

1 — Meal Patterns

Schools and institutions that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP must comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) regulations and policies for school meals. The USDA’s meal patterns for grades K-12 are defined by the final rule, *Nutrition Standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs* (77 FR 4088), as required by the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010](#) (Public Law 111-296).



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

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

Reimbursable Meals

Meals served to children are eligible for USDA reimbursement when they provide the minimum required serving size of each food component in the meal patterns for each grade group. A food component is one of the five food groups that comprise the reimbursable meal, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates. Table 1-1 summarizes the required daily servings of each food component for the lunch and breakfast meal patterns.

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

Table 1-1. Required daily servings of food components in the NSLP and SBP	
Lunch	Breakfast
<p>Five food components¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One serving of milk² • One serving of fruits • One serving of vegetables • One serving of grains³ • One serving of meat/meat alternates 	<p>Three food components^{1, 4}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One serving of milk² • One serving of fruits (or optional vegetable substitutions) • One serving of grains (or optional meat/meat alternate substitutions)^{3, 5}
<p>¹ The required serving size for each food component is the minimum daily amount for each grade group specified in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For more information, see the lunch meal patterns (tables 1-2 and 1-3) and breakfast meal patterns (tables 1-4 and 1-5).</p> <p>² Allowable types of milk include low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored) and fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). School food authorities (SFAs) must offer at least two different choices of milk fat content or flavor, including at least one unflavored choice.</p> <p>³ Grains must be whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched. At least half of all weekly grains offered at lunch and breakfast must be WGR.</p> <p>⁴ These are the breakfast meal pattern requirements without offer versus serve (OVS). When SFAs implement OVS at breakfast, different requirements apply. For more information, see the CSDE's guide, <i>Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals</i>.</p> <p>⁵ SFAs may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component for 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component after offering 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component.</p>	

Required Servings

The meal patterns require minimum daily and weekly servings of each food component. The daily requirements are the minimum amounts that SFAs must offer for each of the five food components for lunch and the three food components for breakfast. Larger amounts may be served if the weekly menus comply with the dietary specifications. Meals that contain less than the minimum daily amount of any component do not meet the meal patterns. For example, the SBP meal pattern requires 1 cup of fruit for all grades. If a breakfast menu contains less than 1 cup of fruit, the meal is not reimbursable.

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



The weekly requirements for the grains component and meat/meat alternates component are different for each grade group.

- For grades 9-12 at lunch, the weekly requirements for grains component and meat/meat alternates component are the sum of the daily requirements.
- For grades K-5 and 6-8 at lunch and breakfast, and grades 9-12 at breakfast, the weekly requirements for the grains component and meat/meat alternates component are more than the sum of the daily requirements. To meet the weekly requirement for these meals, SFAs must serve more than the minimum daily requirement of the grains component and meat/meat alternates component on some days. For example, to meet the weekly ounce equivalents of the grains component at lunch, the minimum daily grains cannot be less than $1\frac{3}{4}$ ounce equivalents for grades K-5 and 6-8, or less than 2 ounce equivalents for grades 9-12. For more information, see “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” and “Weekly Grains at Breakfast” in section 4.

Meals may include additional foods or larger amounts of any component if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fats, trans fat, and sodium. For more information, see “[Additional Foods](#)” in this section.

Dietary Specifications

The dietary specifications are the USDA’s nutrition standards for meals in the NSLP and SBP. They are located at the bottom of the meal pattern charts for lunch (tables 1-2 and 1-3) and breakfast (tables 1-4 and 1-5), just under the required food components and serving sizes.

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 for calories (minimum and maximum levels), saturated fats (less than 10 percent of calories), and sodium. In addition to the weekly limits for calories, saturated, and sodium, the Nutrition Facts labels and manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fats per serving for all food products and ingredients used to prepare school meals. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, see section 6.



Shorter or Longer Weeks

The meal patterns for the NSLP and SBP are based on a five-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 days are averaged together to meet the specified targets for calories, saturated fats, and sodium. SFAs that regularly operate for three, four, or six days must follow the guidance in the CSDE’s handout, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks](#).

Menu modifications are required only if the school or institution regularly operates for a shorter or longer 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.

The majority of Connecticut schools and institutions regularly operate on a five-day week. Some schools and institutions, such as residential child care institutions (RCCIs), regularly operate on a seven-day week. This guide addresses the meal pattern requirements for five-and seven day weeks.

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

Buy American

All foods sold in the USDA’s school nutrition programs must comply with the Buy American provision under the federal regulations for the NSLP (7 CFR 210.21 (d)) and SBP (7CFR 220.16 (d)). This provision requires that schools and institutions purchase domestic commodities or products to the maximum extent practicable.

- A “domestic commodity or product” is an agricultural commodity that is produced in the United States, and a food product that is processed in the United States substantially using agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States.
- “Substantially” means that over 51 percent of the final processed product consists of agricultural commodities that were grown domestically.

There are **very limited exceptions** to the requirement that SFAs must purchase domestic foods. Nondomestic foods are only permitted:

- after first considering domestic alternatives; and
- when domestic foods are unavailable or prohibitively expensive.

SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that any purchases of nondomestic foods meet these criteria. The CSDE's *Buy American Justification Form* assists SFAs with meeting this requirement. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the SFA's school nutrition programs.

SFAs must ensure that all foods purchased using funds from the nonprofit school food service account comply with the Buy American provision. This includes foods that are part of reimbursable meals and competitive foods that are sold a la carte, i.e., foods and beverages sold separately from reimbursable meals. The resources below provide guidance on the Buy American provision.



- Buy American Factsheet (USDA):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Procure/FactSheet_BuyAmerican.pdf
- Buy American Justification Form (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Procure/BuyAmericanForm.pdf>
- Letter to Industry on the Buy American Provision (USDA):
http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/Buy_America_Industry_Letter.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 32-2019: Buy American and the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/buy-american-and-agriculture-improvement-act-2018>
- USDA Memo SP 38-2017: Compliance with and Enforcement of the Buy American Provision in the NSLP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/compliance-enforcement-buy-american>

Lunch Meal Patterns

The information below provides an overview of the NSLP meal pattern requirements. For detailed guidance on the food components, see section 3.

- **Milk component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of milk daily for all grade groups. Allowable types of milk include low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored) and fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). Milk choices must include a variety (at least two different choices) of fat content or flavor. At least one choice must be unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. The minimum creditable amount is 1 cup, with an exception for smoothies. The minimum creditable amount of milk in smoothies is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. For more information, see “Milk Variety” and “Crediting Milk in Smoothies” in section 3.
- **Meat/meat alternates component:** SFAs must offer the minimum daily and weekly ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component for each grade group. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent. The maximum weekly limit for the meat/meat alternates component does not apply, but provides a guide to help menus stay within the weekly calorie range. Meat/meat alternates must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and only one other food item. For more information, see “Main Dish Requirement for Lunch” in section 3 and “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” in section 4.
- **Grains component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly ounce equivalents of grains for each grade group. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent. The maximum weekly limit for the grains component does not apply, but provides a guide to help menus stay within the weekly calorie range. At least half of all weekly grains offered at lunch must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. For more information, see “Part B: Creditable Grains” and “Part C: WGR Criteria” in section 3 and “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” in section 4.
- **Fruits component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly servings of the fruits component, which includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, and canned fruit in light syrup, water, or juice; and 100 percent fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume, except dried fruit credits as twice the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried fruit such as raisins or dried apricots credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. For more information, see “Fruits Component” in section 3.
- **Vegetables component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly servings of the vegetables component, which include fresh, frozen, canned, and dried vegetables; and 100 percent vegetable juice. Dried vegetables require a PFS. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Lunch menus must include specific weekly quantities of

the five vegetable subgroups (dark green, red/orange, legumes, starchy, and “other”). Vegetables credit based on volume, except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of raw leafy greens credit as ½ cup of the vegetables component; and tomato paste and tomato puree credit based on the volume as if reconstituted, as indicated in the FBG, i.e., 1 tablespoon of tomato paste or 2 tablespoons of tomato puree credit as ¼ cup of vegetables (red/orange subgroup). The minimum creditable amount of vegetables is ¼ cup. For more information, see “Vegetables Component” in section 3.

- **Juice:** Fruit juice, vegetable juice, and fruit/vegetable juice blends must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. The minimum creditable amount is ¼ cup. Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount of fruits offered and vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount of vegetables offered. For example, if the weekly lunch menu for grades 6-8 includes 2½ cups of fruit, juice cannot exceed 1¼ 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; pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies; and juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice. For more information, see “Fruit Juice” and “Vegetable Juice” in section 3, and “Weekly Juice Limits at Lunch” and “Weekly Juice Limits at Breakfast” in section 4.
- **OVS:** To implement OVS at lunch, SFAs must offer all five components. For a reimbursable meal with OVS, students must select at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables and the minimum required serving size of at least two other components. For more information, see the CSDE’s guide, *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*, and visit the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

The CSDE’s handout, *Menu Planning for the NSLP*, summarizes the lunch meal pattern requirements.

Table 1-2 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 (see table 1-3). SFAs that regularly operate on three, four, or six days must follow the guidance in the CSDE’s handout, *Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks*. Lunch meal patterns for four-day weeks, 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. For three-day and six day meal patterns, see Appendix 2C in the USDA’s guide, *Menu Planner for School Meals*.

For information on the optional meal patterns for schools and institutions with different grade configurations (such as a K-8 school) that prevent students from being separated into the three required grade groups at lunch, see “[Multiple Grade Groups](#)” in this section.

Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020)

Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) or fat-free, unflavored or flavored	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits	½	2½	½	2½	1	5
Vegetables (cups) ⁵ Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables	¾	3¾	¾	3¾	1	5
Dark green ^{5,6}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange ^{5,7}	0	¾	0	¾	0	1¼
Beans/peas (legumes) ^{5,8}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy ^{5,9}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other ^{5,10}	0	½	0	½	0	¾
Additional vegetables to reach total ^{5,11}	0	1	0	1	0	1½
Grains (ounce equivalents) ¹² WGR or enriched	1	8-9	1	8-10	2	10-12
Meats and meat alternates (ounce equivalents) ¹³	1	8-10	1	9-10	2	10-12
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories ^{14,15}	550-650		600-700		750-850	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁵	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{15,16}	≤ 1,230		≤ 1,360		≤ 1,420	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁵	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ See next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Lunches must include the minimum serving of all five components. Larger amounts may be served if the weekly lunch menu meets the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, sodium, and trans fat. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program*, *Product Formulation Statements*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage. Foods made on site must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ² A week equals five days. School food authorities (SFAs) that regularly operate for six or seven days must increase the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each additional day. SFAs that regularly operate for less than five days must decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day less than five days. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Menu Planning for Shorter and Longer Weeks*, and the four-day and seven-day NSLP meal patterns on the CSDE's *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ³ SFAs must offer at least two different varieties of low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored) or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). At least one choice must be unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, and canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. Fruit credits based on volume, except dried fruit credits as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of dried fruit credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. Fruit juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice and cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits instead of juice. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*.
- ⁵ Vegetables include fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables. Dried vegetables require a PFS. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables credit based on volume, except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup equals ½ cup of vegetables), and tomato paste and puree credit based on the volume as if reconstituted (see the FBG). Vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice and cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*, *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*, and *Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP*.

Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁶ Examples of the dark green subgroup include bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mesclun, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, and watercress.
- ⁷ Examples of the red/orange subgroup include acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, tomatoes, tomato juice, and sweet potatoes.
- ⁸ Examples of the beans and peas (legumes) subgroup include black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soy beans, split peas, and white beans. **Note:** Green peas, green lima beans, and green (string) beans are not legumes and are not in this subgroup.
- ⁹ Examples of the starchy subgroup include black-eyed peas (not dry), corn, cassava, green bananas, green peas, green lima beans, whole hominy (canned drained), parsnips, plantains, taro, water chestnuts, and white potatoes.
- ¹⁰ The “other” subgroup includes all other vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus, avocado, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, turnips, wax beans, and zucchini. The “other” vegetables requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) subgroups, but not the starchy subgroup.
- ¹¹ Any vegetable subgroup may be offered as additional vegetables to meet the total weekly vegetable requirements.
- ¹² At least half of the weekly grains offered at lunch must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. Grains must meet the applicable weights (groups A-G) or volumes (groups H-I) in the USDA’s ounce equivalents chart (see [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)), or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving (see [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus are not required to meet the weekly maximum ounce equivalents for grains, but must meet the weekly minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range. The weekly maximum ounce equivalents provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Up to 2 ounce equivalents per week may be a grain-based dessert if the weekly lunch menu meets the weekly dietary specifications. For more information, see the CSDE’s handouts, [Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).

Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ¹³ The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); ½ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; ¼ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Allowable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than 50 percent of the meat/meat alternates requirement, and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to meet the minimum daily serving. Menus are not required to meet the weekly maximum ounce equivalents for meat/meat alternates, but must meet the weekly minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range. The weekly maximum ounce equivalents provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For more information, see the CSDE’s handouts, [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products](#).
- ¹⁴ The lunch menu’s average daily amount of calories for a five-day school week must be at least the minimum value, but no more than the maximum value.
- ¹⁵ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly lunch menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, see section 6 of the CSDE’s guide, [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).
- ¹⁶ These are the first sodium targets. Weekly lunch menus must meet the first sodium target through June 30, 2024. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020)

Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) or fat-free, unflavored or flavored	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits	½	3½	½	3½	1	7
Vegetables (cups) ⁵ Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables	¾	5¼	¾	5¼	1	7
Dark green ^{5,6}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange ^{5,7}	0	¾	0	¾	0	1¼
Beans/peas (legumes) ^{5,8}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy ^{5,9}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other ^{5,10}	0	½	0	½	0	¾
Additional vegetables to reach total ^{5,11}	0	2½	0	2½	0	3½
Grains (ounce equivalents) ¹² WGR or enriched	1	11-12½	1	11-14	2	14-17
Meats and meat alternates (ounce equivalents) ¹³	1	11-14	1	12½-14	2	14-17
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>						
Calories ^{14,15}	550-650		600-700		750-850	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁵	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{15,16}	≤ 1,230		≤ 1,360		≤ 1,420	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁵	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ See next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Lunches must include the minimum serving of all five components. Larger amounts may be served if the weekly lunch menu meets the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, sodium, and trans fat. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program*, *Product Formulation Statements*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage. Foods made on site must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ² A week equals seven days. SFAs that regularly operate for less than seven days must decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day less than seven days. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Menu Planning for Shorter and Longer Weeks*, and the four-day and seven-day NSLP meal patterns on the CSDE's *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ³ SFAs must offer at least two different varieties of low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored) or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). At least one choice must be unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, and canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. Fruit credits based on volume, except dried fruit credits as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of dried fruit credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. Fruit juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice and cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits instead of juice. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*.
- ⁵ Vegetables include fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables. Dried vegetables require a PFS. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables credit based on volume, except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup equals ½ cup of vegetables), and tomato paste and puree credit based on the volume as if reconstituted (see the FBG). Vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice and cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*, *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*, and *Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP*.

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁶ Examples of the dark green subgroup include bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mesclun, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, and watercress.
- ⁷ Examples of the red/orange subgroup include acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, tomatoes, tomato juice, and sweet potatoes.
- ⁸ Examples of the beans and peas (legumes) subgroup include black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soy beans, split peas, and white beans. **Note:** Green peas, green lima beans, and green (string) beans are not legumes and are not in this subgroup.
- ⁹ Examples of the starchy subgroup include black-eyed peas (not dry), corn, cassava, green bananas, green peas, green lima beans, whole hominy (canned drained), parsnips, plantains, taro, water chestnuts, and white potatoes.
- ¹⁰ The “other” subgroup includes all other vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus, avocado, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, turnips, wax beans, and zucchini. The “other” vegetables requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) subgroups, but not the starchy subgroup.
- ¹¹ Any vegetable subgroup may be offered as additional vegetables to meet the total weekly vegetable requirements.
- ¹² At least half of the weekly grains offered at lunch must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. Grains must meet the applicable weights (groups A-G) or volumes (groups H-I) in the USDA’s ounce equivalents chart (see [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)), or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving (see [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus are not required to meet the weekly maximum ounce equivalents for grains, but must meet the weekly minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range. The weekly maximum ounce equivalents provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Up to 2 ounce equivalents per week may be a grain-based dessert if the weekly lunch menu meets the weekly dietary specifications. For more information, see the CSDE’s handouts, [Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ¹³ The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); ½ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; ¼ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Allowable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than 50 percent of the meat/meat alternates requirement, and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to meet the minimum daily serving. Menus are not required to meet the weekly maximum ounce equivalents for meat/meat alternates, but must meet the weekly minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range. The weekly maximum ounce equivalents provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products](#).
- ¹⁴ The lunch menu's average daily amount of calories for a seven-day school week must be at least the minimum value, but no more than the maximum value.
- ¹⁵ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly lunch menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, see section 6 of the CSDE's guide, [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals](#).
- ¹⁶ These are the first sodium targets. Weekly lunch menus must meet the first sodium target through June 30, 2024. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Breakfast Meal Patterns

The information below provides an overview of the SBP meal pattern requirements. For detailed guidance on the food components, see section 3.

- **Milk component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of milk daily for all grade groups. Allowable types of milk include low-fat milk (unflavored or flavored) and fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). Milk choices must include a variety (at least two different choices) of fat content or flavor. At least one choice must be unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. The minimum creditable amount is 1 cup, with an exception for smoothies. The minimum creditable amount of milk in smoothies is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. For more information, see “Milk Variety” and “Crediting Milk in Smoothies” in section 3.
- **Fruits component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of fruit daily for all grade groups. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, and canned fruit in light syrup, water, or juice; and 100 percent juice. Fruits credit based on volume, except dried fruit credits as twice the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried fruit credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. SFAs may substitute vegetables from the dark green, red/orange, legumes, and “other” subgroups for the fruits component at any time. However, SFAs cannot substitute starchy vegetables (such as hash-brown potatoes) unless the weekly breakfast menu includes at least 2 cups of nonstarchy vegetables. Vegetables credit based on volume, except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component. For more information, see “Fruits Component” and “Vegetables at Breakfast” in section 3.
- **Juice:** Fruit and vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. Fruit juice together with vegetable juice 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, juice cannot exceed $2\frac{1}{2}$ 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; pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies; and juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice. For more information, see “Fruit Juice” and “Vegetable Juice” in section 3, and “Weekly Juice Limits at Lunch” and “Weekly Juice Limits at Breakfast” in section 4.
- **Grains component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 ounce equivalent of grains daily for all grades. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent. The minimum weekly requirement varies by grade group. The maximum weekly limit for the grains component does not apply, but helps menus stay within the weekly calorie range. At

least half of all weekly grains offered at lunch must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. For more information, see “Part B: Creditable Grains” and “Part C: WGR Criteria” in section 3 and “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” in section 4.

- **Optional meat/meat alternates component:** The SBP meal pattern does not require the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs have two options for crediting meat/meat alternates at breakfast: 1) offering a meat/meat alternate in place of part of the grains component after offering the minimum daily 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component; or 2) offering a meat/meat alternate as an extra food that does not credit toward the meal pattern. For more information, see “Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast” in section 3.
- **OVS:** To implement OVS at breakfast, SFAs must offer a minimum of four food items from the three food components, including two grains (or one grain and one meat/meat alternate substitution), one fruit, and one milk; or one grain, two fruits, and one milk. The fourth food item cannot be another serving 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 minimum required serving size of at least two other food items. For more information, see the CSDE’s guide, [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#), and visit the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

The CSDE’s handout, [Menu Planning for the SBP](#), summarizes the breakfast meal pattern requirements.

Table 1-4 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 (see table 1-5). Schools and institutions that regularly operate on three, four, or six days must follow the guidance in the CSDE’s handout, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks](#). Breakfast meal patterns for four-day weeks, 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. For three-day and six day meal patterns, see Appendix 2C in the USDA’s guide, [Menu Planner for School Meals](#).

For information on the optional meal patterns for schools and institutions with different grade configurations (such as a K-8 school) that prevent students from being separated into the three required grade groups at breakfast, see “[Multiple Grade Groups](#)” in this section.



Table 1-4. Five-day breakfast meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020)						
Food components	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Vegetables may be substituted for fruits ⁵ Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits ⁶	1	5	1	5	1	5
Grains (ounce equivalents) ^{7,8} WGR or enriched	1	7-10	1	8-10	1	9-10
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories ^{9,10}	350-500		400-550		450-600	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁰	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{10,11}	≤ 540		≤ 600		≤ 640	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁰	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ See next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-4. Five-day breakfast meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Breakfasts must include the minimum serving of all three components. Larger amounts may be served if the weekly breakfast menu meets the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, sodium, and trans fat. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program, Product Formulation Statements, Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage. Foods made on site must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ² A week equals five days. School food authorities (SFAs) that regularly operate for six or seven days must increase the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each additional day. SFAs that regularly operate for less than five days must decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day less than five days. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Menu Planning for Shorter and Longer Weeks*, and the four-day and seven-day SBP meal patterns on the CSDE's *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ³ SFAs must offer at least two different varieties of low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored) or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). At least one choice must be unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, and canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. Fruit credits based on volume, except dried fruit credits as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of dried fruit credits as ½ cup of the fruits component.
- ⁵ Vegetables include fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables. Dried vegetables require a PFS. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables from the dark green, red/orange, legumes, and "other" subgroups may substitute for the fruits component at any time. Starchy vegetables (such as hash-brown potatoes) cannot substitute unless the weekly breakfast menu includes at least 2 cups of nonstarchy vegetables. Vegetables credit based on volume, except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup credits as ½ cup of vegetables), and tomato paste and puree credit based on the volume as if reconstituted (see the FBG). For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP*.
- ⁶ Fruit and vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits instead of juice. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts *Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*.

Table 1-4. Five-day breakfast meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁷ At least half of the weekly grains offered at breakfast must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. Grains must meet the applicable weights (groups A-G) or volumes (groups H-I) in the USDA's ounce equivalents chart (see [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)), or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving (see [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus are not required to meet the weekly maximum ounce equivalents for grains, but must meet the weekly minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range. The weekly maximum ounce equivalents provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- ⁸ The meat/meat alternates component is not required at breakfast. SFAs may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates for 1 ounce equivalent of grains after offering the minimum daily grains serving (1 ounce equivalent). The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA's requirements in [appendix A](#) of the SBP regulations (7 CFR 220). Allowable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products](#).
- ⁹ The breakfast menu's average daily amount of calories for a five-day school week must be at least the minimum value, but no more than the maximum value.
- ¹⁰ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly breakfast menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, see section 6 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).
- ¹¹ These are the first sodium targets. Weekly breakfast menus must meet the first sodium target through June 30, 2024. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Table 1-5. Seven-day breakfast meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020)

Food components	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Vegetables may be substituted for fruits ⁵ Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits ⁶	1	7	1	7	1	7
Grains (ounce equivalents) ^{7,8} WGR or enriched	1	10-14	1	11-14	1	12½-14
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>						
Calories ^{9,10}	350-500		400-550		450-600	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁰	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{10,11}	≤ 540		≤ 600		≤ 640	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁰	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ See next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-5. Seven-day breakfast meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Breakfasts must include the minimum serving of all three components. Larger amounts may be served if the weekly breakfast menu meets the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, sodium, and trans fat. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program, Product Formulation Statements, Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage. Foods made on site must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ² A week equals seven days. SFAs that regularly operate for less than seven days must decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day less than seven days. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Menu Planning for Shorter and Longer Weeks*, and the four-day and seven-day SBP meal patterns on the CSDE's *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.
- ³ SFAs must offer at least two different varieties of low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored) or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). At least one choice must be unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, and canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. Fruit credits based on volume, except dried fruit credits as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of dried fruit credits as ½ cup of the fruits component.
- ⁵ Vegetables include fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables. Dried vegetables require a PFS. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables from the dark green, red/orange, legumes, and "other" subgroups may substitute for the fruits component at any time. Starchy vegetables (such as hash-brown potatoes) cannot substitute unless the weekly breakfast menu includes at least 2 cups of nonstarchy vegetables. Vegetables credit based on volume, except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup credits as ½ cup of vegetables), and tomato paste and puree credit based on the volume as if reconstituted (see the FBG). For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP*.
- ⁶ Fruit and vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits instead of juice. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts *Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*.

Table 1-5. Seven-day breakfast meal pattern ¹ (through June 30, 2020), *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁷ At least half of the weekly grains offered at breakfast must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. Grains must meet the applicable weights (groups A-G) or volumes (groups H-I) in the USDA's ounce equivalents chart (see [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)), or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving (see [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus are not required to meet the weekly maximum ounce equivalents for grains, but must meet the weekly minimums and stay within the weekly calorie range. The weekly maximum ounce equivalents provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- ⁸ The meat/meat alternates component is not required at breakfast. SFAs may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates for 1 ounce equivalent of grains after offering the minimum daily grains serving (1 ounce equivalent). The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA's requirements in [appendix A](#) of the SBP regulations (7 CFR 220). Allowable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products](#).
- ⁹ The breakfast menu's average daily amount of calories for a seven-day school week must be at least the minimum value, but no more than the maximum value.
- ¹⁰ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly breakfast menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, see section 6 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).
- ¹¹ These are the first sodium targets. Weekly breakfast menus must meet the first sodium target through June 30, 2024. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Preschool Meal Patterns

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) are different from the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. For information on the differences between the two grade groups, see the CSDE's handout, [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).

Serving the same foods to grades K-12 and preschoolers

SFAs must consider the different meal pattern requirements when making menu planning and purchasing decisions for meals that include grades K-12 and preschoolers. When SFAs serve the same foods to both groups, these foods must comply with whichever meal pattern requirements are stricter. For example, since the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 have a stricter WGR requirement than the meal patterns for preschoolers, grain foods served to both groups must comply with the WGR criteria for grades K-12. Since the NSLP and SBP preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for yogurt and breakfast cereals but the meal patterns for grades K-12 do not, yogurt and breakfast cereals served to both groups must comply with the preschool sugar limits.

For information on the preschool meal patterns, see the CSDE's guide, [Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#), and the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Preschoolers and grades K-5 eating together

SFAs that serve meals to preschoolers and grades K-5 in the same service area at the same time may choose to either:

- follow the grade-appropriate meal patterns for each grade group, i.e., use the preschool meal patterns for ages 1-4 and the K-5 meal pattern for grades K-5; or
- serve the K-5 meal pattern to both grade groups.

SFAs must follow the preschool meal patterns when meals are served to preschoolers in a different area or at a different time than K-5 students. The USDA only allows the option to serve the K-5 meal pattern to preschoolers when preschoolers are co-mingled with K-5 students during the meal service. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals to preschoolers and grades K-5 that best address their nutritional needs. For more information, see [USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers](#).

Multiple Grade Groups

Some schools and institutions have different grade configurations that prevent the use of the three required grade groups for the lunch and breakfast meal patterns. Examples include:

- schools where students in grades K-8, grades 5-8, or grades 6-12 eat together during the same meal periods; and
- RCCIs where students in grades 5-12 eat together during the same meal periods.

If the meal pattern requirements for different grade groups overlap, 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 amounts do not exceed the highest level or go below the lowest level for each grade group. The following three grade configurations meet these criteria:

- grades K-8 (breakfast and lunch);
- grades K-12 (breakfast only); and
- grades 6-12 (breakfast only).

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, see [“Lunch for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12”](#) in this section.

For information on the meal pattern requirements when preschoolers and grades K-5 eat together at the same time, see [“Preschoolers and grades K-5 eating together”](#) on the previous page.



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 meal pattern 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 highest 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, a RCCI may offer all students flavored fat-free milk on some days of the week and unflavored low-fat milk on other days. For more information, see “Milk Variety Exemption for RCCIs” in section 3.



RCCIs must obtain approval from the CSDE prior to implementing this option, by submitting 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, if the RCCI meets the required exemption criteria above. RCCIs that are interested in this option should contact their assigned CSDE school nutrition consultant. The CSDE’s handout, [County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs](#), lists the school nutrition consultants for each Connecticut county.

Note: 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 regulations for the NSLP and SBP.

Multiple Grade Groups at Lunch

The meal patterns in this section are for schools and institutions with grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups at lunch. The USDA allows two lunch meal pattern options for different grade groups. These options include:

- lunch for schools with grades K-5 and 6-8; and
- lunch for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12.

A summary of the requirements for each option follows.

Lunch for schools with grades K-5 and 6-8

SFAs may serve one lunch meal pattern with the same food quantities to students in grades K-5 and 6-8 because the daily requirements are the same and the weekly requirements overlap. 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 1-6 shows the overlap in the five-day lunch meal pattern requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8. Table 1-7 shows the overlap in the seven-day lunch meal pattern requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8. Each table also indicates the meal pattern requirements for SFAs serving the same lunch to students in grades K-8 (see yellow shaded columns on the right). The four-day, five-day, and seven-day lunch meal patterns for the grades K-8 option are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Note: The lunch meal pattern option for grades K-8 requires a narrower calorie range (600-650 calories) and more restrictive sodium limit (no more than 1,230 milligrams). Menu planners must be careful to meet these more restrictive requirements when using one lunch meal pattern for grades K-8.



Table 1-6. Comparison of five-day lunch requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8

Food components	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Meal pattern for grades K-8	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	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 (legumes)	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 (ounce equivalents)	1	8-9	1	8-10	1	8-9
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents)	1	8-10	1	9-10	1	9-10
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories	550-650		600-700		600-650	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 1,230		≤ 1,360		≤ 1,230	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
Note: See the five-day lunch meal pattern (table 1-2) for important menu planning notes.						

Table 1-7. Comparison of seven-day lunch requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8						
Food components	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Meal pattern for grades K-8	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	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 (legumes)	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 (ounce equivalents)	1	11-12½	1	11-14	1	11-12½
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents)	1	11-14	1	12½-14	1	12½-14
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>						
Calories	550-650		600-700		600-650	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 1,230		≤ 1,360		≤ 1,230	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
Note: See the seven-day lunch meal pattern (table 1-3) for important menu planning notes.						

Lunch for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12

Table 1-8 compares the dietary specifications for grades 6-8 and 9-12. Since the required calorie ranges for grades 6-8 (600-700 calories) and grades 9-12 (750-850 calories) do not overlap, SFAs cannot use the same lunch meal pattern for both grade groups. One lunch menu with the same amounts of food for grade 6-12 does not meet the NSLP meal pattern requirements.

SFAs must modify menus to offer appropriate serving sizes 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. This section explains the two menu planning options for grades 6-8 and 9-12 eating together in the same lunch period.



Table 1-8. Comparison of dietary specifications for grades 6-8 and 9-12

Daily amount based on weekly average	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Overlap
Calories	600-700	750-850	None
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams) ¹	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,420	≤ 1,360
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.		
¹ SFAs must continue to meet the first sodium target through June 30, 2024. For more information, see “Limiting Sodium” in section 6.			

Lunch menu planning options for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12

During the meal service, SFAs must adjust the serving sizes or food components for grades 6-8 and 9-12 so that meals provide appropriate calories for each grade group. The two options below provide guidance for appropriate meal modifications that will meet the NSLP meal pattern requirements for each grade group when students from grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together during the same lunch period.

With both options, menu planners must be careful to limit starchy vegetables and vegetables or fruits with added fat or sugar, so that lunches for grades 6-8 do not exceed the average weekly limit of 700 calories. Menu planners must ensure that weekly lunch menus meet the minimum of 750 calories for grades 9-12. Each menu planning option requires clear signage and education for students regarding the food items that each grade group can select. For information on signage, see “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5.

Option 1: Increase vegetables or fruits

The simplest menu planning method for SFAs that serve grades 6-8 and 9-12 in the same lunch period is to start with the components that overlap and make minor adjustments to the vegetables or fruits components to increase calories for grades 9-12. SFAs can use the following procedures to implement this option.



1. Plan 2 ounce equivalents of the daily grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the daily meat/meat alternates component for both grade groups (6-8 and 9-12). This provides at least the minimum daily and weekly requirements for each grade group.
2. Offer all fruits and vegetables in $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings.
 - Grades 6-8 can select one serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup) of the vegetables component. For grades 6-8, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit is the minimum daily serving and 1 cup of vegetables provides $\frac{1}{4}$ cup more than the minimum daily $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup serving. Since additional vegetables are offered, the menu planner must ensure that lunches do not exceed the weekly limit of 700 calories for grades 6-8.
 - Grades 9-12 can select two servings (1 cup total) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup total) of the vegetables component. These 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 menu amounts for each grade group. Some examples of signage include:

- “Grades 6-8: Select one fruit choice and two vegetable choices;” and
- “Grades 9-12: Select two fruit choices and two vegetable choices.”



Table 1-9 shows an example of how to implement option 1.

Food components	Amounts offered to grades 6-8	Additional amounts offered to grades 9-12
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	0
Fruits (cups) ¹	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Vegetables (cups) ²	1	0
Grains (ounce equivalents) ³	2	0
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents) ³	2	0
<p>¹ Offer fruits in $\frac{1}{2}$-cup servings. Grades 6-8 can take one serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) and grades 9-12 can take two servings (1 cup).</p> <p>² Offer vegetables in $\frac{1}{2}$-cup servings. Both grade groups can take two servings (1 cup total). Weekly amounts must include the minimum vegetable subgroups for each grade group. For more information, see “Vegetable Subgroups at Lunch” in section 3.</p> <p>³ Offer 2 ounce equivalents of the grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component to each grade group.</p>		

Option 2: Vary grains or meat/meat alternates

This option uses the same procedures as option 1, but varies the serving size of the grains component or meat/meat alternates component on some days to provide a larger serving to 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 ounce equivalents of the daily grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the daily meat/meat alternates 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 can select one serving (½ cup) of fruits and two servings (1 cup) of vegetables. For grade 6-8, ½ cup of fruit is the minimum daily serving and 1 cup of vegetables provides ¼ cup more than the minimum daily ¾-cup serving. Since additional vegetables are offered, menu planners must ensure that meals do not exceed the weekly limit of 700 calories for grades 6-8.
 - Grades 9-12 can select two servings (1 cup total) of fruit and two servings (1 cup total) of vegetables. These are the minimum daily servings for grades 9-12.
3. Increase the amount of the grains component or meat/meat alternates component on some days to provide a larger serving for students in grades 9-12. For example, serve another slice of WGR bread or a piece of low-fat cheese.
4. Post signage at or near the beginning of the serving line and near the appropriate food components to assist students in selecting appropriate quantities based on the planned menu amounts for each grade group. Some examples of signage include:
 - “Grades 6-8: Select one fruit choice, two vegetable choices, one grain choice, one meat/meat alternates choice, and one milk choice;” and
 - “Grades 9-12: Select two fruit choices, two vegetable choices, two grain choices, one meat/meat alternates choice, and one milk choice.”



Table 1-10 shows some examples of how to implement option 2.

Table 1-10. Sample daily lunch menu for grades 6-8 and 9-12 using option 2				
Food components	Amounts offered to grades 6-8	Additional amounts offered to grades 9-12		
		Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	0	0	0
Fruits (cups)¹	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2
Vegetables (cups)²	1	0	0	0
Grains (ounce equivalents)³	2	1	0	1
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents)³	2	0	1	1/2

¹ Offer fruits in 1/2-cup servings. Grades 6-8 can take one serving (1/2 cup) and grades 9-12 can take two servings (1 cup).

² Offer vegetables in 1/2-cup servings. Both grade groups can take two servings (1 cup). Weekly amounts must include the required vegetable subgroups for each grade group.

³ Offer 2 ounce equivalents of the grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component to each grade group, but increase the amount of grains or meat/meat alternates on some days to provide students in grades 9-12 with a larger serving.

Multiple Grade Groups at Breakfast

These meal patterns are for schools and institutions with grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups at breakfast. The USDA allows two breakfast meal pattern options for different grade groups. These options include:

- breakfast for schools with grades K-12; and
- breakfast for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12;

A summary of the requirements for each option follows.

Breakfast for schools with grades K-12

SFAs may serve the same food quantities for breakfast to students in grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 because the daily requirements are the same and the weekly requirements overlap. Table 1-11 shows the overlap in the five-day breakfast meal pattern requirements for all grades. Table 1-12 shows the overlap in the seven-day breakfast meal pattern requirements for all grades. Each table also indicates the meal pattern requirements for SFAs serving the same breakfast to students in grades K-12 and K-8 (see yellow shaded columns on the right). The four-day, five-day, and seven-day breakfast meal patterns for grades K-8 and grades K-12 are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Note: The breakfast meal pattern option for grades K-12 requires a narrower calorie range (450-500 calories) and more restrictive sodium limit (no more than 540 milligrams). Menu planners must be careful to meet these more restrictive requirements when using one breakfast meal pattern for grades K-12.



Table 1-11. Comparison of five-day breakfast requirements for grades K-12

Food components	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12		Five-day meal pattern for grades K-12		Five-day meal pattern for grades K-8	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups)	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	7-10	1	8-10	1	9-10	1	9-10	1	9-10
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>										
Calories	350-500		400-550		450-600		450-500		400-500	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 540		≤ 600		≤ 640		≤ 540		≤ 540	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.									
Note: See the five-day breakfast meal pattern (table 1-4) for important menu planning notes.										

Table 1-12. Comparison of seven-day breakfast requirements for grades K-12										
Food components	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12		Seven-day meal pattern for grades K-12		Seven-day meal pattern for Grades K-8	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups)	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	7
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	10-14	1	11-14	1	12½-14	1	12½-14	1	12½-14
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>										
Calories	350-500		400-550		450-600		450-500		400-500	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 540		≤ 600		≤ 640		≤ 540		≤ 540	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.									
Note: See the seven-day breakfast meal pattern (table 1-5) for important menu planning notes.										

Breakfast for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12

SFAs may serve the same food quantities for breakfast to students in grades 6-8 and 9-12 because the daily requirements are the same and the weekly requirements overlap. Table 1-13 shows the overlap in the five-day breakfast meal pattern requirements for grades 6-8 and 9-12. Table 1-14 shows the overlap in the seven-day breakfast meal pattern requirements for grades 6-8 and 9-12. Each table also indicates the meal pattern requirements for SFAs serving the same breakfast to students in grades 6-12 (see yellow shaded columns on the right). The four-day, five-day, and seven-day breakfast meal patterns for grades 6-12 are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Note: The breakfast meal pattern option for grades 6-12 requires a narrower calorie range (450-550 calories) and more restrictive sodium limit (no more than 600 milligrams). Menu planners must be careful to meet these more restrictive requirements when using one breakfast meal pattern for grades 6-12.



Food components	Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12		Five-day meal pattern for grades 6-12	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups)	1	5	1	5	1	5
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	8-10	1	9-10	1	9-10
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories	400-550		450-600		450-550	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 600		≤ 640		≤ 600	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
Note: See the five-day breakfast meal pattern (table 1-4) for important menu planning notes.						

Table 1-14. Comparison of seven-day breakfast requirements for grades 6-8 and 9-12						
Food components	Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12		Seven-day meal pattern for grades 6-12	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored)	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups)	1	7	1	7	1	7
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	11-14	1	12½-14	1	12½-14
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories	400-550		450-600		450-550	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 600		≤ 640		≤ 600	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
Note: See the seven-day breakfast meal pattern (table 1-5) for important menu planning notes.						

Additional Foods

If meals include additional servings of food beyond the minimum meal pattern requirements, SFAs must be careful to ensure that menus meet the weekly dietary specifications. The guidance below assists SFAs with planning meals to meet these requirements.

Extra foods

Extra foods are creditable or noncreditable foods served in addition to the minimum meal pattern requirements. Creditable extra foods are additional servings of a meal pattern component, such as larger servings of fruits and vegetables. Noncreditable extra foods are foods that do not credit toward the meal patterns, such as bacon, cream cheese, ice cream, pudding, gelatin, and condiments. For more information, see “Noncreditable Foods” in section 3.

All extra foods (creditable and noncreditable) offered to students with reimbursable meals count toward the weekly dietary specifications. Extra foods must contain zero trans fats and their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

When menus do not meet the minimum weekly calories, menu planners should add calories from nutrient-dense creditable foods, following the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. For best nutrition, additional calories should come from more servings of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. The USDA’s meal patterns allow additional servings of any meal pattern component if the menu’s average weekly calories do not exceed the required limit for each grade group. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, see section 6.

Creditable extra foods at lunch

Lunch can include additional foods from the meal pattern components if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. Menu planners must count these foods toward the daily and weekly requirements. The following examples illustrate this requirement.

- If the menu planner includes yogurt as an extra menu item at lunch, it must count toward the minimum daily and weekly servings of the meat/meat alternates component. It must also count toward the weekly dietary specifications.
- If the menu planner includes a creditable grain-based dessert as an extra menu item at lunch, it must count toward the minimum daily and weekly servings of the grains component, including the weekly limit of no more than 2 ounce equivalents of grain-based desserts. It must also count toward the weekly dietary specifications. For more information, see “Limit for Grain-based Desserts” in section 3. **Note:** Noncreditable

grain-based desserts served as an extra menu item at lunch must also count toward the minimum daily and weekly servings of the grains component, including the weekly limit of no more than 2 ounce equivalents of grain-based desserts, and the weekly dietary specifications. For more information, see “Grain-based desserts served as extra foods” in section 3.

When lunch menus include additional creditable foods, SFAs must ensure that school food service personnel receive appropriate training on how to identify reimbursable meals under OVS. The menu planner must clearly communicate with school food service staff regarding how to count these foods. In addition, serving line signage must provide clear information on what and how much students can select. For more information, see “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5 and the CSDE’s guide, *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*.

Creditable extra foods at breakfast

Menu planners may choose to serve meat/meat alternates as extra foods at breakfast. Alternatively, menu planners may choose to substitute 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component for 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component at breakfast, after offering the minimum daily grains requirement (1 ounce equivalent). For example, a breakfast menu could include ½ cup of yogurt (1 ounce equivalent) or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce equivalent) if it also includes at least 1 ounce equivalent of a whole-grain bagel. For more information, see “Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast” in section 3.

When breakfast menus include additional creditable foods, SFAs must ensure that school food service personnel receive appropriate training on how to identify reimbursable meals under OVS. The menu planner must clearly communicate with school food service staff regarding how to count these foods. In addition, serving line signage must provide clear information on what and how much students can select. For more information, see “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5 and the CSDE’s guide, *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*.

Extra servings of vegetables and fruits

The USDA does not limit the amount of vegetables or fruits that SFAs may offer or students may select, if the weekly menu meets the 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 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, sugar, 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. For example, SFAs may allow students to:

- choose one or more servings of foods that do not negatively alter the nutrient analysis if chosen as a second or extra, e.g., fresh vegetables and fruits without added fat, sugar, or salt; and
- choose up to one serving of foods that would negatively alter the nutrient analysis if chosen as a second or extra, e.g., buttered corn, coleslaw made with mayonnaise, and fruit crisp made with butter and sugar.

For information on the requirements for communicating this information to students, see “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5.

Second servings

If SFAs allow students to take second servings of any component of the reimbursable meal at no charge, these foods must count toward the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements and dietary specifications. Second servings of any food must contain zero trans fats and their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, see section 6.

Second helpings or second meals sold a la carte do not count toward the meal pattern components or dietary specifications for reimbursable meals. A la carte foods are not included in the nutrient analysis of reimbursable school meals.

SFAs must determine whether to charge for additional servings of meal components. SFAs must clearly identify the number of servings of each 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 on the serving line and near the applicable food components. For more information, see “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5.

The USDA does not allow exceptions for second servings in RCCIs. If RCCIs allow students to take second servings of any meal components, they must count toward the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements and dietary specifications.

Second meals

SFAs can claim only one reimbursable lunch and one reimbursable breakfast for each child per day. SFAs cannot claim second meals for reimbursement, but may choose to sell them 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. However, SFAs must

charge an appropriate cost for a la carte meals based on the USDA's requirements. For more information, see "[Nonprogram Foods](#)" and "[Paid Lunch Equity](#)" in this section.

Leftovers

Occasional small quantities of leftover food served on another day do not count toward the meal patterns, including the vegetable subgroups. 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 that particular item reappears in the menu cycle.

Leftovers served to students as part of reimbursable meals are subject to the dietary specifications. They must contain zero trans fats and their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, see section 6.

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 school nutrition programs. If the SFA conducts their own nutrient analysis, leftovers must be included. For more information, see "[Nutrient Analysis](#)" in section 2.



When SFAs consistently have leftovers to add to each day's menus, the menu planner should consider participation trends in an effort to provide one reimbursable lunch for each child every day. Leftovers served to students on the same day as they are initially offered are considered seconds. For more information, see "[Second Servings](#)" in this section.

Nonprogram Foods

Effective July 1, 2011, the USDA regulation Revenue from Nonprogram Foods ([7 CFR 210.14 \(f\)](#)) requires that all revenue from sales of nonprogram foods must accrue to the nonprofit school food service account. “Nonprogram foods” are foods and beverages purchased using funds from the nonprofit school food service account, and sold to students (other than reimbursable meals and snacks served through the CNPs) and adults at any time or location on school premises. Nonprogram foods include all foods and beverages sold in schools, adult meals, outside-of-school hours, and catering or vending activities. For more information, see [USDA Memo SP 13-2014: School Food Service Account Revenue from the Sale of Nonprogram Foods](#) and [USDA Memo SP 20-2016: Nonprofit School Food Service Account Nonprogram Food Revenue Requirements](#).

Note: Nonprogram foods are different from competitive foods. Competitive foods are all foods and beverages available for sale to students on school premises, separately from reimbursable meals and snacks served through the USDA's school nutrition programs.

Some competitive foods are nonprogram foods because they are purchased using funds from the nonprofit school food service account, but many are not. For example, funds from the nonprofit school food service account might be used to purchase competitive foods that are sold from vending machines in the cafeteria; however, these funds are not typically used to purchase competitive foods that are sold from school stores and fundraisers. For most SFAs, cafeteria a la carte sales account for the majority of nonprogram foods. For information on competitive foods, visit the CSDE's [Competitive Foods in Schools](#) webpage.

Paid Lunch Equity

The USDA's interim rule, *National School Lunch Program: School Food Service Account Revenue Amendments Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, requires schools and institutions participating in the NSLP to ensure compliance with paid lunch equity (PLE). PLE requires that sufficient funds are provided to the nonprofit school food service account for lunches served to students who are not eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The interim rule addresses revenue from paid reimbursable lunches (7 CFR 210.14(e)) and revenue from foods sold outside of reimbursable meals, when those foods are purchased with school food service account funds (7 CFR 210.14 (f)).

The resources below provide information on PLE.

- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 09-19: Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for School Year 2019-20:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2019/OM09-19.pdf>
- Equity in School Lunch Pricing Fact Sheet (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/equity-school-lunch-pricing-fact-sheet>
- Nonprogram Pricing Worksheet: A La Carte Sales (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/NonprogramPricing_ALaCarte.xlsx
- Nonprogram Pricing Worksheet: Adult Meals (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/NonprogramPricing_AdultMeals.xlsx
- USDA Memo SP 27-2019: Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for School Year 2019-20:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2019/SP27-2019s.pdf>
- USDA Memo SP 39-2011: Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Guidance on Paid Lunch Equity and Revenue from Nonprogram Food:
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP39-2011r.pdf>

Menu Planning Resources

The resources below provide information and guidance for SFAs on planning meals to meet the NSLP and SBP meal patterns.

- Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (Institute of Child Nutrition, ICN):
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/>
- Beans (ICN and USDA):
<https://theicn.org/cnss/menu-planning/beans/>
- Child Nutrition Sharing Site (ICN and USDA):
<https://theicn.org/cnss/>
- Crediting Foods for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- Fact Sheet: Calories in School Meals (USDA):
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/HHFKAfactsheet-calories.pdf>
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- Fruits and Vegetables (ICN and USDA):
<https://theicn.org/cnss/menu-planning/fruits-and-vegetables/>
- Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- Menu Planner for School Meals (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner>
- Menu Planning (ICN):
<https://theicn.org/cnss/menu-planning/>
- Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>
- Nutrition Standards for School Meals (USDA webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>
- Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals Training Resources (USDA):
<https://professionalstandards.fns.usda.gov/>
- Team Nutrition Recipes and Cookbook (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition-recipes-and-cookbook-toolkit>

- The School Day Just Got Healthier (USDA webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/school-day-just-got-healthier-toolkit>
- Tools for Schools: Offering Fruits and Vegetables (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/tools-schools-offering-fruits-and-vegetables>
- Tools for Schools: Reducing Sodium (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/tools-schools-sodium>
- Tools for Schools: Serving Whole Grain-rich (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/tools-schools-serving-whole-grain-rich>
- USDA Foods Connecticut Food Distribution Program (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Distribution-Program-USDA-Foods>
- USDA Memo SP 10-2012 (v9): Questions & Answers on the Final Rule, “Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs”
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/qas-final-rule-nutrition-standards-national-school-lunch-and-school-breakfast-programs>
- USDA Standardized Recipes (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-standardized-recipe>
- What’s Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl (USDA):
<https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>
- What’s Shaking: Creative Ways to Boost Flavor With Less Sodium (ICN and USDA):
<https://theicn.org/cnss/whats-shaking-creative-ways-to-boost-flavor-with-less-sodium/>

For detailed information on the food components and crediting foods, see section 3. For more resources on planning and promoting healthy meals, see “Websites” in section 7 and the CSDE’s handout, *Menu Planning Resources for School Meals*, and resource list, *Menu Planning and Food Production*.