This guidance applies to the meal patterns for grades K-12 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. For information on the meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For additional guidance on the grains component for grades K-12, review the CSDE’s guide, Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12, and visit the “Grains Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

“Breakfast cereals” are defined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations (21 CFR 170.3(n)(4)). They include ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereals, and granola) and instant and regular hot cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina). RTE breakfast cereals are a type of breakfast cereal that can be eaten as sold. They are typically fortified with vitamins and minerals.

### Crediting Requirements

Breakfast cereals credit differently depending on the school nutrition program. For school year 2020-21, all grains offered in the NSLP and SBP must be WGR. The ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 does not have a WGR requirement. Table 1 compares the crediting requirements for breakfast cereals. For more information, review the CSDE’s resource, Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of cereal</th>
<th>NSLP, SBP, and SSO</th>
<th>ASP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooked breakfast cereals</td>
<td>Must be whole grain-rich (WGR)</td>
<td>A creditable grain (whole, or enriched) must be the first ingredient or the cereal must be fortified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTE breakfast cereals</td>
<td>Must be WGR</td>
<td>A creditable grain (whole, or enriched) must be the first ingredient or the cereal must be fortified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Creditable Breakfast Cereals

The crediting requirements for each type of breakfast cereal are summarized below. Table 2 shows some examples of crediting RTE breakfast cereals in the school nutrition programs for grade K-12.

WGR breakfast cereals

WGR breakfast cereals credit in all school nutrition programs. Cooked and RTE breakfast cereals have different WGR criteria.

- **Cooked breakfast cereals** such as oatmeal (including regular and instant) are WGR if they meet three criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient); 2) any other grain ingredients are enriched; and 3) the combined weight of any noncreditable grains (such as fiber, bran, germ, and modified food starch) does not exceed 6.99 grams per ounce equivalent (½ cup cooked or 28 grams dry). Cooked breakfast cereals that exceed the limit for noncreditable grains do not meet the WGR criteria.

- **RTE breakfast cereals** are WGR if the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain. The limit for noncreditable grains does not apply to WGR RTE breakfast cereals. WGR RTE breakfast cereal that are 100 whole-grain do not need to be fortified.

Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel (starchy endosperm, fiber-rich bran, and nutrient-rich germ) after removing the inedible outer husk or hull. A 100 percent whole-grain cereal lists a whole grain as the first ingredient and contains only whole grains. For more information, review the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP*.

Enriched breakfast cereals

Enriched breakfast cereals credit only in the ASP. Enriched grains contain five vitamins and minerals added in amounts required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to replace some of the nutrients lost during processing. The enrichment nutrients include thiamin (vitamin B₁, thiamin mononitrate, or thiamin hydrochloride); riboflavin (vitamin B₂); niacin (vitamin B₃ or niacinamide); folic acid (folate); and iron (reduced iron, ferrous sulfate, or ferric orthophosphate). For more information, review the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*. 
Fortified breakfast cereals

Fortified breakfast cereals credit in the ASP, but must be WGR to credit in the NSLP and SBP. Fortified breakfast cereals contain added nutrients that were not originally present, or that are at higher levels than originally present. Fortified breakfast cereals typically contain the five enrichment nutrients, plus other vitamins and minerals that do not exist naturally in grains. A breakfast cereal is fortified if the food is labeled as “fortified” or the ingredients statement lists the vitamins and minerals added to the product. These nutrients are typically listed after “Vitamins and Minerals.”

Different cereal brands may list different fortification nutrients. Manufacturers may choose which nutrients to use for fortification. The USDA does not specify a minimum number of nutrients or a minimum percentage for the level of fortification for breakfast cereals in the Child Nutrition Programs.

Table 2. Examples of crediting RTE breakfast cereals in the meal patterns for grades K-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Whole grain is first ingredient</th>
<th>Fortified</th>
<th>WGR</th>
<th>Creditable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole-grain wheat, raisins, wheat bran, sugar, brown sugar syrup, contains 2% or less of salt, malt flavor. <strong>Vitamins and Minerals:</strong> Potassium chloride, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), zinc oxide, vitamin B₃ (riboflavin), vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B₁₂.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milled corn, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. <strong>Vitamins and Minerals:</strong> Iron, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate, ascorbic acid), niacinamide, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B₁₂.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 2. Examples of crediting RTE breakfast cereals in the meal patterns for grades K-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Whole grain is first ingredient</th>
<th>Fortified</th>
<th>WGR</th>
<th>Creditable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat bran, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. <strong>Vitamins and Minerals:</strong> Calcium carbonate, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate and ascorbic acid), reduced iron, niacinamide, vitamin B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), folic acid, vitamin B₃ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B₁₂, vitamin D.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puffed rice, ferrous sulfate (a source of iron), niacinamide, citric acid, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-grain rolled oats, sugar, natural flavors, salt.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 RTE breakfast cereals are WGR if the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100% whole grain.

### Serving Size

The USDA’s chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*, summarizes the grain servings and ounce equivalents for nine groups (A-I) of creditable grain foods. Cooked breakfast cereals (regular and instant) are in group H and cold RTE breakfast cereals are in group I.

The Exhibit A requirements are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs. The required amounts for the grains component are in ounce equivalents for the NSLP, SBP, and SSO; and in servings for the ASP. The CSDE’s resource, *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*, lists the Exhibit A grain ounce equivalents that apply to the NSLP, SBP, and SSO meal patterns for grades K-12. The CSDE’s resource, *Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the ASP*, lists the Exhibit A grain servings that apply to the ASP meal patterns for grades K-12.
Table 3 summarizes the required serving size for breakfast cereals in the meal patterns for grade K-12. The minimum creditable amount is ¼ ounce equivalent or ¼ serving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of breakfast cereal</th>
<th>NSLP, SBP, and SSO</th>
<th>ASP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 ounce equivalent</td>
<td>1 serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooked hot</td>
<td>½ cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) dry ¹</td>
<td>½ cup cooked or 25 grams (0.9 ounce) dry ¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTE flakes or rounds</td>
<td>1 cup or 1 ounce ²</td>
<td>¾ cup or 1 ounce ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTE puffed</td>
<td>1 ¼ cups or 1 ounce ²</td>
<td>¾ cup or 1 ounce ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTE granola</td>
<td>¼ cup or 1 ounce ²</td>
<td>¾ cup or 1 ounce ²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Cereal grains typically credit based on the cooked serving, but menu planners may choose to use the dry uncooked weight.

² The serving size is based on weight or volume, whichever is less. If the appropriate volume of cereal weighs less than 1 ounce (28 grams), it still credits as 1 ounce equivalent. For example, 1 cup of flaked cereal that weighs 26 grams credits as 1 ounce equivalent.
Resources

Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE)

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE):

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE)
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditWholeGrainsSNP.pdf

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 11-19: Weekly Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf

Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

Grains Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

Grains/Breads Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents#GrainsBreadsK12

Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE):
Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs

Meal Patterns for the ASP (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program#MealPatternsASP

Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains/Breads Servings in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA):

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

USDA Memo SP 24-2020, CACFP 13-2020 and SFSP 13-2020: Questions and Answers for the Child Nutrition Programs during School Year 2020-2021:
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Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(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) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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