

Five-day Week Lunch Menu Planning Checklist for Grades 6-8

This checklist assists schools with planning meals to meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal pattern requirements for the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#). Check (☑) “yes” or “no” to indicate if the weekly lunch menu complies with each requirement. For detailed information on the NSLP meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and see the CSDE’s guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*.

Lunch	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes all five components: meat/meat alternates, grains, fruits, vegetables, and milk.		
Milk	Yes	No ¹
The weekly lunch menu includes at least 1 cup of milk		
All milk offered is either unflavored or flavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free. Whole and reduced fat (2%) milk are not served		
At least two different varieties of milk are offered. If flavored milk is offered, unflavored milk is also offered.		
Fruits Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes at least ½ cup of fruit. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes at least 2 ½ cups of fruit. ²		
If served, 100% fruit juice does not exceed half of the weekly fruits component, i.e., no more than 1 ¼ cups. Note: Indicate “NA” (not applicable) if fruit juice is not served.		
Dried fruit credits as twice the amount served, i.e., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component.		
Vegetables Component	Yes	No ¹
Each meal includes at least ¾ cup of vegetables. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes at least 3 ¾ cups of vegetables. ²		
The weekly lunch menu meets all vegetable subgroups (3 ¾ cups total):		
<input type="checkbox"/> Dark Green: ½ cup dark offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Red/Orange: ¾ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Beans and Peas (Legumes): ½ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Starchy: ½ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ½ cup offered weekly (or dark green, red/orange, beans/peas, or starchy) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 cup of additional vegetables offered weekly to reach 3 ¾ cups total (choose from any of the five vegetable subgroups)		
If served, 100% vegetable juice does not exceed half of the weekly vegetables component, i.e., no more than 1 ⅞ cups. Note: Indicate “NA” (not applicable) if vegetable juice is not served.		
Raw leafy greens credit as half of the amount served, i.e., 1 cup of lettuce or spinach as ½ cup of the vegetables component.		

Grains Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes at least 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of grains.		
The weekly lunch menu includes 8-10 oz eq of grains. ²		
All grains are whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched. For more information, see <i>Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP</i> and <i>Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP</i> ,		
At least half of all grains offered are WGR.		
Grain-based desserts are limited to no more than 2 oz eq per week.		
Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes at least 1 oz eq of MMA.		
The weekly lunch menu includes 9-10 oz eq of MMA. ²		
Offer versus Serve (OVS)	Yes	No ¹
Students are required to select at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable for a reimbursable meal.		
In addition to at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable, students must to select the full portion of at least two other components for a reimbursable meal.		
Dietary Specifications (Nutrient Standards) for Weekly Menus ³ (Indicate “unknown” if you do not conduct your own nutrient analysis.)	Yes	No ¹
Calories are within the allowable range of 600-700 calories.		
Saturated fat is less than 10% of total calories.		
Sodium does not exceed 1,360 milligrams. <i>This first sodium target applies through June 30, 2024.</i>		
All nutrition labels and manufacturer specifications indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.		

¹ If “no” is checked for any of the statements above, the menu does not comply with the meal pattern requirements. Check the menu and revise accordingly.

² Larger amounts of milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates may be served only if meals do not exceed the weekly limit for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

³ Schools are not required to conduct a nutrient analysis of menus. The CSDE will conduct a nutrient analysis as part of the Administrative Review of Child Nutrition Programs.

Five-day Week Lunch Menu Planning Checklist for Grades 6-8

Menu Planning Resources

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Menu Planning Resources for School Meals: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/MenuPlanResourcesSchools.pdf>

Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Offer-versus-Serve-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Program-Guidance-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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



For more information, review the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals* 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 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/NSLP/MealPattern/NSLPmenuchecklist_gradesK-8.pdf.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of age, ancestry, color, criminal record (in state employment and licensing), gender identity or expression, genetic information, intellectual disability, learning disability, marital status, mental disability (past or present), national origin, physical disability (including blindness), race, religious creed, retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, sex (pregnancy or sexual harassment), sexual orientation, veteran status or workplace hazards to reproductive systems, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes.

Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Levy Gillespie, Equal Employment Opportunity Director/Americans with Disabilities Coordinator (ADA), Connecticut State Department of Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 607, Hartford, CT 06103, 860-807-2071, levy.gillespie@ct.gov.