district may implement community eligibility in any school or group of schools where 25% or more of the student population is directly certified. However, the district should conduct a thorough financial analysis based on anticipated claiming percentages prior to deciding to opt into CEP.

Additional information, including the school year (SY) 2024-2025 application, is available on the [CEP website](#). Determination of eligibility must be made using Direct Certification and enrollment data collected at the beginning of April. The application deadline to participate in CEP for SY 2024-2025 is Sunday, June 30. A validation of the submitted information will take place prior to final approval. Contact your assigned school nutrition programs field specialist with any questions.

Innovate School Food Grant Opportunities

Illinois Public Health Institute's Lake Michigan Innovation Hub will provide grants through two Request for Applications (RFAs) to spark innovation and strengthen the Lake Michigan kindergarten through grade 12 food system, improving schools' access to nutritious, local, and culturally relevant products. The RFAs close Tuesday, April 30.

- Spark Awards: Funding for projects that need a short-term infusion of funds for school food system and marketplace improvements, such as capacity-building, planning, and product testing projects. Amount: \$10,000 - \$75,000
- Innovation Collaborative Awards: Funding for projects that promote systems-level change of the school food system and marketplace, such as scaling up of programs, regional partnerships, or new program or product development and integration. Amount: \$250,000

Find more information [here](#).

Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards

Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) and USDA are recognizing and celebrating school food authorities (SFAs) who have made operational changes to improve the nutritional quality of their school meals, as well as those who engage students and families in nutrition education and school meals. If you've made changes to your school recipes and menus or engaged students in menu planning and nutrition education, you may qualify for a [Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award](#). AFHK has made the application process easier and faster. Awardees will receive national and local recognition, including a stipend to attend an exclusive national Healthy Meals Summit in Las Vegas. This recognition award is on-going to June 30, 2025. Congratulations Portage Township Schools Corporation as a recent Recognition Award winner!

Indiana SUN Bucks

SUN Bucks Office Hours

IDOE will host SUN Bucks office hours for school employees on Friday, April 19, at 10 a.m. ET to review common questions and answer any new questions. [Click here](#) to join.

SUN Bucks Data Collection - Share with Data Teams

IDOE will gather data for the first round of Indiana SUN Bucks card distribution from school enrollment reports submitted through DEX. Households will receive a SUN Bucks EBT card for each eligible student at the address included in the enrollment report. Schools should ask households to ensure their mailing address is updated with the school by Wednesday, May 1. Please make sure DEX Enrollment Reports are updated and pushed to IDOE by the end of the day on Wednesday, May 1. This will capture updates to the system before the first round of cards are issued. After Tuesday, April 30, please direct households to IDOE's [help form](#) to update addresses.

SUN Bucks Contact

Please designate a SUN Bucks contact for your school/corporation. This person does not have to be the food service director, but needs to be reasonably available throughout the summer in the event that questions surrounding eligibility, enrollment, or custody arrangement situations arise. Complete contact designation form [here](#).

SUN Bucks Action Items

Thanks to those who attended the SUN Bucks informational session for schools. If you missed the sessions, you can review the slides with script [here](#). IDOE will rely on our school partners to be the first line of communication with households about this exciting new program.

- Begin communicating with households. Because this program is new, it is recommended that schools reach out to all households within the district to share eligibility status and application information.
 - Those who are directly certified (DC) for free or reduced benefits and those who have been approved by a meal benefit application, curricular materials, or similar application, are automatically eligible for SUN Bucks. These households should ensure their mailing address is up to date with their child's school to guarantee that the benefit card is sent to the correct location. IDOE has a [letter template](#) that explains the new program and that these households are automatically eligible.
 - Those who are not approved for free or reduced benefits, but feel that they might qualify, should be instructed to apply using the [Indiana SUN Bucks application](#) when the application opens. IDOE has a [letter template](#) that explains the application process.

Learn more about SUN Bucks [here](#) and submit questions to the [online help form](#).

Farm to School

Farm to School Symposium Registration is Open

The agenda and registration for the Farm to School and ECE Symposium can be found on the Indiana Grown for School's [event page](#). The event will be held at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds on Tuesday, June 18, and Wednesday, June 19. Participants will learn about gardening, local procurement, and agriculture education. All teaching, food service, and school administrative staff are welcome to attend. Contact [Sophie Lindley](#) with any questions.

Farm to School Highlight: Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson School Corporation

Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson School Corporation's high school agriculture department runs the Creek Cattle Company (CCC). Agriculture students raise, feed, and care for the cattle until they reach their ideal weight for processing. The beef is processed locally, and the food service department buys ground beef from the

CCC. Learn more about their program [here](#). If you would like to highlight your school's farm to school program in the newsletter, contact [Sophie Lindley](#).

USDA Foods

Individually Wrapped Items Will Not Be Delivered

The following items from the Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program (FFVP) will not be delivered tomorrow, Thursday, April 18. The vendor truck arrived with the items above the required temperature and therefore the order was rejected. Unfortunately, there is not enough time to recover these items for tomorrow's delivery. Contact schools@creationgardens.com with any questions.

- individually wrapped broccoli
- individually wrapped celery
- individually wrapped orange wedges
- individually wrapped strawberries
- individually wrapped grape tomatoes

End of School Year Reminders Video

This [video](#) is a useful reminder to schools about tasks that need to be completed before summer break. IDOE will sweep all Direct Delivery (Brown Box) USDA Foods remaining in school inventories in CNPweb as of Monday, July 1.

SY 2023-2024 Direct Delivery USDA Foods Allocations Ended

Direct Delivery USDA Foods allocations into SFA inventories have ended and all deliveries to warehouses are completed for SY 2023-2024. SFAs can continue to order through the Monday of the week before the school's last delivery period, on or before Sunday, June 30. Any USDA Foods remaining in school inventories after Sunday, June 30 will be swept and transferred to surplus.

SY 2024-2025 USDA Foods Direct Delivery Warehouses

IDOE has executed new contracts with two warehouses for SY 2024-2025. Dilgard Frozen Foods will cover the counties in northeastern region and Stanz-Troyers Foodservice will cover the remaining counties in the state. Click [here](#) for a map and list of county and regional assignments.

USDA Frozen Broccoli Cancelled

USDA Foods frozen broccoli 110473 has been cancelled for the remainder of SY 2023-2024. IDOE will not receive any more of this item for this school year. Allocations of this product should resume in SY 2024-2025. Please plan your menus accordingly.

American Commodity Distribution Association Conference (ACDA)

School food service staff working with the USDA Foods in Schools Program are encouraged to participate in the upcoming ACDA Annual Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, from Sunday, April 21, through Wednesday, April 24. Learn more [here](#).



USDA Foods Recipes

Tacos are a great option for breakfast, lunch, or even snack. There are so many variations including beef, pulled pork, ham, and chicken tacos, and it is also a great opportunity to use USDA cheeses, salsa, and corn. Recipes must be adjusted to meet serving sizes and meal patterns.

Training and Webinar Opportunities

Spring Webinars from IDOE

- **Maintenance of the Non-Profit School Food Service Account (Fund 0800):** Learn the finance basics for managing the Non-Profit School Food Service Account including a review of allowable and unallowable cost using federal funds, application of indirect cost and Annual Financial Report requirements. Thursday, April 25, at 10 a.m. ET. [Register here](#).
- **End of Year Updates and Reminders:** Join us for important reminders and updates to help wrap up your school year and prepare for the next school year. Thursday, May 5, at 1 p.m. ET. [Register here](#).

Back by Popular Demand! Culinary Skills for A+ School Meals In-Person Summer Training

Culinary Skill for A+ School Meals is a free five-day, hands-on culinary training skills workshop designed for all job positions in school kitchens. Classes are free and will earn attendees 28 continuing education units (CEUs). This workshop will be offered in six locations throughout Indiana.

- Evansville - Monday, June 3, through Friday, June 7
- Columbus - Monday, June 10, through Friday, June 14
- Fishers - Monday, June 24, through Friday, June 28
- Merrillville - Monday, July 8, through Friday, July 12
- Elkhart - Monday, July 15, through Friday, July 19
- Plainfield - Monday, July 22, through Friday, July 26

Classes meet from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. local time at the host site. Space will be limited for each session and participants should plan to attend all five days. Register [here](#).

Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership (ISNL)

Due to restrictions from the Institute of Child Nutrition, IDOE will offer one in-person ISNL training opportunity this summer, from Monday, June 24, through Friday, June 28, at Greenfield-Central Educational Services Center. ISNL is intended for new school nutrition program directors and provides an overview of school nutrition programs, defines the role and responsibilities of a director, and reviews the relationship between local policies and state/federal regulations. Because this session will be capped at 40 participants, we ask that only those with three or fewer years of director/program management experience, and who have never attended ISNL training, register to attend. [Register here](#).

Beyond the Table Webinar Recording Now Available

The [slides](#) and [recording](#) of IDOE's National Nutrition Month webinar "Beyond the Table - Eat with The Environment in Mind" are available. The webinar includes ideas on reducing food waste with added content on how you can celebrate Earth Day on Monday, April 22.

Reminders

SY 2024-2025 Paid Lunch Equity (PLE)

In March, USDA released [Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for School Year 2024-2025](#). SFAs with positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2023, are exempt from PLE pricing requirements found at [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)](#).

In order to demonstrate state agency oversight, USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) recommends that state agencies maintain documentation that includes which SFAs are using the PLE exemption for SY 2024-2025. This documentation should include a record that each SFA had a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2023. This record could include documents such as a financial ledger or an attestation provided by the SFA. IDOE created an [Attestation Statement](#) for schools that wish to confirm their exempt status. Exempt SFAs may still use the PLE tool to complete the steps necessary to determine their target SY 2024-2025 paid lunch price, consistent with program regulations at [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)](#), and adjust their paid lunch prices accordingly.

- [Attestation Statement for Exempt Schools](#)
- [2024-2025 PLE Tool Flow Chart](#)
- [2024-2025 PLE Tool](#)

The [financial management](#) website is under construction and will be updated with SY 2024-2025 PLE resources soon.

Updates from Our Partners

Pilot Light Food Education Fellowship

Food service staff, please share with educators in your district. Pilot Light, a Midwest Region USDA Farm to School Grantee, has launched the application for the 2024-2025 Food Education Fellowship. Teachers may apply [here](#) through Monday, May 27. Pilot Light created the Food Education Fellowship to invest in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 teacher leaders who are committed to bringing food education to their students. In addition to integrated food education lessons, fellows will partner with an individual or organization in the food space to support student-led advocacy work within their classrooms. Learn more about the fellowship [here](#). Pilot Light will hold a virtual office hour about the fellowship on Wednesday, May 1, at 5 p.m. ET. You may register [here](#) to learn more.

Upcoming Dates



Sunday, April 21, through Wednesday, April 24	ACDA Conference
Tuesday, April 23, 3 to 4:30 p.m. ET	Session 2: Trauma-Informed Nutrition Security for Indiana Schools
Thursday, April 25, at 10 a.m. ET	Maintenance of the Non-Profit School Food Service Account (Fund 0800)
Monday, April 29	Summer EBT Final Rule Comments Due
Tuesday, April 30	Lake Michigan School Food System Innovation Hub Application Deadline
Tuesday, April 30, 3 to 4:30 p.m. ET	Session 3: Trauma-Informed Nutrition Security for Indiana Schools
Wednesday, May 1, at 5 p.m. ET	Food Education Fellowship Office Hour
Thursday, May 5, at 1 p.m. ET	End of Year Updates and Reminders
Friday, May 24	FSD 101 Registration Deadline
Monday, May 27	Food Education Fellowship Application Deadline
Tuesday, June 18, and Wednesday, June 19	Farm to School and ECE Symposium

Additional Resources

- [School Nutrition Programs Calendar](#)
- [IDOE's Nutrition webpage](#)
- [CNPweb](#)

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