



Chapter I: Meal Pattern—What is it and When Does It Need to be in Place?

Summary of New Meal Patterns & Timelines

USDA Memo SP 10-2012—Revised April 27, 2012 “Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs”
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2012/SP10-2012osr2.pdf>

The new meal patterns for the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs were announced by USDA in the Spring of 2012. The new requirements will go into effect on July 1, 2012. There are many changes that must be understood and put in place by the beginning of school year 2012-13. Some of the changes will be phased in over the next several years. This guide is presented as a resource for school districts and state agencies to assist in bridging the gaps between what has been in the past and what is to be in school year 2012-13.

When one describes the new meal pattern as “food based” that is not entirely the case. Granted, menus must be developed around key food groups to include vegetable variety and specific foods ranging from grain products considered “whole grain-rich” to unflavored low-fat milk. Nutrient analyses must be conducted to ensure that not only are the prescribed foods offered in the serving

sizes required but that calories, sodium and saturated fat are held within prescribed limits.

The new meal pattern is food based and requires minimum and maximum calories averaged over a typical school week. There are maximum levels of saturated fat. Trans fat has been eliminated altogether. Each menu must be age-appropriate for the grade groups K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. K-5 and 6-8 can be combined due to an overlap on minimum/maximum average calories for the week. These are some of the major changes this guide presents to enable our members to be successful in meeting the requirements and continuing to serve meals that are acceptable to students.

Materials presented in this guide have been collected from the National Food Service Management Institute, USDA and various state agencies. **Please refer to USDA memos for the most up-to-date information.**

Resources

USDA Best Practices Sharing Center

This collection is intended for School Food Authorities and State Agencies to share resources and tools they use to serve healthy menus that meet school meal regulations.

<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/best-practices>

USDA Food and Nutrition Service School Meals Policy Memos

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/policy.htm>

- **Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Questions and Answers Related to the Certification of Compliance with Meal Requirements for the National School Lunch Program**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2012/SP31-2012ros.pdf>

- **Grain Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2012/SP30-2012os.pdf>

- **Formulated Grain Fruit Products**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2012/SP26-2012os.pdf>

- **Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2012/SP16-2012os.pdf>

USDA Food and Nutrition Service

Nutrition Standards for School Meals

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/nutritionstandards.htm>



Chapter II: Digging Deep into Each Category

All menu offerings must be broken down into the three age/grade groups: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12

GRAINS

Grades K-5: 8 to 9 oz. eq./week

Grades 6-8: 8 to 10 oz. eq./week

Grades 9-12: 10 to 12 oz. eq./week

1 oz. eq./day minimum for K-5 & 6-8

2 oz. eq./day minimum for 9-12

- In the first year of implementation, one half of the grains offered must be whole grain rich.
- There will be weekly grains ranges plus daily minimum requirement.
- The 50% guideline for whole grain-rich requires that if the food item is a grain-based product, it must contain 50% or more whole grains by weight or have a whole grain listed as the first ingredient on the ingredient label. If the food item is a mixed dish product (lasagna, stir fry, etc.), a whole grain must be the primary grain ingredient by weight.
- The grain ranges are the minimum and maximum schools may offer per week. They are intended to help schools offer age-appropriate meals within the required calorie ranges.
- Schools do not have to offer whole grain rich products daily as long as the weekly offerings equal at least 50% whole grains.
 - In SY 2012-13, battered and/or breaded products offered will not be counted toward maximum weekly grain requirements.
- Every school meal must offer the daily minimum requirements for all components. Therefore, if a pizza contains adequate grains to meet the minimum daily requirement, but a sandwich roll does not, the sandwich meal must contain another grain in order to meet the minimum.
- There is a daily minimum grain requirement but not a daily maximum. One must keep in mind, however, that there is a weekly maximum.
- There is a limit of up to two ounce equivalents of grain-based desserts per week (total of 2 ounce equivalents).
- Fully cooked grain and pasta items whose nutrition label has water as the first ingredient, followed by a whole grain is considered whole grain-rich.
- All grains offered in amounts of 0.25 oz. equivalent or greater must be counted toward daily and weekly grain offerings regardless of whether or not they are whole grain-rich.

MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE (M/MA)

Grades K-5: 8 to 10 oz. eq./week

Grades 6-8: 9 to 10 oz. eq./week

Grades 9-12: 10 to 12 oz. eq./week

1 oz. eq./day minimum for K-5 & 6-8

2 oz. eq./day minimum for 9-12

- This component must be served in a main dish or in a main dish and only one other food item.
- Schools without daily choices in this component may not serve the same meat/meat alternate more than 3 times/week.
- May supplement with other M/MA to meet full requirement
- One ounce cooked, skinless, unbreaded portion of beef, fish, poultry, equals one ounce of the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement. NOTE: Check Food Buying Guide as reference.
- Four ounces (weight) or ½ cup (volume) of soy yogurt or dairy yogurt equals one ounce of the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement.
- Two tablespoons of nut butter, almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, reduced fat peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, or sunflower seed butter equals one ounce of the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement.
- Nuts or seeds such as sunflower seeds, almonds, and hazelnuts may be used to meet no more than one-half of the Meat/Meat Alternate component with another Meat/Meat Alternate to meet the full requirement.
- Commercially prepared tofu must be 2.2 ounces (¼ cup) by weight with 5 or more grams of protein to equal one ounce of the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement.
- Other meat alternates, such as cheese and eggs, may be used to meet all or part of the Meat/Meat Alternates component in accordance with FNS guidance.
- A ¼ cup of drained beans/peas/legumes equals one ounce of the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement.
- Regardless of the protein foods offered, schools must plan all meals with the goal to meet the dietary specifications for sodium, saturated fat, trans fat, and calories.

MILK

Grades K-12: 1 cup/day

- Allowable milk options:
 - Fat-free (unflavored or flavored)
 - Low-fat 1% (unflavored only)
 - Fat-free or low-fat lactose-reduced or lactose-free
- Must offer at least two choices daily.
- Does not alter nutrition standards for non-dairy milk substitutes (e.g., soy beverages).
- Milk provisions also apply to children ages 3-4.

FRUITS

Grades K-5: ½ cup/day

Grades 6-8: ½ cup/day

Grades 9-12: 1 cup/day

- No more than half the fruit offerings may be in the form of (only) 100 % juice (over the week).
- May select from fresh, frozen, canned in juice/light syrup, or dried fruit options.
- For SY 2012-13 only, frozen fruit with added sugar is allowable in the NSLP. Note: This will no longer apply after the FY 2012-2013 year.
- ¼ cup dried fruit = ½ cup fruit.

VEGETABLE (see Appendix B)

Grades K-5: ¾ cup/day

Grades 6-8: ¾ cup/day

Grades 9-12: 1 cup/day

- A daily serving at lunch must be offered: K-5=¾ cup, 6-8=¾ cup, 9-12=1 cup.
- Daily serving that reflects variety over the week.
- Vegetable subgroup weekly requirements for:
 - Dark Green (e.g., broccoli, collard greens, spinach)
 - Red/Orange (e.g., carrots, sweet potatoes)
 - Beans/Peas (legumes) (e.g., kidney beans, lentils) (see Appendix A)
 - Starchy (e.g., corn, green peas, white potatoes)
 - Other (e.g., onions, green beans, cucumbers)
 - Additional vegetables to meet the total required for the week
- Changes in crediting of uncooked leafy greens; leafy greens will credit as half of volume as served. Therefore, one cup of romaine lettuce is creditable as one half of a cup of vegetables.
- Foods from the beans/peas (legumes) subgroup may be credited as either a meat alternate or as a legume vegetable but not as both simultaneously.

SODIUM

- Sodium limits and timelines for implementation will begin in School Year 2014-15

Final Rule "Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs" (1/26/12)

Sodium Reduction: Timeline & Amount				
Age/Grade Group	Baseline: Average Current Sodium Levels as Offered ¹ (mg)	Target 1: July 1, 2014 SY 2014-2015 (mg)	Target 2: July 1, 2017 SY 2017-2018 (mg)	Final Target: July 1, 2022 SY 2022-2023 (mg)
School Breakfast Program				
K-5	573 (elementary)	≤540	≤485	≤430
6-8	629 (middle)	≤600	≤535	≤470
9-12	686 (high)	≤640	≤570	≤500
National School Lunch Program				
K-5	1,377 (elementary)	≤1,230	≤935	≤640
6-8	1,520 (middle)	≤1,360	≤1,035	≤710
9-12	1,588 (high)	≤1,420	≤1,080	≤740

CALORIES

(All calorie determinations are based on a weighted average.)

Grades K-5: 550-650/weekly average

Grades 6-8: 600-700/weekly average

Grades 9-12: 750-850/weekly average

- Averaged over a week:
- Specific calorie levels are required for a lunch meal to be considered a healthy school meal depending on the age/grade groups. These calorie levels are weekly averages.

- Since there is no overlap in calorie requirements for K-5 and 6-8, a school could offer age/grade groups K-8 a single menu that falls within a range of 600-650 average calories per week to meet the requirement for each grade group.

FATS

- Calories from saturated fats must average less than 10% weekly.
- Trans fat must be zero.
- Naturally occurring trans fats found in products such as beef, lamb and dairy products made with whole milk are excluded from the trans fat requirement.

- When using a commercially prepared product, schools must refer to the nutrition facts panel to determine that there are zero grams of trans fat per serving. For mixed dishes that may contain both naturally occurring trans fat and added/synthetic trans fat the only certain way to determine if the product is in compliance is for schools to request information from suppliers on how much of the trans fat is naturally occurring.