

Making the Grade: Best Practices for Co-Mingled Meal Service in School Settings

USDA Child Nutrition Programs
Kansas State Department of Education
Colorado Department of Education



United States Department of Agriculture



Today's Agenda

- Co-Mingling Considerations and Policies
- Co-Mingling in Kansas
- Co-Mingling in Colorado
- Questions



CONSIDERATIONS

Meal Pattern
Requirements and
Considerations

Meal Service Options

Co-Mingling Q&As

Licensing and
Enrollment
Requirements

SERVING SCHOOL MEALS VS CACFP MEALS

School Meals Programs

Participants must be enrolled at the school to receive school meal benefits

CACFP

Childcare center licensed or approved by Federal, State or local authorities to provide nonresidential childcare services to enrolled children

SERVING SNACKS

School Meals Programs

Snacks are not reimbursable during the school day

CACFP

A child may receive up to 2 meals and 1 snack or 2 snacks and 1 meal per day through the program

MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENTS - SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMS

Schools serving meals and snacks to preschoolers through the School Meals Programs are required to follow the preschool meal pattern requirements.

- CACFP/Preschool Meal Pattern consists of the following age groups:
 - Infants
 - Birth - 5 months
 - 6 - 11 months
 - Children 1-2 years of age
 - Children 3-5 years of age
- Schools must also follow the additional requirements as outlined in regulations



CO-MINGLING

SP 37-2017 – Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers

- Single-menu flexibility when pre-k and K-5 students are in the same service area at the same time (co-mingled).
- Co-mingled schools may choose to follow the age/grade-appropriate meal patterns for each group or serve the K-5 meal patterns for both groups.
- Schools are encouraged to serve age/grade-appropriate meals
- **NO** co-mingling option for CACFP operators.

MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENTS - COMPONENTS

Meal Pattern Requirement	CACFP/Preschool Meal Pattern for Preschoolers	School Meals for Grades K-12
Fluid Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only <u>unflavored</u> milk for children 5 and under. • Must serve unflavored whole milk to children age 1. • Must serve unflavored fat-free or low-fat milk to children 2 – 5 years old. • May serve unflavored or flavored fat-free or low-fat milk to children ages 6 and older. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flavored milk may be offered. • Must offer students at least two different options of fluid milk. At least one must be unflavored.

MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENTS - COMPONENTS

Meal Pattern Requirement	CACFP/Preschool Meal Pattern for Preschoolers	School Meals for Grades K-12
Fruits & Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While vegetables and fruits are two separate components at lunch, a second, different vegetable may be served in place of the entire fruit requirement at lunch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetables and fruits are separate components at lunch
Vegetable Subgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must offer minimum amounts of each vegetable subgroup over the course of a week
Full-Strength (100%) Juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Daily</u> Limit: May count towards the entire fruit or vegetable component no more than once per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Weekly</u> Limit: May count towards no more than half of the vegetables or fruits offerings over the course of a week (breakfast and lunch are assessed separately)

MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENTS - COMPONENTS

Meal Pattern Requirement	CACFP/Preschool Meal Pattern for Preschoolers	School Meals for Grades K-12
Whole Grain-Rich (WGR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Daily</u>: Must serve a WGR item for the grain component at least once per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Weekly</u>: Eighty (80%) of the weekly grains offered must be WGR
Grain-Based Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot count towards the grains requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 2 ounce equivalents per week may be offered at lunch No limits on grain-based desserts served at breakfast currently

MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENTS - COMPONENTS

Meal Pattern Requirement	CACFP/Preschool Meal Pattern for Preschoolers	School Meals for Grades K-12
Meats/Meat Alternates at Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May substitute M/MA for the entire grain component up to 3 times per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May substitute 1-ounce equivalent M/MA for 1-ounce equivalent grains after the minimum daily 1 oz eq grain requirement is offered
Meats/Meat Alternates at Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 ounce equivalent for children ages 3-5 at lunch • 1 ounce equivalent for children ages 1-2 at lunch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ounce equivalent minimum per day (8-10 ounce equivalents per week) for grades K-5

MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENTS - DIETARY SPECIFICATIONS

Meal Pattern Requirement	CACFP/Preschool Meal Pattern for Preschoolers	School Meals for Grades K-12
Total Sugars Limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakfast cereal must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugar per dry ounce Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugar per 6 ounces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sugar standards
Deep Fat Frying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit deep fat frying as a way of preparing food onsite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions but schools must meet weekly dietary specifications
Weekly Dietary Specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No weekly limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals must, on average, meet weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium

MEAL SERVICE OPTIONS

Offer vs. Serve (OVS)

- ⑩ School Meals Programs: Allowable for preschoolers if co-mingled with K-5 students
- ⑩ CACFP: Not allowable for infants and preschool age children

Family Style Meal Service

- ⑩ Allowable in School Meals Programs and CACFP

Q & A

Can schools choose to co-mingle preschool students during one meal but not the other?

Yes, schools are encouraged to serve the age-appropriate meal pattern whenever possible. A school may choose to co-mingle preschool students at breakfast when all students are coming into the cafeteria at the same time but serve the age-appropriate meal pattern at lunch when the preschool students eat in their classroom or come to the cafeteria at a separate time than the K-5 students.

Q & A

Are the flexibilities offered for co-mingling students between preschoolers and K-5 students extended to K-8 and K-12 students?

It Depends.

- At breakfast, there is an overlap in the meal pattern requirements for grades K-12. A menu planner may offer the same food quantities to all children in grades K-12, provided that the meal meets the requirements of each grade group.
- At lunch, there is an overlap in the meal pattern requirements for grades K-5 and grades 6-8. Since there is an overlap, a single lunch menu can be used to meet the needs of K-8 students, but not K-12 students because the difference in meal pattern requirements are too great to be met by one single menu.

Q & A

Can an SFA choose the NSLP K-5 meal pattern across all schools serving preschool students if one (or more) preschool classes are co-mingled but others are not?

No. When preschoolers are served meals in a different area or at a different time than K-5 students, schools must follow the preschool meal pattern. The option to serve the K-5 meal pattern to preschoolers is only allowed when preschoolers are co-mingled with K-5 students during meal service. The K-5 menu cannot be served district or school wide if co-mingling is not occurring in all preschool food service areas.

Q & A

Does co-mingling extend to the NSLP Afterschool Snack program?

Yes, schools that serve afterschool snacks through the NSLP to preschoolers and K-12 students in the same service area at the same time may choose to follow the age/grade-appropriate snack patterns for each age/grade group or serve the K-12 afterschool snack meal pattern to all co-mingled students.

Q & A

If co-mingling criteria is met and the Pre-K is using family style meal service and K-5 is not, can the K-5 meal pattern still be followed?

The option to extend co-mingling flexibilities is at the discretion of the State Agency. The purpose of the co-mingling flexibility is to ensure integrity and limit operational challenges when children of varying ages are being served at the same time in the same place. If the State agency feels that program integrity is at risk and/or operational challenges are cumbersome in a situation such as the one presented, the State Agency has the discretion to apply co-mingling flexibilities as outlined in SP 37-2017.

Kansas Landscape

- Increase in school sponsors operating day care programs
- Increase in school sponsors adding pre-school programs
- One consultant for all programs

Number of Sponsors	
SNP	401
CACFP	295
SFSP	153
2 Programs	117
All 3 Programs	36

Number of Consultants			
PY2023		PY2024	
SNP	10	SNP/CACFP	10
CACFP	5	CACFP	4
Sr Consultant	2	Sr Consultant	2



Challenges

- Deciding what program to operate
- Identifying preschool and childcare kids who walk into the cafeteria with school-aged siblings.
- Menu differences:

SNP	CACFP
Co-Mingled (K – 5 meal pattern)	NO co-mingling option
Flavored Milk	Unflavored Milk Only
Grain Based Desserts	Sugar limits
OVS	Smaller portion sizes so less waste
Afterschool snacks only	Claim midday snacks



SNP vs CACFP

- Preschool students, daycare kids or both
- Preschool students only
 - Snacks during the school day
- Daycare kids



Maintaining Program Integrity

- Training

- Consultants
- Sponsors

<https://ksde.zoom.us/rec/share/s1kj3Opp1yd1jYenT8qQgOD5ElzsFjpt6ocPBoji0GGDyZHwnt7kwqxhxofFwfm1.j9zWpK-8hFnYSGVg>

- Co-Mingling

- Eat in the classroom
- Eat in the cafeteria at different times



Co-mingling

Considerations & Best Practices



COLORADO
Department of Education



CO School Meal Landscape

- Healthy School Meals for All
- Universal Pre-K
- State Agencies:
 - Department of Education
 - Department of Public Health & Environment
- Co-mingling:
 - Program eligibility
 - Staffing shortages/capacity
 - Licensing requirements



Licensing Considerations

- Table & chair sizes
- Ability to go to cafeteria- not licensed to do so
- Staffing ratios
- Lack of food service staff knowledge around licensing requirements & what is needed
- Requirements to serve snack to preschoolers
 - Current program regs don't support



Best Practices

- Provide support through 1:1 conversations
 - Goal is to find best solution
- Include Pre-K in training and resources
- Include both state agencies during training



Resources

- Serving Preschool students comparison chart: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/preschoolmealoptionschart>
 - Healthy School Meals for All- Pre-K
- Contact CDE:
 - Megan Johnson
johnson_m@cde.state.co.us

Options for Serving Preschool Students



This chart outlines options for serving meals to preschool students enrolled in Colorado.

Program	National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)	Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
State Agency	Colorado Department of Education, School Nutrition Unit	Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any public or private/non-public approved School Food Authority (SFA) that has an income-based programs, like Head Start offers instructional time during the school day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any public or private nonprofit institution or facility or any for-profit center, that is licensed or approved to provide nonresidential child care services to enrolled children

Program	National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)	Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Participant Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children up to 5 years old • Households will receive meal benefits based on their student's eligibility status (i.e. free, reduced-price or paid meals). Households may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals by submitting an income application or by participating in other assistance programs. • UPK eligibility does not mean a child automatically qualifies for free meals • If a SFA participates in the <u>Healthy School Meals for All program</u>, preschool students will also receive free meals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants and children under age 13. • Migrant children under age 15. • Individuals with disabilities who receive care in a child care center where most participants are under age 18. • Cost of meals can be part of tuition or charged as a separate fee





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