

Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the School Breakfast Program

This guidance helps menu planners meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) School Breakfast Program (SBP) meal pattern requirements for grades K-12, and encourage student selections of reimbursable meals with offer versus serve (OVS). The SBP meal patterns are available on the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For information on the SBP meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4), visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Meal pattern: All breakfast menus must meet minimum daily and weekly requirements. The minimum daily requirements for all grades include 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component, 1 cup of the fruits component, and 1 cup of low-fat or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). The weekly maximums for the grains component are not required but school food authorities (SFAs) should use them as a planning tool to offer balanced meals that meet the weekly dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For more information, see the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*.



Milk: The breakfast meal pattern allows low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored) and fat-free (unflavored or flavored) milk. SFAs must offer at least 1 cup daily for all grades, and must include a variety of milk, i.e., at least two different choices. At least one choice must be unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. The milk variety requirement also applies to Breakfast in the Classroom and fruit smoothies made with milk. For information on crediting smoothies, see the CSDE's handout, *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*.



Fruits: The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, and canned fruit in light syrup, water, or juice. All fruits credit based on the volume served except dried fruit, which credits as twice the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried fruit credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. A serving of canned fruit can include the juice in which it is packed.



Vegetable substitutions: SFAs may substitute vegetables (fresh, frozen, and canned) for the fruits component at any breakfast. All vegetables credit based on volume except raw leafy greens such as spinach and lettuce, which credit as half the volume served. For example, 1 cup of raw leafy greens credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component. The meal pattern serving size refers to the amount of vegetables without added liquid, such as the water in canned corn or the sauce in baked beans. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP*.

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Juice: 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 at breakfast. The juice limit applies all sources of 100 percent juice served at breakfast during the week, including 100 percent juice, 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 (unless the canned fruit is drained). 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*.



Grains: SFAs must offer at least 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) daily for grades K-12. Over the week, five-day menus must include at least 7 oz eq for grades K-5, at least 8 oz eq for 6-8, and at least 9 oz eq for grades 9-12. Seven-day menus must include at least 10 oz eq for K-5, at least 11 oz eq for 6-8, and at least 12.5 oz eq for grades 9-12. 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. WGR foods include 100 percent whole grains, which are the most nutritious choices. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP*.



Meat/meat alternate substitutions: SFAs may offer meat/meat alternates as a substitute for the grains component if the daily breakfast menu also includes at least 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. A 1-ounce equivalent serving of the meat/meat alternates component equals 1 ounce of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of 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 of commercial tofu; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APP). For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*, *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*.



Dietary specifications: Breakfast menus must meet the weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards) for calories, saturated fat, and sodium indicated in the SBP meal pattern. In addition, the nutrition label or manufacturer specifications for all foods and ingredients used in school meals must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving. For information on the dietary specifications, see section 6 of the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*. SFAs should be aware of product nutrition

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information and limit noncreditable foods. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Noncreditable Foods for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).



Offer versus serve (OVS): 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, students must select at least three items including ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitution, if offered) and the minimum required serving size of at least two other food items. Menu planners can choose to count products with more than 1 ounce equivalent of grains (or meat/meat alternate substitutions) as more than one food item if the additional amount provides the full ounce equivalent. For example, a 2-ounce bagel can credit as two grain items. To count as a food item under OVS, students must take at least the daily minimum required by the meal pattern except for the fruits component, which must be at least ½ cup. Amounts less than the minimum serving do not count as a food item for OVS. For more information, see the CSDE's guide, [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#).



Offering variety: When SFAs offer a variety of choices with OVS, students must be allowed to decline one of the four offered items. The language used on school menus and signs must indicate if choices are allowed. Use “or” to differentiate between item choices such as “choose one: bagel **or** cereal and graham crackers.” To offer variety, provide different choices and specify the number of items students can select (see examples below).

Fruit variety

Choose 2 fruits **or** 1 fruit and 1 juice

- ½ cup of peaches
- ½ cup strawberries
- ½ cup of cantaloupe
- ½ cup of assorted fruit juices

Milk variety

Choose one

- Low-fat milk
- Fat-free milk
- Fat-free chocolate milk
- Fat-free strawberry milk



Signage and communication: SFAs must identify all foods that are part of reimbursable meals near or at the beginning of all serving lines, and on the serving line near each food component, as applicable. For example, if fruits are offered in ½-cup portions for grades 9-12, the serving line signage must indicate that students can select two choices. To ensure clear communication with students and staff about the SBP meal pattern and OVS, SFAs must post daily breakfast menus in all schools that clearly communicate all menu choices and what students are allowed to select. SFAs must also

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provide adequate training for school food service staff on the breakfast meal pattern, including how to recognize reimbursable breakfasts with OVS.



Consistency: Menu planners determine how menu items credit toward the SBP meal pattern. Be consistent with serving sizes and crediting of food items. Plan menus so it is easy for students to select reimbursable meals under OVS, and easy for food service staff to identify reimbursable meals at the point of service. For example, if the menu includes meat/meat alternates as grain substitutions, menu planners can choose to count them as a grain item or an extra food. Choose one option and count these foods the same way for all menus.

Resources

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/ComparisonGrainCrediting.pdf>

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Milk Component in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/ComparisonMilkRequirements.pdf>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditMMA.pdf>

Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP: Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Creditdeli.pdf>

Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuice.pdf>

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditLegumes.pdf>

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothie.pdf>

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditTofu.pdf>

Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditWholeGrains.pdf>

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 07-19: Compliance Issues with the Vegetables and Fruits Components for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2019/OM07-19.pdf>

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CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 06-19: Summary of Federal and State Milk Requirements for the NSLP, SBP, SSO of the NSLP, ASP of the NSLP, and Special Milk Program (SMP):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2019/OM07-19.pdf>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

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

Menu Planning Resources for School Meals (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>

Noncreditable Foods for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/NoncredSNP.pdf>

Nutrition Standards for School Meals (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>

Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/OVSGuide.pdf>

Portion Guide for Fresh Fruits (Start with Half a Cup):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideFruit85x14.pdf>

Portion Guide for Fresh Vegetables (Start with Half a Cup):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideVeg85x14.pdf>

School Breakfast Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/School-Breakfast-Program>

School Meals: Tools for Schools (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/tools-schools>

USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements (83 FR 63775):

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2018-12-12/pdf/2018-26762.pdf>

Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/VegSubgroup.pdf>

Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/WGRCriteria.pdf>

Whole Grain-rich Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Grainsozeq.pdf>

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For more information, review the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SBP/MenuPlanningSBP.pdf>.

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