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

Direct Certification (DC) Reminder

Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must access the DC report annually. Regular claiming sponsors must download a DC match list at least three times per school year, but are encouraged to do so at least monthly. Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools are required to run direct certification at least once a school year, but it is best practice to download DC information more frequently in an effort to support students that rely on non-federal programs using free and reduced eligibility determinations for fee reductions and program entry and to aid in calculating Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for future CEP applications.

Important Updates

School Breakfast Week Scrapbook

The mystery has been solved! Clue in to School Breakfast was a hit! Thank you to everyone who submitted photos for the National School Breakfast Week Indiana scrapbook. Check out the submissions here.

Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards

Hoosier Awardee Spotlight: Portage Township Schools

Portage Township Schools has received an award in all five categories!

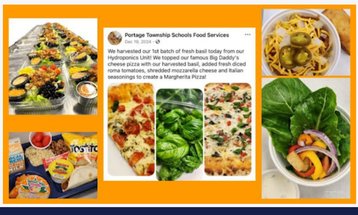
Innovation in Nutrition Education: Engaging cafeteria signage encouraged students to make balanced food choices and stay active. Beyond the lunch line, the district launched two dynamic digital magazines, shared via email, social media, and QR codes, to connect families with their school meals.

Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals: By blending culinary creativity with locally sourced foods, the district crafted meals that not only nourish but also excite young taste buds. Students have embraced these flavorful, wholesome dishes, making mealtime a more enjoyable and nutritious experience across the district.

Lunch Trailblazer: Redefining school meals with fresh, flavorful, and lower-sodium options! The district swaps out processed and cured meats for fresh, lean proteins free from added salt solutions and serves vegetables with no added salt. By selecting lower-sodium products and using bold, natural flavors like garlic, citrus, herbs, and spices, they're proving that healthier meals can still be delicious. These innovative efforts are setting the bar for nutritious, crave-worthy school food!

Breakfast Trailblazer: Making mornings healthier by reducing added sugars in school breakfast! The district revamped its menus to ensure that all breakfast cereals contain ≤ 6 grams of added sugar per dry ounce and all yogurts have ≤ 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces. By making these changes now, the district's breakfast menus are already aligned with the upcoming SY 2025-2026 nutrition standards, ensuring students continue to enjoy delicious, nutritious meals that fuel their day the right way!

Innovative School Lunch Makeover: The district revamped its classic Popcorn Chicken Bowl and introduced a Plant-Based Power Bowl, focusing on lower sodium and whole grain-rich ingredients. Tacos/Nacho entree choice, saw a major upgrade by switching from processed taco meat to fresh, locally sourced beef seasoned with salt-free taco seasoning. These changes meet the Healthy Meals Incentives sodium limits while actively involving students in the selection and promotion of the meals.



Farm to School

Find Local with Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh!

Did you know you can get local food through the DoD Fresh program? In the FFAVORS catalog, look at the state of origin to the right side to see items from Indiana or the Midwest! Right now, there are onions from Indiana and Ohio. This is a great way to use local while utilizing your commodity dollars!

Indiana Grown for Schools March Newsletter

Find the March newsletter for Indiana Grown for Schools (INGFS) here. Every month, INGFS releases a newsletter packed with upcoming events and webinars, school highlights, grant information, and more! If you want to receive this directly to your inbox, sign up for the listserv on the INGFS website.

Northeast Indiana Harvest of the Month (HOM)

The Northeast Indiana Farm to School group, supported by Parkview Health, has created a Harvest of the Month Program with several schools participating this year. They have procured and delivered many produce items to schools for use in their cafeterias and classrooms for taste tests. Many of the products come from Hawkins Family Farm in North Manchester, but the group has sought out products from farms around northeast Indiana as well. Local schools have done a great job incorporating both the food and education into this program. Check out this photo of roasting spaghetti squash from Northcrest Elementary School, part of Fort Wayne Community Schools.

USDA Foods

USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey

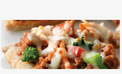
The USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey is now closed. IDOE is balancing and reconciling the survey results and working to meet USDA deadlines for entering destinations and truck totals into their Web Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) computer system.

USDA Foods and DoD Fresh Orders and Deliveries

Schools should begin preparing for the end of the school year. Allocations end on Wednesday, April 30. USDA Foods deliveries (based on delivery periods) and USDA Foods for Processing and DoD orders end Monday, June 30. Schools should make plans for ordering and utilization. USDA Foods for Processing pounds remaining will carry over to school year 2026 depending on usage and availability. DoD Fresh funds will not carry over.

USDA Foods Recipes

Use your USDA Foods ground beef, beef crumbles, broccoli and cheeses to prepare this variation of beef and garden vegetable pizza. This recipe must be adjusted to meet serving sizes and meal patterns.



Training and Webinar Opportunities

Calculating Non-Program Food Cost Webinar

Join IDOE to discuss the process of completing the Non-Program Foods Revenue Tool. Completion of the tool ensures compliance with and accurate tracking of non-program food costs. This webinar will cover cost calculations, pricing considerations, and USDA requirements to help manage non-program food expenses effectively. Thursday, April 10, at 10 a.m. ET. Register here.

Culinary A+ for School Meals In-Person Training

School nutrition operations are transforming. School nutrition standards require schools to offer more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and students demand tastier, fresher and more contemporary menu items. While this brings some challenges it also brings many opportunities to add new, exciting items to your menu. This class will focus on basic culinary skills needed to prepare and serve more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and salads while enhancing flavors and meeting the demands of today's guests. These basic culinary skills will help schools offer foods and meals that support the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and school nutrition standards.

Training is Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. local time.

- Columbus on Monday, June 2, through Friday, June 6
- Charlestown on Monday, June 9, through Friday, June 13
- Michigan City on Monday, July 7, through Friday, July 11
- Indianapolis on Monday, July 14, through Friday, July 18
- Fishers on Monday, July 21, through Friday, July 25
- Crown Point on Monday, July 28, through Friday, August 1

Register here.

Reminders

Deadline Approaching: USDA Request for Information

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released two Requests for Information in December to solicit public input. Please see the upcoming deadlines for each below.

- Child Nutrition Programs Tribal Pilot Projects: comments accepted through Monday, March 24.
- Grain-Based Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs: comments accepted through Wednesday, March 26.

Upcoming Dates

Monday, March 24	Child Nutrition Programs Tribal Pilot Projects comment period ends
Wednesday, March 26	Grain-Based Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs comment period ends
Monday, March 31	December claims for reimbursement are due
Thursday, April 10 at 10 a.m. ET	Calculating Non-Program Food Costs Webinar

Additional Resources

School Nutrition Programs Calendar
IDOE's Nutrition Webpage
CNPweb