Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

This document compares the requirements for the grains component in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in the school nutrition programs, including the updates required by the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The school nutrition programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Special Milk Program (SMP). The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP meal patterns.

For information on the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage, Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage, and the "Meal Patterns and Crediting" section of the ASP webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage and Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Contents

Grains Component....2
Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12....2
Co-Mingled Meals and Afterschool Snacks....3
When the preschool meal pattern is required....3
Required Crediting Documentation....4
Documentation for commercial grain products....4
Documentation for grain foods made from scratch....5
Storing crediting documentation....5
Comparison Chart for the Grains Component....6
Resources....28






Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Grains Component

The USDA regulations define different requirements for the milk component in the NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SMP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool.

- **Grades K-12:** The grain requirements for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 are defined by the USDA regulations for the NSLP (7 CFR 210), SBP (7 CFR 220), and SMP (7 CFR 215), and the updates required by the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

- **Preschool (ages 1-5):** The grain requirements for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns are defined in 7 CFR 210.10(p) (lunch), 7 CFR 220.8(o) (breakfast), and 7 CFR 210.10(o)(3) (snack), and the updates required by the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The preschool meal patterns follow the requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children (7 CFR 226.20).

> School food authorities (SFAs) must ensure that all grains offered in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks meet the specific meal pattern requirements for each school nutrition program and grade group.

Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12

SFAs must consider the different meal pattern requirements for preschool and grades K-12 when making menu planning and purchasing decisions for grain foods that will be served to both groups. Grain foods served to both groups must comply with whichever meal pattern requirements are stricter. The examples below show how these requirements apply.

- The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 require stricter whole grain-rich (WGR) criteria than the preschool meal patterns (refer to "WGR requirement" in this document). Grain foods served to both groups must comply with the WGR criteria for grades K-12.

- Grain-based desserts credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, but do not credit in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 or the preschool meal patterns (refer to "Grain-based Desserts" and "Identifying grain-based desserts" in this document). Menus planned for both groups cannot include grain-based desserts.

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

School menus must meet these requirements unless meals or afterschool snacks are co-mingled.

"Co-mingling" is the practice of serving meals to a variety of grades in the same service area at the same time. This typically occurs due to operational constraints within a school, such as limited time and space.

Co-Mingled Meals and Afterschool Snacks

When preschoolers and older grades are co-mingled, SFAs may use the meal pattern of the older grades for preschoolers if the meal service meets three criteria: 1) the preschoolers and students from older grade groups are served together in the same place at the same time; 2) it is hard to tell the preschoolers from older students; and 3) it would be operationally difficult to serve different foods or different amounts of foods during the combined meal service.

For example, SFAs that serve lunch or breakfast to preschoolers and grades K-5 in the same service area at the same time may choose to follow the K-5 lunch or breakfast meal pattern for both groups because it would be difficult for food service staff to determine which children are in preschool or kindergarten.

For additional guidance, refer to the USDA's *Serving School Meals to Preschoolers* and USDA Memo SP 37-2017: *Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers*, and visit the "Co-mingled Meals and Afterschool Snacks" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. Training on co-mingled meals is available in Module 3: Meal Pattern Comparison of Preschool and Grades K-12 of the CSDE's Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs.

When the preschool meal pattern is required

SFAs must use the preschool meal pattern when meals or afterschool snacks are served to preschoolers in a different area or at a different time than students in older grades. The preschool meal pattern provides the amounts and types of foods that most younger children need for healthy growth and development. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals to preschoolers and older students to best address their nutritional needs.

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Required Crediting Documentation

SFAs must be able to document that all grain menu items served in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks meet the crediting requirements for the grains component. The guidance below summarizes the required documentation for commercial grain products and grain foods made from scratch. Documentation must be based on the food yields and crediting information in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG).

Documentation for commercial grain products

SFAs must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer if a commercial product's ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if it meets these requirements.

The USDA requires that SFAs must verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the grain product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. For guidance on when a PFS is required and the information it must include, refer to the CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs*.

> If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the product cannot credit as the grains component.

For more information on PFS forms, 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 USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements.* Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

For guidance on reviewing PFS forms, visit the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement webpage. Guidance on how to review a grain PFS is available in the CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Training on the requirements for PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Documentation for grain foods made from scratch

SFAs must have standardized recipes on file that document the crediting information for all grain foods made from scratch, including foods made on site by the SFA and foods prepared by vendors. Standardized recipes for whole-grain foods credit as the grains component based on the grams of whole grains per serving. If the standardized recipe indicates the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving, menu planners may use the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for the applicable grain group in the USDA's Exhibit A chart (refer to "Required Servings for Grain Products and Recipes" in this document).

For more information on standardized recipes, refer to 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.

Storing crediting documentation

SFAs must maintain all CN labels, PFS forms, standardized recipes, and other crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs*. This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Comparison Chart for the Grains Component

The chart below compares the grain requirements for the meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in the school nutrition programs.

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Creditable grains	Whole grains, enriched grains, bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran) and germ (such as wheat germ). Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grains (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage)	Same **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grains (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage) How to Identify Creditable Grains for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Limit for noncreditable grains	Creditable WRG and enriched commercial grain products and foods made from scratch must meet the applicable limit for noncreditable grains, abased on the grain groups in the USDA's chart, Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (known as Exhibit A). Examples of noncreditable grains include oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours). Grain foods in groups A-G cannot exceed 3.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. Grain foods in groups H-I cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE)	Not applicable

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Grain-based Desserts	**Restrictions for breakfast:** Only certain types of grain-based desserts credit at breakfast (refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*). The inclusion of grain-based desserts cannot cause the breakfast menu to exceed the weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards), i.e., limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. **Restrictions for lunch:** Grain-based desserts cannot exceed 2 oz eq per week. Grain-based desserts served as extra menu items are included in this limit. The inclusion of grain-based desserts cannot cause the lunch menu to exceed the weekly dietary specifications. **Restrictions for snack:** Grain-based desserts do not credit in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 except for sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers). The CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers in snack menus to no more than twice per week. **Resources** Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	**Restrictions:** Grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns except for sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers). The CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks served to preschoolers. **Resources** Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Identifying grain-based desserts	The CSDE's oz eq chart, Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs, identifies creditable grain-based in blue (allowed at breakfast and lunch) or red (allowed only at lunch). Examples of grain-based desserts include cookies, cakes, cereal bars and granola bars, cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, sweet rolls, and toaster pastries, piecrusts in sweet pies like apple and blueberry, and sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers). **Resources** Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	Not applicable

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting hominy, corn masa, and masa harina	Corn ingredients credit if they are whole grain, enriched, or treated with lime (nixtamalized). Nixtamalization is a process in which dried corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process results in a product with similar nutrition to whole-grain corn. Ingredients labeled as hominy, corn masa, or masa harina are nixtamalized, and credit as whole grains. Cornmeal and corn flour do not credit as the grains component unless they are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized. If the product's ingredients statement does not provide sufficient information, SFAs must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer to document that cornmeal and corn flour ingredients meet one of these requirements. Corn flour ingredients that are not are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized count toward the limit for noncreditable grains (refer to "Limit for noncreditable grains" in this document). **Resources** USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs	Same

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Weekly ranges	**Breakfast:** The breakfast meal pattern requires weekly ranges for the grains/MMA component. **Lunch:** The lunch meal pattern requires weekly ranges for the grains component. Menus are not required to comply with the maximums but must meet the minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range for each age group. The weekly maximum provides a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications (nutrition standards) for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on 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* and visit the "Dietary Specifications" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage. **Snack:** No applicable (no weekly ranges) **Resources** Dietary Specifications (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage) Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE)	None

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Required quantities	The required quantities for the grains component are in ounce equivalents (oz eq). Oz eq are a unit of measure that indicates the contribution of a given serving size toward the grains component. One oz eq equals 16 grams of credible grains. The amount of a grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	Same **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Methods to determine oz eq	The USDA allows two methods for determining the oz eq of creditable grain products and recipes. • **Method 1 – Exhibit A weight or volume:** Used is used for commercial grain products and may also be used for standardized recipes that indicate the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. • **Method 2 – Creditable grains:** Used for standardized recipes and may also be used for commercial grain products with a PFS stating the weight of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 4). SFAs may use either method but must document how the crediting information was obtained. For detailed guidance on both methods, refer to the CSDE's *Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs.* **Resources** Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs) What's in a Meal Module 15: Grain Ounce Equivalents (CSDE) Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage)	Same

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Method 1 Exhibit A chart	Method 1 uses the amount for the appropriate grain group in the USDA's chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*. Exhibit A provides minimum weights (groups A-G) and volumes (groups H-I) for nine groups of grain foods, based on the average grain content of similar products. The CSDE's Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs lists the Exhibit A oz eq for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP. **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	Same **Resources** Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Method 2 creditable grains	Method 2 calculates the total weight (grams) of creditable grains (whole and enriched) per serving. • **To credit as 1 oz eq of an enriched grain**, foods in groups A-E must contain 16 grams of creditable grains and cannot exceed 3.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. Foods in group H must contain 28 grams of creditable grains and cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. • **To credit as 1 oz eq of a WGR food**, foods in groups A-E must contain 16 grams of creditable grains (including at least 8 grams of whole grains) and cannot exceed 3.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. Foods in group H must contain 28 grams of creditable grains (including at least 14 grams of whole grains) and cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. Commercial products require a PFS that states the weight of creditable grains per serving. Foods made from scratch require a standardized recipe that lists the weight of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 4). **Resources** Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE) When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	Method 2 calculates the total weight (grams) of creditable grains (whole and enriched) per serving. • **To credit as 1 oz eq of an enriched grain**, foods in groups A-E must contain 16 grams of creditable grains; and foods in group H must contain 28 grams of creditable grains. • **To credit as 1 oz eq of a WGR food**, foods in groups A-E must contain 16 grams of creditable grains (including at least 8 grams of whole grains); and foods in group H must contain 28 grams of creditable grains (including at least 14 grams of whole grains). Commercial products require a PFS that states the weight of creditable grains per serving. Foods made from scratch require a standardized recipe that lists the weight of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 4). **Resources** Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
When method 2 is required	There are specific situations when SFAs must use method 2 (instead of the USDA's Exhibit A chart) to determine the oz eq for commercial grain products. **Resources** When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs	Same

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
WGR requirement	At least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered at breakfast, lunch, and snack must be WGR, based on the total oz eq of all offered grains in the weekly menu. The weekly percentage of WGR menu items must be calculated separately for breakfast, lunch, and snack menus. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched and cannot exceed 20 percent of all grains offered during the week. **Resources** Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the School Nutrition Programs for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Instructions for the Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the School Nutrition Programs for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (USDA) Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage)	At least one serving per day must be WGR, between all meals and snacks served to preschoolers. The USDA's CACFP best practices recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. **Resources** Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
WGR documentation	SFAs must maintain documentation to indicate that 1) at least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered at breakfast, lunch, and snack are WGR; and 2) grain foods counted toward the WGR requirement meet the WGR criteria. This documentation must be maintained on file for the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs SFAs may calculate the weekly menu's WGR percentage using the CSDE's worksheet. SFAs that do not use this worksheet must maintain alternate documentation. Required documentation for the WGR criteria includes a PFS for commercial foods and a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 4). **Resources** Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Instructions for the Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE) Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	SFAs must maintain documentation to indicate that at least one serving per day is WGR. This documentation must be maintained on file for the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs Required documentation for the WGR criteria includes a PFS for commercial foods and a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 4). **Resources** Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage) Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting breakfast cereals: cold RTE in group I, e.g., flaked cereals, round cereals, puffed cereals, and granola	**Three crediting criteria:** 1) must be WGR, enriched, or fortified; 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. **Three WGR 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 cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) added sugars cannot exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE)	**Two crediting criteria:** 1) must be WGR, enriched, or fortified; and 2) cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. **Two WGR criteria:** 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting breakfast cereals: cooked hot in group H, e.g., oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina	**Three crediting criteria:** 1) must be WGR, enriched, or fortified; 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. **Three WGR 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 cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) added sugars cannot exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE)	**Two crediting criteria:** 1) must be WGR, enriched, or fortified; and 2) cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. **Two WGR criteria:** 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) added sugars d cannot exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. **Resources** Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)
Serving size for breakfast cereals	**Cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** ½ oz eq = ¼ cup cooked or 14 grams dry. **RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** ½ oz eq = ½ cup of flaked or round cereal, ¾ cup of puffed cereal, and ⅛ cup of granola. **Resources** Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	**Cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** ½ oz eq = ¼ cup cooked or 14 grams dry **RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** ½ oz eq = ½ cup of flaked or round cereal, ¾ cup of puffed cereal, and ⅛ cup of granola **Resources** Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting cereal grains in group H, e.g., pasta, and other cereal grains, e.g., amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, farina, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat	**Two crediting criteria:** 1) must be WGR or enriched; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. **Three WGR criteria:** 1) whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight; 2) any remaining grains are enriched; and 3) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE) When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	**Crediting criteria for the preschool meal patterns:** must be WGR or enriched. **WGR criteria for the preschool meal patterns:** 1) whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight; and 2) any remaining grains are enriched. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
WGR criteria for commercial products: grain foods in groups A-G, e.g., crackers, breads, rolls, taco shells, muffins, waffles, pancakes, and grain-based desserts (e.g., cookies, cake, sweet crackers like animal crackers and graham crackers, granola bars, cereal bars, and pastries)	**Two WGR criteria:** 1) whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight; 2) any remaining grains are enriched; and 3) cannot exceed 3.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. **Resources** Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE) Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (USDA) Whole Grain-rich Requirement for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage)	Commercial products must meet the "Rule of Three," which applies only to the preschool meal pattern: The first ingredient must be a whole grain (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the next ingredient), and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are whole, enriched, bran, or germ. The preschool WGR criteria do not require a specific limit for noncreditable grains. Grain-based desserts do not credit (refer to "Grain-based desserts" in this section). **Resources** Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE) How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA) Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP Using the Ingredient List (USDA) Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting enriched grain products, e.g., enriched white bread, enriched crackers, enriched white rice, enriched cream of wheat cereal, and enriched corn grits	Enriched grain products may credit for up to 20 percent of all grains offered at snack (refer to "WGR Requirement" in this section). Enriched grains must comply with the limit for noncreditable grains. They cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE)	Enriched grain products credit as the grains component but at least one grain menu item per day must be WGR (refer to "R9: WGR Requirement"). **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 05-2025: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting commercial products: combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-I, e.g., pizza, breaded chicken nuggets, and macaroni and cheese	**Two crediting criteria:** 1) the grain portion must be WGR or enriched; and 2) cannot exceed 3.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H-I. **Two WGR criteria:** 1) whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight in the grain portion; 2) any remaining grains in the grain portion are enriched; and 3) noncreditable grains in the grain portion cannot exceed 6.99 grams. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE) When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	**Two crediting criteria:** must be WGR or enriched. **Two WGR criteria:** 1) whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight in the grain portion; and 2) any remaining grains in the grain portion are enriched.

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting foods made from scratch: grain foods in groups A-G, e.g., breads, rolls, muffins, waffles, pancakes, and grain-based desserts (e.g., cookies, cake, granola bars, and pastries)	SFAs must have a standardized recipe to document the grams of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 1). **Two crediting criteria:** 1) must be WGR or enriched; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion **Two WGR criteria:** 1) the combined amount (weight or volume) of all whole grains in the standardized recipe is equal to or more than the weight or volume of all other creditable grains; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE) Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage)	SFAs must have a standardized recipe to document the grams of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 1). **Crediting criteria:** must be WGR or enriched. **WGR criteria:** the weight or volume of all whole grains in the standardized recipe is equal to or more than the weight or volume of all other creditable grains. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting foods made from scratch: combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-I, e.g., pizza, breaded chicken nuggets, and macaroni and cheese	SFAs must have a standardized recipe to document the grams of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 1). **Two crediting criteria:** 1) the grain portion must be WGR or enriched; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H-I. **Two WGR criteria:** 1) the weight or volume of all whole grains in the grain portion is equal to or more than the weight or volume of all other creditable grains in the grain portion; and 2) noncreditable grains in the grain portion do not exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H-I. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE) Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage)	SFAs must have a standardized recipe to document the grams of creditable grains per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" on page 1). **Crediting criteria:** the grain portion must be WGR or enriched. **WGR criteria:** the weight or volume of all whole grains in the grain portion is equal to or more than the weight or volume of all other creditable grains in the grain portion. **Resources** Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE) Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage)

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Requirement	Grades K-12: NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO	Preschool (ages 1-5): NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO
Crediting grain-based desserts in groups C-G, e.g., plain brownies, cookies, sweet crackers (such as animal crackers, and graham crackers), cakes, cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, and toaster pastries	Not all grain-based desserts credit at all meals. The NSLP and SBP meal patterns allow different types of grain-based desserts and have different crediting restrictions. The CSDE's oz eq chart, Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs, indicates grain-based in blue (allowed only at breakfast and lunch) or red (allowed only at lunch). **Restrictions for breakfast:** Only certain types of grain-based desserts credit at breakfast. Some examples of allowable grain-based desserts at breakfast include animal crackers and graham crackers, cereal bars, granola bars, doughnuts, fruit turnovers, pastries, and sweet rolls. The inclusion of grain-based desserts cannot cause the breakfast menu to exceed the weekly dietary specifications (refer to "Dietary specifications" in chart 1). **Restrictions for lunch:** Grain-based desserts (including rain-based desserts served as extra menu items) cannot exceed 2 oz eq per week. SFAs cannot offer grain-based desserts like graham crackers or animal crackers as the grains component of a daily alternate lunch choice. The inclusion of grain-based desserts cannot cause the lunch menu to exceed the weekly dietary specifications (refer to "Dietary specifications" in chart 1). **Resources** Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE)	Grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns except for sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers). The CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks served to preschoolers. **Resources** Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA) Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE) USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Resources

Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/calculate_wgr_percentage_snp.pdf

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/grain_calculation_snp.pdf

Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA webpage):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/tips-evaluating-pfs

Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_cereals_snp.pdf

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs

Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_enriched_grains_snp.pdf

Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_grain_based_desserts_grades_ k-12_nslp_sbp.pdf

Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_whole_grains_snp.pdf

Exhibit A Grains Tool of the Food Buying Guide (USDA):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg/webtool

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/grain_oz_eq_snp.pdf

Grains Component (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/grains

Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/wgr_requirement_cacfp.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

How to Identify Creditable Grains for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/identify_creditable_grains_snp_ preschool.pdf

How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/how_to_use_ounce_equivalents_ chart_snp.pdf

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

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs

Menu Planning Guidance Series for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning-guidance-for-school-meals

Menu Planning Guidance Series for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs#MenuPlanningGuidanceSeries

Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/noncreditable_grains_snp.pdf

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

Ounce Equivalents ("Serving Requirements" in "Grains" section of CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/grains#ServingRequirements

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf

USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/fr-042524

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation

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

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_snp.pdf

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

For more information, visit the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage or contact the school nutrition programs staff at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/comparison_grain_requirements_snp.pdf.

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Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements for the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Program

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2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
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