

**WHAT'S IN A MEAL**  
Grades K-12

**National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12**

**Module 3: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Meal Pattern**

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Connecticut State Department of Education  
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs

School Year 2024-25

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**What's in a Meal Training Modules**

- 1: Introduction to Training
- 2: Introduction to School Meal Patterns
- 3: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Meal Pattern
- 4: School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Pattern
- 5: Dietary Specifications
- 6: Meal Pattern Documentation
  - Part A – School Menus
  - Part B – Crediting Commercial Processed Products
- 7: Milk Component
- 8: Meats/Meat Alternates Component
- 9: Fruits Component
- 10: Vegetables Component
- 11: Grains Component
- 12: Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement
- 13: Grain Ounce Equivalents
- 14: Water Availability During Meal Service
- 15: Offer versus serve (OVS) in the NSLP
- 16: Offer versus serve (OVS) in the SBP

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

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**Topics**

- Overview of lunch meal pattern requirements
- Daily meal pattern requirements
- Weekly meal pattern requirements
- Dietary specifications
- Resources

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**Topics**

- Overview of lunch meal pattern requirements
- Daily meal pattern requirements
- Weekly meal pattern requirements
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**Overview of Lunch Meal Pattern Requirements**

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**Food-based Meal Patterns**

- Meal components
- Daily and weekly portions based on specific grade groups
- Weekly nutrition standards (dietary specifications)

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### Daily Lunch Requirements

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### Minimum Daily Portions

- Same for grades K-5 and 6-8
- Larger for grades 9-12, except milk



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### Daily Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-5 and 6-8



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### Daily Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-5 and 6-8

MMA	Grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Milk
1 oz eq	1 oz eq	3/4 cup	1/2 cup	1 cup
				

- ≥ 2 different choices of low-fat or fat-free milk
- ≥ 1 unflavored choice

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### Daily Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades 9-12



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### Daily Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades 9-12

MMA	Grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Milk
2 oz eq	2 oz eq	1 cup	1 cup	1 cup
				

- ≥ 2 different choices of low-fat or fat-free milk
- ≥ 1 unflavored choice

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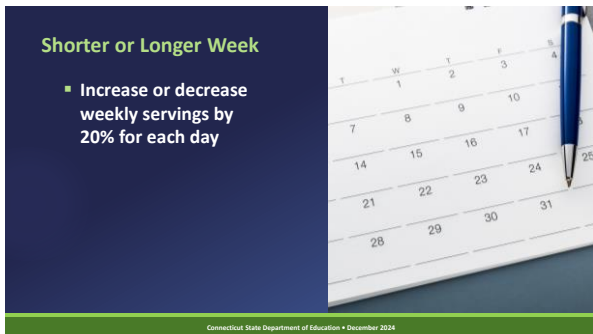
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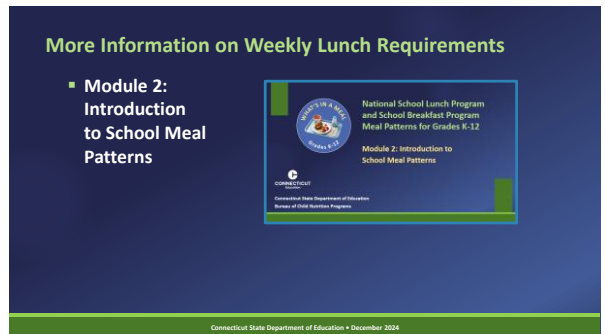
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**Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week**

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

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**Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week**

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

Maximums are guide to meet dietary specifications

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Module 3: NSLP Meal Pattern

### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

Must offer more than minimum on some days for grades K-5 and 6-8

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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

1 oz eq daily = 5 oz eq weekly

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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

2 oz eq daily = 10 oz eq weekly


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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

- ≥ 80 percent of weekly grains must be WGR
- Based on total oz eq offered in weekly lunch menu




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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

Grain-based desserts cannot exceed 2 oz eq per week



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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

1 cup daily = 5 cups weekly

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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5


5 vegetable subgroups

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### Weekly Vegetable Subgroups (Cups) for 5-day Week

Grade groups	Dark green	Red/orange	Beans, peas, and lentils	Starchy	Other	Weekly Total
K-5	¼	¼	½	½	¼	2½
6-8	¼	¼	½	½	¼	2½
9-12	¼	1¼	½	½	¼	3½




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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

Juice limit: No more than half of weekly servings




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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

Juice limit: No more than half of weekly servings



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### Weekly Lunch Requirements for 5-day week

Meal components	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
MMA, oz eq	8-10	9-10	10-12
Grains, oz eq	8-9	8-10	10-12
Vegetables, cups	3½	3½	5
Fruits, cups	2½	2½	5
Milk, cups	5	5	5

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### Optional Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-8

- Schools with different grade configurations
  - Grades K-8
  - Grades 5-8





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### Optional Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-8

- Narrower weekly calorie range and stricter sodium limits
- Requires careful menu planning to meet dietary specifications



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### Optional Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-8


#### 5-day week

Meal components	Daily	Weekly
MMA, oz eq	1	9-10
Grains, oz eq	1	8-9
Vegetables, cups	¾	3¾
Fruits, cups	½	2½
Milk, cups	1	5

#### 7-day week

Meal components	Daily	Weekly
MMA, oz eq	1	12½ -14
Grains, oz eq	1	11-12½
Vegetables, cups	¾	5¾
Fruits, cups	½	3½
Milk, cups	1	7

Same daily quantities as grades K-5 and 6-8



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### Optional Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-8


#### 5-day week

Meal components	Daily	Weekly
MMA, oz eq	1	9-10
Grains, oz eq	1	8-9
Vegetables, cups	¾	3¾
Fruits, cups	½	2½
Milk, cups	1	5

#### 7-day week

Meal components	Daily	Weekly
MMA, oz eq	1	12½ -14
Grains, oz eq	1	11-12½
Vegetables, cups	¾	5¾
Fruits, cups	½	3¾
Milk, cups	1	7

Same weekly quantities for vegetables, fruits, and milk as grades K-5 and 6-8



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### Optional Lunch Meal Pattern for Grades K-8


#### 5-day week

Meal components	Daily	Weekly
MMA, oz eq	1	9-10
Grains, oz eq	1	8-9
Vegetables, cups	¾	3¾
Fruits, cups	½	2½
Milk, cups	1	5

#### 7-day week

Meal components	Daily	Weekly
MMA, oz eq	1	12½ -14
Grains, oz eq	1	11-12½
Vegetables, cups	¾	5¾
Fruits, cups	½	3¾
Milk, cups	1	7

Narrower weekly range for MMA and grains than grades K-5 and 6-8




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### CSDE Webpage

#### Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs

- 4-day week
- 5-day week
- 7-day week




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

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### Dietary Specifications for Lunch



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### Dietary Specifications

The USDA's nutrition standards for school meals for grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP


**Terms to Know**

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### Dietary Specifications = Weekly Averages

- Individual meal could exceed standards if average over week complies




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### Dietary Specifications for School Year 2024-25

- Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (April 25, 2024)
  - Eliminates trans fat standard as of July 1, 2024

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




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### Final Rule Changes to Dietary Specifications for School Year 2027-28

- Beginning July 1, 2027
- New weekly limit for added sugars




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### Final Rule Changes to Dietary Specifications for School Year 2027-28

- Beginning July 1, 2027
- New weekly limit for added sugars
  - < 10 percent of calories




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### More Information on Dietary Specifications

- Module 5: Dietary specifications



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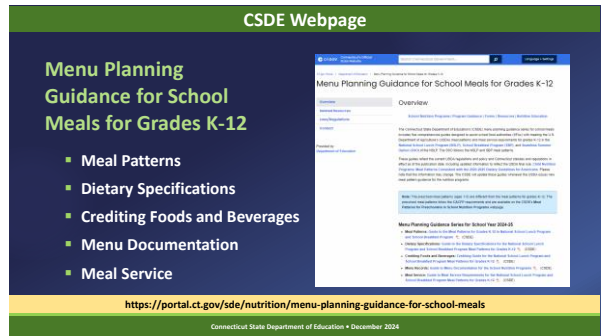


**Resources**

- Meal Patterns
- Dietary Specifications
- Crediting Foods and Beverages
- Menu Documentation
- Meal Service

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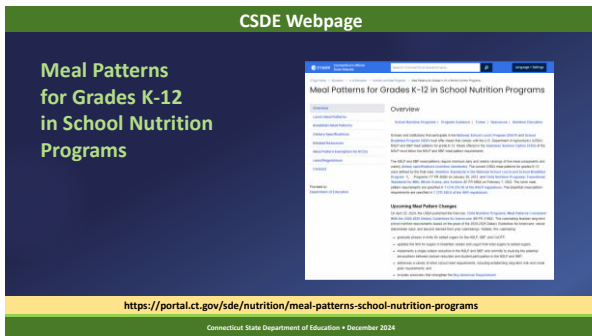
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**Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12**

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

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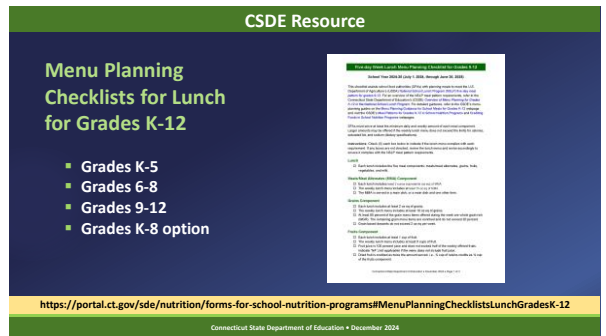
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**Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs**

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

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**CSDE Resource**

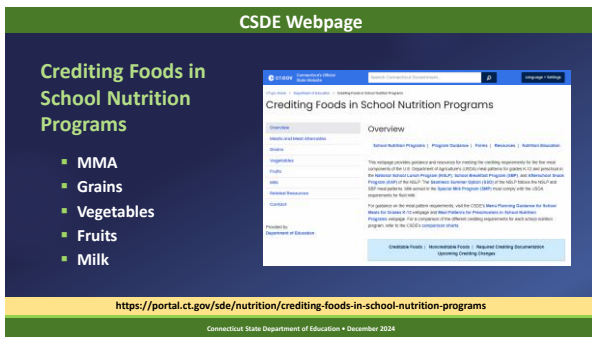
**Menu Planning Checklists for Lunch for Grades K-12**

- Grades K-5
- Grades 6-8
- Grades 9-12
- Grades K-8 option

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

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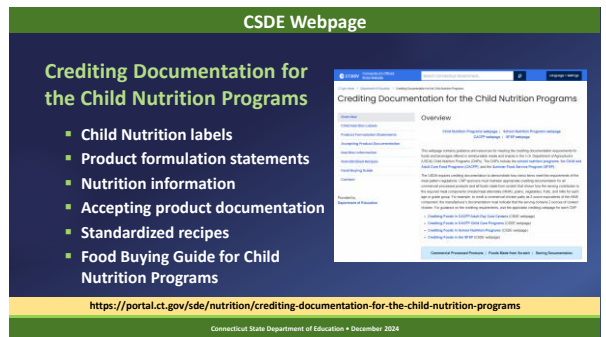
**Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs**

- MMA
- Grains
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Milk

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

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**Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs**

- Child Nutrition labels
- Product formulation statements
- Nutrition information
- Accepting product documentation
- Standardized recipes
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

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

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**CSDE Webpage**

**Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs**

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

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**CSDE Resource**

**Resources for the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12**

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/resources\\_school\\_meal\\_patterns\\_grades\\_k-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/resources_school_meal_patterns_grades_k-12.pdf)

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**Questions?**

- Contact CSDE's school nutrition programs staff

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

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**Thanks for participating!**

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

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3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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