

Guide to the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program



School Year 2026-27 (July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027)



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About this Guide

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Guide to Meeting the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12* is part of the CSDE's menu planning guidance series for the school nutrition programs (refer to "[CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance Series](#)" in this section). This guide provides comprehensive information and resources to assist school food authorities (SFAs) with planning menus to meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 in the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), and [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP. Meals and snacks offered in the SSO follow the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal pattern requirements.

The requirements in this guide apply to all public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO.

This guide reflects the USDA regulations and policies in effect as of the publication date. Please note that this information may change. The CSDE will update this guide whenever the USDA issues new meal pattern guidance for the school nutrition programs. Please check the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) webpage for the most current version. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_meal_patterns_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf.

The mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations does not imply approval or endorsement by the CSDE or the USDA. Product names are used solely for clarification.

Questions regarding this guide may be directed to Susan Fiore, MS, RD, Nutrition Education Coordinator, at 860-807-2075 or susan.fiore@ct.gov.

CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance Series

The CSDE's menu planning guidance series includes five comprehensive guides designed to assist SFAs with meeting the NSLP and SBP meal pattern and meal service requirements for grades K-12.

- Guide to the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program
- Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12
- Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs (applies to the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool)
- Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs (applies to the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool)
- Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

These guides are available on the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) webpage.

CSDE Contact Information


For questions regarding the NSLP, SBP, and SSO, please contact the school nutrition programs staff in the CSDE’s Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs.

County	CSDE School Nutrition Programs Staff
<p>Middlesex County (includes Regions 4, 13, and 17) Tolland County (includes Regions 8 and 19) RCCIs: Adelbrook, Inc. – The Children’s Home</p>	<p>Jennifer Bove 860-807-2044 jennifer.bove@ct.gov</p>
<p>Fairfield County (includes Region 9) Litchfield County (includes Regions 1, 7, 12, 14, and 20) School wellness policies</p>	<p>Fionnuala Brown 860-807-2129 fionnuala.brown@ct.gov</p>
<p>Hartford County (includes Region 10 and the Connecticut Technical Education & Career System [CTECS]) RCCIs: Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Corrections, Judicial Department</p>	<p>Teri Dandeneau 860-807-2079 teri.dandeneau@ct.gov</p>
<p>New Haven County (includes Regions 5, 15, and 16) RCCIs: Children’s Center, Boys & Girls Village, Inc.</p>	<p>Greg King 860-713-6804 greg.king@ct.gov</p>
<p>New London County Windham County (includes Region 11) RCCIs: Waterford Country School Claims processing</p>	<p>Susan Alston 860-807-2081 susan.alston@ct.gov</p>

For a list of all CSDE Child Nutrition Programs staff, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Child Nutrition Staff and Responsibilities](#).

Abbreviations and Acronyms

APP	alternate protein product
AR	Administrative Review
ASP	Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CN	Child Nutrition
CNP	Child Nutrition Program
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
FBG	Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA)
FDP	Food Distribution Program
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
HHFKA	Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296)
ICN	Institute of Child Nutrition
LEA	local educational agency
MMA	meats/meat alternates
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OVS	offer versus serve
oz eq	ounce equivalents
PFS	product formulation statement
RCCI	residential child care institution
SBP	School Breakfast Program



SFA	school food authority
SSO	Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WGR	whole grain-rich

For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Common Acronyms and Abbreviations in the School Nutrition Programs](#).



1 — Introduction

Schools and institutions that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) must offer meals that comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. Meals offered in the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP must follow the NSLP and SBP meal pattern requirements.

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grade K-12 require minimum daily and weekly servings of five meal components. They also require that school menus meet the weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards). SFAs that meet these meal pattern requirements may claim reimbursement for meals served to children.

Food-based Menu Planning

The lunch and breakfast meal patterns for grades K-12 use a food-based menu planning approach for three required grade groups (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). The meal patterns for each grade group require minimum daily and weekly amounts of five meal components for lunch (milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates [MMA]) and three meal components for breakfast (milk, fruits, and grains/MMA).

In addition, the average weekly nutrition content of all lunches for each grade group, and separately for all breakfasts for each grade group, must meet the USDA’s dietary specifications (nutrition standards). For more information, refer to [“Dietary Specifications”](#) in this section.

On average over the week, the lunch meal patterns are designed to provide approximately one-third of children’s total daily calories and other key nutrients. The breakfast meal patterns are designed to provide approximately one-fourth of children’s total daily calories and key nutrients.



Meal Pattern Legislation

The current USDA meal patterns for grades K-12 were defined by the final rules, [Nutrition Standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#) from January 26, 2012, and [Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium](#) from February 7, 2022. In addition, effective January 14, 2026, the [Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025](#) amends the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to revise the requirements for milk and fluid milk substitutes in the NSLP. Effective June 8, 2026, the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), changes the fluid milk requirements for ages 2 and older in the SBP.

- The breakfast meal pattern requirements are defined in section [7 CFR 220.8](#) of the SBP regulations and by the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#).
- The lunch meal pattern requirements are defined in section [7 CFR 210.10](#) of the NSLP regulations and by the [Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025](#) and the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#).
- The snack meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 are defined in section [7 CFR 210.10\(o\)](#) of the NSLP regulations and the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#).

On April 25, 2024, the USDA published the final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). This final rule implements gradual updates to the Child Nutrition Programs in several key areas, including the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For more information on the final rule meal pattern changes, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Summary of Final Rule Updates to the Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the "[Meal Pattern Changes](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Meal pattern changes for milk

Effective January 14, 2026, the [Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025](#) amends the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to revise the requirements for milk and fluid milk substitutes in the NSLP. Effective June 8, 2026, the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), changes the fluid milk requirements for the SBP patterns. For the NSLP and SBP meal patterns, allowable types of milk include unflavored whole milk and reduced fat (2%) milk in addition to the previously allowed low-fat (1%) milk and fat-free milk. SFAs may choose which types of fluid milk to offer. For more information, visit the "[Milk](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Required Grade Groups

The lunch and breakfast meal patterns for grades K-12 require three grade groups. These include grades K-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12.

Multiple Grade Groups

Some schools and institutions may have different grade configurations that prevent the use of the three required grade groups. One example is schools where students in grades K-8, grades 5-8, or grades 6-12 eat together during the same meal periods. Another example is RCCIs where students in grades 5-12 eat together during the same meal periods.

Optional meal patterns

The USDA allows some alternate menu planning options when students from different grade groups eat together in the same meal period. SFAs may use one menu for multiple grade groups only when the meal pattern requirements overlap, and the weekly servings do not exceed the highest level or go below the lowest level for each grade group. The grade configurations that meet these criteria include:

- grades K-8 for lunch (refer to "[Optional Meal Pattern for Grades K-8 at Lunch](#)" in section 3); and
- grades K-8, K-12, and 6-12 for breakfast (refer to "[Optional Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 at Breakfast](#)" in section 5).

Since the calorie ranges for the lunch meal patterns for grades 6-8 and 9-12 do not overlap, SFAs cannot use one lunch meal pattern with the same amounts of food to meet the requirements for these two grade groups. SFAs must plan lunch menus differently to meet the meal pattern requirements when students from grades 6-12 eat together in the same lunch period. For more information, refer to "[Lunch for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12](#)" in section 2.

Training on the optional grade groups is available in [Module 2: Introduction to School Meal Patterns](#), [Module 3: National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) Meal Pattern](#), and [Module 4: School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Meal Pattern](#) of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Exception for Grade Groups in Correctional Facilities

The USDA allows juvenile detention or correctional facilities (i.e., RCCIs) that meet specific criteria to serve one menu when the ages/grades served span more than one grade group. This exemption applies only if the RCCI:

- is a juvenile detention or correctional facility;
- consists of more than one grade group; and
- has legitimate safety concerns or state juvenile justice laws or regulations related to offering meals with varying amounts of food within the same meal period.

This provision also applies to any other RCCIs that can demonstrate operational limitations to separating age/grade groups and can show legitimate safety concerns if students are served different portions.

RCCIs that meet the required criteria may serve breakfasts and lunches with the same amount of food at the meal service. To ensure nutritional adequacy, meals must meet the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for the oldest grade group being served during the meal service.

RCCIs that meet the required criteria may also meet the milk variety requirement over the week rather than daily, if there are potential legitimate safety concerns about offering different types of milk to students. For example, an RCCI may offer all students flavored fat-free milk on some days of the week and unflavored low-fat milk on other days.

CSDE approval required

RCCIs must obtain approval from the CSDE prior to implementing a meal pattern exception. The institution must submit a written waiver request using the CSDE's form, [Meal Pattern Exception Request Form for Residential Child Care Institutions](#). The CSDE will consider requests on a case-by-case basis that meet the required exception criteria above. RCCIs that choose to implement this exception should contact their assigned CSDE school nutrition team member (refer to the CSDE's [County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs](#)).

The grade group exception applies only to RCCIs that meet the required criteria described above. All other facilities and schools must use the meal pattern grade groups specified in the USDA's NSLP and SBP regulations.

Reimbursable Meals

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for each grade group consist of minimum daily and weekly servings of the meal components. Meals served to children are eligible for USDA reimbursement when they contain these minimum daily and weekly servings and meet the weekly dietary specifications.

Reimbursable meals may also contain additional foods (such as condiments) or larger servings of the required meal components. However, menu planners should consider the appropriateness of additional foods based on children’s nutrition needs (refer to “[Additional Foods](#)” in this section).

Meal Components

A meal component is one of the five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals, including MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk.

- The breakfast meal pattern consists of three meal components: grains/MMA (grains, MMA, or combination); fruits (including optional vegetable substitutions); and milk. Different requirements apply when SFAs implement offer versus serve (OVS) at breakfast. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#).
- The lunch meal pattern consists of all five meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk).

Each meal component has specific crediting requirements. All foods and beverages must meet these requirements to credit toward a meal component for reimbursable meals. This includes commercial products, foods made from scratch by the SFA, and foods prepared by vendors. For detailed information on the crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Menu Items

Menu items contribute to the meal components. A menu item is any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk. Menu items may contribute to one or more meal components. For example, a hamburger (MMA component) on a whole-grain bun (grains component) is one menu item that contributes to two meal components.

Required Servings

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 require minimum daily and weekly servings of each meal component. These requirements are summarized below.

Daily requirements

The daily requirements are the minimum servings that SFAs must offer for each of the five meal components for lunch and each of the three meal components for breakfast. Meals that contain less than the minimum daily serving of any meal component do not meet the meal patterns and are not reimbursable. For example, the SBP meal pattern requires 1 cup of fruit for all grades. If the breakfast menu contains less than 1 cup of fruit, these meals are not reimbursable.

Weekly requirements

The weekly requirements for the fruits component, vegetables component, and milk component are the sum of the daily requirements. For example, the daily milk requirement for lunch and breakfast is 1 cup. The weekly milk requirement for lunch and breakfast is 5 cups for a five-day menu and 7 cups for a seven-day menu.

The weekly requirements for the grains component and MMA component are different for each grade group.

- **Grades 9-12 at lunch:** The weekly oz eq for the grains component and MMA component are the sum of the daily oz eq. For example, the five-day lunch meal pattern for grades 9-12 requires 2 oz eq of MMA daily and 10 oz eq over the week.
- **Grades K-5 and 6-8 at lunch and breakfast, and grades 9-12 at breakfast:** The weekly oz eq for the grains component and MMA component are more than the sum of the daily oz eq. To meet the weekly oz eq, SFAs must offer more than the minimum daily oz eq of grains and MMA on some days. For example, the five-day lunch meal pattern for grades K-5 requires 1 oz eq of grains daily. To meet the minimum weekly 8 oz eq, the lunch menu must include an additional 3 oz eq over the week. For more information, refer to [“Weekly Requirement for Grains and MMA at Lunch”](#) in section 3 and [“Weekly Requirement for Grains/MMA at Breakfast”](#) in section 5.

Meals may include larger amounts of any meal component if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium (refer to [“Additional Foods”](#) in this section).

Dietary Specifications

The dietary specifications are the USDA's nutrition standards for reimbursable NSLP and SBP meals for grades K-12. They are located at the bottom of each meal pattern chart, just under the required meal components and servings (refer to the lunch meal pattern charts in [section 2](#) and the breakfast meal pattern charts in [section 4](#)).

The average weekly nutrition content of all lunches for each grade group (and separately for all breakfasts for each grade group) must meet the dietary specifications. The dietary specifications include minimum and maximum levels for calories and limits for saturated fat and sodium.

- Saturated fat must be less than 10 percent of calories.
- The sodium limits are different for each grade group and meal. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).

For information on planning school menus to meet the dietary specifications, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#). For resources on the dietary specifications, visit the "[Dietary Specifications](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Training on the dietary specifications is available in [Module 6: Dietary Specifications](#) of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Effective with school year 2026-27 (beginning July 1, 2027), the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), requires a new weekly dietary specification for added sugars (less than 10 percent of calories). For more information, visit the "[Meal Pattern Changes](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Shorter or Longer Weeks

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns are based on a five-day week. Most Connecticut schools and institutions regularly operate on a five-day week. Some schools and institutions like RCCIs regularly operate on a seven-day week. When a school or institution regularly operates on a shorter or longer week, menu planners must increase or decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day that deviates from the standard five-day week.

The daily requirements and dietary specifications are unaffected by longer or shorter weeks. Since the dietary specifications are daily averages, the number of days are averaged together to meet the specified targets for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

Occasional decreases in school week

Schools and institutions with occasional decreases in the school week due to holidays, snow days, or other reasons are not required to adjust the weekly requirements. However, menus must be consistent with the intent of the meal patterns. For example, menu planners must ensure that lunch menus do not consistently fail to offer certain vegetable subgroups.

Meal patterns for shorter or longer weeks

The meal patterns for five-day and seven-day weeks are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Meal patterns for three-day and six-day weeks are available in [Appendix 2C](#) of the USDA's [Menu Planner for School Meals](#).

For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Additional Foods

School menus may include additional (extra) foods or larger servings beyond the minimum meal pattern requirements if the menu meets the weekly dietary specifications. Additional foods include creditable and noncreditable foods that are served in addition to the minimum meal pattern portions.

- Creditable foods are additional servings of a meal component, such as larger servings of fruits and vegetables.
- Noncreditable foods are foods that do not credit toward the meal patterns, such as bacon, cream cheese, ice cream, pudding, gelatin, and condiments like ketchup and salad dressing. These foods should be limited in school menus to meet the weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium (refer to “[Dietary Specifications](#)” in this section). For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

When offering additional foods, the CSDE encourages SFAs to choose nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to the nutritional needs of each grade group. Examples include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat and nonfat milk products, beans, peas, and lentils, and lean meats, fish, poultry.

All additional creditable and noncreditable foods offered to students with reimbursable meals count toward the weekly dietary specifications. Menu planners must ensure that offering additional foods or larger servings does not cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

Offering additional creditable foods

Menu planners must count additional creditable foods toward the required daily and weekly servings for each grade group. The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- **Example 1:** Yogurt planned as an extra menu item at lunch or breakfast counts toward the daily and weekly oz eq of the MMA component and the weekly dietary specifications.
- **Example 2:** A creditable grain-based dessert planned as an extra menu item at lunch counts toward 1) the daily and weekly oz eq of the grains component and the weekly dietary specifications; and 2) the weekly 2-oz eq limit for grain-based desserts. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

If the SFA implements OVS, school food service personnel must receive appropriate training on how to identify reimbursable meals with additional foods. The menu planner must clearly communicate with school food service staff regarding how to count all menu items. In addition, serving line signage must provide clear information on what and how much students can select for a reimbursable meal. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#).

Offering additional servings of vegetables and fruits

The USDA does not limit the amount of vegetables or fruits that SFAs may offer or students may select, as long as the menu meets the weekly dietary specifications. However, all second servings and extra foods are included when a nutrient analysis of menus is required as part of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. Menu planners should determine how extra servings of vegetables and fruits affect the menu's nutrient content, and limit extra servings of vegetables and fruits with added fat, sugars, and salt.

Menu planners should consider the types of foods that students are more likely to select as a second serving and determine how these foods affect the nutrient analysis of school meals. Modifying how certain vegetables and fruits are offered can help menus comply with the dietary specifications. The examples below show how SFAs might offer extra servings of fruits and vegetables.

- **Fresh vegetables and fruits without added fat, sugars, and salt:** SFAs could allow students to choose one or more extra servings of foods that do not negatively alter the nutrient analysis, such as fresh vegetables and fruits without added fat, sugars, and salt.
- **Vegetables and fruits with added fat, sugars, and salt:** SFAs could limit the number of extra servings of foods that would negatively alter the nutrient analysis, such as vegetables and fruits with added fat, sugars, and salt. Some examples include buttered corn, coleslaw made with mayonnaise, and fruit crisp made with butter and sugar.

SFAs must use menus and signage to clearly communicate these options by indicating what and how much students can select.

Second servings

If SFAs allow students to take second servings of any meal component at no charge, these foods must count toward the required daily and weekly servings and weekly dietary specifications. Menu planners must ensure that allowing students to take second servings does not cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium (refer to “[Dietary Specifications](#)” in this section).

SFAs must determine whether to charge for additional servings of meal components. School menus and signage must clearly identify the number of servings of each meal component that students may take as part of the reimbursable meal. This signage must be located near or at the beginning of the serving line and near the applicable meal components.

The USDA does not allow exceptions for second servings in RCCIs. Second servings of any meal components count toward the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements and the weekly dietary specifications.

Second meals

SFAs can claim only one reimbursable lunch and one reimbursable breakfast for each child per day. Second meals cannot be claimed for reimbursement but may be sold a la carte.

Second meals sold a la carte do not count toward the daily and weekly requirements and are not included in the nutrient analysis of reimbursable school meals. SFAs must charge an appropriate cost for a la carte meals based on the USDA’s requirements. For more information, visit the “[Nonprogram Foods](#)” section and “[Paid Lunch Equity](#)” section of the CSDE’s Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Leftovers

Occasional small quantities of leftover food served on another day do not count toward the NSLP or SBP meal patterns. Leftovers should not be planned. The USDA specifies that state agencies will determine whether leftovers are a reasonable amount and are not occurring on a regular basis. SFAs may also freeze leftovers following standard Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) protocols and serve them first on the serving line the next time they reappear in the menu cycle.

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Leftovers served to students as part of reimbursable meals are subject to the dietary specifications. Menu planners must ensure that leftovers do not cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium (refer to “[Dietary Specifications](#)” in this section).

Leftovers are included in the nutrient assessment of school menus when a nutrient analysis is required as part of the CSDE’s Administrative Review of the SFA’s school nutrition programs. If the SFA conducts their own nutrient analysis, leftovers must be included.

When SFAs consistently have leftovers to add to each day’s menus, the menu planner should consider participation trends to provide one reimbursable meal for each child every day.

Leftovers served to students on the same day they are initially offered are considered seconds (refer to “[Second servings](#)” in this section).



Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs

Schools and institutions participating in the USDA’s school nutrition programs must comply with the federal nondiscrimination laws and requirements for meal modifications for children with special dietary needs. These requirements are summarized below. For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Modifications for disability reasons

The USDA requires reasonable meal modifications on a case-by-case basis for children whose disability restricts their diet, based on a medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. “Case-by-case basis” means that the meal modifications are specific to the individual medical condition and dietary needs of each child.

The Connecticut State Department of Public Health defines a state-licensed healthcare professional as an individual who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law. This includes licensed physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy (DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN).

The CSDE’s medical statements and instructions are available in the “[Medical Statements](#)” section of the CSDE’s Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), requires SFAs to accept medical statements from registered dietitians.

Modifications for disability reasons

The USDA allows optional meal modifications for children whose special dietary needs do not constitute a disability. Optional modifications for non-disability reasons include requests related to religious or moral convictions, general health concerns, and personal food preferences. An example is a family’s preference for gluten-free foods, organic foods, or almond milk because they believe these foods are healthier.

SFAs may choose to provide meal modifications within the NSLP and SBP meal patterns on a case-by-case basis for children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability. Some examples include meals modified only for texture (e.g., chopped, ground, or pureed foods) and

meals that substitute food items from the same meal component, such as substituting a banana for strawberries (fruits component) or substituting chicken for cheese (MMA component).

SFAs may also choose to provide meal modifications outside the NSLP and SBP meal patterns on a case-by-case basis for children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability. To be reimbursable, modified meals outside the meal patterns require a medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian.

Menu Planning Resources

The resources below provide general information and guidance on planning meals to meet the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.

- [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs) (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>
- [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs) (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs>
- [Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_crediting_snp.pdf) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_crediting_snp.pdf
- [Crediting Summary Charts for the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_snp.pdf) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_snp.pdf
- [Cycle Menus](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/cycle-menus) (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/cycle-menus>
- [Dietary Specifications](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/dietary-specifications) (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Program webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/dietary-specifications>
- [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs) (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- [Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/resources_school_meal_patterns.pdf) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/resources_school_meal_patterns.pdf

- [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs) (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs>
- [Menu Planner for School Meals](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner) (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner>
- [Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning) (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning>
- [Nutrition Standards for School Meals](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/nutrition-standards-school-meals) (USDA webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/nutrition-standards-school-meals>
- [Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-meats-and-meat-alternates-school-breakfast) (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-meats-and-meat-alternates-school-breakfast>
- [Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/resources/resources_menu_planning.pdf) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/resources/resources_menu_planning.pdf
- [Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for School Meals for Grades K-12](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/sodium_limits_nslp_sbp.pdf) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/sodium_limits_nslp_sbp.pdf
- [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-school-nutrition-programs) (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-school-nutrition-programs>
- [The Road to Successful Menu Planning for School Meals Training Series](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/schoolmeals/training/menu-planning) (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/schoolmeals/training/menu-planning>
- [Updates to the School Nutrition Standards](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates) (USDA webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates>
- [USDA Foods Connecticut Food Distribution Program](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/food-distribution-program-usda-foods) (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/food-distribution-program-usda-foods>
- [USDA Memo SP 01-2026: Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025 – Implementation Requirements for the National School Lunch Program](https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/wmfhka-implementation):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/wmfhka-implementation>

- [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE Training Program):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

For detailed guidance on crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources with guidance on meeting the NSLP and SBP meal pattern requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Recipe Resources

The USDA's [Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook for Schools](#) features healthy standardized recipes that are low in saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium; and include more dark green and orange vegetables, dry beans, peas, and lentils, and whole grains. The Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#) website is a searchable collection of standardized recipes and other resources for the federal nutrition assistance programs.

For additional recipe resources, visit the "[Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs](#)" section of CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage. This section includes guidance on school recipes, multicultural recipes, standardized recipes, and using spices and seasonings.



Guidance on Meeting the Meal Pattern Requirements

The resources below provide SFAs with information and guidance on meeting the meal pattern requirements for the school nutrition programs.

- Links to the USDA's regulations and final rules for the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs are available on the CSDE's [Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- The USDA provides guidance for implementing the school nutrition programs through the policy memos on their [FNS Documents & Resources](#) webpage.
- The CSDE's [Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides links to relevant USDA memos by year, and includes memos from the CSDE Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs on the requirements for the school nutrition programs.
- The CSDE's [Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides an alphabetical listing of links to information and guidance on the federal and state requirements for the school nutrition programs, including the meal patterns and dietary specifications, crediting foods and beverages, menu documentation, and meal service.
- The CSDE's weekly e-newsletter for school nutrition programs, [School Lunch Tray \(SLT\)](#), provides important guidance and resources to help SFAs comply with the federal and state requirements, and identifies deadlines for completing required activities and submitting required reports.
- The CSDE's [Training for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides links to recorded trainings on a variety of topics, including the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- The CSDE's [Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides links to guides on a variety of topics, including food safety, menu planning and meal patterns, program administration, school wellness, and special diets.

SFAs may contact their assigned [school nutrition team member](#) for more information and program-specific questions.



2 — Lunch Meal Patterns

This section provides an overview of the requirements for the NSLP meal patterns. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program](#).

Overview of Lunch Meal Patterns

To claim reimbursement for lunches served to children, school menus must meet the NSLP meal patterns. SFAs must offer the minimum daily and weekly servings of each meal component and lunch menus must meet the weekly dietary specifications.

- Required meal components:** Lunches must include all five meal components (milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains) in at least the minimum quantity for each grade group in the NSLP lunch meal pattern. The five-day lunch meal patterns are listed in [table 2-1](#). The seven-day lunch meal patterns are listed in [table 2-2](#).
- Milk component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of milk daily for all grade groups. Allowable types of milk include low-fat milk and fat-free milk, either unflavored or flavored (cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces). Effective January 14, 2026, the [Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025](#) revises the allowable types of milk for the NSLP to include unflavored or flavored whole and reduced fat (2%) milk, in addition to the previously allowed unflavored or flavored low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk. Effective June 8, 2026, the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), revises the SBP meal patterns to allow unflavored and flavored whole milk, reduced-fat milk, low-fat milk, and fat-free milk. Allowable milk options also include the following types of fluid milk: lactose-free milk and lactose-reduced milk (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Offering Lactose-Free and Lactose-Reduced Milk in the School Nutrition Programs](#)), acidified milk (e.g., acidified kefir milk and acidified acidophilus milk), cultured milk (e.g., cultured buttermilk, cultured kefir milk, and cultured acidophilus milk), and Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk. Milk choices must include a variety (at least two different choices) and at least one choice must be unflavored. The milk component also includes optional fluid milk substitutes (plant-based beverages like fortified soy milk) that meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information on fluid milk substitutes, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the [“Milk Substitutes”](#) section of the CSDE’s Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

- **MMA component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly oz eq of the MMA component for each grade group. The maximum oz eq for the MMA is not required but provides a guide to help school menus stay within the weekly calorie ranges. MMA must be served in the main dish or in the main dish and only one other food item.
- **Grains component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly oz eq of grains for each grade group. The maximum oz eq for the grains component is not required but provides a guide to help school menus stay within the weekly calorie ranges. At least 80 percent of grains must be WGR, based on the total oz eq of offered grains. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. For more information, refer to the [CSDE's Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Program](#) and [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- **Fruits component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly servings (cups) of the fruits component. The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, and dried fruit, canned fruit in juice, light syrup, or water, and 100 percent fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits (such as raisins or dried apricots) credit as twice the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried fruit credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component.
- **Vegetables component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly servings (cups) of the vegetables component. The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and dried vegetables, and 100 percent vegetable juice. A serving of canned vegetables must be drained. Dried or dehydrated vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume and require a product formulation statement (PFS). Lunch menus must include specific weekly quantities of the five vegetable subgroups (dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other). Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens (such as lettuce and spinach), which credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component.
- **Juices:** Fruit juices, vegetable juices, and fruit/vegetable juice blends must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juices cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits offered. Vegetable juices cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables offered. For example, if the weekly lunch menu for grades 6-8 includes $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of fruit, the total amount of juices served during the week cannot exceed $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups. All sources of juice served in school meals count toward the weekly limit, including juice that is fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate; frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice; and pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

- **OVS:** To implement OVS at lunch, SFAs must offer all five meal components. For a reimbursable meal with OVS, students must select at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables and the full serving of at least two other meal components. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) and visit the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

[Table 2-1](#) shows the five-day lunch meal pattern. SFAs that regularly operate on a seven-day week, such as RCCIs, must follow the seven-day meal pattern (refer to [table 2-2](#)). SFAs that regularly operate on three, four, or six days must follow the guidance in the CSDE's resource, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Lunch meal patterns for five-day weeks and seven-day weeks for each grade group are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Meal patterns for three-day and six-day weeks are available in [Appendix 2C](#) of the USDA's [Menu Planner for School Meals](#).

For guidance on the crediting requirements for each meal component, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs](#). For information on the required records for documenting meal pattern compliance, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Training on the lunch meal patterns is available in [Module 2: Introduction to School Meal Patterns](#) and [Module 3: National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) Meal Pattern](#) of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Table 2-1. Five-day lunch meal patterns

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	9-12 Daily	9-12 Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups)	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups) Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits	½	2½	½	2½	1	5
Vegetables (cups) Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables	¾	3¾	¾	3¾	1	5
Dark green	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange	0	¾	0	¾	0	1¼
Beans, peas, and lentils	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other	0	½	0	½	0	¾
Additional vegetables to reach total	0	1	0	1	0	1½
Grains (oz eq) WGR (at least 80 percent) or enriched (cannot exceed 20 percent)	1	8-9	1	8-10	2	10-12
MMA (oz eq)	1	8-10	1	9-10	2	10-12

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	9-12
Calories	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1A through June 30, 2027	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE's [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) Five-day Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Table 2-2. Seven-day lunch meal patterns

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	9-12 Daily	9-12 Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups)	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups) Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits	½	3½	½	3½	1	7
Vegetables (cups) Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables	¾	5¼	¾	5¼	1	7
Dark green	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange	0	¾	0	¾	0	1¼
Beans, peas, and lentils	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other	0	½	0	½	0	¾
Additional vegetables to reach total	0	2½	0	2½	0	3½
Grains (oz eq) WGR (at least 80 percent) or enriched (cannot exceed 20 percent)	1	11-12½	1	11-14	2	14-17
MMA (oz eq)	1	11-14	1	12½-14	2	14-17

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	9-12
Calories	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1A through June 30, 2027	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE's [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) Seven-day Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Optional Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-8

The USDA permits one alternate menu planning option at lunch that allows SFAs to use the same menu for grades K-8. This option applies to schools and institutions with grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups for K-5 and 6-8. Examples include schools with grades K-8 or grades 5-8, where students from different grade groups eat together during the same lunch period.

- Table 2-3 compares the daily and weekly requirements for the five-day lunch meal patterns for grades K-5 and 6-8.
- Table 2-4 compares the daily and weekly requirements for the seven-day lunch meal patterns.

The daily lunch meal pattern requirements for both grade groups are the same and the weekly requirements overlap. This overlap allows SFAs to serve one lunch menu with the same food quantities to both grade groups. The last two columns in each table indicate the daily and weekly requirements for the optional breakfast meal pattern for grades K-8.

The meal patterns for different grade groups overlap when the servings, calories, saturated fat, and sodium do not exceed the highest level for each grade group or go below the lowest level for each grade group.

It is important to note that the optional lunch meal pattern for grades K-8 requires a narrower calorie range (600-650 calories) and more restrictive sodium limit (no more than 1,110 milligrams) compared to the individual meal patterns for grades K-5 and 6-8. Menu planners must be careful to meet these more restrictive dietary specifications when using this optional lunch meal pattern.

The five-day and seven-day optional lunch meal patterns for grades K-8 are available in the [“Lunch Meal Patterns”](#) section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Table 2-3. Comparison of five-day lunch requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	Overlap: K-8 Option Daily	Overlap: K-8 Option Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups)	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups)	½	2½	½	2½	½	2½
Vegetables (cups)	¾	3¾	¾	3¾	¾	3¾
Dark green	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange	0	¾	0	¾	0	¾
Beans, peas, and lentils	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other	0	½	0	½	0	½
Additional vegetables to reach total	0	1	0	1	0	1
Grains (oz eq)	1	8-9	1	8-10	1	8-9
MMA (oz eq)	1	8-10	1	9-10	1	9-10

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	K-8 Option
Calories	550-650	600-700	600-650
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1A through June 30, 2027	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,110

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE's [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) Five-day Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Table 2-4. Comparison of seven-day lunch requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	Overlap: K-8 Option Daily	Overlap: K-8 Option Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups)	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups)	½	3½	½	3½	½	3½
Vegetables (cups)	¾	5¼	¾	5¼	¾	5¼
Dark green	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange	0	¾	0	¾	0	¾
Beans, peas, and lentils	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other	0	½	0	½	0	½
Additional vegetables to reach total	0	2½	0	2½	0	2½
Grains (oz eq)	1	11-12½	1	11-14	1	11-12½
MMA (oz eq)	1	11-14	1	12½-14	1	12½-14

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	K-8 Option
Calories	550-650	600-700	600-650
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1A through June 30, 2027	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,110

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE's [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) Seven-day Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Lunch for Schools with Grades 6-8 and 9-12

When students from grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together during the same lunch period, SFAs cannot use the same lunch menu to meet the meal pattern requirements for both groups because the required calorie ranges for grades 6-8 (600-700 calories) and grades 9-12 (750-850 calories) do not overlap (refer to table 2-5).

Table 2-5. Comparison of NSLP dietary specifications for grades 6-8 and 9-12

Nutrient	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12
Calories	600-700	750-850	None
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams) Target 1A through June 30, 2027	≤ 1,225	≤ 1280 mg	≤ 1,225

This means that SFAs must modify menus to offer appropriate servings when students from grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together in the same lunch period. Schools and institutions that consist of both grade groups must develop menus accordingly to meet the needs of these two separate groups. There are two menu planning options when grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together in the same lunch period.

Offering one lunch menu with the same amounts of food for grade 6-12 does not meet the NSLP meal pattern requirements.

Acceptable lunch menu planning options

To provide reimbursable meals when grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together, SFAs must adjust the serving sizes or meal components during the meal service to provide the appropriate calories for each grade group. With both menu planning options, menu planners must be careful to limit starchy vegetables and vegetables or fruits with added fat or sugars, so that the weekly lunch menu for grades 6-8 does not exceed 700 calories. Menu planners must also ensure that the weekly lunch menu for grades 9-12 provides at least 750 calories.

Each menu planning option requires clear signage and education for students regarding the food items that each grade group can select. For information on the signage requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), and visit the "[Signage and Posters](#)" section of the CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

- **Option 1:** Increase servings of vegetables or fruits: The simplest menu planning method is to start with the meal components that overlap and make minor adjustments to the offered servings of vegetables or fruits to increase calories for grades 9-12. SFAs can use the following procedures to implement this option.
 1. Plan 2 oz eq of the daily grains component and 2 oz eq of the daily MMA component for both grade groups (6-8 and 9-12). This provides at least the minimum daily and weekly servings for each grade group.
 2. Offer all fruits and vegetables in ½-cup servings.
 - **Grades 6-8:** Students can select one serving (½ cup) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup total) of the vegetables component. This provides the minimum ½-cup serving of fruit and ¼ cup more than the minimum ¾-cup serving of vegetables. Since additional vegetables are offered, menu planners must ensure that the weekly lunch menu does not exceed 700 calories.
 - **Grades 9-12:** Students can select two servings (1 cup total) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup total) of the vegetables component. These amounts are the minimum daily servings for grades 9-12.
 3. Post signage at or near the beginning of the serving line and near the fruits and vegetables components to assist students with selecting appropriate quantities based on the planned servings for each grade group. For example, the signage for grades 6-8 could indicate “may select one fruit choice and up to two vegetable choices.” The signage for grades 9-12 could indicate “may select up to two fruit choices and up to two vegetable choices.”

Table 2-6 shows an example of how to implement option 1.

Table 2-6. Sample daily lunch menu for grades 6-8 and 9-12 using option 1

Meal components	Amounts offered to grades 6-8	Additional amounts offered to grades 9-12
Milk, fluid (cups)	1	0
Fruits (cups) Offer all fruits in ½-cup servings. Grades 6-8 may take one serving (½ cup) and grades 9-12 may take two servings (1 cup).	½	½
Vegetables (cups) Offer all vegetables in ½-cup servings. Both grade groups may take two servings (1 cup total). Weekly amounts must include the minimum vegetable subgroups for each grade group.	1	0
Grains (oz eq) Offer 2 oz eq of the grains component to each grade group.	2	0
MMA (oz eq) Offer 2 oz eq of the MMA component to each grade group.	2	0



- **Option 2: Vary servings of grains or MMA:** This option uses the same procedures as option 1 but varies the serving size of the grains component or MMA component on some days to provide larger servings for older students. This option relies more heavily on student education and signage but provides more flexibility for menu planners. SFAs can use the following procedures to implement this option.
 1. Plan 2 oz eq of the daily grains component and 2 oz eq of the daily MMA component for both grade groups. This provides at least the minimum daily and weekly requirement for both grade groups.
 2. Offer all fruits and vegetables in ½-cup servings.
 - **Grades 6-8:** Students can select one serving (½ cup) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup total) of the vegetables component. This provides the minimum daily ½-cup serving of fruit and ¼ cup more than the minimum daily ¾-cup serving of vegetables. Since additional vegetables are offered, menu planners must ensure that the weekly lunch menu does not exceed 700 calories.
 - **Grades 9-12:** Students can select two servings (1 cup total) of fruits and two servings (1 cup total) of vegetables. These are the minimum servings for grades 9-12.
 3. Increase the oz eq of the grains component or MMA component on some days to provide a larger serving for students in grades 9-12. For example, serve an additional ounce of cheese or another slice of WGR bread.
 4. Post signage at or near the beginning of the serving line and near the appropriate meal components to assist students in selecting appropriate quantities based on the planned menu amounts for each grade group. For example, the signage for grades 6-8 could indicate “may select one fruit choice, up to two vegetable choices, one grain choice, one MMA choice, and one milk choice.” The signage for grades 9-12 could indicate “may select up to two fruit choices, up to two vegetable choices, up to two grain choices, one MMA choice, and one milk choice.”

Table 2-7 shows some examples of how to implement option 2.

Table 2-7. Sample daily lunch menu for grades 6-8 and 9-12 using option 2

Meal components	Amounts offered to grades 6-8	Additional amounts offered to grades 9-12: Example 1	Additional amounts offered to grades 9-12: Example 2
Milk, fluid (cups)	1	0	0
Fruits (cups): Offer all fruits in ½-cup servings. Grades 6-8 may take one serving (½ cup) and grades 9-12 may take two servings (1 cup).	½	½	½
Vegetables (cups): Offer vegetables in ½-cup servings. Both grade groups may take two servings (1 cup). Weekly amounts must include the required vegetable subgroups for each grade group.	1	0	0
Grains (oz eq): Offer 2 oz eq of the grains component to each grade group but increase the amount of grains on some days to provide students in grades 9-12 with a larger serving.	2	1	0
MMA (oz eq): Offer 2 oz eq of the MMA component to each grade group but increase the amount of MMA on some days to provide students in grades 9-12 with a larger serving.	2	0	1



3 — Meeting the Weekly Requirements for Lunch

The weekly requirements for the lunch meal patterns include minimum servings of the five meal components, minimum servings of the five vegetable subgroups, a minimum percentage of WGR menu items, a limit for juice, and a limit for grain-based desserts. For specific guidance on the meal components for the lunch meal patterns, refer to [“Overview of Lunch Meal Patterns”](#) in section 2.

Minimum Weekly Servings

In addition to the minimum daily servings, lunch menus must meet the minimum weekly servings for each grade group. The tables below summarize the five-day and seven-day weekly meal pattern requirements for lunch.

Table 3-1. Five-day weekly lunch meal patterns for grades K-12

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Milk (cups)	5	5	5
Fruits (cups)	2½	2½	5
Vegetables (cups) Includes specific amounts of the vegetable subgroups	3¾	3¾	5
Grains (oz eq)	8-9	8-10	10-12
MMA (oz eq)	8-10	9-10	10-12

Table 3-2. Seven-day weekly lunch meal patterns for grades K-12

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Milk (cups)	7	7	7
Fruits (cups)	3½	3½	7
Vegetables (cups) Includes specific amounts of the vegetable subgroups	5¼	5¼	7
Grains (oz eq)	11-12½	11-14	14-17
MMA (oz eq)	11-14	12½-14	14-17

Minimum weekly servings of fruits, vegetables, and milk

The weekly requirements of fruits, vegetables, and milk for all grades are the sum of the daily requirements. For example, the daily milk requirement for a five-day lunch menu is 1 cup and the weekly requirement is 5 cups.

At lunch, the weekly vegetables requirement includes minimum servings of the five vegetable subgroups (refer to [“Weekly Vegetable Subgroups”](#) in this section).

Minimum weekly servings of grains and MMA

The weekly requirements for grains and MMA are different for each grade group. For grades 9-12, the weekly oz eq for grains and MMA are the sum of the daily oz eq.

- For a five-day week, lunch menus for grades 9-12 must provide at least 2 oz eq of grains and 2 oz eq of MMA daily, and at least 10 oz eq of each meal component weekly.
- For a seven-day week, lunch menus for grades 9-12 must provide at least 2 oz eq of grains and 2 oz eq of MMA daily, and at least 14 oz eq of each meal component weekly.

For grades K-5 and 6-8, the weekly oz eq for grains and MMA are more than the sum of the daily oz eq. To meet the weekly oz eq for these grade groups, SFAs must serve more than the minimum daily oz eq of grains and MMA on some days of the week. For example, the lunch meal pattern requires 1 oz eq of grains daily for grades 6-8, but the weekly grains requirement is at least 8 oz eq per week.

The maximum weekly oz eq of grains and MMA are not required but provide a guide to help schools plan age-appropriate meals that meet the weekly dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium (refer to "[Dietary Specifications](#)" in section 1).

Weekly Juice Limits at Lunch

Fruit juices cannot exceed half of the total cups of fruits offered to students during the week. Vegetable juices cannot exceed half of the total amount of vegetables offered to students during the week.

The weekly juice limit is based on the total amount of fruits or vegetables that students are allowed to select at a given meal, regardless of the number of options or variety of fruits or vegetables available.

SFAs must calculate the lunch menu's compliance with the weekly juice limit separately for fruits and vegetables.

- **Fruits component:** Divide the total cups of 100 percent fruit juices that students may select at all lunches during the week by the total cups of fruits that students may select at all lunches during the week.
- **Vegetables component:** Divide the total cups of 100 percent vegetable juices that students may select at all lunches during the week by the total cups of vegetables that students may select at all lunches during the week.

Juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product credits as the fruits component and counts toward the limit for fruit juice. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as either the other subgroup or additional vegetables requirement, depending on the needs of the menu planner, and counts toward the limit for vegetable juice.

Menu planners must count all sources of 100 percent juice available to students during the week toward the weekly juice limit. This includes all types of juices (fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate), frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies.

Juice limits for grades K-5 and 6-8

The juice limits at lunch are based on the minimum weekly servings of the fruits component and vegetables component in the NSLP meal pattern. If SFAs serve larger amounts of fruits and vegetables, the weekly juice limit also increases.

- Five-day lunch menus:** If the menu offers the minimum amount of fruits and vegetables in the five-day lunch meal pattern, fruit juices cannot exceed $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups per week and vegetable juices cannot exceed $1\frac{7}{8}$ cups per week. When SFAs serve juice in 4-fluid ounce ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) containers, the lunch menu may offer fruit juice twice per week and vegetable juice three times per week. Tables 3-3 and 3-4 indicate the weekly juice limits for a five-day lunch menu.
- Seven-day lunch menus:** If the menu offers the minimum amount of fruits and vegetables in the seven-day lunch meal pattern, fruit juices cannot exceed $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups per week and vegetable juices cannot exceed $2\frac{5}{8}$ cups per week. When SFAs serve juice in 4-fluid ounce ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) containers, the lunch menu may offer fruit juice three times per week and vegetable juice five times per week. Tables 3-5 and 3-6 indicate the weekly juice limits for a seven-day lunch menu.

Alternatively, elementary and middle schools could serve larger quantities of juice on one or two days if the weekly total complies with the limit. For example, a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 could offer 1 cup of fruit juice once per week instead of offering $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice twice per week.

Table 3-3. Weekly fruit juice limits for five-day lunch menus

Grade group	Required weekly servings of meal component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum number of weekly $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup juice servings
K-5	$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups	$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups	2
6-8	$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups	$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups	2
9-12	5 cups	$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups	5

Table 3-4. Weekly vegetable juice limits for five-day lunch menus

Grade group	Required weekly servings of meal component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum number of weekly ½-cup juice servings
K-5	3¾ cups	1 ⁷ / ₈ cups	3
6-8	3¾ cups	1 ⁷ / ₈ cups	3
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5

Table 3-5. Weekly fruit juice limits for seven-day lunch menus

Grade group	Required weekly servings of meal component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum number of weekly ½-cup juice servings
K-5	3½ cups	1¾ cups	3
6-8	3½ cups	1¾ cups	3
9-12	7 cups	3½ cups	7

Table 3-6. Weekly vegetable juice limits for seven-day lunch menus

Grade group	Required weekly servings of meal component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum number of weekly ½-cup juice servings
K-5	5¼ cups	2 ⁵ / ₈ cups	5
6-8	5¼ cups	2 ⁵ / ₈ cups	5
9-12	7 cups	3½ cups	7

Juice limits for grades 9-12

Five-day and seven-day lunch menus for grades 9-12 may offer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice each day and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetable juice each day. However, SFAs must be careful not to exceed the weekly calorie limit when offering juice each day because juice contains more calories than whole fruits and vegetables. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of grape juice contains 76 calories while $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fresh grapes contains 34 calories. One cup of fresh sliced peaches contains 60 calories while 1 cup of canned sliced peaches in juice contains 109 calories.

Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables. Whole fruits and vegetables should be served most often. School menus might exceed the weekly calorie limits if juice is served frequently.

Required signage for juice limits at lunch

Cafeteria menus and signage must clearly indicate the specific amount of fruits, vegetables, and juice that students may select with each meal. If SFAs offer juice at lunch, signage must reflect the juice limit. Some examples of possible language to communicate the juice limit are indicated below.

- May choose any two fruit servings (no more than one juice).
- May choose two fruit servings or one fruit and one juice.
- May choose up to two servings of fruit (no more than one juice).
- May choose two fruit servings and two vegetable servings (no more than one juice).
- May choose two fruits or one fruit and one juice.
- May choose one fruit and one juice.

This type of language must be indicated on school menus and in signage on the serving line where the fruits and vegetables are located.

Juice limit calculation for lunch

The sample calculation below shows how to determine if a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 meets the weekly fruit juice limit.

A lunch menu for grades 6-8 offers 1 cup of fruit daily, which is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup more than the minimum daily requirement for this grade group. Students may select up to two servings from a variety of $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup fruit choices, including fresh fruits, canned fruits, and 100 percent fruit juices.

Cafeteria menus and signage instruct students to select two servings of fruit or one serving of fruit and one serving of juice. Students are not allowed to choose more than one serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of juice because this would exceed the weekly juice limit.

1. Calculate total weekly juice offerings:

Multiply the total daily cups of juice that students are allowed to select by the number of days in the week.

- Students may select one $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruit daily:
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup multiplied by 5 days equals $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups.

2. Calculate total weekly fruit offerings:

Multiply the total daily cups of fruit that students are allowed to select by the number of days in the week.

- Students may select two $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings of fruit daily (1 cup total):
1 cup multiplied by 5 days equals 5 cups.

3. Calculate weekly percentage of juice offerings:

Divide the total cups of juice (step 1) by the total cups of fruit (step 2) and multiply by 100.

- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups divided by 5 cups equals 0.5 multiplied by 100 equals 50 percent.

This lunch menu meets the weekly juice limit because the $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of juice offered to students during the week is half of the 5 cups of fruits offered to students during the week.



Weekly Vegetable Subgroups

The lunch meal pattern requires minimum weekly servings of five vegetable subgroups based on the recommendations of the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) and the [vegetables group](#) in Choose MyPlate. These subgroups include dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other.

SFAs may offer the vegetable subgroups in any order and amount throughout the week. The vegetable subgroups do not have a daily requirement. SFAs may choose to break up the subgroup requirements throughout the week and offer the same vegetable subgroup several different times during the week if:

- the weekly menu meets the full vegetable subgroup requirements; and
- each day's lunch includes the minimum serving of vegetables.

For example, SFAs can meet the required weekly $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of beans, peas, and lentils for a five-day menu by offering a black bean salsa on Monday that provides $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of black beans and a bean burrito on Thursday that provides $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of kidney beans. The menu must also include additional vegetable servings so that each lunch meets the minimum daily requirement for each grade group ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup for grades K-5 and 6-8, and 1 cup for grades 9-12).

All students must have access to the appropriate quantities of all vegetable subgroups each week. If a school has multiple serving lines, each serving line must offer all vegetable subgroups on a weekly basis in at least the minimum required amounts. For more information on multiple serving lines, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Service Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

For information on the vegetable subgroups, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program](#). For guidance and examples of how to use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine purchasing and crediting information for vegetables, refer to chapter 2 of the USDA's [Menu Planner for School Meals](#).

Additional vegetables

The required weekly quantities for the five vegetable subgroups do not add up to the total weekly vegetables requirement. The additional vegetables category makes up the difference.

For example, the required servings of the vegetable subgroups in the five-day meal pattern for grades K-5 and 6-8 add up to $2\frac{3}{4}$ cups per week. Since both grade groups require $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups of vegetables per week, SFAs must provide 1 cup of additional vegetables to meet the minimum weekly total. These additional vegetables may come from any of the five subgroups.

The tables below show the required weekly quantities of the vegetable subgroups and additional vegetables for each grade group at lunch for five-day and seven-day weeks.

Table 3-7. Vegetable subgroups and additional vegetables for five-day weeks

Vegetables	Grades K-5 and 6-8	Grades 9-12
Dark green	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Red/orange	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups
Beans, peas, and lentils	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Starchy	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Other	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
Subtotal	$2\frac{3}{4}$ cups	$3\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Additional vegetables required for weekly total (any subgroup)	1 cup	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Total weekly vegetables	$3\frac{3}{4}$ cups	5 cups



Table 3-8. Vegetable subgroups and additional vegetables for seven-day weeks

Vegetables	Grades K-5 and 6-8	Grades 9-12
Dark green	½ cup	½ cup
Red/orange	¾ cup	1¼ cups
Beans, peas, and lentils	½ cup	½ cup
Starchy	½ cup	½ cup
Other	½ cup	¾ cup
Subtotal	2¾ cups	3½ cups
Additional vegetables required for weekly total (any subgroup)	2½ cups	3½ cups
Total weekly vegetables	5¼ cups	7 cups

Weekly WGR Requirement at Lunch

At least 80 percent of the grains offered at lunch each week must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. The determination of whether the weekly lunch menu offers at least 80 percent WGR grains is based on the total oz eq of all grain items offered with all menu choices during the week.

SFAs may calculate the weekly menu's percentage of WGR grains using the CSDE's Excel worksheet, [Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#). For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Instructions for the Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) and [Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

Weekly Limit for Grain-based Desserts

The total amount of WGR and enriched grain-based desserts at lunch cannot exceed 2 oz eq per week. For example, the lunch menu may include a 2-oz eq grain-based dessert once per week or a 1-oz eq grain-based dessert twice per week.

The limit for grain-based desserts also applies to non-WGR grain products offered as extra foods at lunch. For example, an enriched fortune cookie that credits as at least ¼ oz eq also counts toward the weekly limit for grain-based desserts. For more information, refer to the

CSDE's resource, [Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

Weekly Requirement for Grains and MMA at Lunch

The tables below show the weekly meal pattern requirements for the grains component and MMA component at lunch. The maximum oz eq are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the weekly dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

Menu planners may offer larger amounts of grains and MMA if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications (refer to "[Dietary Specifications](#)" in section 1). Keep in mind that menus that consistently offer larger amounts of grains and MMA might exceed the weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

Table 3-9. Required weekly oz eq of grains for lunch menus

Grades	Grains for 5-day week	Grains for 7-day week
K-5	8-9 oz eq	11-12½ oz eq
6-8	8-10 oz eq	11-14 oz eq
9-12	10-12 oz eq	14-17 oz eq

Table 3-10. Required weekly oz eq of MMA for lunch menus

Grades	MMA for 5-day week	MMA for 7-day week
K-5	8-10 oz eq	11-14 oz eq
6-8	9-10 oz eq	12½-14 oz eq
9-12	10-12 oz eq	14-17 oz eq

Calculating Weekly Grains and MMA at Lunch

SFAs must determine the total oz eq of grains and MMA in the weekly lunch menu by adding all planned daily oz eq for the week, separately for grains and MMA. If the menu offers a choice of more than one grain or MMA item on an individual day, the menu planner must use the smallest oz eq choice to count toward the weekly requirements. For example, if the lunch menu offers a 1½-oz eq grain item and a 2-oz eq grain item, the menu planner must count the 1½-oz eq grain item toward the weekly grain requirements.

When lunch menus include grain or MMA choices with different oz eq each day or over the week, SFAs must ensure that the weekly lunch menu provides the minimum oz eq for each grade group.

Meeting Weekly Grains and MMA for Grades K-5 and 6-8

For grades K-5 and 6-8, menu planners must offer more than the minimum daily 1 oz eq of grains and MMA on some days to meet the weekly requirement. Lunch menus that offer only 1 oz eq do not meet the weekly requirements because the sum of the daily oz eq is less than the minimum weekly requirement. For example, offering 1 oz eq daily provides 5 oz eq for a five-day week and 7 oz eq for a seven-day week.

Example 1: Offering 1 oz eq of grains or MMA daily for grades K-5

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	5 oz eq

- Meets daily grains or MMA for grades K-5 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly grains or MMA for grades K-5 (at least 8 oz eq): No

Example 2: Offering 1 oz eq of MMA daily for grades 6-8

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	5 oz eq

- Meets daily MMA for grades 6-8 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly MMA for grades 6-8 (at least 9 oz eq): No

Example 3: Offering more than 1 oz eq of grains or MMA daily for grades K-5

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	2 oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	8 oz eq

- Meets daily grains and MMA for grades K-5 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly grains and MMA for grades K-5 (at least 8 oz eq): No

Example 4: Offering more than 1 oz eq of MMA daily for grades 6-8

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	9 oz eq

- Meets daily MMA for grades K-5 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly MMA for grades K-5 (at least 9 oz eq): No

Meeting Weekly Grains and MMA for Grades 9-12

Lunch menus for grades 9-12 that offer only the minimum daily 2 oz eq of the grains component or MMA component will meet the minimum weekly requirement. The weekly sum of the daily oz eq for grades 9-12 eq is the same as the minimum weekly oz eq. For example, offering 2 oz eq daily provides 10 oz eq for a five-day week and 14 oz eq for a seven-day week.

The daily lunch menu for grades 9-12 may offer more than 2 oz eq of grains and MMA. However, menus that consistently offer larger amounts might exceed the weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

Example 1: Offering 2 oz eq of grains or MMA daily for grades 9-12

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	10 oz eq

- Meets daily grains or MMA for grades 9-12 (at least 2 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly grains or MMA for grades 9-12 (at least 10 oz eq): No.



Offering Multiple Grain or MMA Choices with Different Oz Eq

When lunch menus offer multiple grain or MMA choices with different oz eq, the menu planner must use the smallest oz eq choice to determine the total weekly oz eq. Only the menu item with the smallest oz eq counts toward the weekly requirements.

Example 1: Different daily grain or MMA choices for grades K-5

A five-day lunch menu for grades K-5 offers three different grain or MMA choices that provide the same oz eq on an individual day. Days 1 through 4 offer three 1½-oz eq choices. Day 5 offers three 2-oz eq choices. This lunch menu offers a total of 8 oz eq and meets the minimum weekly requirement.

Menu	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
Choice 1	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	2 oz eq	8 oz eq
Choice 2	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	2 oz eq	8 oz eq
Choice 3	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	2 oz eq	8 oz eq

- Meets daily grains and MMA for grades K-5 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly grains and MMA for grades K-5 (at least 8 oz eq): No

3 | Meeting the Weekly Requirements for Lunch

Example 2: Different daily MMA choices for grades 6-8

A five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 offers three different daily MMA choices ($1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq, $1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq, and 2 oz eq). The menu planner must count the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -oz eq choice toward the weekly oz eq because it is the smallest oz eq. This lunch menu offers a total of $7\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq and does not meet the minimum weekly requirement.

Menu	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
Choice 1	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$7\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq
Choice 2	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$8\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq
Choice 3	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	10 oz eq

- Meets daily MMA for grades 6-8 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly MMA for grades 6-8 (at least 9 oz eq): No



Example 3: Different daily grain choices for grades 9-12

A five-day lunch menu for grades 9-12 offers three grain choices that provide the same oz eq on an individual day. Days 1 through 4 offer three 2-oz eq choices. Day 5 offers three 2½-oz eq choices. This lunch menu offers a weekly total of 10½ oz eq and meets the minimum weekly requirement.

Menu	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
Choice 1	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2½ oz eq	10½ oz eq
Choice 2	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2½ oz eq	10½ oz eq
Choice 3	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2½ oz eq	10½ oz eq

- Meets daily grains for grades 9-12 (at least 2 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly grains for grades 9-12 (at least 10 oz eq): No

Example 4: Different daily MMA choices for grades 9-12

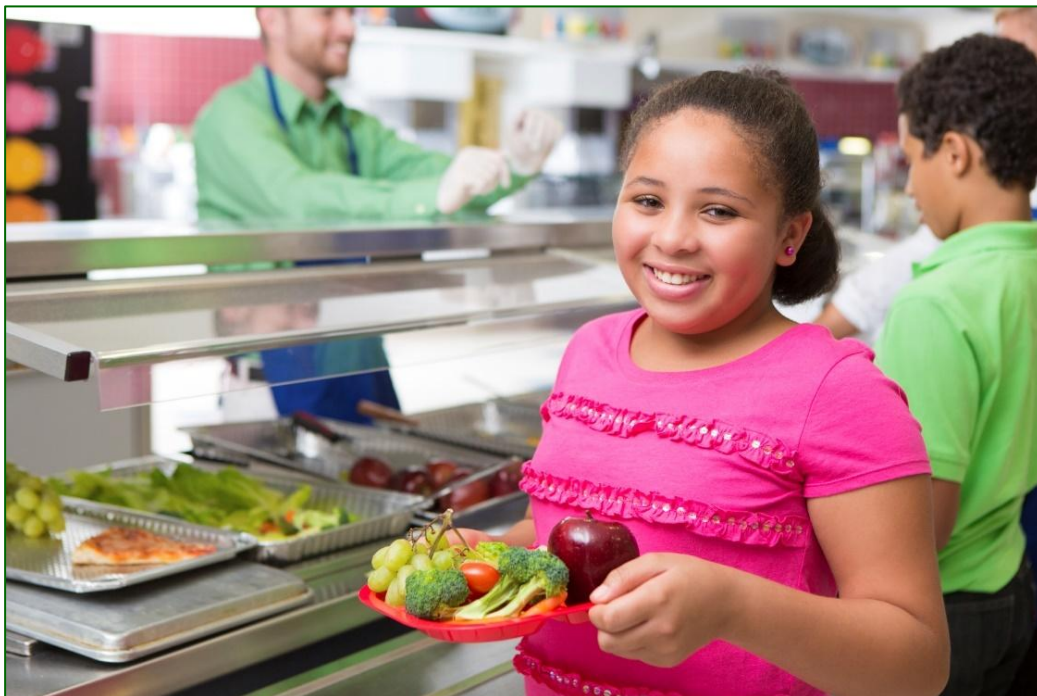
A five-day lunch menu for grades 9-12 offers three different MMA choices (2 oz eq, 2¼ oz eq, and 2½ oz eq) each day. The menu planner must count the 2 oz eq choice toward the weekly oz eq because it is the daily menu item with the smallest oz eq. This lunch menu offers a total of 10 oz eq and meets the minimum weekly requirement.

Menu	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
Choice 1	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	10 oz eq
Choice 2	2¼ oz eq	2¼ oz eq	2¼ oz eq	2¼ oz eq	2¼ oz eq	11¼ oz eq
Choice 3	2½ oz eq	2½ oz eq	2½ oz eq	2½ oz eq	2½ oz eq	12½ oz eq

- Meets daily MMA for grades 9-12 (at least 2 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly MMA for grades 9-12 (at least 10 oz eq): No

3 | Meeting the Weekly Requirements for Lunch

Reminder: When the lunch menu offers two or more daily choices with different oz eq, each choice must provide at least the minimum daily oz eq. The determination of whether the menu meets the minimum weekly requirement is based on the daily item with the smallest oz eq.



4 — Breakfast Meal Patterns

This section provides an overview of the requirements for the SBP meal patterns. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the School Breakfast Program](#).

Overview of Breakfast Meal Patterns

To claim reimbursement for breakfasts served to children, school menus must meet the SBP meal patterns. SFAs must offer the minimum daily and weekly servings of each meal component and breakfast menus must meet the weekly dietary specifications.

- Required components:** Breakfasts must include all three meal components (milk, fruits including vegetable substitutions, and grains/MMA) in at least the minimum quantity for each grade group in the SBP meal pattern. The five-day meal breakfast patterns are listed in [table 4-1](#). The seven-day breakfast meal patterns are listed in [table 4-2](#) in this section.
- Milk component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of milk daily for all grade groups. Allowable types of milk include whole, reduced fat, low fat, and fat free, either unflavored or flavored (cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces). In addition to regular milk, allowable milk options also include the following types of fluid milk that meet the requirements for each meal pattern: lactose-free milk and lactose-reduced milk (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Offering Lactose-Free and Lactose-Reduced Milk in the School Nutrition Programs](#)), acidified milk (e.g., acidified kefir milk and acidified acidophilus milk), cultured milk (e.g., cultured buttermilk, cultured kefir milk, and cultured acidophilus milk), and Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk. Milk choices must include a variety (at least two different choices) and at least one choice must be unflavored. The milk component also includes optional fluid milk substitutes (plant-based beverages like fortified soy milk) that meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the “[Milk Substitutes](#)” section of the CSDE’s Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- Fruits component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of fruit daily for all grade groups. The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, and dried fruit; canned fruit in juice, light syrup, or water; and 100 percent fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served. Vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at any breakfast (refer to “[Vegetable Substitutions at Breakfast](#)” in section 5).

- Juices:** Fruit juices, vegetable juices, and fruit/vegetable juice blends must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juices together with vegetable juices cannot exceed half of the weekly amount of fruits offered at breakfast. For example, if the weekly breakfast menu for grades 6-8 includes 5 cups of fruit, juices cannot exceed 2½ cups. All sources of juice served in school meals count toward the weekly limit, including juice that is fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate; frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice; and pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- Grains/MMA component:** SFAs may offer 1 oz eq of grains, 1 oz eq of MMA, or a 1-oz eq combination of both. Breakfast menus must also meet the minimum weekly oz eq for each grade group. The maximum weekly limit is not required but provides a guide to help menus stay within the weekly calorie range. At least 80 percent of grains must be WGR, based on the total oz eq of offered grains. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Program](#) and [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- OVS:** To implement OVS at breakfast, SFAs must offer a minimum of four food items from the three meal components. The four food items may include one of the following: a) two servings of grains/MMA (either two of the same grain/MMA or two different grains/MMA); b) one serving of grains and one serving of MMA; or c) or two servings of fruits or vegetable substitutions (either two of the same fruit or vegetable, two different fruits or vegetables, or one fruit and one vegetable). The four food items cannot include two servings of milk. For a reimbursable meal with OVS, students must select at least three food items including ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitution, if offered) and the full serving of at least two other food items. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) and visit the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

[Table 4-1](#) shows the five-day breakfast meal pattern. SFAs that regularly operate on a seven-day week, such as RCCIs, must follow the seven-day meal pattern (refer to [table 4-2](#)). SFAs that regularly operate on three, four, or six days must follow the guidance in the CSDE's resource, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Breakfast meal patterns for five-day weeks and seven-day weeks for each grade group are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Meal patterns for three-day and six-day weeks are available in [Appendix 2C](#) of the USDA's [Menu Planner for School Meals](#).

Training on the breakfast meal patterns is available in [Module 2: Introduction to School Meal Patterns](#) and [Module 4: School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Meal Pattern](#) of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.



Table 4-1. Five-day breakfast meal patterns

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	9-12 Daily	9-12 Weekly
Milk, fluid, cups	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits, cups Vegetables may substitute for fruits Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits and vegetables	1	5	1	5	1	5
Grains, MMA), or both (oz eq) Grains must be whole grain-rich (WGR) (at least 80 percent per week) or enriched (cannot exceed 20 percent per week)	1	7-10	1	8-10	1	9-10

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	9-12
Calories	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1 through June 30, 2027	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE's [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Five-day Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Table 4-2. Seven-day breakfast meal patterns

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	9-12 Daily	9-12 Weekly
Milk, fluid, cups	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits, cups Vegetables may substitute for fruits Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits and vegetables	1	7	1	7	1	7
Grains, MMA), or both (oz eq) Grains must be whole grain-rich (WGR) (at least 80 percent per week) or enriched (cannot exceed 20 percent per week)	1	10-14	1	11-14	1	12½-14

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	9-12
Calories	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1 through June 30, 2027	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE’s [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Seven-day Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Optional Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

The USDA permits three alternate menu planning options at breakfast that allow SFAs to use the same menu for grades K-12. These options may be used by schools and institutions with grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups at breakfast. They apply to any combination of grade groups at breakfast, such as grades K-8, grades K-12, and grades 6-12.

Breakfast for schools with grades K-8

Table 4-3 compares the daily and weekly requirements for the five-day breakfast meal patterns for grades K-5 and 6-8. Table 4-4 compares this information for the seven-day breakfast meal patterns. The daily breakfast meal pattern requirements for both grade groups are the same and the weekly requirements overlap. This overlap allows SFAs to serve one breakfast menu with the same food quantities to both grade groups. The last two columns in each table indicate the daily and weekly requirements for the optional breakfast meal pattern for grades K-12.

The meal patterns for different grade groups overlap when the meal component servings, calories, saturated fat, and sodium do not exceed the highest level for each grade group or go below the lowest level for each grade group.

The five-day and seven-day optional breakfast meal patterns for grades K-12, grades K-8, and grades 6-12 are available in the [“Breakfast Meal Patterns”](#) section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Table 4-3. Comparison of five-day breakfast meal patterns for grades K-8

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	Overlap: K-12 Daily	Overlap: K-12 Weekly
Milk, fluid, cups	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups)	1	5	1	5	1	5
Grains, MMA or both (oz eq)	1	7-10	1	8-10	1	9-10

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	Overlap: K-12 Weekly
Calories	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1 through June 30, 2027	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 540

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE's [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Five-day Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Table 4-4. Comparison of seven-day breakfast meal patterns for grades K-8

Meal components	K-5 Daily	K-5 Weekly	6-8 Daily	6-8 Weekly	Overlap: K-12 Daily	Overlap: K-12 Weekly
Milk, fluid, cups	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups)	1	7	1	7	1	7
Grains, MMA or both (oz eq)	1	10-14	1	11-14	1	12½-14

Dietary specifications: Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week

Nutrient	K-5	6-8	Overlap: K-12 Weekly
Calories	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10

For important menu planning notes, refer to the CSDE’s [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Seven-day Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12](#).

Considerations for Calories and Sodium

The table below summarizes the weekly calorie ranges for the three required grade groups and the three optional grade groups for the breakfast meal patterns.

Table 4-5. Weekly calorie ranges for the SBP meal patterns

Grade groups	Calories
K-5	350-500
6-8	400-550
9-12	450-600
K-8 option	400-500
6-12 option	450-550
K-12 option	450-500



The table below summarizes the current weekly sodium limits (Target 1) through June 30, 2027, for the three required grade groups and the three optional grade groups for the breakfast meal patterns.

Table 4-6. Weekly sodium limits for the SBP meal patterns

Grade groups	Sodium (Target 1) through June 30, 2027
K-5	≤ 540 milligrams
6-8	≤ 600 milligrams
9-12	≤ 640 milligrams
K-8 option	≤ 540 milligrams
6-12 option	≤ 600 milligrams
K-12 option	≤ 540 milligrams

Note: The optional breakfast meal pattern for grades K-12 requires a narrower calorie range (450-500 calories) and more restrictive sodium limit (no more than 540 milligrams) compared to the individual meal patterns for each grade group. This is also true for the optional breakfast meal patterns for grades K-8 and grades 6-12. Menu planners must be careful to meet these more restrictive requirements when using one breakfast meal pattern for grades K-12.

5 — Meeting the Weekly Requirements for Breakfast

The weekly menu planning requirements for breakfast include minimum servings of the three meal components, a minimum percentage of WGR menu items, weekly requirements when vegetables substitute for fruits, and a juice limit. For specific guidance on the meal components for the breakfast meal patterns, refer to [“Overview of Breakfast Meal Patterns”](#) in section 4.

Minimum Weekly Servings

In addition to the minimum daily servings, breakfast menus must meet the minimum weekly servings for the fruits component (including optional vegetable substitutions), milk component, and grains/MMA component. The tables below summarize the five-day and seven-day weekly meal pattern requirements for breakfast.

Table 5-1. Five-day weekly breakfast meal pattern

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Milk (cups)	5	5	5
Fruits or optional vegetable substitutions (cups)	5	5	5
Grains, MMA, or combination (oz eq)	7-10	8-10	9-10

Table 5-2. Seven-day weekly breakfast meal pattern

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Milk (cups)	7	7	7
Fruits or optional vegetable substitutions (cups)	7	7	7
Grains, MMA, or combination (oz eq)	10-14	11-14	12½-14

Minimum weekly servings of fruits and milk

The weekly requirements for fruits (including optional vegetable substitutions) and milk for all grades are the sum of the daily requirements. For example, the daily milk requirement for a five-day breakfast menu is 1 cup and the weekly requirement is 5 cups. The daily fruits requirement for a five-day breakfast menu is 1 cup and the weekly requirement is 5 cups.

Minimum weekly servings of grains/MMA

The minimum weekly requirements for the grains/MMA component are different for each grade group and are more than the sum of the daily requirements. To meet the weekly requirement, SFAs must serve more than the minimum daily oz eq of grains/MMA on some days of the week. For example, a five-day breakfast menu that offers 1½ oz eq of grains/MMA daily (7½ oz eq per week) meets the weekly requirements for grades K-5 but does not meet the weekly requirements for grades 6-8 or grades 9-12.

The maximum weekly daily oz eq of grains/MMA are not required but provide a guide to help schools plan age-appropriate meals that meet the weekly dietary specifications (refer to “[Dietary Specifications](#)” in section 1).



Vegetable Substitutions at Breakfast

Vegetables are optional at breakfast. SFAs may substitute vegetables for the fruits component at any breakfast.

Note: For school year 2026-27, the Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026 ([Public Law 119-37](#), the 2026 Appropriations Act), enacted on November 12, 2025, supersedes the requirements for vegetables at breakfast in the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). The 2026 Appropriations Act allows SFAs participating in the SBP to credit any vegetable offered in place of fruit without including vegetables from other subgroups in the weekly menus. For additional guidance, refer to [USDA Memo SP 05-2026, CACFP 03-2026, SFSP 03-2026: 2026 Appropriations Act: Effect on Child Nutrition Programs](#).



Weekly Juice Limit at Breakfast

The weekly juice limit is based on the cups of fruits (and vegetables, if offered) that students are allowed to select at a given meal, regardless of the number of options or variety of fruits and vegetables available. The total cups of fruit juices together with vegetable juices (including fruit and vegetable juice blends) offered at breakfast during the week cannot exceed half of the total cups of fruits and vegetables offered at breakfast during the week. For example, a breakfast menu that offers 5 cups of fruits and vegetables over the week may offer up to 2½ cups of juices over the week.

SFAs determine if the breakfast menu complies with the weekly juice limit by dividing the total cups of 100 percent fruit juice (and vegetable juice, if offered) that students may select at all breakfasts during the week by the total cups of fruits (and vegetables, if offered) that students may select at all breakfasts during the week. For a sample calculation of the weekly juice limit, refer to [“Juice limit calculation for lunch”](#) in section 4.

The juice limit includes 100 percent fruit juice, frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies.

The tables below show the weekly juice limits at breakfast, based on the minimum servings of the fruits component for the five-day and seven-day breakfast meal patterns.

Table 5-3. Weekly juice limits for five-day breakfast menus

Grade group	Required weekly servings of meal component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum number of weekly ½-cup juice servings
K-5	5 cups	2½ cups	5
6-8	5 cups	2½ cups	5
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5

Table 5-4. Weekly juice limits for seven-day breakfast menus

Grade group	Required weekly servings of meal component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum number of weekly ½-cup juice servings
K-5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
6-8	7 cups	3½ cups	7
9-12	7 cups	3½ cups	7

Offering a variety of fruit and juice choices at breakfast

Breakfast menus must include at least 1 cup of the fruits component daily for all grades. SFAs may offer a variety of fruit and juice choices in ½-cup servings, and allows students to select two choices. However, to comply with the weekly juice limit, students cannot select more than one serving (½ cup) of juice. SFAs must provide clear signage regarding the fruit and juice choices that student may select at breakfast, including the limit for juices (refer to “[Required signage for juice limits at breakfast](#)” in this section).

Offering more than the minimum daily fruits component at breakfast

If the breakfast menu offers more than 1 cup of the fruits component daily, the maximum amount of juice that may be served also increases. For example, a breakfast menu that offers 2 cups of the fruits component daily could offer 1 cup (8 fluid ounces) of juice daily. However, menu planners must be careful not to exceed the weekly calorie limits when offering juice daily, because juice contains more calories than whole fruits and vegetables. For more information, refer to “[Dietary Specifications](#)” in section 1.

Juices do not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables. Whole fruits and vegetables should be served most often.

Required signage for juice limits at breakfast

Cafeteria menus and signage must clearly indicate the specific amount of fruits and juices that students may select with each meal. Some examples of possible language to communicate the juice limit are indicated below.

- May choose any two fruit servings (no more than one juice).
- May select up to two servings of fruit (no more than one juice).
- May choose two fruit servings (no more than one juice).
- May choose two fruits or one fruit and one juice.
- May choose one fruit and one juice.

This type of language must be indicated on school menus and in signage on the serving line where the fruits, vegetables, and juices are located. For additional guidance on signage, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#).

Weekly WGR Requirement at Breakfast

At least 80 percent of the grains offered at breakfast each week must be whole WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. The determination of whether the weekly breakfast menu offers at least 80 percent WGR grains is based on the total oz eq of all grain items offered with all menu choices during the week.

SFAs may calculate the weekly menu's percentage of WGR grains using the CSDE's Excel worksheet, [Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#). For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Instructions for the Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) and [Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).



Weekly Requirement for Grains/MMA at Breakfast

Table 5-5 shows the minimum weekly oz eq for the grains/MMA component at breakfast. The maximums are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the weekly dietary specifications (refer to “[Dietary Specifications](#)” in section 1).

Menu planners may offer larger amounts of the grains/MMA component if the weekly menu still meets the dietary specifications. Menus that consistently offer larger amounts of grains and MMA might exceed the weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

Table 5-5. Required weekly oz eq of grains/MMA at breakfast

Grades	Five-day week	Seven-day week
K-5	7-10 oz eq	10-14 oz eq
6-8	8-10 oz eq	11-14 oz eq
9-12	9-10 oz eq	12½-14 oz eq

Calculating Weekly Grains/MMA at Breakfast

SFAs must determine the total oz eq of grains/MMA in the weekly breakfast menu by adding all planned daily oz eq for the week. If the menu offers choices of grains/MMA on an individual day, the menu planner must use smallest oz eq choice to count toward the weekly requirements. For example, if the breakfast menu offers a choice of a menu item with 1½ oz eq or 2 oz eq, the menu planner must count the menu item with 1½ oz eq toward the weekly grain requirements.

When breakfast menus include grain/MMA choices with different oz eq each day or over the week, SFAs must ensure that the weekly breakfast menu provides the minimum oz eq for each grade group.

Meeting Weekly Grains/MMA at Breakfast

Breakfast menus that offer only the minimum daily 1 oz eq of grains/MMA do not meet the weekly requirements because the sum of the daily oz eq is less than the minimum weekly requirement. For example, offering 1 oz eq daily provides 5 oz eq for a five-day week and 7 oz eq for a seven-day week. To meet the weekly requirement, the menu planner must offer more than the minimum daily 1 oz eq of grains/MMA on some days.

Example 1: Offering 1 oz eq of grains/MMA daily for grades 6-8

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	5 oz eq

- Meets daily requirement for grades 6-8 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes No
- Meets weekly requirement for grades 6-8 (at least 8 oz eq): Yes No

Example 2: Offering more than 1 oz eq of grains/MMA daily for grades 6-8

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	8 oz eq

- Meets daily requirement for grades 6-8 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes No
- Meets weekly requirement for grades 6-8 (at least 8 oz eq): Yes No

Offering Multiple Grain/MMA Choices with Different Oz Eq at Breakfast

When breakfast menus offer multiple grain/MMA choices with different oz eq, the menu planner must use the smallest oz eq choice to determine the total weekly oz eq of grains/MMA. Only the menu item with the smallest oz eq counts toward the weekly requirements.

Example 1: Different daily grain/MMA choices for grades K-5

A five-day breakfast menu for grades K-5 offers three grain/MMA choices that provide the same oz eq on an individual day. Days 1 and 2 offer three choices that are each $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq. Day 3 offers three choices that are each 1 oz eq. Day 4 offers three choices that are each 2 oz eq. Day 5 offers three choices that are each $1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq. This breakfast menu offers a total of $7\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq and meets the minimum weekly requirement.

Menu	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
Choice 1	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$7\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq
Choice 2	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$7\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq
Choice 3	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq	$1\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq	$7\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq

- Meets daily requirement for grades K-5 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly requirement for grades K-5 (at least 7 oz eq): No

Example 2: Different daily grain/MMA choices for grades 6-8

A five-day breakfast menu for grades 6-8 offers three grain/MMA choices that provide different oz eq on an individual day. Each day includes three different grain/MMA choices (1½ oz eq, 1¾ oz eq, and 2 oz eq). The menu planner must count the 1½-oz eq grain/MMA item (choice 1) toward the weekly oz eq because it is the daily menu item with the smallest oz eq. This breakfast menu offers a total of 7½ oz eq and does not meet the minimum weekly requirement.

Menu	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
Choice 1	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	1½ oz eq	7½ oz eq
Choice 2	1¾ oz eq	1¾ oz eq	1¾ oz eq	1¾ oz eq	1¾ oz eq	8¾ oz eq
Choice 3	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	10 oz eq

- Meets daily requirement for grades 6-8 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly requirement for grades 6-8 (at least 8 oz eq): No

Example 3: Different daily grain/MMA choices for grades 9-12

A five-day breakfast menu for grades K-5 offers multiple grain/MMA choices that provide the same oz eq on an individual day. Days 1 through 4 offer three choices that are each 2 oz eq. Day 5 offers three choices that are each 2½ oz eq. This breakfast menu offers a weekly total of 10½ oz eq and meets the minimum weekly requirement.

Menu	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Weekly
Choice 1	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2½ oz eq	10½ oz eq
Choice 2	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2½ oz eq	10½ oz eq
Choice 3	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2½ oz eq	10½ oz eq

- Meets daily requirement for grades 9-12 (at least 1 oz eq): Yes
- Meets weekly requirement for grades 9-12 (at least 9 oz eq): No

6 — Resources

This section includes additional resources and websites to assist SFAs with meeting the NSLP and SBP meal patterns and the crediting, documentation, and meal service requirements for the school nutrition programs. More links to information on the federal and state requirements and guidance for school meals are available on the CSDE's [Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages. For a list of resources on the meal patterns and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Meal Components and Crediting

[Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>

[Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs>

[Crediting Summary Charts for the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#)

(CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_snp.pdf

[Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/guide_wgr_requirement_snp_grades_k-12.pdf

[Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/resources_school_meal_patterns_snp.pdf

[Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning-guidance-for-school-meals>

[Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/noncreditable_foods_snp.pdf

[What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE's Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

Meal Patterns and Menu Planning

[Breakfast Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/breakfast-meal-patterns) (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/breakfast-meal-patterns>

[Dietary Specifications](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/dietary-specifications) (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/dietary-specifications>

[Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School](#)

[Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_dietary_specifications_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf

[Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/lunch-meal-patterns) (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/lunch-meal-patterns>

[Meal Pattern Changes](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/#Meal_Pattern_Changes) (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/#Meal_Pattern_Changes

[Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs>

[Menu Planner for School Meals](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner>

[Menu Planning Checklists for Lunch for Grades K-12](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/forms-for-school-nutrition-programs/#MenuPlanningChecklistsLunchGradesK-12) (CSDE's Forms for School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/forms-for-school-nutrition-programs/#MenuPlanningChecklistsLunchGradesK-12>

[Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning>

[Nutrition Standards for School Meals](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/nutrition-standards-school-meals) (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/nutrition-standards-school-meals>

[Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/offer-versus-serve-for-school-nutrition-programs>

[Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/ovs/ovs_guide_snp.pdf

[Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/overview_menu_planning_nslp_grades_k-12.pdf

[Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the School Breakfast Program](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sbp/overview_menu_planning_sbp_grades_k-12.pdf

[Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/sodium_limits_nslp_sbp.pdf

[What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE's

Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

Policy and Guidance

[C.G.S. Section 10-221q. Sale of beverages:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-221q

[Child Nutrition Programs Legislation and Regulations \(USDA\):](#)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/legislation-regulations>

[Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) for the National School Lunch Program \(7 CFR 210\)](#)

(USDA):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210>

[Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) for the School Breakfast Program \(7 CFR 220\)](#) (USDA):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220>

[Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) Documents & Resources](#) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources>

[Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) Instructions](#) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/fns-instructions-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/laws-and-regulations-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/manuals-and-guides-for-child-nutrition-program>

[Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/lists/operational-memoranda-for-school-nutrition-programs>

[Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/program-guidance-school-nutrition-programs>

[Questions and Answers on Connecticut Statutes for School Foods and Beverages](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/questions_answers_connecticut_statutes_school_foods_beverages.pdf

[School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/school-lunch-tray-and-table-talk>

[Training for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/training-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[USDA Final Rule: Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs \(77 FR 4087\):](#)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/fr-012612>

[USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans \(89 FR 31962\):](#)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for>

[USDA Final Rule: Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs \(91 FR 25073\):](#)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/08/2026-09212/expanding-fluid-milk-options-in-child-nutrition-programs>

[USDA FNS Instruction 786-8: Reimbursement for Off-Site Meal Consumption:](#)

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/fnsinstruction/786-8.pdf>

[USDA Memo SP 05-2022: Meal Requirements Under the NSLP & SBP: Q&A for Program Operators Updated to Support the Transitional Standards Effective July 1, 2022:](#)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/sp052022-questions-answers-program-operators>

[USDA Memo SP 17-2012: Procurement Questions and Answers to Assist in the Implementation of the final rule titled Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program.](#)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/procurement-qas-assist-implementation-final-rule>

Glossary

added sugars: Sugars and syrups added to foods in processing or preparation, as opposed to the naturally occurring sugars found in nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products. Names for added sugars include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup.

Administrative Review (AR): The state agency’s comprehensive offsite and onsite evaluation of all SFAs participating in the NSLP and SBP. The review cycle is every three years for each SFA and includes a review of critical and general areas. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Administrative Review for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Afterschool Snack Program (ASP): The USDA’s federally assisted snack program implemented through the NSLP. The ASP provides cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children in afterschool activities aimed at promoting the health and well-being of children and youth. Schools must provide children with regularly scheduled activities in an organized, structured, and supervised environment that includes educational or enrichment activities, e.g., mentoring/tutoring programs. Programs must meet state or local licensing requirements and health and safety standards. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Afterschool Snack Program](#) webpage.

afterschool snacks: Reimbursable snacks offered in the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). For more information, refer to “Afterschool Snack Program” in this section.

age/grade groups: The three grade groupings (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) of the USDA’s meal breakfast and lunch patterns for grades K-12. The classification of grade groups is based on children’s nutritional needs and the ages that typically correspond with these grade levels (ages 5-10 for grades K-5, ages 11-13 for grades 6-8, and ages 14-18 for grades 9-12).

alternate protein products (APPs): Food ingredients processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources (e.g., dehydrated granules, particles, or flakes) that may be used alone or in combination with meat, poultry, or seafood. Some examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. The USDA has specific requirements for the crediting of APPs in Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

beans, peas, and lentils (pulses): The dried edible seeds of legumes (such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas) that are one of the five vegetable subgroups recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Pulses include all beans, peas, and lentils cooked from dry, canned, or frozen, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, pink beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), split peas, pigeon peas, mung beans, and lentils. The meal patterns for Child Nutrition Programs allow beans, peas, and lentils to credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component. Minimum weekly servings are required in the NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

calories: The measurement of energy provided by foods and beverages.

cereal grains: The seeds that come from grasses. Cereal grains can be whole grain (such as amaranth, barley, buckwheat, corn, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rolled wheat, rye, sorghum, triticale, wheat, and wheat berries) or enriched (such as enriched cornmeal, corn grits, and farina).

Child Nutrition (CN) label: A statement approved by the USDA that clearly identifies the contribution of a food product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. Products eligible for CN labels include main dish entrees that provide at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component, e.g., beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. CN labels usually indicate the contribution of other meal components (such as vegetables, grains, and fruits) that are part of these products. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the "[Child Nutrition Labels](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Child Nutrition Programs: The USDA's federally funded programs that provide nutritious meals and snacks to children, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP also provides nutritious meals and snacks to the frail elderly in adult day care centers. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

creditable food: A food or beverage that counts toward meeting the meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

creditable grains: The ingredients in a commercial grain product or standardized recipe that credit toward the grains component. Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

cycle menu: A series of menus planned for a specific period, with a different menu for each day. Cycle menus can help schools comply with the meal pattern requirements, control food cost, control inventory, improve staff efficiency, and save time and labor costs. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the “[Cycle Menus](#)” section of the CSDE’s Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans: A federal document that provides science-based advice for Americans ages 2 and older to promote health and reduce risk for chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the USDA jointly publish the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* every five years. This document forms the basis of federal food, nutrition education, and information programs. For more information, visit the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) webpage.

dietary specifications: The USDA’s nutrition standards for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, that include weekly calorie ranges and weekly limits for saturated fat and sodium. For information on the specific dietary specifications for each grade group, visit the “[Dietary Specifications](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For guidance on meeting the dietary specifications, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

Effective with school year 2027-28 (beginning July 1, 2027), the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), requires a new weekly dietary specification for added sugars (less than 10 percent of calories). For more information, visit the “[Meal Pattern Changes](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

disability: A condition in which a person has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#).

edible portion: The portion of a food that can be eaten after the nonedible parts are removed. Examples include cooked, lean meat without bone, and fruits without seeds or pits.

enriched grains: Refined grains (such as wheat, rice, and corn) and grain products (such as cereal, pasta, and bread) that have some vitamins and minerals added to replace the nutrients lost during processing. The five enrichment nutrients are added within limits specified by the FDA, and include thiamin (B₁), riboflavin (B₂), niacin (B₃), folic acid, and iron. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

enrichment: Adding back nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) originally present in a food that were lost during processing. Enrichment nutrients are added back in approximately the same levels as were originally present in the food. For more information, refer to “enriched grains” in this section.

Exhibit A chart: The USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) chart that indicates the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for different types of grain foods to provide 1 oz eq of the grains component. For guidance on applicable Exhibit A quantities and requirements for each school nutrition program, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

flour: Finely ground and sifted wheat or other grains such as rye, corn, rice, or buckwheat.

fluid milk substitutes: Plant-based beverages like fortified soy milk that are intended to replace cow's milk. Fluid milk substitutes must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. Only certain brands of fluid milk substitutes meet these standards. CACFP facilities may choose to offer allowable fluid milk substitutes to children who do not consume milk due to non-disability reasons. For more information, refer to “nutrition standards for milk substitutes” in this section and the CSDE's resources, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Determining if Nondairy Milk Substitutes Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs](#).

food item: A specific food offered within the meal components that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA's school nutrition programs. A food item may contain one or more meal components or more than one serving of a single component. For example, an entree could provide 1 oz eq of the grains component and 1 oz eq of the MMA component. A 2-ounce whole grain or enriched bagel could provide 2 oz eq of the grains component.

food-based menu planning: A type of menu planning for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs that uses a meal pattern with specific meal components in certain amounts based on specific age/grade groups. For more information, refer to “meal components” in this section.

fortification: Adding nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) that were not originally present in a food or beverage, or adding nutrients at levels that are higher than originally present.

Fortification is used for naturally nutrient-rich products based on scientifically documented health needs (such as fortifying milk with vitamin D to increase the body's absorption of calcium), or to enhance the perceived nutritional value of products with little or no natural nutritional value, e.g., fortifying "*energy*" bars made from processed flour with multiple vitamins and minerals. Fortification nutrients are added to products in varying amounts, from small percentages up to amounts greater than recommended intakes.

fruits component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings at lunch or breakfast. For more information, visit the "[Fruits](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

full meal component: The daily quantity designated by the menu planner (no less than the established minimum) to meet the required weekly ranges.

full serving: Refer to "full meal component" in this section.

full-strength fruit or vegetable juice: An undiluted product obtained by extraction from sound fruit. Full-strength juice may be fresh, canned, frozen or reconstituted from concentrate and may be served in either liquid or frozen state or as an ingredient in a recipe. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: "full-strength juice," "single-strength juice," "100 percent juice," "reconstituted juice," or "juice from concentrate." For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

germ: The vitamin-rich sprouting section of the whole-grain kernel. Germ credits the same as enriched grains.

grade groups: Refer to "age/grade groups" in this section.

grain-based desserts: Desserts made of grains, such as brownies, cookies, sweet crackers (e.g., graham crackers and animal crackers), cakes, cupcakes, coffee cakes, cinnamon streusel quick breads, piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, orange cranberry, and chocolate chip), sweet croissants (e.g., chocolate or almond filled), sweet rice puddings (e.g., cinnamon and vanilla), sweet bread puddings (e.g., made with cinnamon, fruits, chocolate, or icing), and sweet pita chips (e.g., cinnamon sugar). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

grains: Plants in the grass family that produce a dry, edible fruit commonly called a kernel, grain, or berry.

grains component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes cereal grains and products made from their flours. Creditable grain foods include products and recipes that are WGR or enriched. Creditable cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals include products that are WGR, enriched, or fortified. For more information, visit the "[Grains](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

juice drink: A product resembling juice that contains full-strength juice along with added water and possibly other ingredients, such as sweeteners, spices, or flavorings. Juice drinks do not credit toward the meal pattern requirements.

lactose-free milk: A type of fluid milk that is processed to remove the lactose (naturally occurring sugar) found in regular milk. Lactose-free milk typically has the same nutritional benefits as regular milk, including calcium, protein, and vitamins. Like other types of fluid milk, lactose-free milk comes in a variety of flavors and fat contents. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Offering Lactose-Free and Lactose-Reduced Milk in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

lactose-reduced milk: A type of fluid milk that is processed to remove some of the lactose (naturally occurring sugar). Lactose-reduced milk typically has the same nutritional benefits as regular milk, including calcium, protein, and vitamins. Like other types of fluid milk, lactose-reduced milk comes in a variety of flavors and fat contents. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Offering Lactose-Free and Lactose-Reduced Milk in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

legumes: A type of plant that includes pods, e.g., soybeans, peanuts, fresh peas, fresh beans, and pulses (beans, peas, and lentils). For more information, refer to "beans, peas, and lentils (pulses)" and "pulses" in this section.

local educational agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public or private nonprofit authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools. The term also includes any other public or private nonprofit institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a public or private nonprofit elementary school or secondary school, including residential child care institutions, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and educational service agencies and consortia of those agencies, as well as the state educational agency in a state or territory in which the state educational agency is the sole educational agency for all public or private nonprofit schools.

main dish: The main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items. Examples of main dish items include pizza, chicken stir-fry, and chef's salad with ham, hard-boiled egg, and cheese.

meal components: The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the NSLP (milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and MMA) and the three food groups that comprise reimbursable breakfasts in the SBP (grains/MMA, fruits with optional vegetable substitutions, and milk). For information on the crediting requirements for each meal component, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

meal pattern: The required meal components and minimum servings that schools and institutions participating in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and afterschool snacks served to children. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

meal: A grain made by coarsely grinding corn, oats, wheat, or other grains. Whole grain, enriched, or fortified meal credits toward the grains component of the USDA's meal patterns.

meals: Refer to "reimbursable meals" in this section.

meat alternates: Foods that provide a similar protein content to meat. Meat alternates include alternate protein products, cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans and peas, nuts and seeds and their butters (except for acorn, chestnut, and coconut), yogurt, soy yogurt, commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein in a ¼-cup (2.2 ounces) serving, and tempeh. For more information, visit the "[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

meats/meat alternates (MMA) component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes meats (e.g., beef, poultry, and fish) and meat alternates, such as eggs, cheese, yogurt, beans, peas, and lentils, nuts, and seeds. For more information, visit the "[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

medical statement: A document that identifies the specific medical conditions and appropriate dietary accommodations for children with special dietary needs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

menu item: Any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk that is part of the reimbursable meal. Menu items consist of food items. For more information, refer to "food item" in this section.

milk component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes pasteurized fluid milk that meets federal and state regulations. The milk component also includes fluid milk substitutes that meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, refer to “fluid milk substitutes” and “nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes” in this section, and visit the [“Milk”](#) section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP): The USDA’s federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to children each school day. The NSLP was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [National School Lunch Program](#) webpage.

noncreditable foods: Foods and beverages that do not contribute toward the meal patterns for the USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs. Noncreditable foods and beverages are either in amounts too small to credit (i.e., foods and beverages that do not provide the minimum creditable amount of a meal component) or they do not meet the crediting requirements of the meal components. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

noncreditable grains: Grain ingredients that do not contribute to the grains component. Examples include oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours). For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

nutrient assessment: A review of school menu records to determine whether they meet the USDA’s weekly dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For more information, refer to “dietary specifications” in this section.

nutrient-dense foods: Foods and beverages that provide vitamins, minerals, and other substances that contribute to adequate nutrient intakes or may have positive health effects, and contain little or no solid fats, added sugars, refined starches, or sodium. Ideally, these foods and beverages are also in forms that retain naturally occurring components, such as dietary fiber. Examples include all vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry (when prepared with little or no added solid fats, sugars, refined starches, and sodium). The term “nutrient dense” indicates the nutrients and other beneficial substances in a food have not been “diluted” by the addition of calories from added solid fats, sugars, or refined starches, or by the solid fats naturally present in the food.

nutrient-rich foods: Refer to “nutrient-dense foods” in this section.

nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes: The USDA’s nutrition requirements for plant-based beverages like soy milk that are used as fluid milk substitutes in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA requires that any fluid milk substitutes are nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk and meet the following nutrients per cup (8 fluid ounces): 276 milligrams (mg) of calcium; 8 grams (g) of protein; 150 micrograms (mcg) retinol activity equivalents (RAE) of vitamin A; 2.5 mcg of vitamin D; 24 mg of magnesium; 222 mg of phosphorus; 349 mg of potassium; 0.44 mg of riboflavin; and 1.1 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin B-12. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

offer versus serve (OVS): A provision that applies to menu planning and the determination of reimbursable meals for grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP. OVS allows students to decline a certain number of meal components or food items in the meal. SFAs must offer the required meal components to each student. For the NSLP, students must select at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables and the full serving of at least two other meal components. For the SBP, students must select at least three food items including at least ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitutions, if offered). OVS must be implemented in senior high schools for lunch but is optional for breakfast. OVS is optional for breakfast and lunch in junior high, middle, and elementary schools. OVS does not apply to the SMP or ASP, or to preschool meals in the NSLP and SBP. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) and visit the CSDE’s [OVS](#) webpage.

ounce equivalent (oz eq): A weight-based unit of measure for the grains component and MMA component in the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. Oz eq account for dry versus cooked grains and variations in MMA. One oz eq of the MMA component is sometimes more than a measured ounce, depending on the food’s density and nutritional content. One oz eq of the grains component is less than a measured ounce for some grain foods (e.g., pretzels, breadsticks, and crackers), equal to a measured ounce for some grain foods (e.g., bagels, biscuits, bread, rolls, cereal grains, and RTE breakfast cereals), and more than a measured ounce for some grain foods (e.g., muffins and pancakes). For more information, refer to “Exhibit A chart” in this section and the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

point-of-service meal count: The moment in the food service operation where staff can accurately determine that a reimbursable free, reduced-price, or paid meal has been served to an eligible child or that a reimbursable afterschool snack has been served to an eligible child.

product formulation statement (PFS): An information statement developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA’s meal patterns, and documents how this information is obtained citing Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations. A PFS does not provide any warranty against audit claims. The USDA requires a PFS for commercial processed products without a CN label that are not listed in the [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG). All creditable ingredients in this statement must match a description in the FBG. The PFS must be prepared on company letterhead with the signature of a company official and the date of issue. The USDA requires that SFAs must verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

pulses: The edible dry seeds from legumes, such as beans, peas, and lentils. For more information, refer to “beans, peas, and lentils (pulses)” and “legumes” in this section.

refined grains: Grains that have been processed to remove the bran and germ, making the product less nutritious than whole grains. Refined grains may or may not be enriched. For more information, refer to “enriched grains” in this section.

registered dietitian (RD) or registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN): An individual who meets the following requirements: 1) completed a minimum of a graduate degree at a U.S. regionally accredited university or college and course work accredited by the [Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) (ACEND); 2) completed an ACEND®-accredited supervised practice program at a health-care facility, community agency, or a foodservice corporation or combined with undergraduate or graduate studies; 3) passed a national examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR); and 4) completed continuing professional educational requirements to maintain registration. For more information, visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ (AND) [Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Fact Sheet](#) website.

reimbursable meals: Meals that offer the required meal components and minimum servings for each grade group, as defined by the NSLP and SBP meal patterns.

residential child care institution (RCCI): RCCIs include, but are not limited to homes for the mentally, emotionally or physically impaired, and unmarried mothers and their infants; group homes; halfway houses; orphanages; temporary shelters for abused children and for runaway children; long-term care facilities for chronically ill children; and juvenile detention centers. A long-term care facility is a hospital, skilled nursing facility, intermediate care facility, or distinct part thereof, which is intended for the care of children confined for 30 days or more.

saturated fat: A type of fat that raises blood cholesterol, which is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Major sources of saturated fat include coconut oil, palm oil, palm kernel oil, butter, and beef fat. Saturated fat is also found in other animal fats, such as pork and chicken fats, and in other plant fats, such as nuts. For more information, refer to “solid fats” in this section.

School Breakfast Program (SBP): The USDA’s federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. The SBP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free breakfasts to children each school day. The SBP was established under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to ensure that all children have access to a healthy breakfast at school to promote learning readiness and healthy eating behaviors. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [School Breakfast Program](#) webpage.

school food authority (SFA): The governing body that is responsible for the administration of one or more schools and has the legal authority to operate the USDA’s school nutrition programs.

school nutrition programs: The USDA’s school nutrition programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Special Milk Program (SMP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-risk Supper Program implemented in schools. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP: The USDA’s federally assisted summer feeding program that combines features of the NSLP, SBP, and SFSP, and serves meals free of charge to children ages 18 and younger from low-income areas. School districts participating in the NSLP or SBP are eligible to apply to the CSDE to participate in the SSO. SSO meals follow the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For more information, visit the [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\) of the NSLP](#) webpage.

serving size or portion: The weight, measure, number of pieces, or slices of a food or beverage. SFAs must provide the minimum serving sizes specified in the USDA meal patterns for meals and afterschool snacks to be reimbursable.

simple carbohydrates (sugars): Carbohydrates consisting of one sugar (e.g., fructose and galactose) or two sugars (e.g., lactose, maltose, and sucrose). Sugars can be naturally present in foods (such as fructose in fruit or lactose in milk) or added to foods (such as sucrose or table sugar). Foods that naturally contain simple carbohydrates (such as fruits, milk, and milk products, and some vegetables) also contain vitamins and minerals. Foods that contain large amounts of added sugars (such as cookies, candy, pastries, sweetened baked goods, regular soft drinks, and other sweetened drinks) provide calories with few, if any, nutrients. For more information, refer to “added sugars” in this section.

sodium: A mineral that helps maintain the body’s fluid balance and blood pressure. Diets that are high in sodium can increase the risk of high blood pressure in individuals who are sodium sensitive.

solid fats: Fats that are usually not liquid at room temperature. Solid fats are found in most animal foods but also can be made from vegetable oils through hydrogenation. Some common solid fats include butter, beef fat (tallow, suet), chicken fat, pork fat (lard), stick margarine, coconut oil, palm oil, and shortening. Foods high in solid fats include full-fat (regular) cheese, cream, whole milk, ice cream, well-marbled cuts of meats, regular ground beef, bacon, sausages, poultry skin, and many baked goods (such as cookies, crackers, donuts, pastries, and croissants). Solid fats contain more saturated fat. For more information, refer to “saturated fat” in this section.

Special Milk Program (SMP): The USDA’s federally assisted program that provides milk to children in schools and child care institutions that do not participate in other federal meal service programs. The SMP reimburses schools for the milk they serve. Schools in the NSLP or SBP may also participate in the SMP to provide milk to children in half-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs where children do not have access to the school meal programs. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Special Milk Program](#) webpage.

standardized recipe: A recipe that been tried, adapted, and retried at least three times and has been found to produce the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized recipes include specific information such as ingredients, weights and measures, preparation directions, serving directions, yield, and portion size. For more information, refer to the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition’s [USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs](#), the CSDE’s [Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the “[Standardized Recipes](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

state licensed healthcare professional: An individual who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law and is recognized by the State Department of Public Health (DPH). In Connecticut, this includes physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy (DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN), i.e., nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse anesthetists who are licensed as APRNs. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#).

sucrose: Another name for table sugar. Sucrose contains glucose and fructose. For more information, refer to “simple carbohydrates (sugars) in this section.

sugars: Refer to “added sugars” and “simple carbohydrates” in this section.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): The USDA's federally assisted summer feeding program for children ages 18 and younger that provides nutritious meals when schools end for the summer. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage.

surimi: Pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood usually made from pollock (fish). A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

tempeh: A highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other beans, peas, and lentils), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. SFA must obtain a PFS for tempeh products that contain different ingredients.

USDA Foods: Foods available to the USDA Child Nutrition Programs through the CSDE's Food Distribution Program. USDA Foods are available to schools in several ways, including Direct Delivery USDA Foods, Further Processed USDA Foods, the USDA Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Pilot, and the SFSP USDA DoD Pilot. For more information, visit the USDA's [USDA Foods Programs](#) webpage and the CSDE's [Food Distribution Program](#) webpage.

vegetable subgroups: The five categories of vegetables within the vegetables component that are required over the week in the NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12. The subgroups include dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other vegetables. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program](#), and visit the "[Vegetables](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

vegetables component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice; and includes five subgroups. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings at lunch or breakfast. For more information, visit the "[Vegetables](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

whole foods: Foods that are unprocessed or minimally processed and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, or sodium.

whole fruits and vegetables: Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables that are unprocessed or minimally processed, and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, and sodium.

whole grain-rich (meal patterns for grades K-12): Foods in groups A-G and H are WGR if they meet two criteria: 1) the grain content is between 50 and 100 percent whole grain with any remaining grains being enriched; and 2) any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent of the product formula (or less than ¼ oz eq per portion), i.e., no more than 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G (baked goods) or 6.99 grams per portion for group H (cereal grains). Ready-to-eat (RTE) and cooked breakfast cereals (group I) are WGR criteria if they meet three criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) added sugars do not exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. Fortification is not required for 100 whole grain cereals. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit “[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)” in the “Grains” section of the Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

whole grains: Grains that consist of the entire kernel, including the starchy endosperm, the fiber-rich bran, and the nutrient-rich germ. All grains start out as whole grains, but many are processed to remove the bran and germ, which also removes many of the nutrients. Whole grains are nutrient rich, containing vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and health-enhancing phytonutrients such as lignans and flavonoids. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, whole oats, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, brown rice, whole rye, whole barley, wild rice, buckwheat, and bulgur (cracked wheat). For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

whole-grain flour: Flour made by grinding the entire whole-grain kernel, including the fiber-rich bran, nutrient-rich germ, and starchy endosperm. Flour or meal that does not contain all parts of the grain is not whole grain, e.g., degermed corn, milled rice, and wheat flour. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).



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