

# Crediting **Grains** in the **Child Nutrition Programs**

## Tip Sheet

### Part 3: Program Requirements



Grain products made with creditable grains are required as part of reimbursable meals offered in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), Preschool meal pattern, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Products made with creditable grains may also be offered as part of a reimbursable snack in the CACFP, NSLP Preschool, SFSP, and NSLP afterschool snack service (NSLP afterschool snacks). This tip sheet provides helpful information on serving creditable grains in CNP to meet meal pattern requirements.

## How Much?

**A.** In NSLP, SBP, Preschool meal pattern, and CACFP, the grains component is measured in ounce equivalents (oz eq). To provide 1.00 oz eq grains, the product must contain at least:

- 16 grams of creditable grains for grain products listed in Groups A-G of **Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (Exhibit A)** ([https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/Exhibit\\_A\\_Grain\\_Requirements\\_For\\_Child\\_Nutrition\\_Programs.pdf](https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/Exhibit_A_Grain_Requirements_For_Child_Nutrition_Programs.pdf)), such as breads, crackers, bagels, pancakes, etc.
- 28 grams of creditable grains for grain products listed in Groups H and I of Exhibit A, such as dry cereal grains, pastas, and ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals.

A grain product must provide **a minimum of 0.25 oz eq grains per serving** to credit toward the grains component. **Note:** The minimum creditable amounts do not apply to the infant meal pattern.

**B.** For SFSP and NSLP afterschool snacks,\* the grains contribution is measured in grains/breads servings. One grains/breads serving provides:

- 14.75 grams of creditable grains for grain products listed in Groups A-G of Exhibit A, such as breads and crackers.
- 25 grams of creditable grains for grain products listed in Groups H and I of Exhibit A, such as dry cereal grains, pastas, and ready-to-eat cereals.

A grain product must provide **a minimum of 0.25 grains/breads serving** to contribute toward the grains component.

\*Effective July 1, 2025, NSLP afterschool snacks will measure grains in oz eq.





The minimum grains requirement for a reimbursable meal depends upon the age or grade group for the specific CNP.

## School Meals

SBP*			NSLP	
Grade	Daily Minimum (oz eq)	Weekly Minimum-Maximum (oz eq)	Daily Minimum (oz eq)	Weekly Minimum-Maximum (oz eq)
K-5	1	7-10	1	8-9
6-8	1	8-10	1	8-10
9-12	1	9-10	2	10-12

\*At breakfast, meats/meat alternates may be served with or in place of grains to meet the minimum daily and weekly requirements of the combined grains and meats/meat alternates component.

School meals have both a minimum daily grains requirement and a weekly grains requirement range. Although schools may serve more than the upper weekly range (as long as the weekly dietary specifications are met), they must serve at least the minimum amount listed per week.

## CACFP and Preschool Meal Pattern

Age Group	Meal	Daily Minimum per Meal/Snack* (oz eq)
Ages 1-2 & Ages 3-5	Each Meal* & Snack**	1/2
Ages 6-18	Each Meal* & Snack**	1
Adults	Each Meal*	2
Adults	Snack**	1

\*At breakfast, meats/meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains requirement up to three times per week.

\*\*Grains may be served at snack.

CACFP Training Worksheets can be found at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-training-worksheets-cacfp>

## SFSP & NSLP Afterschool Snack Service\*

Age Group	Daily Minimum per Meal/Snack*
All Ages SFSP Each Meal & Snack**	1 grains/breads serving
Ages 1-2 NSLP Afterschool Snack**	1/2 grains/breads serving
Ages 3-5	1/2 grains/breads serving
Ages 6-12	1 grains/breads serving

\*Effective July 1, 2025, NSLP afterschool snacks must serve the meal components and quantities required in the snack meal pattern established for the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

\*\*Grains may be served at snack.

**Note:** Schools, sponsors, institutions, and facilities that serve primarily American Indian/Alaska Native children may serve vegetables to meet the grains requirement.



# Four Ways To Determine How Grain Products Credit Toward the Meal Pattern Requirements

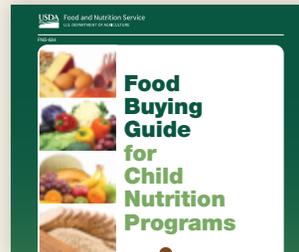
## 1 Exhibit A

**Exhibit A: Grain Requirements For Child Nutrition Programs<sup>1,2</sup>**  
 Color Key: Footnote 5 = Blue, Footnote 3 or 4 = Red

Food Products per Group	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq)	Minimum Serving Size
<b>Group A</b>	<b>Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group A</b>	<b>Minimum Serving Size for Group A</b>
Bread type coating	1 oz eq = 22 gm or 0.8 oz	1 serving = 20 gm or 0.7 oz
Bread sticks (hard)	3/4 oz eq = 17 gm or 0.6 oz	3/4 serving = 15 gm or 0.5 oz
Chow Mein noodles	1/2 oz eq = 11 gm or 0.4 oz	1/2 serving = 10 gm or 0.4 oz
Savory Crackers (saltines and snack crackers)	1/4 oz eq = 6 gm or 0.2 oz	1/4 serving = 5 gm or 0.2 oz
CROUTONS		
Pretzels (hard)		
Stuffing (dry) <i>Note: weights apply to bread in stuffing</i>		

Example: 11 grams or 0.4 ounces of whole grain-rich crackers provides 0.5 oz eq grains

## 2 The Food Buying Guide

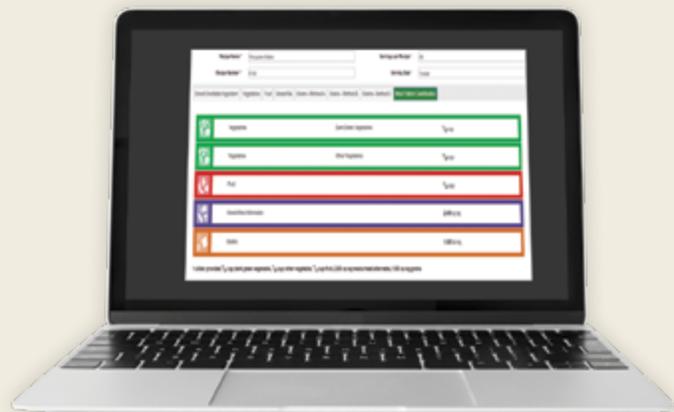


1 1/2 cups of popcorn provides 0.5 oz eq grains

**POPCORN**

Item	Weight	Price	Grain Contribution
Popcorn, popped	Pound	45.50	3/4 cup popped provides 1/4 oz equivalent grains
	Pound	22.75	1-1/2 cup popped provides 1/2 oz equivalent grains
	Pound	11.38	3 cup popped provides 1 oz equivalent grains

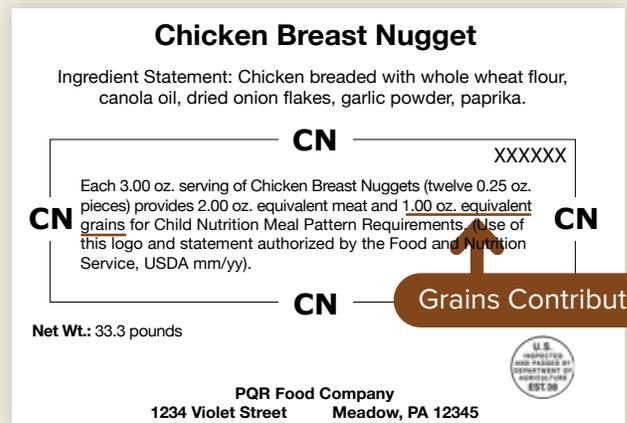
## 3 The Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW)



This helps Program operators determine how creditable ingredients in a standardized recipe may credit toward meal pattern requirements, including grains and other meal pattern components.

- For more details, visit <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Appendix/ResourceAppendixA>.
- To access the online RAW, visit <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/>.

## 4 Manufacturer's Documentation Child Nutrition (CN) Label



Grains Contribution

A CN label provides crediting information for commercial products. Main dish products that provide at least 0.50 oz equivalent meats/meat alternates are eligible for a CN label.

For more information, see: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling-program>.

# 4

## Manufacturer's Documentation (continued) Product Formulation Statement (PFS)

A PFS is a certified document that may be used to demonstrate how a manufacturer's product contributes to the meal pattern requirements. A PFS may be provided for processed products that do not have a CN label. Program operators are responsible for ensuring menu items meet meal pattern requirements; therefore, they should review and verify the crediting statement on a manufacturer's PFS prior to purchasing the product.

For more information, see: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/food-manufacturersindustry>.

### Crediting Statement from a PFS for Dinner Rolls (for NSLP)

Total weight (per portion) of product as purchased 2.25

Total contribution of product (per portion) 2.00 oz eq

I certify that the above information is true and correct and that a 2.25 ounce portion of this product (ready for serving) provides 2.00 oz eq grains. I further certify that non-creditable grains **are not** above 0.24 oz eq per portion. Products with more than 0.24 oz eq or 3.99g for Groups A-G or 6.99g for Groups H and I of non-creditable grains do not credit toward the grains requirement for school meals.

## Grains Requirement in CNP

- Grains offered in all CNP must be creditable to count toward meal pattern requirements.
- When calculating the grains contribution, round down to the nearest 0.25 oz eq or 0.25 grains/breads serving.

### What is a creditable grain in CNP?

For more information see: [Crediting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet, Part 1: Creditable Grains in Child Nutrition Programs](#).



For more information, see: [Crediting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet, Part 2: Identifying Grain Products That Are Whole Grain-Rich](#).

**Note:** There is no whole grain-rich requirement for SFSP, NSLP afterschool snacks, or the CACFP infant meal pattern; however, by July 1, 2025, NSLP afterschool snacks will have the same weekly whole grain-rich requirement as NSLP and SBP.

- School meal programs, Preschool, and CACFP have a whole grain-rich requirement.

### What does Whole Grain-Rich mean?

“Whole grain-rich” is the term designated by FNS to indicate that the grain content of a product is between 50 and 100 percent whole grain with any remaining grains being enriched.

### School Meal Programs (NSLP & SBP)

- 80 percent of grains offered over the course of the week must be whole grain-rich.
- In NSLP, up to 2 oz eq of grain-based desserts per week are allowed.
- In SBP, schools may offer grains, meats/meat alternates, or a combination of both to meet this combined component requirement, based on ounce equivalents.
- Effective School Year 2027–2028, added sugars must be less than 10 percent of calories per week in the school lunch and breakfast programs.

### CACFP and Preschool

- At least one offering of grains per day must be whole grain-rich for children and adults.
- Grain-based desserts do not credit toward the grains component.
- Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry oz (by October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals are limited to no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce).
- At breakfast, meats/meat alternates may be used to meet the entire grains requirement a maximum of three times per week.



## Test Your Knowledge

1. The preschool at Liberty Elementary School served Happy Days breakfast cereal to students, ages 3–5 years old. Can this cereal count toward the grains component in a reimbursable breakfast?



**INGREDIENTS:** Corn, sugar, contains 2% or less of: malt flavor, corn syrup, modified food starch, dextrose, salt, gelatin, natural flavors

**Vitamins & Minerals:** Iron (ferric phosphate), niacinamide, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), folic acid, vitamin D3, vitamin B12.

Yes  No

### Nutrition Facts

**Serving size** 2/3 cup (1 oz)

**Amount per serving**  
**Calories** 102

% Daily Value\*

**Total Fat** 0g 0%

Saturated Fat 0g 0%

Trans Fat 0g

**Cholesterol** 0mg 0%

**Sodium** 124mg 5%

**Total Carbohydrate** 25g 9%

Dietary Fiber <1g 2%

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 11g Added Sugars 22%

**Protein** 1g

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

2. Sunrise Day Care Center cares for children ages 3–5 years old. The program operator purchased the following crackers to serve at snack.

Using Exhibit A, how many crackers would need to be offered to each child to meet the meal pattern requirement in oz eq when including grains at snack?



Serving size = 5 crackers (15 grams)

- 3 crackers  
 4 crackers  
 5 crackers

#### Exhibit A: Grain Requirements For Child Nutrition Programs<sup>1,2</sup>

Color Key: Footnote 5 = Blue, Footnote 3 or 4 = Red

Food Products per Group	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq)	Minimum Serving Size
<b>Group A</b>	<b>Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group A</b>	<b>Minimum Serving Size for Group A</b>
Bread type coating	1 oz eq = 22 gm or 0.8 oz	1 serving = 20 gm or 0.7 oz
Bread sticks (hard)	3/4 oz eq = 17 gm or 0.6 oz	3/4 serving = 15 gm or 0.5 oz
Chow Mein noodles	1/2 oz eq = 11 gm or 0.4 oz	1/2 serving = 10 gm or 0.4 oz
Savory Crackers (saltines and snack crackers)	1/4 oz eq = 6 gm or 0.2 oz	1/4 serving = 5 gm or 0.2 oz
Croutons		
Pretzels (hard)		
Stuffing (dry) <i>Note: weights apply to bread in stuffing</i>		

3. These strawberry pancakes are served at Liberty Elementary School (K–5) for breakfast.

**INGREDIENTS:** Water, whole wheat flour, enriched wheat flour (unbleached wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), soybean oil, cane sugar contains 2% or less: baking powder, barley malt, salt, strawberries, guar gum, soy lecithin.



Serving size = 2 pancakes (70 grams)

a. Using Exhibit A (below), how many ounce equivalents of grains are provided in 2 pancakes?

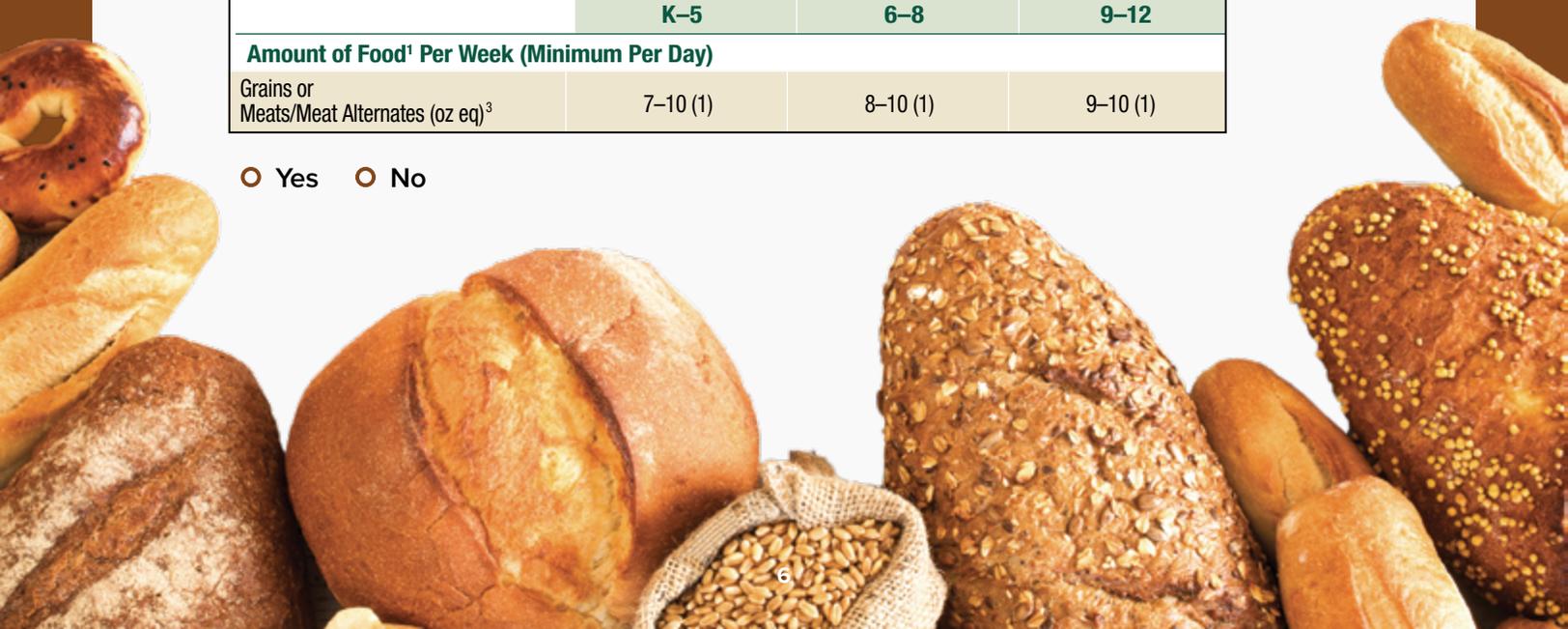
<b>Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs<sup>1,2</sup></b>		
Color Key: Footnote 5 = Blue, Footnote 3 or 4 = Red		
<b>Group C</b>	<b>Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group C</b>	<b>Minimum Serving Size for Group C</b>
Cookies <sup>3</sup> (plain - includes vanilla wafers)	1 oz eq = 34 gm or 1.2 oz	1 serving = 31 gm or 1.1 oz
Cornbread	3/4 oz eq = 26 gm or 0.9 oz	3/4 serving = 23 gm or 0.8 oz
Corn muffins	1/2 oz eq = 17 gm or 0.6 oz	1/2 serving = 16 gm or 0.6 oz
Croissants	1/4 oz eq = 9 gm or 0.3 oz	1/4 serving = 8 gm or 0.3 oz
Pancakes		
Pie crust (dessert pies <sup>3</sup> , cobbler <sup>3</sup> , fruit turnovers <sup>4</sup> , and meats/meat alternate pies)		
Waffles		

- 1 oz eq
- 2 oz eq
- 2.5 oz eq

b. Do two strawberry pancakes meet the SBP daily minimum requirement for grades K–5?

<b>Chart 1A: School Breakfast Program (SBP)</b>			
<b>Meal Components</b>	<b>Grades K–5</b>	<b>Grades 6–8</b>	<b>Grades 9–12</b>
<b>Amount of Food<sup>1</sup> Per Week (Minimum Per Day)</b>			
Grains or Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) <sup>3</sup>	7–10 (1)	8–10 (1)	9–10 (1)

- Yes
- No





# Answers

1. The preschool at Liberty Elementary School served Happy Days breakfast cereal to students, ages 3–5 years old. Can this cereal count toward the grains component in a reimbursable breakfast?



**INGREDIENTS:** Corn, sugar, contains 2% or less of: malt flavor, corn syrup, modified food starch, dextrose, salt, gelatin, natural flavors

**Vitamins & Minerals:** Iron (ferric phosphate), niacinamide, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), folic acid, vitamin D3, vitamin B12.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (1 oz)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 0g	<b>0%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 124mg	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 25g	<b>9%</b>
Dietary Fiber <1g	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total Sugars</b> 12g	
Includes 11g Added Sugars	<b>22%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 1g	

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

- **No. The grain ingredient, corn, does not indicate that it is whole grain or enriched. However, the cereal is fortified with added vitamins and minerals, and therefore appears creditable based on the ingredient label. The sugar content for a RTE breakfast cereal served in Preschool must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce. The Nutrition Facts label for this cereal, which lists nutrients per 1 oz serving size, states that Total Sugars are 12 grams per dry ounce; hence, this cereal is not creditable. By July 1, 2025, the added sugars limit will be no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. This cereal exceeds that limit as well.**

Yes

2. Sunrise Day Care Center cares for children ages 3–5 years old. The program operator purchased the following crackers to serve at snack.

Using Exhibit A, how many crackers would need to be offered to each child to meet the meal pattern requirement in oz eq when including grains at snack?

Serving size = 5 crackers (15 grams)

<b>Exhibit A: Grain Requirements For Child Nutrition Programs<sup>1,2</sup></b>		
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Croutons		
Pretzels (hard)		
Stuffing (dry) <small>Note: weights apply to bread in stuffing</small>		

3 crackers

- **4 crackers. When grains are included at snack in the CACFP for 3-5 year olds, 0.5 oz eq of grains must be served. According to Exhibit A, 1/2 oz eq of savory crackers equals 11 grams.**

To find out how many crackers are in 11 grams, first find the weight of each cracker. Divide the total weight of the crackers (15 grams) by the number of crackers (5). 15 grams divided by 5 crackers is 3 grams. Each cracker weighs 3 grams.

You need to serve at least 11 grams of crackers. 11 divided by 3 is 3.66 crackers, which rounds up to 4 crackers.

5 crackers

3. These strawberry pancakes are served at Liberty Elementary School (K–5) for breakfast.

**INGREDIENTS:** Water, **whole wheat flour, enriched wheat flour** (unbleached wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), soybean oil, cane sugar contains 2% or less: baking powder, barley malt, salt, strawberries, guar gum, soy lecithin.



Serving size = 2 pancakes (70 grams)

a. Using Exhibit A (below), how many ounce equivalents of grains are provided in 2 pancakes?

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Color Key: Footnote 5 = Blue, Footnote 3 or 4 = Red		
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Croissants	1/4 oz eq = 9 gm or 0.3 oz	1/4 serving = 8 gm or 0.3 oz
Pancakes		
Pie crust (dessert pies <sup>3</sup> , cobbler <sup>3</sup> , fruit turnovers <sup>4</sup> , and meats/meat alternate pies)		
Waffles		

1 oz eq

**2 oz eq. Two pancakes weigh 70 grams. Exhibit A states that 34 grams of pancakes provide 1 oz eq grains. Divide the weight of the two pancakes (70 grams) by the weight of 1 oz eq of pancakes (34 grams), and the result is 2.05 oz eq. This amount needs to be rounded down to the nearest 0.25 oz eq, which is 2.0 oz eq.**

2.5 oz eq

b. Do two strawberry pancakes meet the SBP daily minimum requirement for grades K–5?

Chart 1A: School Breakfast Program (SBP)			
Meal Components	Grades K–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
<b>Amount of Food<sup>1</sup> Per Week (Minimum Per Day)</b>			
Grains or Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) <sup>3</sup>	7–10 (1)	8–10 (1)	9–10 (1)

**Yes. As calculated in the previous step, two pancakes provide 2 oz eq grains, which exceeds the minimum daily grains requirement at breakfast in the SBP for grades K–5.**

No