

School Nutrition Update

April 14-18, 2025



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Important Dates

Date	Action Step
April 21	Spring Policy Updates Registration Deadline
May 2	Manager Best Practices Sessions Submission Deadline
May 5	May 12-16 SN Update Submission Deadline
May 8	2025 N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute Participant Application Deadline
May 19	May 27-30 SN Update Submission Deadline
June 2	June 9-13 SN Update Submission Deadline
June 9	SNA-NC Pre-conference Workshops Registration Deadline
June 30	Healthy Meals Incentives Awards Deadline
July 7	July 14-18 SN Update Submission Deadline
August 4	August 11-15 SN Update Submission Deadline
Each Month – By the 10th (On or Before)	Claim for Reimbursement Due (NSLP, SBP, ASSP)
Each Month – By the 15th (On or Before)	FFVP Reimbursement Claims Due

Program Operations Information

Note Change in SN Update Schedule/Submission Process

The SN Update schedule is changing for the remainder of the 2024-25 school year and summer. The e-letter will go out once during the second week of the month in April (14-18), June (9-13), July (14-18), and August

(11-15) and twice in May during the 2nd and 4th week of the month (12-16 and 27-30). Please keep these dates in mind. If you have a shout out or job posting to share, please send a brief ready-for-print article (250 words or less) to your [Area School Nutrition Consultant](#) by Monday of the week prior to when the SN Update is scheduled to go out. Please include “SN Update” in the email subject line.

Prepare to Use Cartwheel Meal Counter for 2025 Summer Meals

The Summer Nutrition Team with the N.C. Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), Office of School Nutrition is excited to share that the Cartwheel Meal Counter will be available for Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors to use this summer. The program will look much the same as in previous years and can be accessed at <https://mealcounter.cartwheelsolutions.com>. Prior to starting your summer program or logging information into Cartwheel, the SFSP application and all meal sites must be approved. Then, the Meal Counter Initialization should be completed in the SN Technology System to allow your 2025 meal sites to populate in Cartwheel. The Summer Nutrition Team wants you to be prepared to enter information in Cartwheel and train your staff - materials are currently being updated. Please bear with us while we complete these updates. We will advise you when the materials are ready for use. For questions, reach out to summernutritionprogram@dpi.nc.gov.

Plan to Attend Spring 2025 Policy Updates – Register by 4/21

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition is happy to announce our in-person Spring 2025 Policy Updates meetings. We will be offering six opportunities across the state to engage with our team and network with other School Nutrition professionals while also receiving important information and updates impacting North Carolina School Nutrition Programs. Please note that Policy Updates are intended for School Nutrition Administrators and their central office staff.

Date	Location	Primary Facilitators
Tuesday, April 29	Jacksonville Onslow Chamber of Commerce 1099 Gum Branch Road, Jacksonville	Laura Chase, Pam Sheets
Tuesday, April 29	N.C. Telecenter 415 East Boulevard, Williamston	Cathie Masters, Leslie Otts
Wednesday, April 30	Masonic Center of Winston-Salem 4537 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem	Flo Smith, Trip Warren
Thursday, May 1	NCSU McKimmon Center 1101 Gorman Street, Raleigh ***LOCATION FULL***	Dana Edwards, Jamie Narron, Jennifer Ozkurt
Thursday, May 1	Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) 121 Hendersonville Road, Asheville	Jennifer Brown, Sheryl Harris
Friday, May 2	Great Wolf Lodge 10175 Weddington Road, Concord	Kristen Bealler, Kim McCall

Participants are welcome to attend any meeting location, even if your Area School Nutrition Consultant is not facilitating that meeting. However, we do encourage you to attend the meeting that your Area School Nutrition Consultant is facilitating, if possible. Please only register for one location.

Each meeting will **begin at 9:00 am and conclude by 4:00 pm.** Additional details can be found in the registration form.

Contact Katrina Perry, Professional Development Consultant, katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov, to register, cancel or modify your registration, or to ask any questions. Registration is open until **Monday, April 21**, or until full for the location. We look forward to seeing you this spring!

Learn about SUN Bucks – 4/24

SUN Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids offer three ways to combat summer hunger when schools are out:

- SUN Meals: Youth enjoy meals and activities onsite together at schools and community sites
- SUN Meals To-Go: Meals for youth are available for pick up or delivery in some rural areas
- SUN Bucks: Grocery-buying benefits are issued per eligible child to purchase nutritious food



[Register for a webinar](#) for School Nutrition leaders and Summer Nutrition sponsors on **April 24 at 2 pm ET** to learn about SUN Bucks, the newest Summer Nutrition Program. Join the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), NCDPI, and the Carolina Hunger Initiative to learn:

- An overview and timeline for the SUN Bucks 2025 program
- Student eligibility and application information
- How families will receive benefits and the importance of accurate contact information
- Resources available to help communicate with families.
- How School Nutrition teams and Summer Nutrition sponsors can support SUN Bucks outreach in communities

Your partnership is vital to ensuring students and families can successfully access this support, which totaled almost \$130 million for North Carolina families in 2024. A recording will be posted online after the webinar at CarolinaHungerInitiative.org/sunbucks. For questions, contact Tamara Baker, tamarabaker@unc.edu, at the Carolina Hunger Initiative.

Seeking Manager Best Practices for SNA-NC Session – Reply by 5/2

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition, is planning a session for the upcoming School Nutrition Association of North Carolina (SNA-NC) Annual Conference on June 19 and is seeking examples of best practices, tips, and tools for School Nutrition Managers. If you or someone in your district has any examples you would be willing to share with other School Nutrition Managers and School Food Authorities (SFAs) across our state, please complete the [best practices form](#) by **May 2** so we can follow up with you. If you have any questions, please contact Katrina Perry, Professional Development Consultant, katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov.

Encourage Participation in the 2025 N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute – Apply by 5/8

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition, in conjunction with Chef Cyndie Story and the Culinary Solutions K-12 Team, will offer four North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute regional workshops this summer. Three workshops will be for School Nutrition Managers and one for School Nutrition (SN) Directors/Administrators or central office staff. N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute workshops teach fundamental culinary techniques such as knife skills, food production strategies like batch cooking for quality, quick-scratch cooking techniques, and merchandising tips for recipes developed specifically for North Carolina schools. Participants graduate as Chef Ambassadors prepared to teach the Institute lessons and recipes to local School Nutrition professionals.



Listening, Learning, Leading

The N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute objectives are to:

- Improve student health, well-being, and academic success through nutritious, appealing meals at school,
- Increase participation in high quality, enticing School Nutrition Programs,
- Expand capacity of local School Nutrition Programs to purchase, prepare, and serve fresh, locally grown produce,
- Increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain rich foods, and
- Provide continuing education opportunities for School Nutrition personnel.

The N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute workshops will be hosted by School Food Authorities (SFAs) across the state and facilitated by the N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute team, including State Agency staff. The following workshops will be offered this summer:

- **July 8-10** – Cleveland County Schools (SN Managers)
- **July 22-24** – Craven County Schools (SN Managers)
- **July 29-31** – Orange County Schools (SN Managers)
- **August 5-7** – New Hanover County Schools (SN Directors/Administrators and central office staff only)

Interested School Nutrition professionals must [submit a 2025 Chef Ambassador Application](#) by **Thursday, May 8** to be considered for a spot and must have the support of their School Nutrition Director/Administrator, principal, and/or direct supervisor to attend. Submitted applications will be reviewed and selected participants will be notified by email. Selected participants must confirm their spot. Please reach out to Katrina Perry, Professional Development Consultant, katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov, with any questions.

Register for the SNA-NC Pre-conference Workshops by 6/9

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition is thrilled to announce three upcoming in-person pre-conference workshops that will be offered at the SNA-NC Conference in Greensboro. The workshops will be held at the Koury Convention Center. See below for more information and links to register. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Katrina Perry, Professional Development Consultant, katrina.perry@dpi.nc.gov.

New School Nutrition Manager

The *New School Nutrition Manager* is a two-day workshop designed for new and aspiring School Nutrition Managers. It will include introductory information and overviews for meal patterns and offer vs. serve, meal

counting and claiming, cash management and accountability, food safety and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan, inventory management, production records, and customer service.

Dates: June 16-17, 2025

- Day 1: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Check-in begins at 12:30 pm.)
- Day 2: 9:00 am- 4:00 pm (Check-in begins at 8:30 am.)

[Learn more and register for the *New School Nutrition Manager* workshop.](#) Registration will close on **Monday, June 9, 2025**, or when registration is full. Please register in advance as on-site registrations cannot be processed due to limited seating space.

Register for Safe Plates for Food Managers

The *Safe Plates for Food Managers* is a two-day workshop designed to help School Nutrition Administrators/Directors, School Nutrition Managers, and other Persons in Charge (PICs) obtain a Certified Food Protection Manager certification. This certification is required for School Nutrition Administrators/Directors as part of Professional Standards hiring requirements and is also required for PICs of food establishments per the North Carolina Food Code. A preparation course begins on the first day and ends on the second day. After the conclusion of the preparation course on the afternoon of the second day, participants will be given an opportunity to take the exam. The exam provided at the conclusion of this workshop meets the requirements for an American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-accredited exam option.

Dates: June 16-17, 2025

- Day 1: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm (Check-in begins at 9:30 am.)
- Day 2: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm (Check-in begins at 8:30 am. Exam - 2:30 pm - 5:00 pm.)

Safe Plates for Food Managers is an evidence-based, interactive food safety training course developed by N.C. State University (NCSU)/Cooperative Extension. This workshop is being offered by NCSU. [Learn more and register for the *Safe Plates for Food Managers* workshop.](#) Registration will close on **Monday, June 9, 2025**, or when registration is full. Advance registration is REQUIRED; on-site registrations and payments cannot be processed.

NOTE: There is a \$70 registration cost for the workshop that includes participation in the course, training materials, and the ANSI-certified exam fee. The SNA-NC *Safe Plates* registration fee is a discounted rate compared to taking this course through your local N.C. Cooperative Extension agent.

Administrative Review Workshop: An Approach to Collaborative Compliance

The *Administrative Review: An Approach to Collaborative Compliance* is a two-day workshop designed to provide important information about the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Administrative Review. Participants will have a better understanding of the areas of review and process of the Administrative Review.

Dates: June 16-17, 2025

- Day 1: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Check-in begins at 12:30 pm.)
- Day 2: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm (Check-in begins at 8:30 am.)

Please note, registration is currently open only for SFAs scheduled for an Administrative Review in SY 2025-26. These SFAs will receive the link to register in the letter they receive from the Administrative Review team. Registration will open for all SFAs on **Monday, May 26, 2025**. Registration will close for all on **Monday, June 9, 2025**, or when registration is full.

School Nutrition Spotlight

Celebrating National Empanada Day – Wake County Schools

Wake County Public Schools participated in National Empanada Day on April 8 by making house made beef and cheese empanadas for the menu that day. Students enjoyed dipping their empanadas in queso and celebrating this special day. As staff walked around and talked to students about their empanadas, they were met by empty trays as the only thing left was the boat they were served in. The empanadas were a hit with students!



Follow/Like Us on Social Media

Did you know you could find the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition on social media? Follow or like our pages - @NCSchoolMeals and @Ray4NCKids on Facebook, Instagram, and X, formerly Twitter.

Share Your School Nutrition Photos

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition wants to spotlight the appealing, wholesome, quality meals our School and Summer Nutrition Programs across the state offer to students. Share your beautiful photos of serving lines, complete school or summer meals, and nutrition education and promotion with us. Please send to Tracey Bates, NCDPI School Nutrition Promotion Specialist, at tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov. Make sure to include the school and district or organization info so we can aim to credit the source. Be on the lookout for photos from across the state on social media.

Job Opportunity

Work with New Hanover County – School Nutrition Supervisor Opening

New Hanover County Schools is seeking applicants for a School Nutrition Supervisor opening. An associate’s degree in Child Nutrition or a related field, or a bachelor’s degree in nutrition or a related field is preferred. Two or more years of experience in the food service industry or a related field is required. Applicants must hold a ServSafe® certification or equivalent. [Learn more and apply for the NHCS SN Supervisor position.](#)

Apply for Gaston County School Nutrition Director Position

Gaston County Schools is actively recruiting applicants for the School Nutrition Director position. The School Nutrition Director will lead a large school district with 55 schools and 30,000 students. Gaston County School Nutrition also has a Central Kitchen/Distribution Center. A bachelor’s degree, with an academic major in specific areas, is required, and a master’s degree is preferred. At least (5) years of management experience in a K-12

school program is strongly recommended. Contact Angela Calamia at arcalamia@gaston.k12.nc.us for more information.

Work for Durham Public Schools – Child Nutrition Supervisor Opening

Durham Public Schools (DPS) is seeking applicants for an open Child Nutrition Supervisor position. The Child Nutrition Supervisor provides direct support for the School Nutrition Services (SNS) Department through active participation in local, state and federal programs, prepares requested reports and findings as requested by Durham Public Schools, NCDPI, and USDA, conducts ongoing school assessments to ensure observance of Federal, State and Local regulations and policies, works collaboratively with the Central Office team, District Leadership, and school-based Administration to ensure a smooth operation and excellent customer service, provide support in the development of new School Nutrition Services programs and implement programs to increase student meal participation, and supervises the operations of the Central HUB Kitchen and all related programs including Charter Schools and Catering. [Learn more and apply for the DPS CN Supervisor position.](#)

Apply for Anson County School Nutrition Director Position

Anson County Schools (ACS) is actively recruiting applicants for the School Nutrition Director position. A bachelor’s degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas; or a bachelor’s degree in any academic major and a State-recognized certificate for School Nutrition Directors; or a bachelor’s degree in any academic major and at least two years of relevant School Nutrition Program experience; or an associate’s degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major or concentration in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field; and at least 2 years of relevant School Nutrition Program experience is required. [Learn more and apply for the Anson County School Nutrition Director position.](#)

Award/Grant Opportunity

Apply for a Healthy Meals Incentive Award – Deadline 6/30

As part of the USDA, Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Initiative, Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) is offering Recognition Awards to celebrate School Food Authorities (SFAs) that have made improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals and to spotlight innovative practices and student and community engagement activities. There are eight HMI Recognition Award categories. SFAs are encouraged to apply for one or more awards. Learn more about all the awards by visiting the [Healthy Meal Incentives website](#).

1. SFA Breakfast Trailblazer Award
2. Small and/or Rural SFA Breakfast Trailblazer Award
3. Lunch Trailblazer Award
4. Small and/or Rural SFA Lunch Trailblazer Award
5. Innovative School Lunch Makeover Award
6. Innovation in the Cultural Diversity of School Meals Award
7. Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals Award
8. Innovation in Nutrition Education Award

SFAs that receive HMI Awards will receive travel stipends to attend the national Healthy Meals Summit in October. The summits are an exclusive opportunity for HMI Awardees to celebrate their outstanding work, network with School Nutrition professionals from across the country, and provide an opportunity to showcase their best practices! HMI Recognition Award winners will also receive an awardee toolkit that includes promotional materials and digital assets to help publicize the district’s success to local media and the school community. USDA and AFHK will highlight and share best practices from HMI Awardees nationwide through traditional and social media, stakeholder engagement, and training and technical assistance activities.

The application portal and helpful resources to complete the application are available from the Healthy Meals Incentives [website](#). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through **11:59 pm ET on June 30, 2025**. If interested in attending the HMI Summit, SFAs are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. If you have questions about the awards and application, email award@healthymealsincentives.org.

Join the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition and Action for Healthy Kids for an informational webinar about the Healthy Meals Incentives Awards on **May 15 at 2 pm ET**. [Learn more and register for the HMI webinar](#).



Nutrition Education & Promotion

Celebrate April as Garden Month

April is Garden Month. School gardens are effective learning tools that create opportunities for children to discover fresh food, make healthier food choices and be more active. Gardens offer dynamic settings for class curriculum activities that integrate science, environmental studies, math, reading, nutrition, health and physical activity. [Explore school garden resources from N.C. Cooperative Extension](#).



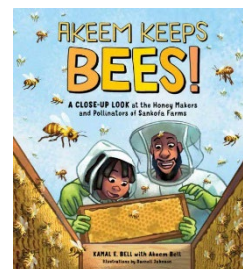
KidsGardening is offering a Kids Garden Month Challenge. Kids are invited to complete one or more challenges. Each challenge has a unique prize, and kids who complete at least five challenges will be entered to win the grand prize! Download and print the Kids Garden Month Challenge printout to keep track in your school or home. [Learn more and enter the Kids Garden Month Challenge](#).

Check Out the April Ag in the Classroom Book of the Month

North Carolina Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom (NCAITC) is an educational program that is dedicated to fostering an understanding of the importance of agriculture in North Carolina. Each month NCAITC offers a book for anyone looking for a valid ag-related resource to utilize in the classroom. Each book will have accompanying activities of high-quality that can be integrated into lesson plans at various grade levels. The total purchase of

one book is \$5.00 and can be purchased until copies are sold out. Educational activity sheets are downloadable from the [NCAITC website](#).

Told from Akeem’s perspective, *Akeem Keeps Bees!* begins with the arrival and installation of a package of bees and follows Akeem and his Dad throughout the year as they inspect the hive, find the queen, deal with a swarm, harvest honey, and prepare for winter. Every part of the process is illustrated for young readers, teaching them the special role that bees play on a farm. The author, Kamal Bell, is a leading voice among Black farmers educating and inspiring Black youth about farming and beekeeping and is from North Carolina! Young readers will learn the basics of beekeeping with this vibrantly illustrated book that takes place on the Sankofa Farms apiary.



Continuing Education

Strategies for Navigating Bids and Vendor Selections in School Nutrition – 4/24, 3 pm ET

Join the Institute for Child Nutrition (ICN) for a webinar on **April 24 at 3 pm ET** to learn effective strategies for navigating the bid process and vendor selections with School Nutrition Programs. Gain insights on securing high-quality food at competitive prices and learn practical tips for successful procurement. The session will also cover best practices for creating clear bid specifications--ensuring compliance with procurement regulations--and assessing vendors, with a focus on maintaining effective communication, sustainability, and sourcing local fresh foods. [Learn more and register for the bids and vendor selections webinar](#).

Reducing Sodium with Scratch Cooking in School Meals – 5/1, 3 pm ET

Reducing sodium in school meals doesn’t mean compromising on flavor! Join the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) on **May 1 at 3 pm ET** to hear School Nutrition operators identify practical techniques for replacing high-sodium ingredients with fresh, flavorful alternatives. Learn how Power School District 30 in Montana successfully incorporated natural flavor enhancers into their recipes through easy substitutions and additions. They will also share their step-by-step approach that can be integrated into existing menus. In addition, the CICN will highlight existing resources that support School Nutrition operators in incorporating sodium reduction best practices in their daily operations in school kitchens. [Learn more and register for the webinar on reducing sodium in school meals](#).

Serving Beyond Summer School: Reaching More Kids with Rural Summer Meals – 5/1, 3 pm ET

Join the Center for Best Practices with No Kid Hungry for a webinar on **May 1 at 3 pm ET** on how school districts are revolutionizing rural non-congregate summer meal programs beyond traditional summer school services. This session will feature School Nutrition leaders from across the country who will share their innovative strategies and success stories. Learn how to implement grab-and-go services, use weekend meal packs, and effectively utilize your organization's resources and staffing to ensure more children in your community have

access to nutritious meals during the summer. Discover practical ideas and actionable steps to make your summer meal program both manageable and impactful. Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your meal service and support your community! [Learn more and register for the serving beyond summer school webinar.](#)

Watch the following recent Summer Nutrition Program webinars recordings from No Kid Hungry:

- [Reaching Rural Families with Grab & Go: Ideas for Transforming Summer Meal Programs](#)
- [Smart Hiring: Leveraging Student Workers for Impactful Summer Meal Programs](#)
- [Together We Serve: How Schools and Community Organizations are Boosting Summer Meals](#)

Learn about Farm to School with Growing Minds – 5/14, 3:30 pm ET

On **May 14 at 3:30 pm ET**, join the Growing Minds program for an introduction to farm to school. In this virtual training, you will learn about the different components of farm to school, hear how you can use Growing Minds toolkits and resources to support your farm to school goals, glean insights from farm to school champions in our region, and brainstorm activities to get you started. All are welcome no matter what age you teach or what your experience with farm to school is! [Learn more and register for the farm to school webinar.](#)

If you attend the training and are an educator in North Carolina, Growing Minds will send you a hard copy of their *I Tried Local Toolkit* for FREE, so make sure to note your school's address in the registration form. In the meantime, you can access a [digital version of the toolkit](#).

Growing Minds Farm to School Program is part of Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), a nonprofit based in Asheville. Visit growing-minds.org to learn more.

Access Virtual Training Opportunities

Continuing education resources are available on the Office of School Nutrition [website](#) from NCDPI, the Institute of Child Nutrition, School Nutrition Association and other agencies and organizations. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers [continuing professional education resources](#) for Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists (RDNs) and Dietetic Technicians, Registered (DTRs).

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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