

Five-day Week Lunch Menu Planning Checklist for Grades 6-8: School Year 2023-24

This checklist assists school food authorities (SFAs) with planning meals to meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#) meal pattern. For an overview of the NSLP meal pattern requirements, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) resource, [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the NSLP](#). For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE’s [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages.

Instructions: Check (☑) “yes” or “no” to indicate if the lunch menu complies with each requirement.

Lunch	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes the five components: meat/meat alternates, grains, fruits, vegetables, and milk.		
Milk Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes 1 cup of milk. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes 5 cups of milk. ²		
Milk is low-fat (1%) or fat-free, unflavored or flavored.		
At least two different varieties of milk are offered, including at least one unflavored choice.		
Fruits Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes ½ cup of fruit. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes 2½ cups of fruit. ²		
Fruit juice is 100 percent juice and does not exceed half (1¼ cups) of the weekly fruits component. <i>Indicate “NA” (not applicable) if the menu does not include fruit juice.</i>		
Dried fruit is credited as twice the amount served, i.e., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component.		
Vegetables Component	Yes	No ¹
Each meal includes ¾ cup of vegetables. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes 3¾ cups of vegetables. ²		
The weekly lunch menu provides all 5 vegetable subgroups (3¾ cups total):		
<input type="checkbox"/> Dark green: ½ cup dark offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Red/orange: ¾ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Beans and peas (legumes): ½ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Starchy: ½ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ½ cup offered weekly (or dark green, red/orange, beans/peas, or starchy) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 cup of additional vegetables offered weekly (from any of the five vegetable subgroups)		
Vegetable juice is 100 percent juice and does not exceed half (17/8 cups) of the weekly vegetables component. <i>Indicate “NA” if the menu does not include vegetable juice.</i>		
Raw leafy greens are credited as half of the amount served, i.e., 1 cup of lettuce or spinach credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component.		

Grains Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of grains. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes 8-10 oz eq of grains. ²		
At least 80 percent of grains offered during the week are whole grain-rich (WGR). The remaining grains are enriched. For information, on the WGR criteria refer to the CSDE’s guide, Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 .		
Grain-based desserts do not exceed 2 oz eq per week.		
Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes 1 oz eq of MMA. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes 9-10 oz eq of MMA. ²		
The MMA is served in a main dish, or a main dish and one other item.		
Offer versus Serve (OVS)	Yes	No ¹
<i>Indicate “NA” if the school does not implement OVS.</i>		
Students select at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable for a reimbursable meal.		
In addition to at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable, students select the full portion of at least two other components for a reimbursable meal.		
Dietary Specifications (Nutrient Standards) for Weekly Menus ³	Yes	No ¹
<i>Indicate “NK” (not known) if the SFA does not conduct a nutrient analysis.</i>		
Calories are within the allowable range of 600-700 calories.		
Saturated fat is less than 10 percent of total calories.		
Sodium does not exceed 1,225 milligrams (target 1A).		
All nutrition labels and manufacturer specifications indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.		

¹ If the answer to any statement is “no,” the lunch menu does not comply with the meal pattern requirements. Check the menu and revise accordingly.

² SFAs may serve larger amounts of milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates if the lunch menu does not exceed the weekly dietary specifications (limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium).

³ SFAs are not required to conduct a nutrient analysis of menus. If applicable, the CSDE will conduct a nutrient analysis during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

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Menu Planning Resources

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Offer-versus-Serve-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Program-Guidance-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Resources for the School Meal Patterns: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/Resources_School_Meal_Patterns.pdf

Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Vegetable_Subgroups_NSLP.pdf



For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals* and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages 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/MealPattern/NSLP_Menu_Checklist_5day_grades_6-8.pdf.

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

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