



Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs

Module 10:
Co-mingled Meal Service

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Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs

School Year 2025-26

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Preschool Meal Pattern Training Modules

1. Introduction to Training

2. Preschool Meal Patterns

3. Comparison of Meal Patterns for Preschool and Grades K-5

4. Milk Component

5. Meats/Meat Alternates Component

6. Vegetables Component

7. Fruits Component

8. Grains Component

9. Meal Service for Preschoolers

10. Co-mingled Meal Service

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/preschool-meal-pattern-training>

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Topics

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Module 10 Topics

▪ Definition of co-mingling

▪ How meal pattern for older grades applies to co-mingled meals or snacks


▪ Reasons to avoid co-mingled meal service

▪ How to avoid co-mingled meal service

▪ When preschool meal patterns apply

▪ Knowledge check for co-mingled meal service

▪ Resources



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Definition of Co-mingling

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Co-mingling

The practice of serving meals or afterschool snacks to a variety of grades in the same service area at the same time


Terms to Know

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Usually Occurs Due to Operational Constraints

- Limited time in daily schedule
- Limited space in school building




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Examples of Co-mingled Meal Service

- Preschoolers and grades K-5 served together
- Preschoolers and grades K-8 served together




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May Use Older Meal Pattern for Both Grade Groups

- When students are co-mingled **BUT**
- Only if school's meal service meets three requirements




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Three Requirements to Allow Co-mingled Meals

1. Served together in same place at same time
2. Difficult to tell preschoolers from older students
3. Operationally difficult to serve different foods or amounts during combined meal service



May use meal pattern of older grades for both grade groups

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Example 1: Co-Mingled Meals at Lunch or Breakfast

Combined Grade Groups

- Preschoolers
- Grades K-5

Meal Pattern Used

- Grades K-5



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Example 2: Co-Mingled Meals at Lunch or Breakfast

Combined Grade Groups

- Preschoolers
- Grades K-8

Meal Pattern Used

- Grades K-8 option



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Example 3: Co-Mingled Meals at Snack

Combined Grade Groups

- Preschoolers
- Grades K-12

Meal Pattern Used

- Grades K-12



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Different Nutritional Needs for Preschool and Grades K-12

- USDA recommends using specific grade-appropriate meal pattern whenever possible



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How Meal Pattern for Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

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During Co-Mingled Meals or Snacks

- All requirements of meal pattern for older grades apply to preschoolers




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Meal Pattern Requirements for Older Grades Apply

- Breakfast and lunch portions
 - Minimum daily and weekly portions
- Snack portions
 - Minimum daily portions
- Crediting requirements
 - Weekly minimums or limits



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Summary of Applicable K-12 Meal Pattern Requirements

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Weekly Dietary Specifications for Grades K-12

- Nutrition standards for breakfast and lunch
 - Calorie ranges
 - Limits for saturated fat and sodium
 - Effective July 1, 2027, new limit for added sugars




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Weekly WGR Requirement for Grades K-12

- At least 80% WGR grains at breakfast, lunch, and snack




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Weekly Juice Limits for Grades K-12

- **Lunch**
 - Fruit juices cannot exceed half of offered fruits
 - Vegetable juices cannot exceed half of offered vegetables
- **Breakfast and Snack**
 - Fruit/vegetable juices cannot exceed half of offered fruits and vegetables



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Weekly Vegetable Subgroups for Grades K-12 at Lunch

Minimum Servings

- Dark green
- Red/orange
- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Starchy
- Other




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Milk Variety for Grades K-12 at Breakfast and Lunch

- At least two different choices
- At least one unflavored choice



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Flavored Low-fat/Fat-free Milk Allowed for Grades K-12

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Snack




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Offer Versus Serve (OVS) for Grades K-12

- When a school implements OVS at breakfast and lunch, OVS also applies to preschoolers
 - Not allowed for preschoolers without co-mingling

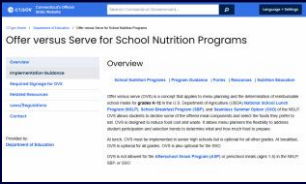


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CSDE Webpage

Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs




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

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CSDE Webpage

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs




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

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More Meal Pattern Information

- Module 3: Comparison of Meal Patterns for Preschool and Grades K-12



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Reasons to Avoid Co-mingled Meal Service

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Reasons to Avoid Co-mingled Meals or Snacks

- Closer supervision of younger children
- Family-style meal service is best option for preschoolers
- May affect amount preschoolers eat
- Preschool meal patterns provide amounts/types of foods for best nutrition



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How to Avoid Co-mingled Meal Service

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Offer Breakfast and Lunch in Classroom

- Makes it easy to serve preschoolers separately from older grades




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CSDE Resource

Requirements for Classroom Meals in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/forms/mealcount/requirements_classroom_meals_nsip_sbp.pdf

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Stagger Meal Service Times

- Allows food service staff sufficient time to modify serving lines to accommodate preschool meal patterns



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Serve Meals Family Style

- USDA recommends for ages 3 and 4



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More Information About Family Style Meal Service

- Module 9: Meal Service for Preschoolers



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Module 9: Meal Service for Preschoolers

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Knowledge Check for Co-mingled Meal Service

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Module 10 Worksheet: Co-mingled Meal Service

- Decide if each type of meal service is co-mingled



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/training/preschool/worksheet_preschool_meal_pattern_module_10_comingled_meals.pdf

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Situation 1

Preschoolers are mixed together with grades K-5 at lunch and both grade groups go through the serving line together

- Co-mingled?
☒ Yes ☐ No

May use K-5 lunch meal pattern for both groups



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Situation 2

Preschoolers and student s in grades K-8 arrive at school at the same time and enter the cafeteria serving line together to get breakfast

- Co-mingled?
☒ Yes ☐ No

May use optional K-8 breakfast meal pattern for both groups



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Situation 3

Preschoolers and grades K-8 are served afterschool snack in the same service area at the same time

- Co-mingled?
☒ Yes ☐ No

May use ASP K-12 meal pattern for both groups



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Situation 4

Preschoolers and students in grades K-5 eat together during the same meal period but one serving line is used for preschoolers and another serving line is used for grades K-5

- Co-mingled?
☐ Yes ☒ No

Must use preschool meal pattern and K-5 meal pattern



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Situation 5

A school with preschoolers and grades K-8 offers a bagged grab-and-go breakfast from one location that is available to students at the beginning of the school day

- Co-mingled?
☒ Yes ☐ No

May use optional K-8 breakfast meal pattern for both groups



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Situation 6

At lunch, the preschool class eats immediately after the older grade groups and food service staff do not have time to switch serving utensils or change food items, such as removing flavored milk

- Co-mingled?
☒ Yes ☐ No

May use older grades' lunch meal pattern for both groups



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Situation 7

Preschoolers eat breakfast in the classroom

- Co-mingled?
☐ Yes ☒ No

Must use preschool breakfast meal pattern



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When Preschool Meal Patterns Apply

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Must Follow Preschool Meal Patterns When

- Meals/snacks served to preschoolers in different area or at different time than older grades
 - Separate cafeteria serving line
 - Separate meal service time
 - Classroom meals



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Resources

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CSDE Resource

Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs

- Meal schedules
- Different types of meal service
- Co-mingled meals and snacks
- Classroom meals
- Field trip meals



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/guide_preschool_meal_service_snp.pdf


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CSDE Webpage

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs

- Meal Service
- Co-mingled Meals or Afterschool Snacks



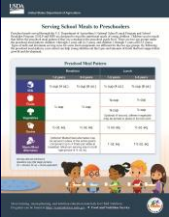
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/meal-service#CoMingled>

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USDA Resource

Serving School Meals to Preschoolers



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-school-meals-preschoolers>


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CSDE Resource

Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs


- NSLP
- SBP
- ASP



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

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Questions?

- Contact the school nutrition programs staff

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cnstaff/countyassign.pdf>

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Thank you for participating!

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

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