



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the School Child Nutrition Programs

FROM: John Frassinelli, Chief 
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: June 18, 2014

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #38-14
Questions and Answers on the School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern
for School Year 2014-15

The breakfast meal pattern for school year 2013-14 expires on June 30, 2014. This memorandum addresses the breakfast meal pattern for the School Breakfast Program (SBP) for school year 2014-15, **effective July 1, 2014**.

The attached U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Questions and Answers (QAs) provide guidance on the meal patterns and dietary specifications for meals offered under the SBP. The meal requirements for the SBP were established by the final rule, [Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#), which was issued in conformance with the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010](#).

The final rule phased in the SBP meal requirements over several years, with full implementation for school year 2014-15. For information on the breakfast requirements that were implemented in school year 2013-14, please refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) [operational memorandum 24-13](#) (March 15, 2013). For QAs on the school lunch requirements or general questions applicable to both breakfasts and lunches, see the USDA document, [Questions and Answers on the Final Rule "Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs"](#) (August 7, 2013).

OVERVIEW OF BREAKFAST MEAL PATTERN FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2014-15

In school year 2014-15, all schools in the SBP must plan to offer the three required food components (fruits, grains and fluid milk) in the daily and weekly quantities specified in the meal pattern established by the final rule. The daily breakfast for all grades must consist of at least:

- 1 cup of fruits;
- 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of whole grain-rich grains; and
- 1 cup of milk (unflavored/flavored fat-free milk or unflavored low-fat milk).

Additional whole grain-rich grains must be offered over the course of the week to meet the weekly grains requirement for each age/grade group. **All grains offered with school meals must be whole grain-rich products.**

The first sodium restriction target for school meals is effective in school year 2014-15. Effective July 1, 2014, the average weekly sodium content of breakfast menus cannot exceed 540 milligrams for grades K-5, 600 milligrams for grades 6-8 or 640 milligrams for grades 9-12. There are no changes to the other dietary specifications (calories, saturated fat and trans fat).

The calorie ranges for each age/grade group and the restrictions on saturated fat (less than 10 percent of calories) remain in effect. Please note that the dietary specifications for sodium, calories and saturated fat apply to breakfasts offered on **average** over the course of the week. They do not apply to each individual meal or student.

The restriction on trans fat also remains in effect. The nutrition label or manufacturer specifications for all products must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.

As a reminder, there are three age-grade groups (K-5, 6-8 and 9-12) that must be used for menu planning. However, schools may offer the same breakfast to all students provided that it contains the food quantities required for each age/grade group and meets the dietary specifications for each age/grade group. When using one breakfast menu for grades K-12, the average weekly menus must be within 450-500 calories and contain no more than 540 milligrams of sodium.

More details about the SBP meal requirements for school year 2014-15 are summarized below.

Fruits

- The “juice/fruit/vegetable” component becomes the “fruits” component and schools must offer a minimum of 1 cup of fruits daily to all age/grade groups.
- More fruits may be offered if the calorie level in the average breakfast offered over the week is within the calorie range established in the meal pattern for each age/grade group.
- Schools may offer vegetables in place of fruits but the first 2 cups per week must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes) or other vegetable subgroups. Starchy vegetables may be offered on any day if the weekly menu includes at least 2 cups of nonstarchy vegetables. For more information, on the five vegetable subgroups, see the CSDE’s handout, *Vegetable Subgroups*.
- Full-strength juice is limited to no more than half of the weekly fruits component. Fruit juice together with vegetable juice must meet this requirement.
- Dried fruit credits for twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit.
- If a school implements offer versus serve (OVS), students are required to take **at least ½ cup of fruit** (or vegetable, if schools use vegetable substitutions) for a reimbursable meal.

Grains

- **All grains** offered must be whole grain-rich products, i.e., the product contains at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent (¼ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. For more information on the whole grain-rich requirements, see the CSDE’s handout, *Criteria for Whole Grain-rich Foods*.
- Schools must offer at least 1 oz eq of grains daily for all grade groups.
- The weekly grains requirement varies by age/grade group. Schools must offer 7-10 oz eq for grades K-5, 8-10 oz eq for grades 6-8 and 9-10 oz eq for grades 9-12. Menus are not required to comply with the maximum for grains, but must meet the minimum and stay within the weekly calorie range. The weekly grains range provides a guide to help

schools plan age-appropriate meals that meet the calorie, saturated fat and sodium requirements. Exceeding the weekly grains range is not a violation of the meal pattern under the state administrative review.

Optional Meat/Meat Alternate

- There is no separate requirement to offer meat/meat alternates in the SBP meal pattern. Schools may offer an optional meat/meat alternate to meet part of the grains component after the minimum daily grains requirement is offered in the menu or planned breakfast. A serving of 1 oz eq of meat/meat alternate may credit as 1 oz eq of grains.
- Alternately, schools may offer a meat/meat alternate as an extra food and not credit it toward the grains component. However, extra foods must be included when menus are assessed for compliance with the requirements for calories, saturated fat, sodium and trans fat.

Fluid Milk

- Schools must offer only fat-free (unflavored or flavored) or low-fat (unflavored) milk.
- For all age/grade groups, schools must offer at least 1 cup of milk daily. Larger amounts of milk may be served if the average weekly meals do not exceed the weekly limits for calories, saturated fat and sodium.
- A variety (at least two options) of milk must be offered.

OFFER VERSUS SERVE (OVS)

A *food component* is one of three food groups that comprise reimbursable breakfasts. These include fruits (or vegetables as substitute), grains (with optional meat/meat alternate) and fluid milk. A *food item* is a specific food offered within the three food components.

Under OVS, students must be **offered** at least four food items that meet the required food components and portion sizes and must **select** three food items including **at least ½ cup of fruit** (or vegetable substitution) and two other food items. The CSDE will provide schools with more information on the OVS requirements in the near future.

RESOURCES, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING

The breakfast meal patterns for school year 2014-15 and other materials related to the new school meal requirements are available on the CSDE Web pages:

- [Five-day Week Meal Patterns](#);
- [Seven-day Meal Patterns](#) (only for schools that **regularly** serve meals seven days a week such as residential child care institutions (RCCIs)); and
- [Four-day Meal Patterns](#) (only for schools that **regularly** serve meals four days a week).

Materials related to the new school meal requirements are also available on the USDA's [Nutrition Standards for School Meals](#) website.

The CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals* for school year 2013-14 expires on June 30, 2014. The CSDE will be updating this guide to include information on the breakfast meal pattern and OVS requirements for school year 2014-15. Schools will be notified when the guide is finalized.

In addition, the CSDE will be conducting training this summer for school nutrition programs on the breakfast meal patterns. The workshop flier was e-mailed to schools on May 15, 2014. For more information and to register, please contact Glenda Stuckey at glenda.stuckey@ct.gov or 860-807-2210.

Questions may be directed to:

COUNTY ASSIGNMENTS	CONSULTANT	E-MAIL AND PHONE
Fairfield County	Fionnuala Brown	fionnuala.brown@ct.gov 860-807-2129
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Hartford County (towns/cities beginning with S-W) Windham County	Susan Alston	susan.alston@ct.gov 860-807-2081
Litchfield County	Allison Calhoun-White	allison.calhoun-white@ct.gov 860-807-2008
Middlesex County Tolland County	Andy Paul	andrew.paul@ct.gov 860-807-2048
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Attachment

This is a numbered Operational Memorandum that contains important program information. Please read carefully and retain in a binder for future reference. Operational Memoranda are posted on the Connecticut State Department of Education's [Child Nutrition website](#).

Questions and Answers on the School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Requirements for School Year 2014-15

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), April 28, 2014

GRAINS COMPONENT

1. What grains may be offered?

Beginning school year (SY) 2014-15, all grains offered to meet the grains component of the NSLP and SBP must be whole grain-rich. Allowable grains are identified in The Whole Grains Resource at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/whole-grain-resource>. Grain items made with refined grains that do not meet the whole grain-rich criteria are not creditable toward the grains component; all grains offered count toward the dietary specifications (calories, sodium, saturated fat, trans fat), even if they are not credited toward the grains component (i.e., extra foods).

2. How much of the grains component must a school offer at breakfast?

Schools must offer at least 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of grains daily to children in all grades. The total amount of grains offered over the week must meet at least the minimum weekly requirement established for each age/grade group: 7 oz eq for grades K-5, 8 oz eq for grades 6-8, and 9 oz eq for grades 9-12. The menu planner should use the weekly maximum levels as a guide to offer age-appropriate meals and meet dietary specifications requirements.

3. Can menu planners still offer traditional grits when the whole grain-rich requirement goes into effect?

Whole grain-rich grits, which are currently commercially available, are creditable toward the daily and weekly grains requirements. However, traditional grits may be offered as an extra food, but may not be credited toward the grains requirements beginning SY 2014-15.

4. May schools offer a meat/meat alternate in the SBP?

Yes. Schools may offer a meat/meat alternate at breakfast, even though the new SBP meal pattern does not require a meat/meat alternate component. A meat/meat alternate can be offered at breakfast as long as a minimum of at least 1 oz eq of grains is also offered daily. Schools that wish to offer a meat/meat alternate have two options for incorporating meats/meat alternates into menus:

- Schools may offer a meat/meat alternate that credits toward the grains requirement, provided they offer at least 1 oz eq of grains daily. Under this flexible option, the meat/meat alternate would count toward the weekly grains requirement and the dietary specifications. The operator receives credit for the meat/meat alternate under the grains component.
- Alternately, schools may serve a meat/meat alternate as an extra food and not count it toward the weekly grains requirement. The extra meat/meat alternate must fit within the weekly dietary specifications (calories, saturated and trans fats, and sodium), and the operator must continue to offer a sufficient amount of grains daily to meet the weekly grains requirement. Under this option, the meat/meat alternate does not change the other required components in the SBP meal pattern.

The above options allow menu planning flexibility while promoting the consumption of whole grain-rich foods consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Questions and Answers on the SBP Meal Requirements, continued

5. Does a large grain food item (e.g., 2 oz eq muffin) count as more than one item at breakfast?

The menu planner has discretion to offer a 2 oz eq muffin as one or two breakfast items. It would be acceptable for the menu planner to offer the large muffin as two food items, 1 cup of fruits, and fluid milk. In such scenario, however, only the milk could be declined under OVS; the students would have to select the muffin and the fruit (at least ½ cup) to have a reimbursable meal under OVS.

6. Does a combination food consisting of 1 oz eq grains and 1 oz eq meat/meat alternate (such as a breakfast sandwich) count as one or two items for purposes of OVS at breakfast?

Menu planners have two options for counting a combination food consisting of meat/meat alternate and grains, such as an egg sandwich.

- One option is to count the combination food (e.g., egg sandwich) as two items under the grains component. It provides at least 1 oz eq of grains (the minimum daily requirement for the grains component) plus an additional 1 oz eq of meat/meat alternate which is also counted toward the grains requirement. As noted above, a 2 oz eq grain is considered two items for purposes of OVS. Therefore, it is acceptable under OVS to offer a combination food that counts as two grain items, plus the full required amounts of fruit and milk.
- The other option for the menu planner is to offer a meat/meat alternate in the combination food and not count it toward the grains component. In this case, the meat/meat alternate is an extra and does not count as an item for purposes of OVS. The 1 oz eq of grains in the combination food does count as one grains item. Therefore, the egg sandwich as a whole in this scenario counts as one grains item. Three additional items – including fruit (or vegetable) and milk – must be offered to have OVS.

7. At breakfast, how does the whole grain-rich requirement apply if a menu planner is crediting meat/meat alternates toward the grains component?

The whole grain-rich requirement applies only to grain-based foods, and *not* meat/meat alternates crediting toward the grains component. For example, if a menu planner offers 6 oz eq grains and 3 oz eq meats/meat alternates to meet the weekly minimum requirement of 9 oz eq grains in grades 9-12, only the 6 oz eq of grains must be whole grain-rich.

8. What popular meat alternates may be offered in the SBP to supplement the required grains component?

Yogurt (dairy and soy), cheese, and nuts are examples of meat alternates that may be offered to supplement the daily grains offering. Yogurt in smoothies prepared in-house may also be credited as a meat alternate in place of the grains component. (Note: Because there is no meat/meat alternate requirement in the SBP, nuts are not limited to the 50 percent requirement specified in the NSLP.)

Questions and Answers on the SBP Meal Requirements, continued

9. Does the flexibility for Grains Maximums apply to the SBP meal pattern?

Yes. The flexibility applies to the weekly grains maximums in the SBP meal pattern. Menus that offer the minimum required grains will be considered compliant during an administrative review. However, menu planners should use the weekly maximum levels as a guide to offer age-appropriate meals and meet dietary specifications requirements.

FRUITS COMPONENT

10. How much fruit must a school offer at breakfast?

Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily to children in grades K-12 beginning SY 2014-15.

11. Is a student required to take fruit at breakfast under OVS?

Yes. Beginning SY 2014-15, the reimbursable meal selected by a student under OVS must include at least ½ cup of fruit (or substitute vegetable), or ½ cup of juice.

12. Is there a limit on the amount of juice that may be offered at breakfast?

Yes. The total weekly fruit and/or vegetable juice offerings may not exceed one-half of the total fruits (or vegetables, if substituted for fruits) offered over the week.

13. May schools offer smoothies at breakfast?

Yes. For smoothies prepared in-house, the fruit and milk ingredients count toward the required fruit and milk components. Yogurt offered as a meat alternate in smoothies prepared in-house may be credited toward the grains component of the breakfast meal pattern (see question 8 in the Grains Component section above). The 50 percent juice limit applies to the fruit juice/puree in smoothies. For additional information, see memorandum SP 10-2014, *Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs*, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>.

MILK COMPONENT

14. Must milk be offered at breakfast when the meal includes a smoothie?

Yes. Although the milk quantity included in smoothies prepared in-house counts toward the required milk component, two types of fluid milk must be offered separately to meet the milk component variety requirement. The service of smoothies must not compromise student consumption of fluid milk. For additional information, see memorandum SP 10-2014, *Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs*, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>.

Questions and Answers on the SBP Meal Requirements, continued

OFFER VERSUS SERVE (OVS)

15. How is OVS implemented in the SBP?

OVS remains optional for all age/grade groups in the SBP, and schools using OVS must offer at least four breakfast items in the amounts specified in the new meal pattern. A student must select at least three breakfast items under OVS. The reimbursable breakfast selected by a student under OVS must include at least ½ cup of fruits (or substitute vegetables). A student is not required to take milk under OVS.

16. May a school using OVS offer two different 1 oz eq grain items at breakfast, and allow students to take two of the same grain items and count them as two items for purposes of OVS?

Yes. This is acceptable if the menu planner chooses to do so. For example, a menu may offer 1 cup milk and 1 cup fruit, effective SY 2014-15, plus two grains: cereal (1 oz eq) and toast (1 oz eq). The student could select at least ½ cup of fruit and two pieces of toast and this would count as the three items required for a reimbursable meal under OVS. The menu planner has discretion whether or not to allow students to select duplicate items.

17. Can pre-bagged meals be offered when breakfast is offered in the classroom and OVS is in place?

Yes. If a school participates in OVS at breakfast and offers breakfasts where some or all of the components are bundled together, the operator should attempt to the extent possible to offer choices (such as a fruit basket) aside from the pre-bagged items. However, there is no requirement that all possible combinations of choices be made available to the student.

18. Why are schools required to offer 1 cup of fruit if students only need to select ½ cup of fruit for a reimbursable meal under OVS?

Schools are required to plan and offer at least one cup of fruit to each grade group. If, upon a review of production records, schools find that students are only selecting ½ cup of fruit, menu planners should adjust the fruit (or vegetable) offerings so students are enticed to select more fruits. Offering popular choices such as smoothies may encourage student consumption of fruits. FNS recently issued guidance on crediting fruit in smoothies. For more information, please visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>.

There are many resources available to schools to help encourage students to select and consume more fruits. Team Nutrition (TN) has activities and recipes to help promote fruits and vegetables to school-aged children. Please visit <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/fruit-and-vegetable-resources/fruit-and-vegetable-resources-school-aged-children>. The Healthy Meals Resource System also has an assortment of state-developed best practice materials to promote fruits in school meals. See <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/best-practices>. Cornell University's BEN Center offers *Smarter Lunchrooms* strategies to make healthful foods more appealing to children. See <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/resources>.

Questions and Answers on the SBP Meal Requirements, continued

SODIUM

19. Is each daily breakfast menu, or each meal a student selects, required to meet the sodium Target 1?

Sodium is a weekly requirement and, therefore, does not apply to daily menus or meals selected by individual students. Individual meal(s) offered on one or more day(s) may exceed the sodium target. However, the average sodium content of meals offered over the week must be at, or below, the sodium Target 1.

20. What resources are available to schools to reduce the sodium content of breakfasts?

FNS has developed resources to help plan meals with lower sodium content. Team Nutrition (TN) and the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) both provide guidance for reducing sodium.

- The TN Healthy Meals Resource System has a webpage with resources to help menu planners lower sodium in school meals; see <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/menu-planning/sodium-reduction>. The Fact Sheets for Healthier School Meals also offer tips on reducing sodium; see: http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/jtf_resources.pdf.
- The NFSMI has tips for reducing sodium in menus; see <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20120102035310.pdf>.

In addition, USDA Foods has low-sodium products available to schools. See the list of USDA Foods at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/nsfp-usda-foods-fact-sheets>.