

Four-day Lunch Meal Pattern: Grades K-8 Option

School Year 2019-20 (Effective July 1, 2019)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal patterns for grades K-5 and 6-8 overlap, which allows schools and institutions to choose to use one lunch meal pattern for both grade groups. This option is useful for grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups for K-5 and 6-8. Examples include schools where students in grades K-8 or grades 5-8 eat together during the same lunch period. **Note:** The lunch meal pattern option for grades K-8 requires a narrower caloric range and more restrictive sodium limit (see “Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards)” below).

For detailed guidance on the NSLP meal pattern requirements, see 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.

Food Components ¹	Grades K-8 Option	
	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) milk or fat-free milk, unflavored or flavored	1	4
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits	1/2	2
Vegetables (cups) ⁵ Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables	3/4	3
Dark green ^{5,6}	0	1/2
Red/orange ^{5,7}	0	3/4
Beans/peas (legumes) ^{5,8}	0	1/2
Starchy ^{5,9}	0	1/2
Other ^{5,10}	0	1/2
Additional vegetables to reach total ^{5,11}	0	1/4
Grains (ounce equivalents) ¹² Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched	1	6 1/2-7
Meats and meat alternates (ounce equivalents) ¹³	1	7-8
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a four-day week</i>		
Calories ^{14,15}	600-650	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁵	< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{15,16}	≤ 1,230	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁵	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving	

◀ See page 2 for important menu planning notes ▶

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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 four days. This meal pattern is only for school food authorities (SFAs) that regularly operate on a four-day week. SFAs that regularly operate for five, six, or seven days must increase the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each additional day. SFAs that regularly operate for less than four 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 five-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*.
- 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.

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Menu planning notes, continued

- 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](#).
- 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); $\frac{1}{4}$ 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 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 four-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](#).

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This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/NSLPmealpattern4day_gradesK-8option.pdf.

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