

A Guide to Reimbursable Meals Served at NSD

National School District is proud to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students every school day. In order to do this, we must carefully adhere to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidelines for reimbursable meals. A reimbursement for a student meal is determined by a federal formula which helps each district determine whether they receive a monetary reimbursement from the Federal and State Government for each meal given to students. In order to get that reimbursement, the USDA and California Department of Education (CDE) guidelines, and the "Offer vs. Serve" program must be followed. The lunch and breakfast programs are a little different, so let's just start with lunch.

Lunch

At lunch, we are required to offer students five components with each meal. Students are required to take three of those five components for us to count it as a reimbursable meal. One of those components must be a serving of a fruit or vegetable for us to count it as a reimbursable meal. The five components offered are:

- Milk: Two types must be offered. It can be 1% white or nonfat and selection can also include nonfat or 1% for flavored milk.
- Meat/Meat Alternate: Meat, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, beans/legumes.
- Grains: Half of all grains served must be whole grain rich (WG). Items include breadings, tortillas, cereal, pizza crust, etc.
- Fruit: Students are required to take $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits or vegetables with every meal.
- Vegetables: Students are required to take $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits or vegetables with every meal (there is a requirement for certain subcategories of vegetables that must be offered weekly according to their color and nutritional content).

Grain and Meat/Meat Alternate Equivalents:

- Each entrée item has a number from 0 to 2 assigned to it for meat/meat alternate and grain equivalents. These are used to develop a balanced menu. This has a significant impact on the way a weekly menu is planned.
- There are different requirements for different age groups for certain components. For example, at the High School level, the requirement is to offer 10 grain equivalents each week. At the Middle School the requirement is to offer 8 grain equivalents each week. At the Elementary level, we are also required to offer 8 equivalents of grains each week for an average of 1.6 per day.
- For meat/meat alternates, we are required to offer a minimum of 9 equivalents per week for an average of 1.8 per day.
- Most of the menu items selected for our menus are 2/2 (two equivalents each of grains and meat/meat alternates).

Example 1 of a Reimbursable Lunch: The main item the student selects is a Cheese Quesadilla made with a WG flour tortilla. The quesadilla contains the grain component and the meat/meat alternate component. Students would also have to take at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit or vegetables for us to count that as a reimbursable meal.

Example 2 of a Reimbursable Lunch: The main item the student selects is a Chicken Sandwich served on a WG bun. The sandwich contains the meat/meat alternate serving and the grain serving. Students would also have to take at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetables for us to count that as a reimbursable meal.

In both examples, students could also take a milk, and/or a larger serving of fruit and vegetables, and/or 100% fruit juice if they want a larger meal. However, these items are not required as part of a reimbursable meal.

Breakfast

Breakfast is regulated a little differently. There are three meal components (fruits, grains, milk) of which at least four items from these groups must be offered. As long as a grain is also offered, a meat/meat alternate may be used to meet the grain requirement. Students are required to take three items in order to have a reimbursable meal.

At breakfast we are required to offer four items:

- 1 to 2 oz. equivalent servings of grain of which we offer two. Students can select from a selection of cold cereals each day or one hot entrée.
- ½ cup serving of fruit and/or a ½ cup serving of 100% juice
- Milk

Students are required to take a serving of a fruit to be counted as a reimbursable meal.

Example 1 of a Reimbursable Breakfast: WG Pancakes, one carton of milk, and ½ cup of fruit.

Example 2 of a Reimbursable Breakfast: Cereal (1 oz. container), one carton of milk, and ½ cup of fruit.

Other Information

- All our kitchen staff are trained to ensure that each tray holds a reimbursable meal.
- Students who finish their meal but are still hungry can come back to the salad bar for second servings.

Other Resources

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/newfbmplunch.asp>

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/nfbmpbreakfast.asp>

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/mbsnp202019.asp>

<https://schoolnutrition.org/AboutSchoolMeals/SchoolNutritionStandards/>