



SCHOOL  
NUTRITION TEAM

# School Nutrition News

Fall 2023 Vol 16 Issue No 1

## FEATURED STORIES

## Verification Updates

To maintain the integrity of the USDA child nutrition programs, each school food authority (SFA) must **annually** verify the eligibility of children from a sample of household applications approved for free or reduced price meal benefits for each school year. Verification uses a sample pool of all current, approved applications on file as of October 1. A letter will be sent to the Authorized Representative and Food Service Director to notify your SFA of which sampling method you must use. The verification process must be completed by November 15. A new [Verification in a Nutshell](#) document is available to assist SFAs on the [Verification webpage](#).

Please contact one of the free and reduced eligibility specialists at [DPIMealEligibility@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIMealEligibility@dpi.wi.gov) with any questions about verification.

[USDA Updates](#)

[Administrative Review & You Virtual Workshop](#)

[USDA Foods Training](#)

[Reducing Sugar at Breakfast](#)

[Nutritious, Delicious Wisconsin Lessons](#)

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## School Nutrition Superhero of the Month Nominations

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Nutrition Team is always looking for candidates to feature as the "School Nutrition Superhero" each month on the main DPI Facebook page. The goal is to recognize someone who is doing an excellent job in their role. If you know someone who would be an excellent School Nutrition Superhero of the Month, please send your nominations to [DPIFNS@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIFNS@dpi.wi.gov).

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

OCTOBER 9-13, 2023  
[National School Lunch Week](#)

OCTOBER 2023  
[National Farm to School \(F2S\) Month](#)

October 12, 2023  
[Great Lakes Apple Crunch](#)

# USDA Guidance Memo Summaries

## [SP 17-2023 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program \(FFVP\): Allocation of Funds for Fiscal Year 2024](#)

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide FFVP funding allocation amounts for all state agencies for fiscal year (FY) 2024, to provide information on funding requirements and deadlines, and to serve as a reminder of important program requirements. Wisconsin is allocated \$4,692,048 for the FFVP for FY 2024.

## [SP 16-2023: Revised Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals](#)

This memorandum provides information on the revised Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals. USDA updated the prototype application to improve the user experience for applicants by adjusting the reading level, streamlining the application instructions, and by adding clarity to the mailing instructions to reduce the number of applications sent to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. The SY 2023-24 Wisconsin Free and Reduced Meal Applications are located on the [Free and Reduced Meal Application webpage](#).

## [SP 15-2023: State Agency Food Safety Inspections Report for SY 2022-23](#)

This memorandum provides guidance regarding continuation of the food safety inspections reporting requirement under the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Programs (SBP) for FY 2023. State agencies must report to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) the number of annual food safety inspections obtained by schools under their jurisdiction for SY 2022-23. This information is collected from SFAs as part of the SY 2023-24 School Nutrition contract.

## [SP 14-2023: Questions and Answers #2: Summer 2023 Noncongregate Meal Service in Rural Areas](#)

This memorandum provides further guidance on the administration and operation of noncongregate meal service in rural areas during summer 2023 for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO).

## [SP 13-2023: Best Practices for Contracting with Food Service Management Companies](#)

This memorandum provides additional procurement-related technical assistance and information for SAs and SFAs to consider when entering into and executing contracts with Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs).

*(Continued on page 12)*



# School Nutrition Summer Training Recap

With nearly 600 participants joining us for two engaging in-person sessions and one dynamic virtual session, SNST 2023 was a resounding success. We are already looking ahead to SNST 2024 and cannot wait to reunite with all of you next Summer! Please visit the [School Nutrition Training webpage](#) for upcoming training opportunities!



## Administrative Review & You Virtual Workshop

This is a friendly reminder that time is running out to secure your spot for our highly anticipated virtual Administrative Review & You Workshop happening on Thursday, October 5, 2023 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Do not miss this exciting opportunity to enhance your knowledge on the Administrative Review process. [Register](#) now to reserve your place and ensure you do not miss out on this valuable learning experience. We cannot wait to see you there!



## Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Training

Exciting news! Join us for an in-person ICN training on *Utilizing the Cafeteria as a Classroom*. This course covers using the menu as a marketing tool and understanding how the cafeteria environment impacts student eating behaviors. Learn how to teach students about nutrition and healthy food choices. Mark your calendar for this free training being held on Friday, October 27, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at [Oak Creek High School](#) in Oak Creek, WI. To secure your spot, as class size is limited to the first 40 participants, [register](#) by October 18, 2023. Hope to see you there!



# 2023-24 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)

This school year, elementary students in 212 Wisconsin schools will enjoy fresh fruit and vegetable snacks at least two days per week! FFVP funding provides schools the opportunity to offer students unique produce that they may not have been able to try elsewhere. Last school year, Wisconsin students snacked on blood oranges, persimmons, guava, and Wisconsin-grown apples, among many other local fruits and vegetables. Many schools held nutrition education lessons with these fruits and vegetables, including reading a book about persimmons! Schools that operate the FFVP consistently demonstrate the program's positive effects on nutrition and wellness throughout the school.

The Wisconsin [FFVP webpage](#) includes information about the program, eligibility, requirements, and helpful resources for schools participating in the program.

Grant funds from USDA make the FFVP possible nationwide. If your school did not apply, please consider applying next school year. FFVP grant application information for the 2024-25 school year will be available in early 2024.



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## USDA Foods Training

This is a free, in-person training for SFAs interested in learning more about how to run a successful direct diversion program for the next school year (SY 2024-25). The USDA Foods Direct Diversion Processing Program Training and Food Show is the first day of the Wisconsin School Nutrition Association (SNA) fall conference on Monday, December 4. You do not need to be an SNA member to register for this session. The food show is a great companion to the training and is an opportunity to taste test USDA Foods products from processors and food brokers for SY 2024-25. The events will be held at the Wilderness Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells. Watch for event updates and registration on the [SNA-WI Events webpage](#).



# Improving Nutritional Quality of School Breakfast: Lower Added Sugars!

USDA child nutrition program nutrient standards align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and are reviewed routinely to ensure that the nutritional quality of school meals is consistent with research. These standards included age-specific calorie limits, and limits on sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat while encouraging whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. However, there are no standards set for added sugars in child nutrition programs despite recommendations to limit calorie intake from added sugars to fewer than 10 percent daily. Approximately 70 to 80 percent of children consume over this limit and school breakfast meals alone can contribute up to 17 percent of calories daily from added sugars. Limits on added sugars in school meal programs have been proposed in the [USDA's Proposed Rule](#) in the form of product-based limits (i.e. grain-based desserts, breakfast cereals, yogurts, and flavored milks), and an overall weekly limit of fewer than 10 percent of calories from added sugars per meal.

Added sugars are those that are added to foods during food processing; not those that are naturally occurring such as sugar found in fruits (fructose) and unflavored milk (lactose). Common breakfast foods that are high in added sugars include flavored milk, sweetened ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, syrups, muffins and sweet breads, granola bars, sweet crackers, cinnamon buns, and sweetened yogurts. With staffing hardships and labor costs, many of these foods are easy to prepare and use in our school breakfast programs so while an entire overhaul of the foods you serve in your program may not be feasible, consider the following strategies for healthy swaps:

1. Consider offering only unflavored milk varieties (skim and low-fat unflavored milk).
2. Reduce offerings of grain-based desserts. Follow the National School Lunch Program and limit to <2.0 oz equivalents weekly.
3. Offer breakfast cereals that contain no more than six grams of total sugars per dry ounce (28 grams). [Cereals that meet CACFP requirements](#) are lower in sugar!
4. Offer Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) in combination with grains. After 1.0 oz equivalent of true grain is offered, M/MA can credit towards the weekly grain component.



## Improving Nutritional Quality of School Breakfast: Lower Added Sugars! (cont'd)

5. Offer [yogurt](#) with no more than 23 grams of total sugars per six ounces.
6. Offer fruits that contain no or few added sugars.
7. Use fruit to sweeten smoothies rather than added sweeteners.
8. Offer less fruit juice and more whole fruit.
9. Prepare more speed-scratch or scratch recipes. Check out [Quantity Recipes](#) from the Institute of Child Nutrition.
10. Lastly, “the Cafeteria is your Classroom” – use it to teach kids about nutrition with colorful signage.

For questions about improving the nutritional quality of your school breakfast program, contact [DPISBP@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPISBP@dpi.wi.gov).

Send pictures of your school breakfast to [DPINFNS@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPINFNS@dpi.wi.gov) so we can share on the DPI social media accounts.

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## FY 2022 National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance Grant

We received applications from 259 SFAs requesting a total of 422 pieces of equipment. Applicants were notified in April if they were selected or not to move forward with Part 2 of the application process. Eligible applicants went out for bids in April. We awarded 31 SFAs with 40 pieces of equipment and we anticipate reallocating the remaining funds in the fall. Thank you to everyone who applied.



# SNT Member Updates

## Farewell and Best Wishes to...

**Jeff Laubert**, Nutrition Program Consultant, who left our team in July to go back to school for his MBA at The Ohio State University!



**Jane Maier**, Nutrition Program Consultant, who retired in September after 6 ½ years with DPI! Jane has worked in several capacities within school food service for 23 years. She is looking forward to gardening, photography, and spending time with her two-year-old granddaughter. The School Nutrition Team at DPI will always remain special in her heart.



## Welcome Back to...

**Claire Nagel**, USDA Foods and Procurement Contract Specialist, who is returning to the team on a limited basis.

## Congrats to...

**Brittany Zerbe**, Public Health Nutritionist, who welcomed a healthy baby boy in July.

**Alyssa Flores**, Nutrition Program Consultant, who married her husband, Michael, in August.

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## Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch

Celebrate National Farm to School (F2S) Month this October by crunching into locally or regionally grown apples at noon on Thursday, October 12, 2023. All schools, early child care settings, and other organizations in the Great Lakes region are invited to participate. Anyone who wants to show support for local farmers is encouraged to join! For more information and to register visit their [website](#).



# Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin Lessons

New Resource! Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin Toolkit

Wisconsin Team Nutrition's newest resource is the [Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin Toolkit](#). Full of new resources, this toolkit provides information to help school nutrition professionals implement a Wisconsin Harvest of the Month program at their school.

In this toolkit you will find:

- Information on local procurement;
- Guidance on how to conduct student taste tests, including sample ballots;
- Promotional materials, including newsletter and social media templates, new images and posters, and videos that can be used to educate students about local Wisconsin agricultural products; and
- Seven newly developed quantity recipes featuring local Wisconsin agricultural products, including a Spiced Apple Parfait and Southwest Seasoned Potatoes.



These recipes, which were developed specifically for school food service, have been taste-tested and approved by students around the state. The recipes feature Wisconsin-grown apples, broccoli, carrots, dairy, potatoes, and winter squash.

Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin can be coordinated with other Harvest of the Month activities, such as featuring Wisconsin produce on the school menu or displaying promotional materials in the cafeteria. Wisconsin school districts are encouraged to use the Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin Toolkit in their elementary classrooms, school cafeterias, and in the community.

## GOALS Recipients

Congratulations to the following people who have recently earned their GOALS Certificate:

- **Laura Hendricks**, Gilman School District
- **Brenda Utesch**, Big Foot Union High School
- **Jennifer Tweed**, DPI School Nutrition Team





# A Reflection on Two Years as an AmeriCorps Farm to School Member

By Catherine Masters

As I finish up my two years of serving as an AmeriCorps Farm to School Specialist, it's amazing to reflect on all of the momentum I've been able to build around Farm to School (F2S) programming in that time at my sites. Both of the school gardens I oversaw have been entirely transformed in that time. The Lake View Elementary School garden received a complete facelift—we scraped the garden clean this spring and were able to build a completely new garden in a few months. This garden is more accessible—in physical terms, with higher garden beds so people with mobility issues can more easily engage in gardening—but also in terms of being a community harvesting spot. The garden at Elvehjem Elementary School has expanded to include a three sisters garden plot and a digging pit, as well as some aesthetic and practical accents, such as ADA accessible beds, an arbor, and an extra whiteboard for the outdoor classroom. Both gardens are peppered with handmade educational signs offering information on pollinator and decomposer ID, the water cycle, the parts of a plant, the life cycle of plants, behavioral expectations, and more.

I've stewarded a popular cultural cooking club that engages students in the diverse cuisines of their families and their classmates. Students learned how to chop, mince, dice, measure, stir, peel, open cans, fry, and blend, all while also learning that vegetable-forward meals cooked in a variety of ways are not only fun to make, but fun to eat! Students would eagerly bring home food they cooked in the club to share with their families, and I was constantly asked in the hallways if more spots had opened up in the club so that new students could join. It was wonderful to see students become more confident in their ability to cook and in their willingness to try new foods as the weeks progressed. They seemed to develop a sense of trust with me, believing that if I was encouraging them to try something new, it wouldn't be so bad. It might even be surprisingly wonderful.

I led the charge on building a relationship between Rooted and the Madison Metropolitan School District, so that student-grown produce could end up in lunchrooms. Over several months of steadily building a relationship with the nutrition director of MMSD, we began "The Lettuce Project", a pilot attempt to have students grow lettuce in their classrooms that matured at the student



# A Reflection on Two Years as an AmeriCorps F2S Member (con't)

run Rooted Farms and was ultimately served to them in salads in their lunch.

The project was a success, which is noteworthy for a school district as large as MMSD. The nutrition director has a lot of enthusiasm to capitalize on that success and expand the ways that student-grown produce can appear in their cafeterias moving forward.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I developed friendly and meaningful relationships with hundreds of students, dozens of teachers, and many school administrators. I gained valuable experience as an educator—the difference in my confidence between me teaching now and when I started is stark and notable. I developed so many valuable skills, such as creating compelling lesson plans, leadership in a classroom, and flexibility. These relationships and skills are components of my service that I will carry forward with me for the rest of my life.

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## SNACS Update

Is your SFA scheduled for an Administrative Review (AR) this year? If so, you will need access to our School Nutrition Accountability Software (SNACS)! The Authorized Representative and Food Service Director should have received an email with a copy of the SNACS Access Request Form. Please note that the DPI School Nutrition Team will add one user per SFA and that person will then have the ability to add additional users. Each SFA staff member who will need access to SNACS must have their own WAMS ID. Visit the [SNACS webpage](#) for additional information on SNACS access and creating a WAMS ID. On the webpage, you will also find a variety of SNACS How-to-Guides under the SNACS for Administrative Review heading.



SNACS will be demonstrated during the AR and You Virtual Workshop taking place Thursday, October 5, 2023. For SFAs with ARs later in the school year, the workshop will be offered again in January 2024 (date/time TBD). If you have questions, please contact [DPISNACSSupport@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPISNACSSupport@dpi.wi.gov).

## \*NEW\* Sesame Allergen

Sesame is the ninth most common food allergy among children and adults in the U.S. It is critical that school nutrition professionals carefully review ingredient statements for sesame flour, oil, and seeds since it appears that some manufacturers are not clearly labeling these on allergen statements yet. Most commercial oils containing other allergens are highly refined and do not contain the allergen (i.e., soy oil). However, most sesame oils and sesame flours are not highly refined and should not be consumed by someone with a sesame allergy. If you have any questions about a product with sesame in it, always err on the side of caution and do not serve it to a student with a sesame allergy. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the special dietary needs specialists listed on the bottom of the [Special Dietary Needs webpage](#).



## Special Dietary Needs: Back to School Reminders

**Medical statement:** There is a new nondiscrimination statement on our medical statement template. Please be sure to distribute the new medical statements this school year.

**Fluid Milk Substitute form:** SFAs may offer students a fluid milk substitute that is nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk *without* a signed medical statement from the child's health care team. SFAs must request approval from the DPI School Nutrition Team (SNT) to ensure the milk substitute meets nutritional guidelines.

The SNT has created a [List of Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes](#) to help you choose an eligible product. Once you have chosen a product, please complete and submit the [Fluid Milk Substitute Approval Form](#). Please note that lactose-free cow's milk does not need prior approval, as it is already an approved milk type in the child nutrition programs.

**Special Dietary Needs Policy:** The School Nutrition Team has created an [Example Special Dietary Needs Policy](#) that can be used at your school or district. Please note that this template should be thoroughly reviewed and modified to fit the needs of your school or district.

For more information or to access the contact information of the SNT's special dietary needs specialists, visit our [Special Dietary Needs webpage](#).



# USDA Guidance (cont'd)



## [SP 12-2023 Oversight and Monitoring of the School Meals Programs- Information Regarding Onsite and Offsite Strategies and Options](#)

This memorandum provides guidance on oversight and monitoring of programs now that the public health emergency has ended. The attached appendix presents onsite and offsite strategies and options for state agencies to incorporate in their reviews.

## [SP 11-2023 Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for School Year 2023-24](#)

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to SAs and SFAs on the paid lunch equity (PLE) requirements for SY 2023-24. SFAs with a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2022, are exempt from PLE pricing requirements found at [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)](#). SFAs that had a negative balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2022, must follow PLE requirements according to [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)](#) when establishing their paid lunch prices for SY 2023-24. More information regarding PLE requirements for SY 2023-24 is available on the [Financial Management webpage](#).

## [SP 10-2023 Updated Title I Guidance for Making Within District Allocations](#)

This memorandum shares updated guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for making within-district Title I allocations under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This memo includes links to guidance on how LEAs can successfully implement Title I requirements using NSLP data while operating the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

## [SP 08-2023 Free or Low-Cost Internet Services Available to All Households with Kids at Schools Participating in the Community Eligibility Provision](#)

This guidance provides a reminder of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP provides eligible households a discount of up to \$30 per month off their internet bills, as well as a one-time discount of up to \$100 off an eligible connected device like a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. This is a reminder that a household is eligible to participate in the ACP if a child in the household receives free or reduced-price school meals. Therefore, every household with a child attending a school participating in the CEP of the NSLP and SBP is eligible for ACP benefits.

Please help spread the word. Links to School Outreach Toolkits are available in the policy memorandum. Households can learn more and apply for the ACP at [GetInternet.gov](#).

# About Us



School Nutrition News is published three times per year by the Department of Public Instruction.

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- 1. mail:**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
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- 2. fax:**  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- 3. email:**  
[program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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