

# OSPI School Meal Programs Reference Sheet

## School Meal Programs: Updated Nutrition Standards

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) published the [\*Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans\*](#) final rule on April 24, 2024 which finalized updates to the meal pattern requirements. These updates represent continued progress toward supporting the nutrition quality of school meals, strengthening the Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), and advancing USDA's commitment to nutrition security.

### Menu Planning Flexibilities — Effective July 1, 2024:

**Combined Meats/Meat Alternate (MMA) & Grain meal component at Breakfast:** Schools may offer grains, MMAs, or a combination of both, to meet the minimum daily and weekly ounce equivalent requirements at breakfast.

**Substituting Vegetables for Fruit at Breakfast:** Schools that choose to offer vegetables in place of fruit at breakfast may offer any vegetable subgroup one day per week. If vegetables are offered at breakfast two days or more per week, at least two different subgroups must be offered.

**Beans, Peas & Lentils (formerly Legumes) at Lunch:** Schools may serve beans, peas, and lentils as a MMA at lunch and also count them toward the weekly beans, peas, and lentils (formerly Legumes) vegetable subgroup requirement.

**Nuts & Seeds:** Allows nuts and seeds to credit for the full MMA component.

**Substituting Vegetables for Grains in Tribal Communities:** Allows schools that are tribally operated, operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, and that serve primarily American Indian or Alaska Native children to serve vegetables to meet the grains requirement.

**Traditional Indigenous Foods:** Explicitly includes in regulation that traditional indigenous foods may be served in reimbursable school meals.

### Meal Pattern Changes — Effective July 1, 2025:

**Added Sugars — Product Based Limits:** Establishes product-based added sugar limits for the following items:

- Breakfast Cereal: ≤6 grams of added sugar per dry ounce.
- Yogurt: ≤12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces.
- Flavored Milk: ≤10 grams of added sugar per 8 fluid ounces.



- The flavored milk added sugar limit applies to Smart Snacks.

**Meal Modifications:** Medical statements signed by a Registered Dietitian (RD or RDN) requesting meal modifications on behalf of students with disabilities must be accepted.

**Sodium:** Maintains current sodium limits for school breakfast and lunch until July 1, 2027.

**Buy American Provision:** Non-domestic food purchases must not exceed 10% of total annual commercial food costs.

**Afterschool Snacks:** Meal pattern requirements for the NSLP Afterschool Snack Program now align with CACFP snack standards — highlights include:

- No more than half of the weekly fruit or vegetable offerings can be in the form of juice.
- At least 80% of grains offered during the week must be whole grain-rich.
- Grain-based dessert, except for sweet crackers (animal crackers or graham crackers), do not contribute toward the grains requirement.

## Meal Pattern Changes — Effective July 1, 2027 or Later:

**Added Sugars — Weekly Limit:** No more than 10% of weekly calories can be from added sugars at both breakfast and lunch.

- Product-based limits for cereal, yogurt, and flavored milk continue to apply.

**Sodium:** Reduces the sodium limits for both breakfast and lunch:

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|--|--|
| ➤ <b>Breakfast:</b> 10% reduction from current sodium limits | ➤ <b>Lunch:</b> 15% reduction from current sodium limits |
| ○ Grades K–5: 485mg  | ○ Grades K–5: 935mg                                      |
| ○ Grades 6–8: 535mg  | ○ Grades 6–8: 1035mg                                     |
| ○ Grades 9–12: 570mg   | ○ Grades 9–12: 1080mg                                    |

**Buy American Provision:**

- **SY 2028–29:** Non-domestic food purchases must not exceed **8%** of total annual commercial food costs.
- **SY 2031–32:** Non-domestic food purchases must not exceed **5%** of total annual commercial food costs.

## Resources

- [USDA Updates to the School Nutrition Standards](#)
- [OSPI Menu Planning and Meal Pattern Toolkit](#)
- [Crediting Tip Sheets in Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast](#)
- [Reducing Added Sugars at School Breakfast](#)
- [Serving School Meals to Preschoolers](#)
- [The Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#)
- [Nutrition Standards for Added Sugars Fact Sheets](#)

## References

- [Final Rule – Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)
- [SP 19-2024, CACFP 07-2024, SFSP 12-2024: Initial Implementation Memorandum: Child Nutrition Programs: \*Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans\*](#)
- [USDA Implementation Timeline for Updated School Meal Nutrition Standards](#)

## Acronyms

- CNP – Child Nutrition Programs
- CNS – Child Nutrition Services
- CACFP – Child and Adult Care Food Program
- NSLP – National School Lunch Program
- OSPI – Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- RD or RDN – Registered Dietitian Nutritionist
- SBP – School Breakfast Program
- USDA – United States Department of Agriculture